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Insaf network pakistan

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Joint Network Meetings

Dastageer Legal Aid Center, Jacobabad, MRDO

#### Introduction and Background

Under “Access to Justice for Vulnerable Populations” project, Dastageer Legal Aid Center (DLAC) has been established in District Jacobabad through the organization “MRDO”, since February, 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, 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. **Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Center for Women Development**

The meeting was convened with the following personnel:

1. Khalida Soomro, Head of Center

A crisis center is the first stage of contact for a woman before admission to a shelter. They assess a woman’s needs and the risks she faces. After full assessment, she can get access to legal advisers and counsellors. She is then referred to a shelter, which can be a darul aman, public shelter or a private shelter. There are 17-18 lawyers present at the panel of the crisis center Jacobabad of which 3 are regular. The center is also involved in conducting awareness raising sessions on the rights of women and how these women can protect themselves.

1. **CASWA**

The meeting was convened with the following personnel:

1. Tariq Ali Chandio
2. Riaz Ali Shah
3. Pastor Yusuf Masih
4. Rumina Masih

The organization is working with a mission on prosperity for all. The organization is especially engaged in activities for facilitating persons with disability. A meeting of PWDs was going on where the members said that inspite of their disability they wanted to generate income through their own work and have also applied for government jobs, qualifying the test interview but were not considered for any job.

In addition to PWDs, a discussion on minority rights was also conducted with the Pastor and Ms. Rumina Masih. The district Jacobabad comprises of 25 % of minorities with approximately 120 families residing over there. It was discussed that just as Eid packages for Muslim widow women are announced, similar packages should be provided to Christian widow women on their Eid and Bait-ul-Mal department should facilitate in this process. It was discussed that the relevant department will be consulted and their rules may be thoroughly reviewed as Christian women are citizens of Pakistan. DLAC Jacobabad ensured facilitation of the process. Rumina Masih informed that usually government departments refer the Christians towards their churches for social safety nets.

1. **Community Development Foundation (CDF)**

The meeting was convened with the following personnel:

* 1. Nasrullah Inayat
  2. Saima Gul Mirani, Focal Person for DLAC
  3. Sadia, Liaison Officer

CDF established and registered in the year 2005 as voluntary and social welfare agency in district Jacobabad. CDF works on social mobilization, health care, skills training, relief and humanitarian aid as well as conducting seminars and publishing awareness-raising materials.

The organization is currently involved in Right to Expression, Assembly and Thought (REAT) network and working on minority rights. The organization shared that it has received many cases of forced conversion of Hindu females and kidnapping for forced marriages. Presently the organization is focused on reducing religious extremism in the community.

CDF is support organization of DLAC, Jacobabad and has provided many referral cases to DLAC.

1. **HelpAge**

The meeting was convened with the following personnel:

* 1. Rafique Rehman Soomro, Project Coordinator
  2. Zulfiqar Mastoi

HelpAge organization is specifically focused on senior citizen i.e. 50 plus age, committed to working long-term to improve older people's lives in Pakistan. The senior citizens have been most affected in the past through floods. Currently in coordination with SRSO (Sindh Rural Support Organization) it has been implementing Disaster Risk Reduction project in the district (9 UCs). Additionally the organization has worked with Persons with Disability providing them with wheelchairs, walking sticks, eye camp etc.

The organization has showed willingness to coordinate and collaborate with DLAC and has assured of its complete support in this regard.

1. **SAFWCO**

The meeting was convened with the following personnel:

1. Mehmoodullah, Social Organizer
2. Najma Panwal, Social Organizer
3. Shaista Zia, Admin & Finance Officer

Sindh Agricultural and Forestry Workers Coordinating Organization was launched in 1986 in Sanghar District and has now spread to other neighboring districts as well. The organization envisions sustainable communities achieving economic, social, political and cultural development through indigenous community organizations. In district Jacobabad it is currently working in 4 UCs forming peace groups (10-15) and have identified migration of minority groups within provinces and GBV survivors. As they cannot provide legal aid hence the organization will refer these cases to DLAC. The project has recently been initiated in August 2014.

1. **DEVCON**

The meeting was convened with the following personnel:

1. Mohsin Jamali, Project Manager

An association for rural development, it is currently implementing 03 projects in 6 UCs of Jacobabad. The projects are focused on livelihood, food security and provision of shelters for flood affected people. In this regard around 1400 goats have been provided to vulnerable widows, training on kitchen gardening, provision of agriculture packages (wheat packages including seeds, fertilizer etc.). There are approximately 6000 beneficiaries of the project in district Jacobabad.

The organization has again ensured full cooperation with the legal aid center in its activities.

#### Government Institutions

1. **District Public Prosecutor**

The meeting was convened with the following personnel:

1. Syed Asad Ali Shah, District Public Prosecutor
2. Preetam Das, Assistant Public Prosecutor

The District Public Prosecutor was briefed about the project and given an update on DLAC activities. Mr. Asad Ali Shah was aware about the training provided to the lawyers at Islamabad and discussed in detail about the training. The cases of minorities and GBV were discussed in detail. The DPP assured of his full cooperation for the activities of legal aid center.

The panel lawyers were also present at the meeting.

1. **District & Sessions Judge**

The meeting was convened with the following personnel:

1. Khalid Hussain Shahani, District & Session Judge

District & Session Judge was debriefed about the project and progress of DLAC. The issue of activation of District Legal Empowerment Committee (DLEC) under Law & Justice Commission was discussed whereby the District & Session Judge is the Chairman of the committee. Mr. Khalid Hussain Shahani was of the view that the focus of NGOs should be on provision of basic facilities to the community including clean drinking water, health and sanitation etc. He was explained that the mandate of the organization and Dastageer Legal Aid Center is access to justice and there are other local organizations that are working on the provision of basic needs to the community.

The District & Session Judge specifically mentioned Karo Kari being the major problem in Sindh where even a Kari person may be acquitted by the court but the people will still consider that person Kari.

1. **Law Enforcing Agency**

The meeting was convened with the following personnel:

* 1. Nazar Hussain Khoso, DSP City
  2. Wazir Ali Mangi, Line Officer

Mr. Nazar Hussain Khoso stated that currently Human Rights/ Complaint Cell in Jacobabad police department is under the charge of Ms. Zarina ASI. The complaints are then dealt with and even transportation and security is provided to women victims of GBV. The women are facilitated in terms of provision of lawyers as well.

The DSP assured of full cooperation and coordination for legal aid center.

1. **Department of Social Welfare**

The meeting was convened with the following personnel:

1. Zohra Khoso, Deputy District Officer

Ms. Zohra Khoso mentioned women welfare centers and the certificate of disability issued by the department. The department does not have any data available on PWDs inspite of issuing certificate for disability.

1. **Zakat & Ushr Department**

The meeting was convened with the following personnel:

1. Arbab Ali Lashari, Chairman

The Chairman Zakat & Ushr Department deals with provision of “Guzara Allowance” by ATM cards through Sindh Bank and “Jahez fund (Dowry)”. Upon discussion of the funds/ Eid packages for Christian Widow Women, the chairman was unable to respond and said that it may come under the Bait-ul-Maal department.

#### 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.