



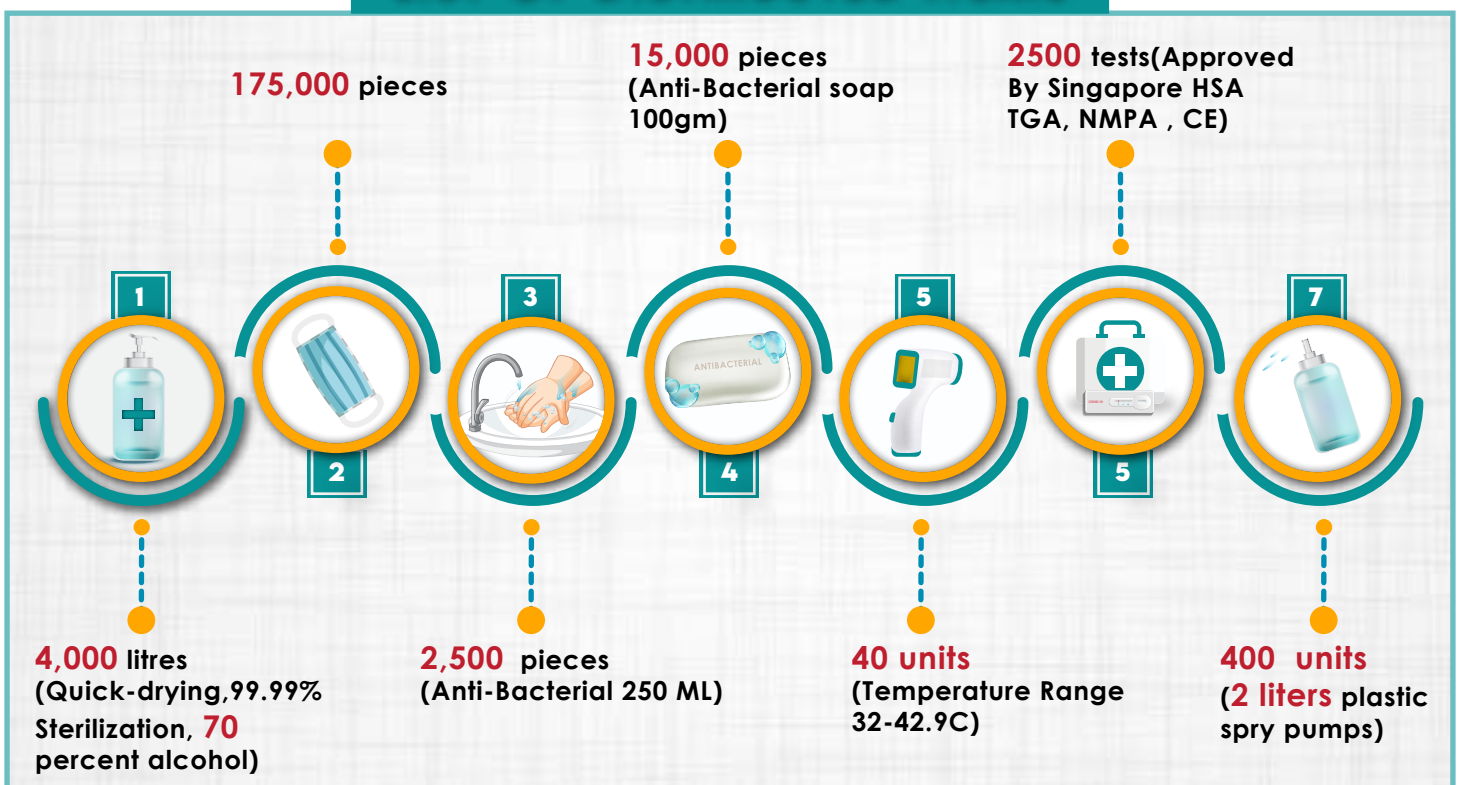
Fighting Covid-19 in Prisons

CWP – LAO, in collaboration with the Legal Aid Society, has provided immediate assistance through provision of essential PPE for prisoners and prison staff. Hand sanitisers, surgical masks, hand gloves, anti-bacterial cleaning liquids and soaps and thermal temperature scanners have been provided to all 24 prison facilities after an extensive needs assessment was conducted to ensure the PPE met the demands from the prisons.

In addition, a strategy for conducting antibody testing was devised to determine the infection rates and immunity level within the prison strata. The deployment of PPE and testing of prisoners was scheduled range wise (Karachi, Hyderabad and Sukkur) along with training sessions for medical staff of prisons. These sessions were used to review existing SOPs and explain the value and limitations of rapid testing. The training sessions were divided into two phases. In the first phase (13 to 15th July 2020), the training covered staff from the four prisons in Karachi i.e. Women Prison, YOIS, Central Prison and District Prison of Malir- covering the Karachi Range. In the second phase, (23rd to 28th July 2020) parallel training sessions were conducted to engage with staff from prisons in the Hyderabad and Sukkur Regions. Each training session was followed by a mini-camp in which Rapid Corona testing was conducted by Nawan Labs and CitiLab/ Advanced Lab. As a result of the mechanism developed between CWP-LAO and the Sindh Prison Department, a total of 2,500 tests were conducted over 3 weeks to map out prevailing rates of infection amongst prisoners and prison staff.



LIST OF DISTRIBUTED ITEMS







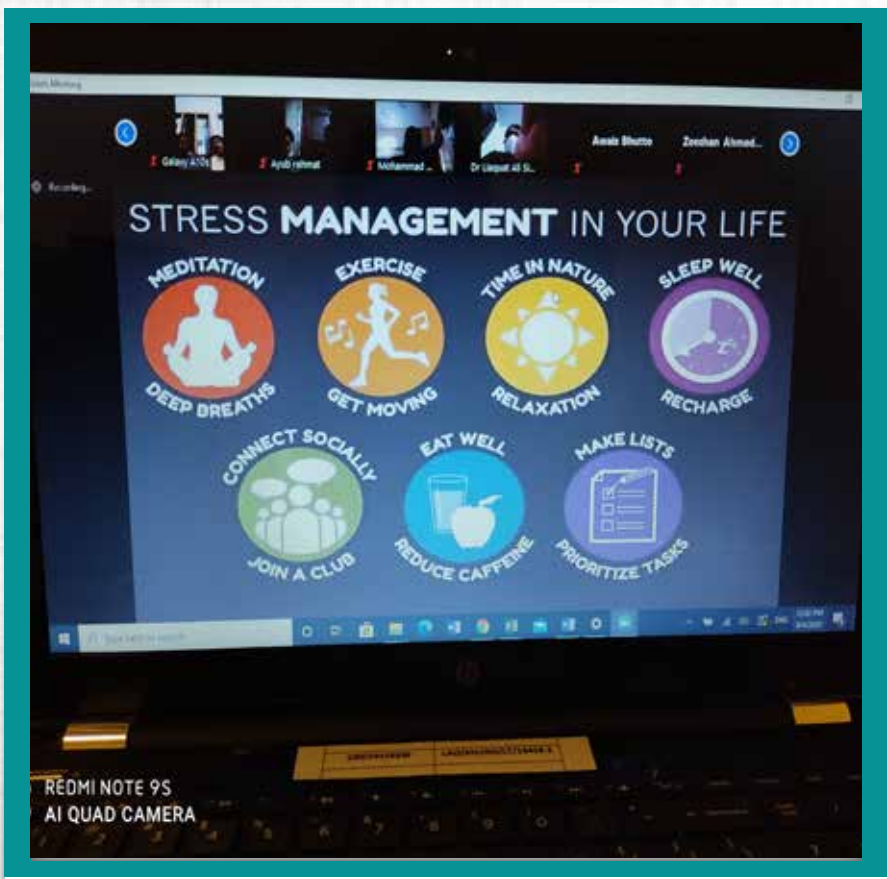


Online Training for Mental Health of Prisoners

Female prisoners that enter prisons represent a population that is at high risk for substance use disorders and mental health problems. This is validated by a growing body of research on the mental health needs of women offenders. One major finding is that incarcerated women are more likely than their male counterparts to report extensive histories of physical, sexual, and emotional abuse (Messina, Burdon, Hagopian, & Prendergast, 2006). Incarcerated women have typically experienced some form of abuse in their lifetime, including sexual abuse, domestic violence, and other physical and psychological forms of abuse. Many correctional systems such as ours are not functioning in a manner whereby they assess and screen for childhood or adult abuse in order to determine effective pathways for treatment during incarceration. The way in which prison staff treat and interact with prisoners can prevent, cause or exacerbate mental ill-health. With the rate of mental health incidents continuing to rise in our community it is more important than ever to ensure our prison staff is better equipped with the skills required to respond more effectively. CWP-LAO; with the support of its tele-health partner Sehat Kahani; organized an online training for sensitization of prison staff on mental health needs of prisoners. Prison staff can play a vital role in the prevention of mental ill-health and can improve the well-being of prisoners as part of their regular work. Whilst staff cannot control the increase in prison population with new jail admissions and through this control those that enter facilities with pre-existing mental health needs, they can be trained and sensitised to prevent others from developing the same issues. In view of this, 25 staff members from the women and juvenile prisons in Karachi and Hyderabad were engaged in a training which highlighted the psychosocial needs of prisoners with mental health conditions, and the challenges they face in communicating with them. The training focused on breaking down the stigma associated with mental ill-health and tried to introduce a framework for developing gender responsive treatment plans and attitudes.

Recovery is not a linear change but a transformation that occurs in deep connection with self and others.

Providing quality mental health services for women in criminal justice settings involves confronting a variety of systemic barriers. Our correctional system has been based on the principles of care, custody and control. It was not designed for the provision of mental health services. As such it is essential to eradicate practices that continue to traumatize and retraumatize prisoners. Providing for the mental health needs of female prisoners involves a gender-responsive approach that includes comprehensive services that take into account the content and context of women's lives. CWP-LAO will continue to work with the Prisons Department to develop programs which consider the fact that a woman cannot be treated successfully in isolation from her social support network.





Annual Progress Meeting

The annual performance review meeting of the CWP-LAO was held on September 10th, 2020 under the chairmanship of Dr. Muhammad Usman Chachar, Additional Chief Secretary, Home Department, Government of Sindh. The meeting was attended by the I.G Prisons, Sindh, DIG Prisons of Hyderabad and Sukkur, Special Secretary Sindh Prisons, Additional Secretary of Women's Development Department and Sectary CWP-LAO.



The Secretary for the CWP, Barrister Haya Emaan Zahid presented the achievements of 2019-2020 as follows:

4,917 male prisoners and **756** female and juvenile prisoners were provided with legal information and advice.

2,231 male prisoners and **299** female and juvenile prisoners were provided with legal representation before courts.

2,076 cases were disposed of through court orders.

1,012 bail applications were filed and granted in favour of prisoners.



Ensuring Menstrual Hygiene in Prisons:

A Collaboration with Santex Pakistan.

Menstrual hygiene products are essential and should be a priority, not an option. The struggle to make menstrual hygiene management accessible is more challenging in the context of prisons where women are many times cut off from contact with their families and are heavily reliant upon the support of the state. This problem needed to be addressed, as menstrual hygiene products are a necessity and should never be treated as a privilege. In view of this challenge, CWP-LAO partnered with Santex Pakistan, a leading company in personal hygiene care, to provide free packs of sanitary napkins to women prisoners in Karachi, Hyderabad, Sukkur and Larkana. The sanitary napkins will be distributed free of cost on a monthly basis in all women prisons. One of the minimum standards specified by the Bangkok Rules is to prohibit financial burdening of prisoners for purchasing menstrual absorbents. CWP-LAO will work with the Prisons Department to ensure that the rights for menstruating populations in prisons can be streamlined along with ensuring improvement in the knowledge, attitude and practice parameters related to menstrual health of prisoners and prison staff.



Distribution in Women Prison Hyderabad



Distribution in Women Prison Larkana



Litigation Progress

The First quarter (1st July to 30th September, 2020)

Our team of dedicated advocates represented **389** clients who have not been able to afford legal counsel:

Disposed of **385** cases of which **222** were acquittals.



In addition **207** individuals were released on bail.



Resumption of Activities in Prisons with SOPs



Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, almost all institutions and organisations have suffered periods of stoppage and slowdowns in work. Specifically, community engagement had come to a standstill. Key Government Departments were shut for public dealings and prison visits were temporarily suspended. In addition to this, family visits for prisoners were also suspended along with recreational activities.



Gradually, the prison department was able to adhere to SOPs to ensure routine medical screenings and testing of prisoners. Isolation wards were set up in all prisons and as the prisons got a handle over the unprecedented nature of the pandemic, working relationships were redefined and re-modelled. CWP-LAO initiated its prisons visits on 17-7-2020 with a new strategy which would ensure remote coordination and fewer visits for collection of Vakalatnamas. In addition, testing of teachers hired for the early learning centres is being conducted twice a month by CWP-LAO and classes have resumed in outdoor space since 24-7-2020 for children of female inmates. Paralegal classes commenced on 8-9-2020 and all efforts are being made to ensure social distancing and safety protocols are being adhered to.



Imprisoned Abroad and Forgotten at Home: Repatriation of Nigerian Prisoner Ms. Sandra.



CWP-LAO arranged for the repatriation of a 32 year old female foreign prisoner from Nigeria, Ms. Sandra. Due to the outbreak of COVID-19, repatriation of foreign prisoners was additionally challenging. However, CWP-LAO continued to advocate for the case of Sandra who was charged and convicted for attempting to smuggle heroin into Pakistan from Nigeria as a result of which she was in prison for 1 year and 8 months at the Women Prison in Karachi. Prison officials requested CWP-LAO for providing assistance and arranging for her ticket and the same was done. Sandra returned to her country on 30th September, 2020.



Success Stories



Advocate Habib Jiskani

Asim is a 27 year old man who was wrongfully charged with murder. He was arrested in April, 2015 and spent 5 years at the Central Prison in Karachi in wait for justice to be served. Asim had no previous criminal record and fell victim to the false charges levelled against him by shop tenants who refused to pay their rental dues to him and his father. Asim belongs to a very poor family and was not in a position to engage a private advocate to fight his case. His father, a retired pensioner, requested the CWP-LAO to provide legal aid in early 2019 after he was referred to the CWP-LAO by Madadgar. **Mr Habib Jiskani** from CWP-LAO took Asim's case and aggressively pursued it in court. A judgment was announced in his favour on 31st August, 2020 pronouncing Asim innocent. Asim was extremely grateful for the zealous advocacy of CWP-LAO on his behalf and plans to restart his life where he left off helping his ageing father and providing for their family.



29 year old **Ali Asghar** was accused by the police of allegedly being in possession of drugs and was confined in the District Prison in Dadu. He came from a poor family and the case against him was fabricated by relatives due to a matrimonial dispute. **Mr. Fahad Dawachh** Advocate of the CWP-LAO represented him successfully and pursued the case examining all witnesses that appeared before the Court. Final arguments were heard on the same date on which the statement of accused was recorded and Ali was acquitted.



Advocate Fahad Dawachh





Success Stories



Advocate Khalid Hussain

30 year old **Shamim** was arrested on charges of theft and was sent to the Women's Prison in Karachi. CWP-LAO's lawyer **Mr. Khalid Hussain Shah** filed her bail application immediately. This was granted with a surety amount of PKR 10,000/- however Shamim was unable to provide a basic address or contact number for any of her family members. Her family had no idea of her whereabouts and had infact registered an FIR fearing that she had gone missing. The CWP-LAO team now faced a challenge of how to find out her relatives or any other contact details. The team devised a strategy based on very limited information we have had. They planned to access all the local cable operators in that area and through their database the team was lucky enough to get a link which led our team to her husband's house. Her surety was submitted by her husband. Her release order has been issued. She is regularly appearing for her hearing in the court and court announced its judgment with the acquittal of accused on 8-7-2020.



Ghullam Qadir is a 40 year old man who was implicated in multiple offences of theft, robbery and intoxication due to caste based enmity with the Rind community. He has 1 daughter and 7 sons who are all minors and depend on his meagre earnings as a small time farmer. He requested CWP-LAO for legal aid and **Mr. Majid Ali** proceeded in his cases on an urgent basis and through his extra efforts ensured witnesses attended hearings. The case was concluded and a first verdict of an acquittal was delivered on one charge on 15-2-2020. Due to COVID-19, judicial work remained suspended however with courts working again Majid has continued to follow up and appear in the cases and the remaining two charges were also addressed through disposal orders on 12-9-2020 resulting in the acquittal of Ghulam Qadir. He is very thankful to the CWP-LAO who appeared for him like a bright flame in his dark life.



Advocate Majid Ali





Noor-ul-Sabah's Journey with CWP-LAO

(Celebrating 15 years)

You started your journey working with CWP-LAO when it was situated inside the Women's Prison in Karachi in 2004. It has been 15 years. Please describe some of your most cherished memories?

I started my professional career at the CWP-LAO in 2004. Today I am the litigation team lead for Karachi Women's Prison. Initially, the scope of the Prisoners' Welfare Committee was only limited to the women and juvenile prisons. As a lawyer, I am proud of my involvement in the prison services headed by Justice Nasir Aslam Zahid. During my fifteen years of service, I did not differentiate between myself and the women prisoners. I gained their trust as a woman first and then as human rights defender. Every moment of my life is memorable and presents cherished memories when I am able to assist deserted underprivileged women seek justice. During my 15 years of professional career, I have successfully represented women and facilitated with over 250 acquittals.



Advocate Noor-us-Saba

You also play a leading role in educating prisoners on their legal rights. How important is it to conduct legal literacy initiatives for prisoners and what meaning does the prison paralegal program have for you?



The women prisoners are typically from marginalized and disadvantaged sectors of society. Most are likely to have suffered particularly from discrimination and abuse before imprisonment. They are less likely to have been employed than men at the time of imprisonment. Most of the females who are incarcerated commit heinous crimes after being the victim of domestic violence and being abused by husbands. We guide them on their foremost rights and the protections that the law provides for them as citizens. We spread awareness regarding legal rights through our legal services, legal awareness clinics and the convict led paralegal program which uses literate trained convicts for this work. Women prisoners' vulnerability in the criminal justice system can be tackled and addressed by empowering them with information about their legal rights, by enabling their access to lawyers or paralegal services. I have trained a lot of convicts and UTPS women prisoners through the Prison Paralegal Program.



Can you describe what humane and sensitized lawyering means to you and how it differs from more mainstream practices?

“

There is a big difference between fighting a case of a common criminal and fighting the case of a vulnerable female in our society. Prisons have different world conditions. The great achievement of the lawyers of the CWP-LAO is to gain the trust of prisoners as we routinely visit the prisons and will be available no matter what. Having the necessary empathy in you to hear the concerns, frustrations and struggles of the prisoners is what is the main difference

”

You have helped hundreds of prisoners in being released from prisons. Share some stories that have left an impact on you more than others?

“

I have seen the lives of many women change since I started work here. Either they lose their confidence and belief or they become so strong that they are ready to face any difficult situation with renewed energy. Seeing women reinvigorated and revived with a sense of hope is what the real success feels like.

One convicted woman Naila had been incarcerated for ten years at the Women’s Prison in Karachi under the charge of kidnapping for ransom. Despite her abandonment and challenges, Naila continued to fight for her rights. In prison, she participated in several activities including both recreational and capacity building activities. These have included parlour training, stitching, computer training and our own Paralegal classes. Women such as Naila help us to stay motivated and and continue to work for the betterment of marginalized women.

”

HEAD OFFICE

Spanish Homes,
Mezzanine Floor,
Plot No. 13/A
DHA, Phase 1, Karachi

FACEBOOK

@LegalAidOfficePakistan

PHONE

+92-021-35390133,
+92-021-35390135
Fax +92-21-99266015
SLACC 0800-70806

WEBSITE

www.lao.org.pk

EMAIL

info@lao.org.pk
laocpkhi@hotmail.com

