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Insaf network pakistan

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Joint Network Meetings

Dastageer Legal Aid Center, Faisalabad, WSO

#### Introduction and Background

Under “Access to Justice for Vulnerable Populations” project, Dastageer Legal Aid Center (DLAC) has been established in District Faisalabad through the organization “WSO”, since March 2014.

The stakeholders of the project include Rights-based organizations including NGOs/ CBOs, Judiciary, Bar, Law-enforcing agencies like police, government line departments including Social Welfare & Special Education, Education and Health etc.

In order to apprise these departments about the project Joint Networking Meetings of INP in collaboration with DLAC has been planned in the district. The purpose of these meetings is to promote and support developing partnerships and expanding networks among Legal Aid Centers, NGOs, and government line ministries to improve the environment in which legal aid centers operate. District-level local government representatives will also be invited to these meetings to further promote information-sharing, collaboration, and government buy-in. The basic idea is to have collaboration and coordination with Rights based NGOs specifically working on Minorities, Persons with Disabilities and Survivor of GBVs and establishing networking with Justice Institutions for stronger referral mechanism.

#### First Joint Network Meeting (Aug-Sep 2014)

In the quarter July-September 2014 a preliminary meeting was conducted with major stakeholders by visiting their offices in Lahore district. The stakeholders were identified through Referral Directory of the district which included; President and Members of District Bar Association, Social Welfare Department, Rights based NGOs/local CBOs etc. The meeting was arranged by DLAC Sanjog and included team from INP, Center Coordinator and Counselor. Following agenda points were discussed:

* Information about Access to Justice Project
* Facilities provided through DLACs and progress till date
* Role of stakeholders during the project
* Support of stakeholder for DLACs
* Sharing information for next meeting that will be a joint meeting at DLAC office

or other venue

#### Rights Based Organizations (RBOs)

1. **Beacon Foundation for the Visually Challenged People**

The meeting was convened with the following personnel:

1. Rana Yasir Nadeem, President

The organization is working for people who are visually challenged and includes dynamic personalities who themselves have impaired vision. Beacon Foundation is support organization of DLAC, Faisalabad and is working side by side with the center providing support in its activities including linkages with other organizations working on PWD and providing strong referral mechanism.

1. **Human Rights Focus Pakistan (HRFP), Faisalabad**

The meeting was convened with the following personnel:

1. Naveed Walter, President

HRFP has been established in 1994 to work for the promotion and protection of human rights with special focus to religious minorities, women and children. It is also a partner organization of REAT Network Pakistan, working through volunteers and human rights defenders on minority’s rights. HRFP is also a support organization of DLAC, Faisalabad.

During the meeting a recent case at Chak 206 G.B, Tehsil Samundri (District Faisalabad) was discussed whereby on 2nd September, 2014 an incident occurred at Chak 206 G.B near Toriyan Wala and initially FIR (First Information Report) No. 316 under offence 295-C was registered against 55 persons that included 33 Christians, 2 Muslims and 20 unknown persons upon the allegation of damaging the 400-500 graves of the non-functional 200 to 300 years old Muslim’s graveyard.

At that time the legal advisor of INP (Access to Justice Project), Waqas discussed the case with local Pastor who at that time recounted the details and said the case was moving towards reconciliation through alternate dispute resolution and they wanted less intervention of external sources. Upon the intervention of concerned Muslim and Christian leaders, the Police authorities of Samundri amended the charge from 295-C to 297 after accessing the nature of allegation.

HRFP assured of its full cooperation but the center coordinator recounted that not a single case has been referred through HRFP to legal aid center.

1. **SOS Village, Faisalabad**

The meeting was convened with the following personnel:

* 1. Shahid Hamid

#### The SOS Children's Village Faisalabad was opened in 1988 with the support of many local philanthropists donating family homes. During the meeting it was mentioned that there are many instances of women reporting to the village who have been a victim of domestic violence and therefore need shelter for themselves and their children. Currently SOS is working on emergency relief program, vocational training center and rural support programs. In this regard SOS village may serve as a referral point for the DLAC.

#### Government Institutions

1. **District Bar**

The meeting was convened with the following personnel:

1. Tanvir Ahmed Randhva, President
2. Ijaz Ahmed Wahla, Secretary

The President and the Secretary bar was briefed about the project, its scope and update on DLAC. The President District Bar assured of his full cooperation and quoted incidents where he had supported lawyers in provision of legal aid. It was also discussed that there are provisions for free legal aid but the processes are lengthy. The issue of District Legal Empowerment Committees was also discussed along with the funds provided by ADB for the reforms supporting judges and lawyers.

The panel lawyers were also present at the meeting.

1. **Department of Social Welfare**

The meeting was convened with the following personnel:

1. Ch. M. Sultan Balandia, Social Welfare Officer

The focal person was apprised of the project, however while appreciating the efforts of DLAC, he said the department is concerned with issuing certificates of disability. The focal person had attended an initial awareness session conducted by the center.

1. **District Health Office**

The meeting was convened with the following personnel:

1. Dr. Rana Liaqat Ali Khan, DO Health

The DO Health was apprised of the facilities present at the legal aid center Faisalabad, the number and type of cases dealt with and progress so far. He was also explained the purpose of the meeting and future collaboration in this regard.

#### Future Recommended Actions:

* Joint Networking Meetings may be convened on specific issues/topics/ themes and relevant departments invited in those meetings e.g. separately on GBV, PWDs and minorities.
* When a meeting on minorities may be convened representative minority families may be invited to ensure their representation and their awareness so that minority cases may come to DLAC.
* Minutes of the meeting with Directorate of Human Rights to be circulated by DLAC Lahore
* Quarterly one/ two pages update on the activities of the center may be circulated to all its stakeholders whether civil society or government departments. INP may facilitate in this regard.