



**LEGAL AID SOCIETY**

RESHAPING SOLUTIONS FOR  
ACCESSING JUSTICE IN PAKISTAN

# NEWSLETTER

April - June 2023

23<sup>rd</sup> Edition



## EDITORIAL SECTION: from the desk of Hasan Saeed (Program Delivery Specialist, LAS)

### DIVERSITY IN DATA: EMBRACING EVIDENCE-BASED POLICY MAKING



If the past decade or so has taught us anything, it is the need to recognize data as a key strategic asset to be utilized not only when driving evidence-driven policy making, but also in order to curate interventions with foundations laid in extensive primary research. Data-driven policy making enables the development of refined responses that can target the roots, whilst pre-intervention research ensures that the designed interventions are in-line with the needs of the masses; these can be measured through carefully curated indicators.

At the Legal Aid Society, we have always believed in the importance of understanding on-ground needs through detailed assessments and research, so as to be better positioned to design programming and specific interventions whilst ensuring that end-users of justice are able to access the requisite support. Whether this has been through conducting an in-depth analysis of legal queries received at our Sindh Legal Advisory Call Center (SLACC), or through primary research conducted within projects, the emphasis has always been on identifying

drivers, exploring a variety of avenues, and better understanding the needs of marginalized populations.

During this quarter alone, our research journey has seen us unearth perceptions on access and control over property, understand gaps and challenges in women's acquisition of property, and also identify the extent to which access to justice forums and services is provided to members from religious minority communities. The evidence gathered from this research has formed the foundation based on which our teams will be executing interventions geared at improving knowledge bases, providing legal support to improve access, and establishing a cohort of community

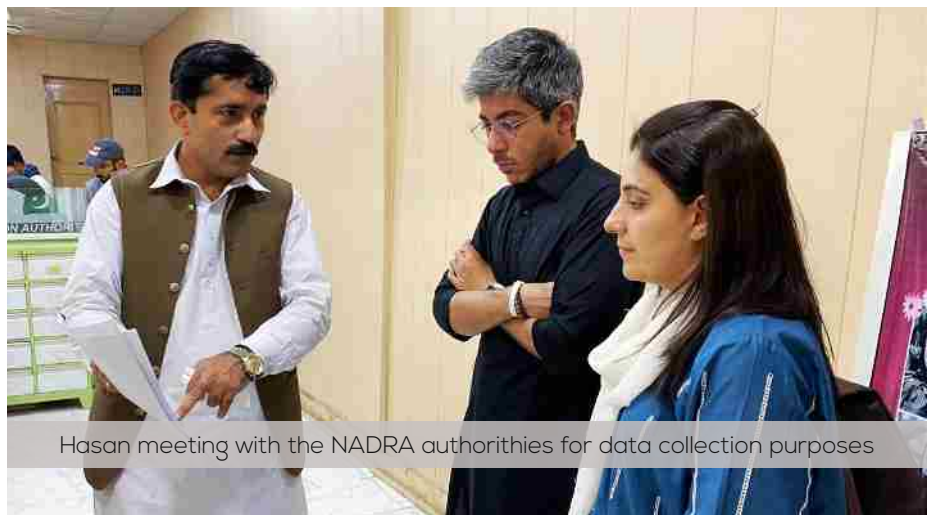


paralegals to ensure the sustenance of knowledge and information within.

Moreover, through a mapping exercise conducted as part of programming to understand the civil documentation needs of communities impacted by the devastating 2022 floods, we were able to identify pockets within villages that required immediate legal support. This support ensured that they were able to recover or register themselves for documentation that is crucial for them to access social security and protection schemes as they move towards rebuilding their lives.

Our research over the next quarter features a Predictive Analysis, which will inform insights on the utilization of Alternative Dispute Resolution to curb Court pendency in Sindh. The gathered data will drive the push for evidence-driven policy making as we further our efforts to advocate for the institutionalization of ADR, and work toward the provision of expeditious access to justice.

As we build towards cementing research and evidence at the Legal Aid Society, we hope to drive interventions and policies that address needs echoed by those that are impacted the most, whilst ensuring efficiency, effectiveness, and accountability – God Willing.



Hasan meeting with the NADRA authorities for data collection purposes

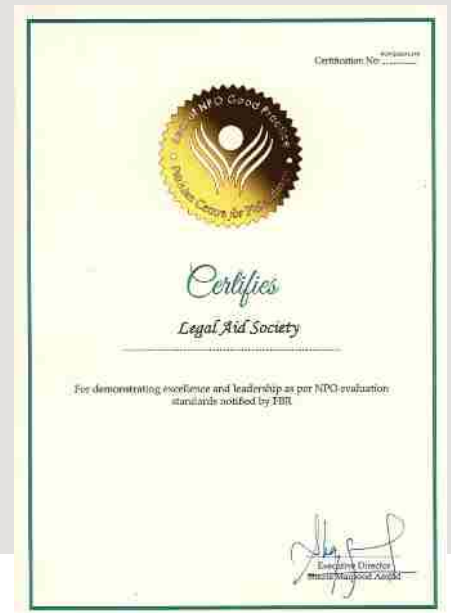


# ANOTHER MILESTONE UNLOCKED

## LAS is now PCP Certified

With the grace of the Almighty, we are pleased to inform you that we have recently attained Non-profit Organization (NPO) Good Practice certification from the Pakistan Centre for Philanthropy (PCP).

The certification is based on an extensive evaluation, where we were assessed extensively for our program delivery, compliance with tax laws, financial transparency and accountability. LAS has always strived to bring continuous improvements to its work policies & practices and shall always continue to do so.

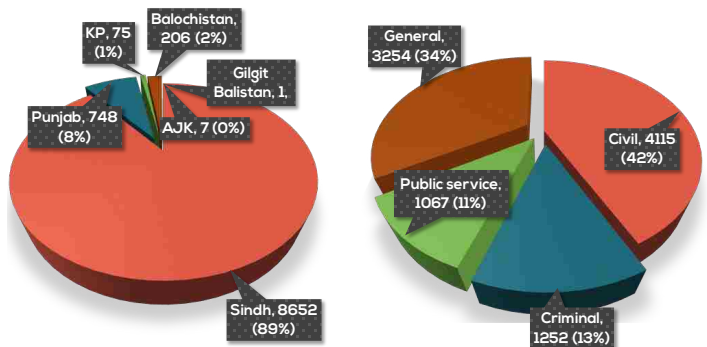


## EMPOWERING CITIZENS AT THE FOREFRONT OF CRISES through its Toll-free number: 0800-70806

The Sindh Legal Advisory Call Center (SLACC) is a flagship project of the Legal Aid Society and the Government of Sindh. It is Pakistan's first and one-of-a-kind toll-free helpline, which through its Interactive Voice Recording (IVRT) system, has amassed an impressive record of 419,325 calls received, encompassing a diverse range of 214,912 queries registered from more than 450 cities across Pakistan, all successfully addressed and resolved.

We concluded the year 2022-2023 with resounding success. The call center exceeded last year's projections and catered to 34,927 queries across Pakistan. During the last quarter alone, SLACC registered 9,689 queries.

This quarter's statistics reveal that 70% of queries originated from male callers, while 25% came from female callers, with an additional 5% from individuals who identified their gender as 'Other.' The provincial and category-wise breakdown is such:

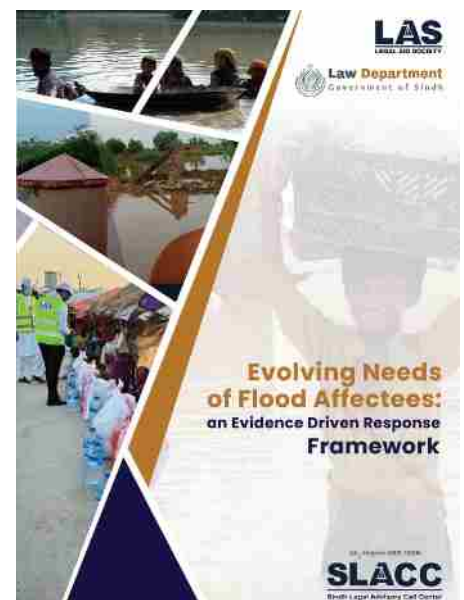


## Evolving Needs of Flood Affectees: An Evidence-Driven Response Framework

During the reporting quarter, SLACC released a policy brief that evaluated the effects of the 2022 floods and the specific legal assistance required by individuals affected. The study analyzed quantitative data gathered by SLACC from June 14, 2022 (the onset of the floods) to January 31, 2023, encompassing the period during and a few months after the disaster. The research focused on 24 districts and cities in Sindh and Balochistan that were severely impacted by the floods.

Furthermore, the brief incorporated data from the 2010 floods to identify the medium and long-

term issues arising from natural disasters, particularly within the Pakistani context. This analysis aimed to anticipate and prepare for future consequences of the recent floods. Our findings indicate that while immediate priorities for those affected by the floods are financial aid and access to basic facilities, the medium and long-term concerns revolve around property ownership, as losses and damages to property and civil documentation are significant outcomes. Consequently, we propose nine intervention needs that address short-term, mid-term, and long-term responses.



## PUBLIC AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS

### PEOPLE'S BUS CAMPAIGN

To spread legal awareness amongst the masses, SLACC's People's Bus Campaign helped spread information about the availability of a free legal advice hotline, where communities (including vulnerable groups, especially, women) are provided access to justice. Key messages from the campaign revolved around recognizing domestic and sexual violence as a crime while spreading awareness on women's right to legal property.

The People's Bus Service Campaign is still ongoing, with buses with SLACC messaging still visible on the streets of Karachi.



### RICKSHAW CAMPAIGN

A public awareness campaign was initiated to educate the community about the services that SLACC provides. Following the success of a similar campaign last year 1,000 rickshaws promoting the SLACC helpline containing ADR messages were also rolled out across ten targeted districts of Sindh during the reporting quarter.

### PAMPHLET DISTRIBUTION



Representatives from SLACC actively distributed promotional materials within local communities and neighborhoods during a four-week pilot program implemented with the support of LAS, reaching communities at the grass root level.

Throughout this period, 2,450 SLACC flyers, 18 SLACC boards, and 36 posters were strategically disseminated across various regions in Karachi. This intensive effort contributed significantly to increasing SLACC's outreach and raising awareness about its services within the community.



## EXPOSURE VISITS at the SLACC

### Hosting SINDH HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION (SHRC)



We were honored to host the esteemed Sindh Human Rights Commission (SHRC) delegation, led by **Mr. Iqbal Detho** (Honorable Chairperson, SHRC), at the Sindh Legal Advisory Call Center (SLACC) on May 29, 2023. On the day, **Justice Arif H. Khilji** (Former Judge, Supreme Court of Pakistan and Chief Legal Advisor, SLACC) welcomed the delegation, fostering greater collaboration between the

two organizations in their shared mission of supporting vulnerable communities.

During the visit, the Honorable Chairperson SHRC explored the prospect of establishing closer ties with police facilitation centers, aiming to bridge the gap between citizens and authority figures. This collaborative effort shall seek to promote SLACC's valuable services amongst other entities that citizens

can turn to for their legal needs.

The SHRC delegation expressed their admiration for SLACC's services and expressed their commitment to future collaboration, envisioning enhanced legal empowerment throughout Pakistan. Together, SLACC and SHRC aim to make significant strides in championing human rights and advancing access to justice nationwide.

### Meeting with PAKISTAN HINDU COUNCIL



SLACC had the privilege of hosting the Pakistan Hindu Council (PHC) on June 5, 2023, engaging in fruitful discussions about potential collaborations and strategies to uplift and improve the condition of the Hindu community.

The day was graced by esteemed attendees, including **Ramesh Kumar Vankwani** (Patron-in-Chief of Pakistan Hindu Council and Chairman, Task Force on Gandhara

Tourism), along with **Ms. Mangla Sharma** (Honorable Member, Sindh Assembly), **Ms. Komal Khatri** (Director, to the Patron-in-Chief), and Ms. Sunena Shantilal (General Manager, PHC).

During the visit, **Justice Arif H. Khilji**, **Barrister Haya Emaan Zahid** (CEO, LAS), and **Ms. Ruksana Parveen Khokhar** (Senior Program Manager, LAS) provided valuable insights and briefings. The Pakistan Hindu Council

expressed its deep appreciation for the remarkable efforts made by SLACC. They also reiterated their commitment to work with us to improve access to justice for the Hindu communities.

SLACC & PHC are determined to bring about policy reforms, implement impactful measures, and enhance case referrals and advocacy.

## Protecting CIVIL DOCUMENTATION



### LEGAL AWARENESS Sessions

The unprecedented rainfall in 2022 triggered catastrophic floods in Pakistan, leaving more than 33 million people affected all over the country. With 23 of the most affected districts being in the province of Sindh, the Government of Pakistan, along with the Government of Sindh introduced cash-assistance programs to provide relief aid. However, these social protection schemes are only accessible via a national ID card, which several people lost during floods.

To cater to this situation, LAS's collaboration with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) aims to bridge that gap by setting up legal clinics to provide awareness sessions and legal guidance regarding the recovery of civil documentation in five targeted districts of Dadu, Khairpur, Sanghar, Shaheed Benazirabad, and Umerkot.



Alongside the provision of legal guidance, the clinics also spread awareness of the social protection schemes which the beneficiaries can access. Four key issues which were addressed in the clinics included:

1. How to apply for a NADRA ID card.
2. Social protection schemes.
3. Fundamental rights; and
4. Importance of civil documentation.

Legal advice was provided to people who expressed interest in taking their cases (concerning lost CNICs or other civil documentation) to the courts. A total of **2,036** beneficiaries have benefitted from the sessions so far.

## FOCUSED GROUP DISCUSSIONS

To bring relief to the people facing challenges in recovering their documents, the LAS team met the District Commissioner of Dadu and related stakeholders on April 13, 2023. On this occasion, we were also able to conduct FGDs to determine:

- The extent of loss in Dadu due to the floods of 2022.
- Measures used to prevent further damage?
- Maintenance mechanism of data pertaining to relief given to flood victims.







On this occasion, we informed the Deputy Commissioner of Dadu about LAS's interventions to help flood victims and recover their civil documents.

The team also paid a visit to the NADRA and BISP offices to learn more about their daily contribution to processing applications. Additionally, LAS was able to set up a data collection mechanism that will be integrated with BISP dynamic surveys. This strategy aims to gather data on rejected applicants who did not possess the required documents, making them part of our beneficiaries.

Hopefully, these efforts will pave the way toward a more integrated response framework, where collaborations across different organizations are identified and utilized.

## Subsequent meetings with DEPUTY COMMISSIONER and RELEVANT STAKEHOLDERS

LAS team paid a visit to Commissioner Shaheed Benazirabad's office for a Focused Group Discussion (FGD) on June 22, 2023, and visited the Deputy Commissioner to seek his kind support in providing official data collected by the government regarding the extent of loss of civil documentation.

The LAS team was attended by Mr. **Asad Ali Memon** (Representative, Office of the Deputy Commissioner in SBA), **Mr. Muhammad Sabir Qureshi** (Additional Director, Social Welfare Department), and **Mr. Rafique Ahmed Buller** (Director of Operations, Benazir Income Support Program). Besides the FGD, the LAS team visited the Benazir Income Support Programme's (BISP) office with Mr. Rafique Buller, who informed us about the dynamic survey process for registering BISP beneficiaries.



of 5) with the State via B-form. This coordination resulted in a collaboration between LAS and DevCon where DevCon would help to identify beneficiaries under five years of age who do not possess

the B-Form, while LAS would facilitate them in acquiring one. The joint effort will seek to ensure that every eligible child receives the necessary support and benefits they richly deserve.

The LAS team also met with the Program Manager at DevCon (a UNICEF-supported CSO) to discuss their work regarding registering minors (children under the age

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# EMPOWERING WOMEN AND GIRLS during climate emergencies



The establishment of Women and Girls Friendly Spaces (WGFS) in the districts of Larkana and Qamber Shahdadkot, which was spearheaded by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and implemented by LAS, is an important initiative to support women affected by the disastrous floods of 2022. The spaces serve as safe spaces where women can seek psychosocial support and access various essential services.

The WGFS provide a safe environment where women can openly discuss their problems, engage in enjoyable activities, and receive information about their rights through legal awareness programs.

They also offer referral services, enabling women to access social, economic, health, and legal support through a single channel. LAS has collaborated with government and private partners to enhance these

referral pathways, ensuring women receive comprehensive assistance.

Some Key Highlights since its establishment (March 2023) are as follows:



**8,000 Women**

utilized these spaces and benefitted from the services provided.



**1,600 Women**

received UNFPA dignity kits (including oral and menstrual hygiene items). To ensure their proper utilization, sessions were conducted to educate all women on the correct usage of these products.



**80 Women**

received psychosocial support sessions from a mental health professional.

As an overall impact, the WGFS initiative serves as a crucial emergency response measure, recognizing the disproportionate impact of climate catastrophes on women. By addressing their specific needs and creating a supportive environment, WGFS aims to alleviate the burdens imposed by poverty and existing social responsibilities, ultimately empowering women in the face of adversity.





# ENSURING RIGHTS & ACCESS TO JUSTICE for Religious Minorities in Pakistan

## LEGAL AWARENESS CLINICS

Our research has identified numerous challenges that the Religious Minority Communities (RMCs) face while accessing justice in Pakistan. One significant contributing factor to this deplorable condition is the lack of awareness regarding the legal rights guaranteed by the Constitution of Pakistan and other legislative instruments.



To bridge this gap, we developed a series of five Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) materials focusing on the property laws of Hindus, Christians, Parsis, and other religious minorities. Our field teams are effectively disseminating this crucial information through legal aid clinics in eight districts of Sindh. During these clinics, LAS' community

lawyers, with the assistance of paralegals, brief the communities comprehensively about their rights. During the awareness sessions, participants are encouraged to share their legal issues with our field team, while our field lawyers offer legal advice on the spot, and take up cases for further litigation where necessary.

The primary objective of these legal aid clinics is to create awareness within the communities regarding their personal laws, including special legislation enacted by the legislative assemblies to regulate matters such as marriages, custody, divorce, and maintenance, as we strive to bring about positive change and ensure equal rights for all.





## COLLABORATIONS & PARTNERSHIPS

### Collaboration Event with **SINDH HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION**



The Supreme Court of Pakistan made a historic judgment on June 19, 2014, following **Chief Justice Tassaduq Hussain Jilani's** suo moto action in response to a terrorist attack on a church in Peshawar. The apex court extensively addressed various challenges faced by Religious Minority Communities (RMCs), including forced conversions, dispossession of places of worship, and violations of their fundamental rights. The court issued directives to the federal and provincial governments to enhance the condition of religious minorities.

Emphasizing and ensuring compliance with the historic

judgment, the Sindh Human Rights Commission (SHRC) and LAS co-organized a consultation meeting on the same date (June 19, 2023) after nine years. The event was graced by key stakeholders, including MNAs, MPAs from minority communities, government representatives, civil society organizations, and minority rights activists.

On the occasion, **Mr. Iqbal Detho** (Honorable Chairperson, SHRC) highlighted the historical significance of human rights and emphasized the critical importance of protecting minority rights. He discussed the SHRC's commitment & role in addressing collective minority issues in various districts of Sindh.

**Advocate Maliha Zia Lari** (Associate Director, LAS) acknowledged the significance of the judgment in addressing the issues faced by RMCs and provided an update on the progress made at the federal and provincial levels in complying with the judgment. Furthermore, **Ms. Rukhsana Parveen Khokhar** (Senior Program Manager, LAS) shed light on the challenges confronted by religious minorities in different districts of Sindh. She emphasized the importance of collective efforts and collaboration between the government and civil society organizations to safeguard the rights of religious minorities.

### Hosting **SANITARY WORKERS ASSOCIATION**

Representatives of the Sanitary Workers Association visited the Legal Aid Society (LAS) to discuss pressing issues faced by their workers, along with those belonging to RMCs specifically. The problems included a lack of safety equipment, absence of health insurance, discrimination, and more. Recognizing the gravity of the situation, the LAS team has expressed its commitment to working for the rights of religious minority workers.

By actively engaging with the Sanitary Workers Association and acknowledging the specific challenges faced by religious minority workers, the LAS aims to create a platform for dialogue and collaboration. Through these efforts, we strive to ensure that these workers receive fair treatment, access to necessary resources, and protection from discrimination or harm.





## FOCUSED GROUP DISCUSSIONS with District Peace Committee in Khairpur

LAS recently organized a Focused Group Discussion (FGD) with the District Peace Committee (DPC) members in Khairpur. The session witnessed participation from religious leaders, and was moderated by Muhammad Baqar (District Field Officer, LAS) and Maqbool Ahmed (Community leader, Khairpur).

During the FGD, members of the DPC responsively shared their concerns and highlighted the challenges that they face during their efforts to promote interfaith harmony and peace within their respective districts. This session also provided a platform for participants to discuss their experiences and exchange ideas on overcoming obstacles and strengthening the DPCs' effectiveness.

The insights gathered aim to foster interfaith harmony, resolve conflicts, and promote peace within the districts. LAS remains committed to working closely with DPCs and community leaders to implement these recommendations to create a more tolerant, harmonious, and peaceful environment for everyone.



## PARALEGAL TRAININGS

LAS is dedicated to establishing sustainable mechanisms that empower RMCs. In pursuit of this objective, we have successfully trained 104 paralegals from religious minority backgrounds in eight districts of Sindh, namely Karachi, Hyderabad, Dadu, Sanghar, Khairpur, Sukkur, Larkana, and SBA.

Our paralegals have undergone comprehensive and rigorous training programs that cover a wide range of topics. These include community engagement strategies, legal rights specific to religious minorities, and mechanisms for enforcing these rights. The training sessions were carefully designed to enhance their understanding



of the legal frameworks that promote and protect the rights of religious minorities. Additionally, the trainings aimed to develop their communication and interpersonal skills, enabling them to effectively engage with their communities and address their legal needs.

By actively engaging with religious

minority communities and providing legal assistance, our paralegals serve as valuable resources and advocates for those in need. They are well-equipped to navigate the complexities of legal issues affecting religious minority communities and work towards achieving sustainable change.

# Closing the Gap between LAW, POLICY, AND PRACTICE ON WOMEN'S RIGHT TO PROPERTY

A lack of awareness regarding legal entitlements hinders women's access to property rights. Property rights serve as crucial indicators of social and economic autonomy for individuals. They grant women the freedom and dignity to make decisions and assert control over their lives within marriages, families, and communities. The Legal Aid Society aims to address this perennial issue by raising awareness, generating demand, establishing imperative legal aid linkages, and advocating for policy-level changes.



## LEGAL AWARENESS CLINICS

**W**omen's property rights are instrumental in achieving gender equity and empowerment. To educate and inform underserved locales about women's legal property rights, LAS organized legal clinics in the targeted districts of Karachi, Larkana, and Shaheed Benazirabad about women's rights.

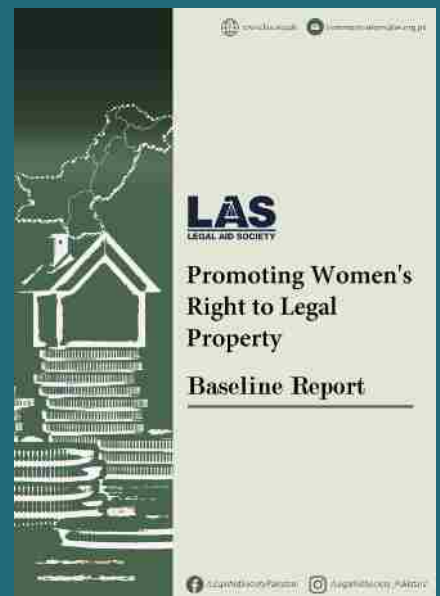
Our legal clinics equip communities with knowledge about the law and facilitate economic empowerment by promoting access and control of legal assets for women. They sensitize the community to the legal frameworks governing women's property rights and make them aware of LAS's free legal advice and pro-bono litigation services for

property-related matters. During the reporting quarter, we conducted 117 community awareness sessions, positively impacting and engaging **1,357** individuals. These sessions are inclusive, diverse, and are tailored to effectively transfer knowledge to men, women, transgender people, and individuals belonging to religious minorities.

## ASSESSING THE IMPACTS OF WOMEN'S PROPERTY OWNERSHIP on Household Decision-Making and the Utilization of Social Security Mechanisms

LAS realized the dearth of research on women's property ownership as a significant barrier to advocating for their financial rights, and the potential for primary research to catalyze change. Catering to this, LAS conducted a baseline assessment across intervention districts in Sindh to gauge the knowledge and perceptions of women with regard to the rights, access, and control they have over the acquisition and protection of their legal and marital property.

Using a quantitative research methodology, LAS investigated the target audience's perception of access and control over their property and their knowledge of acquiring and protecting legal and marital property. Findings suggest that while audience's self-reported perceptions on the rights of women to own property are generally high (87% of participants agreed that women should have legal rights over their family's property), there appear to be considerable misconceptions when it comes to the legal stipulations of women's ownership of property. It further reveals that women's knowledge on the means and processes of property acquisition is relatively low, postulating the need for interventions to address this knowledge gap.





## EMPOWERING THROUGH THEATRE: Unveiling Women's Rights under Muslim Family Laws

The Legal Aid Society collaborated with Tehrik-e-Niswan, a renowned theater group led by Ms. Sheema Kirmani, to conduct a series of impactful plays addressing women's rights under Muslim family laws on June 23-24, 2023. Three captivating performances took place in Shaheed Benazirabad (SBA) district, paving the way for a broader movement toward empowerment and social change.

Highlighting the Muslim Family Laws Ordinance, 1961 - which governs various aspects of marriage, divorce, and family relations in Pakistan, the plays aimed to raise awareness about the legal rights and protections available to women under this ordinance.

The theater played powerful songs that served as a reminder for the resolution of unanswered incidents which are deeply ingrained within our society. The narratives explored the significance of brides' access to and understanding their Nikahnama (marriage contract). The play discussed the marriage arrangements, especially the bride's lack of awareness regarding her rights given in the Nikahnama. These clauses include:

- ▶ **Clause 17:** Special conditions decided between the bride and groom at the time of nikah
- ▶ **Clause 18:** Whether the groom has delegated the right of divorce to the bride
- ▶ **Clause 19:** Any conditions on the husband's right to divorce
- ▶ **Clause 20:** Any special terms pertaining to the groom's financial obligations towards the bride (i.e., maintenance), and
- ▶ **Clauses 21 and 22:** Permissions related to the groom's potential remarriage.

By highlighting the rights given to women through the above clauses, the performances shed light on the consequences women face when these rights are curtailed. The theater performances were attended by diverse audiences each day, including many prominent stakeholders & policymakers, including **Mr. Asad Ali Memon** (P.A. to the Deputy Commissioner SBA), **Mr. Muhammad Sabir** (Additional Director, Social Welfare Department), **Ms. Zaibunnisa** (In-charge Women Development



Department), **Ms. Qamarunnisa Dhamrah** (Senior Member, SCSW), **Mr. Muslim Farooque** (Additional Director, Child Protection Unit Department), members from various Union Councils, NGOs, journalists, alongside the community members, Nikah-Khwans, government stakeholders, and civil society members, but most importantly by married and soon-to-be-married women.



As these theater plays serve as powerful catalysts for change, LAS and Tehrik-e-Niswan are trying to spark conversations, raise awareness, and inspire individuals to challenge archaic practices

that curtail women's rights under marriage.

Further, there are plans to embark upon new theatre plays in Larkana & Karachi.

# STRENGTHENING THE GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSE TO SEXUAL VIOLENCE

LAS is continually striving to improve access to justice for victims and survivors of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) by improving the critical Criminal Justice System (CJS) actors' capacity to respond to sexual violence cases, majorly in Karachi, Hyderabad, and Sukkur.

To increase access to justice for survivors of SGBV, LAS continues to provide free legal aid and advice through its call centers and legal representation. To ensure that LAS and government stakeholders are capacitated to better respond to survivors of SGBV, LAS continues to conduct training sessions on various thematic areas.



## ANTI-RAPE CRISIS CELL CONSULTATION WORKSHOP in Islamabad

LAS organized a consultation workshop on 'Guidelines for Anti-Rape Crisis Cells' with key stakeholders at the Ministry of Law and Justice (MoLJ) in Islamabad on May 16, 2023. The consultation was presided by **Raja Naem Akbar** (Honorable Secretary, Law & Justice), where the infrastructural and human resource requirements of the prospective ARCCs (Anti-Rape Crises Cells) were discussed

at great length, along with the most sustainable approach to pilot the model ARCCs in ICT, KP, Punjab, and Sindh.

On the day, **Dr. Summaiya Syed-Tariq** (Chief Police Surgeon) led the session and shed light on the Anti-Rape (Investigation and Trial) Act, 2021 and the ARCC SOP guidelines which were developed earlier in collaboration with LAS, taking into

account the role of the stakeholders who were present at that time. Notable attendees included **Mr. Rasideen Nawaz** (Additional Attorney General), **Mr. Rana Hassan Abbas** (Special Prosecutor under ARA 2021), **Mr. Rana Imran Sikandar** (Executive Director PIMS), and **Dr. Ambreen Nadeem Khan** (Deputy Director General, Ministry of National Health Services, Regulation and Coordination).

## Strengthening REFERRAL PATHWAYS

On June 6-10, 2023, LAS significantly promoted survivors' access to essential services by strengthening referral pathways in Matiari, Larkana, and Qamber Shahdadkot. These pathways ensure survivors receive timely assistance across social, psychological, healthcare, and economic domains, all through one platform.

We also focused on reinforcing Prevention of Sexual Exploitation & Abuse (PSEA) compliance mechanisms. Every staff member underwent rigorous PSEA training, ensuring survivors are protected from any misconduct by humanitarian personnel. A Community-Based Complaint Mechanism (CBCM) is also in place, ensuring that community feedback mechanisms are utilized appropriately.





## SHARING LESSONS across provinces

A consultation between critical stakeholders responsible for implementing the Punjab Protection of Women Against Violence Act 2016 (PPWAVA) took place on June 5-6, 2023, in LUMS.

The consultation session was organized by the **Dastak Foundation** and **Shaikh Ahmad Hassan School of Law**, LUMS, bringing together diverse perspectives to shape a safer future for women facing domestic violence. LAS was invited to share insights and learnings from interventions and protection measures from Sindh, emphasizing the importance of the Multi-Sectoral Coordination Committee and coordinated approaches to combat violence against women at both the grassroots and policy-making levels.

The PPWAVA 2016 mandates establishing one-stop protection mechanisms across Punjab, a model already operational in Multan and Karachi. We feel honored to



have been a part of this knowledge-sharing process between provinces.

## Participation at the WOMEN'S PARLIAMENTARY CAUCUS



Women's Parliamentary Caucus organized a conference on "Reclaiming The Space: Reading the Constitution from Women's Perspective" at the Pakistan Institute of Parliamentary Services in collaboration with the Ministry of Law & Justice & AGHS Legal Aid Cell.

During a roundtable session on "Language of the Constitution," **Advocate Maliha Zia Lari** (Human Rights Activist and Associate Director, LAS) suggested constitutional and social reforms to ensure equal representation and the effective contribution of females in decision-making cycles. She also focused on giving women equal opportunity for progressive development in all fields of life.

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## DECONGESTING COURT DOCKETS: by institutionalizing ADR in Pakistan

The deprivation of basic fundamental rights and limited access to justice have significantly impacted the lives of impoverished and vulnerable individuals, leading to increased hardship and a loss of trust in the justice system.

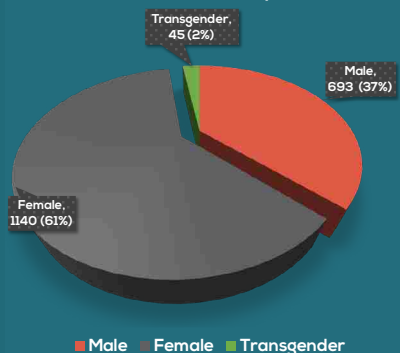
Recognizing this, LAS has been actively involved in community engagement efforts to promote awareness about the rights of these individuals, as well as the benefits of ADR, along with the channels available for swift dispute resolution. By empowering these communities with knowledge and resources, LAS aims to alleviate their suffering and restore faith in the justice system.

### LEGAL AWARENESS CLINICS on ADR

LAS is actively working to raise awareness among individuals regarding dispute resolution mechanisms through legal awareness clinics conducted in targeted districts of Sindh, with the valuable support of ADR paralegals.

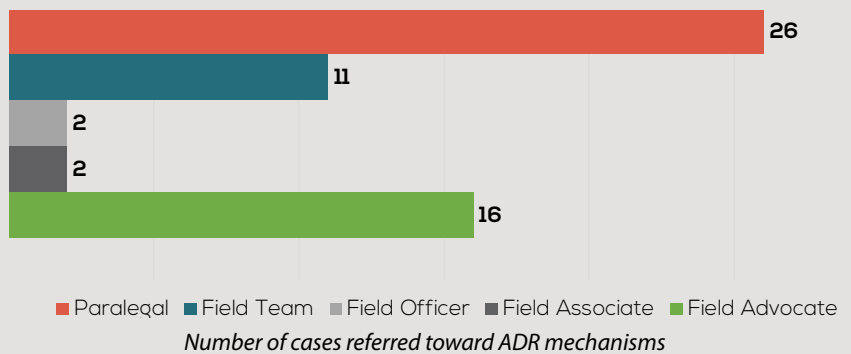
During the reporting quarter, **81** legal clinics were successfully organized in Hyderabad, Larkana, Karachi, Sukkur, Sanghar, SBA, Dadu, and Khairpur. During these clinics, **1,878** engaged community members (693 males and 1140 females) were briefed about ADR, its mechanisms, and the appropriate channels for reporting relevant cases at relevant forums. These awareness sessions aim to empower marginalized and vulnerable communities by equipping them with knowledge of dispute resolution mechanisms, ultimately improving Pakistan's justice system.

Participants of Legal Awareness Clinics: Breakdown by Gender



### DIVERSION OF CASES toward ADR Mechanisms

During the reporting quarter, 57 cases in eight targeted districts were successfully diverted toward ADR mechanisms. Among these cases, the highest number was reported by females 29 cases (52%), while males, accounted for 28 cases (49%). Most of these cases, that is, 39 were categorized as matters to be referred to the Federal Ombudsperson, followed by three cases for the Provincial Ombudsperson. This highlights the effectiveness and growing acceptance of ADR to resolve disputes in our targeted districts.



Our trained paralegals have been empowering communities by providing them with knowledge about alternative dispute resolution (ADR), dispute-resolution mechanisms, and awareness sessions on available channels. During the specified period, our paralegals reported 26 out of a total of 57 cases.



## IMPROVING THE DEMAND side of ADR

### Introducing Pakistan's first batch of CERTIFIED AND BAR COUNCIL-RECOGNIZED MEDIATION ADVOCATES

Mediation Advocates are a critical component of the mediation ecosystem. Since mediation proceedings have very little to do with law and precedent and mostly revolve around the parties' issues, interests, concerns, and potential options for an amicable settlement, it is imperative for members of the legal fraternity to be acquainted not only with the process of Mediation but also to nuanced skills of interest-based negotiation to effectively represent their clients in mediation proceedings.



MICADR (a sister organization of LAS) designed Pakistan's first Certified Mediation Advocacy Program, which the Islamabad Bar Council very graciously recognized. The graduation ceremony of the first batch of 28 MICADR-trained and Council-certified Mediation Advocates highlights a significant milestone and was celebrated during a certificate distribution ceremony held in partnership with Islamabad Bar Council (IBC), Islamabad High

Court Bar Association (IHCBA), and Islamabad District Bar Association (IDBA) at Islamabad Bar Council on June 14, 2023.

On this occasion, the Chief Guest, **Justice Sardar Ejaz** (Honorable Judge, Islamabad High Court), termed the vital role of Mediation Advocacy as a fundamental component of the growing mediation ecosystem in Pakistan. He recognized the efforts of MICADR in supporting the State

in his discourse. Justice Ejaz also emphasized the importance of mediators and mediation advocates actively diverting cases toward ADR and recommended rigorous data collection to ensure well-informed policy-making in the future.

**It is worth noting that all 28 program graduates have joined MICADR as mediation advocates, further contributing to the advancement of mediation in Pakistan.**

### ADR SYMPOSIUM in Islamabad

In collaboration with the Federal Judicial Academy (FJA) and Islamabad High Court (IHC), the Legal Aid Society organized a One-day ADR Symposium and Study Circle on Court Referred Mediation on May 12, 2023. The event aimed to bring together Civil Judges from the District Courts in Islamabad, the Honourable Judges of IHC, and the Member Inspection Team (MIT) to discuss the benefits of the ADR Act 2017 and address related concerns & doubts. The primary purpose of this symposium was to facilitate the implementation of court-referred mediations through ADR.



On the day, the participants were encouraged to partake in hands-on activities, collaborate in groups, during which they presented critical points and insights after meticulously examining the ADR Act of 2017, its associated rules, and practice directions.

**The IHC and MIT assured the participants that the valuable inputs provided by them shall be promptly addressed and necessary steps shall be taken to commence the implementation of ADR in ICT.**

## IMPROVING THE SUPPLY of State-Recognized ADR across Pakistan

### FIRST-EVER ACCREDITED MEDIATORS TRAINING PROGRAM in Gilgit Baltistan

Gilgit Baltistan is a region where people often utilize informal forums of alternative dispute resolution (ADR) to resolve their disputes rather than moving to formal forums like courts. Interestingly, every community in Gilgit Baltistan has its own hierarchy of dispute resolution bodies/forums. Community Elders, including Lumberdars (community representatives) Mohalla/Local Committees, Conciliation and Arbitration Board (CAB), Imamia Sharia Board, and Mohakma Sharia are some of the most notable informal dispute resolution forums.



To institutionalize state-recognized ADR in Gilgit Baltistan, LAS and MICADR commenced an Accredited Mediators Training Program with logistical support from Agha Khan Rural Support Program (AKRSP) on May 18-28, 2023.

This mediation training was delivered by Pakistan Mediators Association (PMA), during which a total of 55 participants nominated by AKRSP, LAS, and GB Chief Court from the

Legal fraternity, Local Support Organizations (LSOs), Regional Conciliation and Arbitration Board (CAB), Noorbakhshia Community, Imamia Sharia Board, and Mohakma Sharia were trained for five days (8\*5=40hrs) in two batches. These participants were selected from Gilgit, Hunza, Ghizer, Astore, Diamer, Nagar, Ganche, Shigar, and Skardu. These qualified mediation trainees will be later notified by GB Chief Court and will be referred relevant civil, family, and commercial cases

for resolution through mediation techniques.

Speaking on the occasion, **Mr. Ali Baig** (Honorable Chief Judge, GB Chief Court) applauded the interventions by LAS and MICADR with the support of GB Judiciary and further made commitments to institutionalize ADR with LAS, GB Government, and other private stakeholders in Gilgit Baltistan.

### CONSULTATION WITH GB JUDICIARY: Preparing the First Ever Mediation Bill 2023 in GBLA

LAS in collaboration with the Gilgit Baltistan Chief Court, conducted exclusive consultative sessions with the Gilgit Baltistan Legislative Assembly (GBLA) and Judges of the District Judiciary in May of 2023. The LAS team led by **Justice Arif Hussain Khilji** (former Judge, Supreme Court of Pakistan) provided an overview of the proposed "Gilgit Baltistan Model Mediation Bill 2023". The concise and cogent presentation by the LAS illuminated the composition and establishment of the Accreditation





Committee and its pivotal role in regulating mediation centers and mediators in Gilgit Baltistan.

The Mediation Bill 2023 is considered as the first standalone legislative instrument mandating mediation in Pakistan, including best practices from provincial laws across Pakistan

and global legislation.

The bill received overwhelming support from cabinet members who vowed to table it for debate at the earliest. If passed as a law, it will allow parties to settle their disputes through mediation in a completely confidential manner.



## LAS launches Summer Internship (ADR Street Law Changemakers) Program

LAS visited the School of Law at the University of Karachi and Hamdard University in Karachi. During these visits, the team engaged in conversations regarding the internship opportunities offered by the Legal Aid Society. These internships aim to provide ADR changemakers with valuable experiences in ADR and practical knowledge in related fields.

Moreover, the internships will play a vital role in shaping the development skills of the changemakers. By engaging in hands-on ADR-related assignments, they gain learning and exposure to real life. Additionally, the program will foster a collaborative environment for knowledge exchange between changemakers, further enriching their experiences and perspectives in Alternative Dispute Resolution.

## ADR PARALEGALS REFRESHER TRAINING



LAS organized an extensive refresher training program to enhance the skills of our dedicated team of 192 community Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) paralegals across eight districts of Sindh.

During the refresher training, LAS paralegals delved deeper into the core principles of ADR, with a specific focus on refining their understanding of mediation, negotiation, and conflict resolution techniques. To strengthen their practical abilities, they actively engaged in role plays,

simulating various disputes such as family matters, landlord-tenant issues, and neighborhood conflicts. The primary goal of this training was to elevate the expertise of our paralegals and equip them with the necessary skills to guide individuals in approaching relevant ADR forums for amicable settlement.

These paralegals are now ready to facilitate citizens by connecting them with the offices of the Provincial and Federal Ombudsperson, and the High Court notified MICADR Mediators and Salis members.

# ENGAGEMENT & ADVOCACY EFFORTS for the promotion of ADR

LAS has been continuously bringing awareness among the public, legal fraternity, and government institutions on ADR using different approaches, including awareness sessions, conferences, and different campaigns through print and electronic media.



## SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGN with ADR Changemakers

To raise awareness and promote ADR's benefits among law students and the wider legal community, a social media campaign was initiated to enhance the visibility of the ADR Changemakers across all five Law Colleges affiliated with the LAS.

The digital campaign showcased the ADR changemakers through mainstream posts and stories on the LAS' social media official mainstreams, including Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. This effort shall inspire law students to consider pursuing ADR as a specialized subject within their law degrees.

ABD Law College, Sukkur



Government Law College, Khairpur



Hamdard School of Law



Institute of Law, Hyderabad



School of Law, UOK



## NATIONAL AND REGIONAL ADR MEDIA CAMPAIGNS to increase public awareness of ADR

Recognizing the need to alleviate burdens on the justice system, media sensitization emerges as a powerful tool to disseminate awareness about ADR amongst businesses, the judiciary, and the general public. LAS's continuous national and regional media campaign serves as a vital catalyst in raising awareness about the benefits and methodologies of ADR. Through engaging talk shows, radio programs, and news coverage on national and regional TV channels, LAS effectively disseminates information to educate the public about the merits of ADR.



**Justice Arif Hussain Khilji** (former Judge, Supreme Court of Pakistan) and **Ms. Sarha Rasheed** (Senior Manager, MICADR) participated in a web TV interview at Ausaf Gilgit Baltistan on May 22, 2023. Justice Arif Khilji shed light on ADR's extensive potential in Pakistan, with specific emphasis on Gilgit Baltistan, where informal dispute resolution forums have been successfully operating for decades. The interview also delved into the discussions surrounding the passage of the "Model Mediation Bill 2023" by LAS, showcasing their commitment for advancing ADR practices in the region, which is receiving enormous support from the Gilgit Baltistan Judiciary and Gilgit Baltistan Legislative (GBLA) Members.



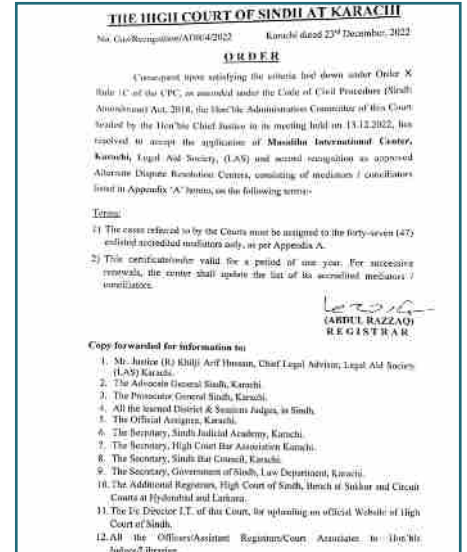
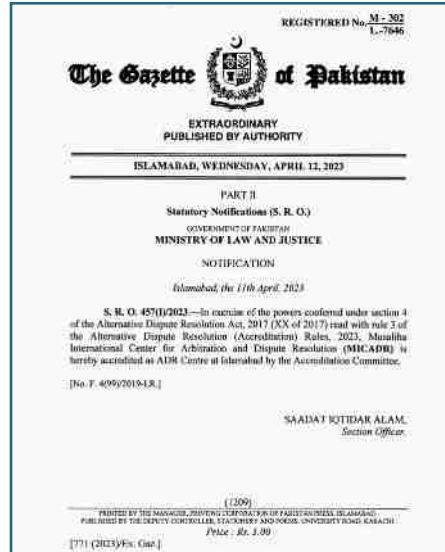


## Notifications by MOLJ and ISLAMABAD HIGH COURT

LAS is honored and proud to announce that the Government of Pakistan has notified MICADR as a Recognized ADR Center.

The Accreditation Committee, comprising of the Islamabad High Court and Pakistan Federation of Chambers of Commerce & Industry notified MICADR, along with 40 of its empaneled Mediators.

Headquartered in Karachi, with a presence in the capital city of Islamabad, MICADR aims to provide state-of-the-art mediation, arbitration, and other ADR services for entities across Pakistan. This official recognition by the Government of Pakistan, Islamabad High Court, and the Sindh High Court, means that courts and regulatory bodies can now refer cases to MICADR. Through our panel of 40 recognized ADR Practitioners



in Islamabad and 56 in Karachi, we will now be able to resolve disputes in an expeditious and expedient manner.

While we are committed to promoting ADR in the country and look forward to providing an efficient and cost-effective alternative to traditional dispute resolution mechanisms, we are grateful to our partners and stakeholders for instilling their trust in us.

## LAW SECRETARY ADVOCATING FOR GB MEDIATION BILL 2023 with the Chief Minister of Gilgit Baltistan

The Senior Management of LAS met with **Mr. Rahim Gul** (Law Secretary, Government of GB) in Gilgit and apprised him of the GB Mediation Bill 2023. **Justice Khilji** briefed him about the need for and importance of the GB Mediation Bill in a region like Gilgit Baltistan, where access to Justice Institutions becomes difficult in extreme weather. Mr. Rahim Gul appreciated the efforts of LAS and committed to presenting the summary of this bill to the Chief Minister of Gilgit Baltistan for his consent and guidance prior to tabling it before the Gilgit Baltistan Legislative Assembly.



## JUSTICE SUCCESS **STORIES**

### Helping a blind woman to attain justice

**N**aseema Bano, a resident of South Karachi, is a blind divorcee who lives with her sister. She was earlier trapped in an abusive marriage, which was arranged by her father. Despite making several complaints to her father about her husband's violent behavior, Naseema's father ignored her pleas for help. Tragically, she lost her eyesight, leading to which her ex-husband threw her out of the marital abode and divorced her.

Following the divorce, Naseema sought refuge with her sister, who hails from a low middle-class family and relies on her husband's daily wages. Naseema's father lived separately with his sons and her stepmother, who was seemingly indifferent to his daughter's struggles. As Naseema's financial situation worsened, she turned to her father for monthly expenses. However, her father not only refused to provide financial support but also suggested admitting Naseema to a shelter house, leaving her in a vulnerable position. In search of justice & legal assistance,

Naseema approached LAS for help, as she could not afford to hire a private lawyer amid other legal expenses. **Advocate Rashid Mahar** (Field Advocate, LAS) took up her case, and immediately took active measures to recover maintenance funds.

The court proceeded to record evidence from both sides, including testimony from Naseema's brothers & father, who argued against her right to receive maintenance. Despite all odds, and after carefully considering all the evidence, the

honorable court passed their judgment on April 6, 2023, which resulted in a significant victory for Naseema. The court ruled in Naseema's favor, granting her a monthly maintenance amount of Rs. 4,000/- which was timely financial relief for her.

Naseema's resilience and the unwavering efforts of the LAS team in this case highlight the transformative power of justice and compassion in the face of adversity.



**Advocate Rashid Mahar** (Field Advocate, LAS) with Naseema while discussing her case

## JUSTICE SUCCESS **STORIES**

### Helping a woman with the recovery of her dowry items & maintenance

**M**s. Shazia Mehraja, a resident of Sanghar, was referred to LAS by the Assistant Director of the Women's Development Department in Sanghar.

Shazia, after getting married had relocated to her husband's home. She had two minor daughters (aged 4 and 2) from the marriage. Upon reaching out to the LAS office in Sanghar,

Shazia narrated her distressing ordeal to LAS. She revealed that she had been subjected to severe physical abuse by her husband and his family. In one instance, her husband



even used an iron object to assault her and forcibly evict her from the house. As Shazia was leaving with her daughters, her husband aggressively snatched the children from her. Left with no choice, Shazia returned to her father's house.

When Shazia shared her plight with **Advocate Housh Muhammad** (Field Advocate,

LAS), he promptly took relevant legal action. Advocate Housh filed an application at the District Court Sanghar to recover Shazia's minor daughters (under Section 491 of the Criminal Procedure Code ,1898). In response to the application, the Honorable Judge ordered to produce the minors in court, and their custody was awarded to Shazia.

Moreover, after carefully considering the arguments presented, the Honorable Judge ordered the production of the minor and the custody was awarded to Shazia. Her husband was further ordered to return the dowry articles or, in case of failure to do so, he would pay Shazia a sum of PKR 400,000.

## JUSTICE SUCCESS STORIES

### Protecting a woman from a toxic relationship and ensuring her rightful maintenance

**D**ileep Kumar, a concerned father, had filed a First Information Report (FIR) against nine individuals, accusing them of kidnapping his beloved 14-year-old daughter, Suhana Sharma. The gravity of the allegations was immense, as Mr. Kumar suspected that the kidnapers intended to force Suhana into marriage and coerce her into changing her religion.

As news of the incident spread, the LAS team swiftly reached out to the distressed father, extending a compassionate hand, and offered legal support. Mr. Kumar informed us that he had already engaged a private advocate for his daughter's case. During this critical moment, Suhana's private advocate refused to allow the LAS Advocate to file a separate Vakalatnama (a document authorizing legal representation). Despite the setback, Advocate **Syed Danish Ali Shah** (Field Advocate, LAS) kept his motivation and submitted a joint power document to ensure that Suhana's best interests were



protected.

After remarkable efforts, Suhana was timely found and brought before Honorable Judge to record her statement under Section 164 of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC). The Honorable Judge ordered for the custody of the minor to be returned to her parents.

This was not only a victory for justice but also a catalyst for the family's happiness. The Sharma family rejoiced as they hugged their daughter and expressed gratitude to LAS for its support during this time of need.



# JUSTICE SUCCESS STORIES

## Successful Court Annexed Mediation in a Child Maintenance Case

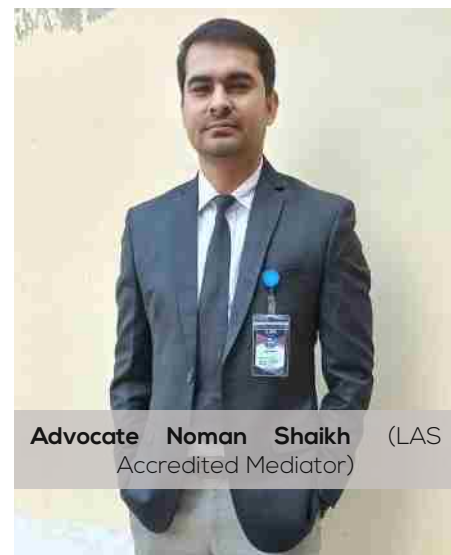
LAS' Community field teams have been actively engaged with marginalized and vulnerable community members, including elderly individuals, women, and children, through awareness sessions. They have also been connecting with stakeholders to refer cases of marginalized individuals for Mediation (mechanism of ADR). Recently, a successful court-annexed mediation was conducted by a LAS Accredited Mediator.

Mr. Jawad\*, a 38-year-old daily wage worker at a salon shop, requested an out-of-court settlement for a child maintenance suit filed by his ex-wife in the Family Court of Larkana. With the consent of the Plaintiff's Advocate, the Honorable Judge of the Family Court referred the matter to the LAS Accredited Mediator **Advocate Noman Shaikh**. Just within two-days' time, through assistance of Advocate Noman, both the complainant and defendant reached a



mutually agreed settlement. The settlement included provisions for a monthly allowance for the defendant's ex-wife to support the five children under her custody.

The Honorable Judge of the Family Court in Larkana later approved the settlement as a decree. This is a perfect example of cost & time-effective dispute resolution of pending disputes, giving ultimate relief to both the parties.



**Advocate Noman Shaikh** (LAS Accredited Mediator)


*\* pseudo name used to conceal the identity of the beneficiary*

Speak to a qualified & high-court registered lawyer - TOLL FREE number:

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