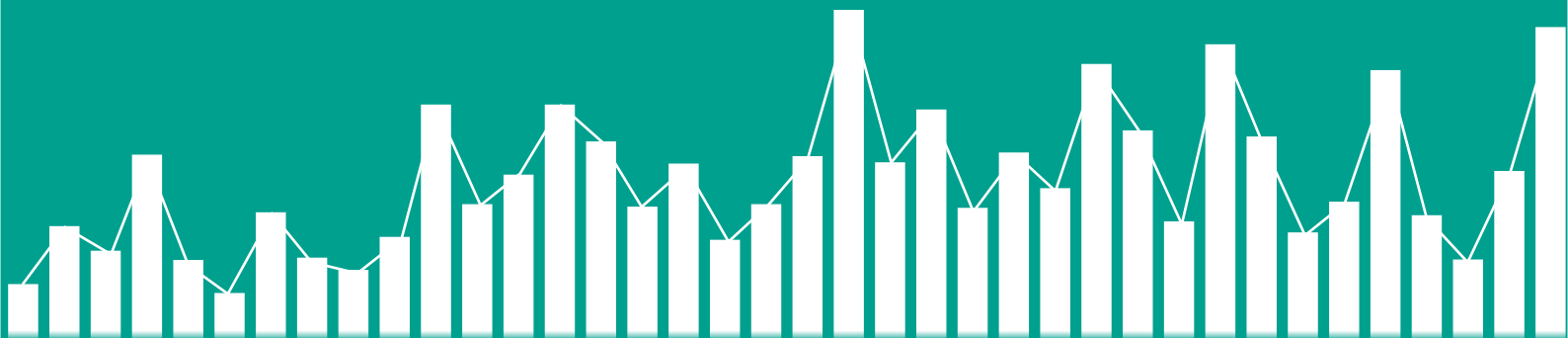


Best Practices
Punjab's
Women Helpline

1043



Punjab Commission
on the Status of Women



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Contents

Acronyms	iii
Acknowledgements	iv
Foreword	v
Introduction to Punjab Commission on The Status of Women	vi
Background	01
The Context	02
Global Best Practices	04
PCSW Helpline 1043	07
Helpline Overview	08
Best Practices, Challenges & Conclusion	14
Best Practices	15
Success Stories	19
Challenges	20
Conclusion	21
Annex	22

Acronyms

ADP	Annual Development Programme
DFID	Department for International Development
GBV	Gender Based Violence
GMIS	Gender Management Information System
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
NCSW	National Commission on the Status of Women
PCSW	Punjab Commission on the Status of Women
PGPR	Punjab Gender Parity Report
P&DD	Planning and Development Department
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SNE	Schedule of New Expenditure
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
VAW	Violence against Women

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The Punjab Commission on the Status of Women (PCSW) acknowledges the support of the Government of Punjab in recognizing the importance of the Helpline 1043. The support of UNFPA and UK AID in developing the Helpline 1043 is also appreciated. PCSW would like to extend its deepest gratitude to everyone who assisted in the development of this report, especially Ms. Omaira Chaudhry and the Helpline team for offering invaluable support.

Foreword



**Ms Fauzia Vigar,
Chairperson,
PCSW**

Punjab Commission on the Status of Women is strongly committed to promoting gender equality, ending gender-based violence and advancing interventions that enhance women empowerment. In line with this commitment, the Punjab Women's Helpline was set up in August 2014 to serve as a platform for support on social, economic and legal issues by providing information, and in case of complaints resolving problems through active coordination and follow up with relevant Government authorities. The Helpline has proven itself as a beacon of hope for women and girls in Punjab, especially in backward and remote regions, where it is ever so difficult for them to raise their voice.

The number of calls received by the Helpline is rapidly increasing over time, since women have begun to actively use the Helpline and register their complaints against state organizations and individuals, reflecting its imperative nature in bringing to light issues that may have otherwise gone unnoticed. These include complaints regarding domestic violence, inheritance and property related disputes, sexual harassment and sexual violence against women, as well as bureaucratic hurdles in registering FIRs or getting officials to cooperate.

Punjab Women's Helpline is an important and necessary service which has since inception been instrumental in provision of recourse for victimised women. With its full-time dedicated staff including legal experts, the Helpline has clearly proven to be a best practice in empowerment of women, one that I see expanding unremittingly in outreach and that I hope will be a model for replication in other provinces in Pakistan.

Punjab Commission on the Status of Women

The Punjab Commission on the Status of Women ("PCSW") is a statutory, autonomous institution established in February 2014 under the Punjab Commission on the Status of Women Act, 2014 for the promotion of women's rights. After the 18th Amendment, policy areas related to the development and empowerment of women were transferred to the provinces. The Women Development Department and, subsequently, PCSW was set up and conceived as an oversight body. PCSW ensures that laws, policies and programs of the Government of Punjab (GoPB) promote women's empowerment; that efforts are made for expansion of opportunities for socio-economic development of women, and discrimination against women is eliminated.

PCSW's functions include reviewing laws, rules, policies and programs of the government to ensure gender sensitivity; providing redress; and monitoring implementation of women-related laws and policies for the achievement of gender equality and elimination of discrimination. PCSW is represented in all 9 divisions of Punjab through its Members and Divisional Coordinators. For the purposes of providing redress to women victims of violence, PCSW has the power to investigate instances of violence against women, as vested in Civil Courts under the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908.

PCSW also provides periodical feedback and status updates on international instruments affecting women and girls, including the Convention on Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), the Convention against Torture, International Labour Organization (ILO) Conventions, and the Convention on Rights of the Child.



Background

The Context

In recent years there have been considerable advances in gender equality in Pakistan. Pakistani women today have increased access to health and education services, and are better represented in Parliament with about a fifth of parliamentary seats. As a signatory to the international treaties and conventions like the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1979, the United Nation's Beijing Declaration of 1995, the International Convention on Population and Development (1994) and 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Pakistan's government recognizes that any and all progress needs to be based on the principle of equity.

The Government of Pakistan, has introduced many pro-women laws and policies and set up institutions to safeguard the interests of women. Laws to prevent honour killings and rape were passed in 2016 to ensure punishment for perpetrators of heinous crimes; and considerable investments were made to improve women's access to education and health.

However, Pakistan remains one of the lowest performers in the South Asia region on human development indicators. Significant progress is crucial for Pakistani women to fully access their rights, participate in the labour force and empower themselves to be full partners in development. As per the World Economic Forum's (WEF) Global Gender Gap Report 2017, Pakistan ranks 143 out of 144 countries in the gender inequality index, way behind Bangladesh and India which rank 47th and 108th respectively. One in two Pakistani women who have experienced violence never sought help or told anyone about the violence they had experienced. Almost 32 percent of women have experienced physical violence in Pakistan and 40 percent of ever-married women have suffered from spousal abuse at some point in their life¹.

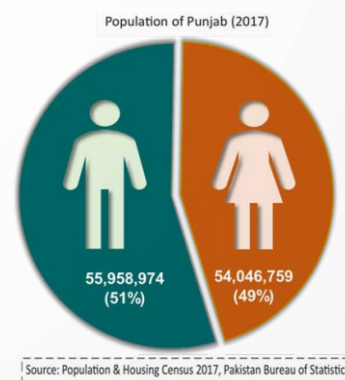
Almost half of Punjab's population, comprises of women. Despite progress women remain socially and economically vulnerable. In 2017, the female (labour force participation rate (LFPR), at 27.8 percent is considerably lower than the male LFPR at 69.4 percent in Punjab. Social gender norms

restrict women's mobility and participation, especially in public life, limiting their choices and emphasizing reproductive roles. Principles of inheritance and descent also are patrilineal.

The Government of Punjab (GoPb) recognizes its strong commitment to working towards women's empowerment and removing barriers that prevent women from advancing in the socioeconomic and political sphere. The recently promulgated pro-women laws represent a positive development in the strategic plan to materialize the goal of women's empowerment. Moreover, government policies such as the Punjab Women Empowerment Packages and Initiatives of 2012, 2014, 2016 and 2017 have been introduced to embed a gendered component into the public sector. In line with its efforts to mainstream women in society, the GoPb has established the Punjab Commission on the Status (PCSW), that is reflective of this commitment of the government to promote empowerment of women.

In Punjab, as per the Women Gender Parity Report 2018, there was 21.5 percent increase in reported cases of violence against women in 2017 as compared to 2016. In 2017 alone, 28,923 calls were received by the police, in which complainants reported domestic violence (15,698), harassment (4,063), threatening phone calls (2,033), sexual assault (549), rape (192) and child molestation (40). Of the cases decided, 315 resulted in convictions and 6,904 cases resulted in acquittals, usually due to lack of forensic evidence

or resiling of witnesses. Amid inadequate implementation of laws that support women, and inadequate institutional mechanisms, the question arises that when a woman faces violence, discrimination, harassment, and injustice, where is she to go? Who does she talk to? Recognizing this



¹ The Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey 2012-2013

gap, PCSW introduced the Punjab Women Helpline service 1043, an accessible service to provide women and girls the confidential support and information they need at the time that they need it. It is a trusted and accessible gateway for women and girls to find the much-needed next level of support.

The idea of a helpline builds on a concept well established in other fields of social care and describes a service that provides listening and emotional support as well as information to assist users with issues they may encounter in their lives. Women and girls all over the world contact helplines to express their fears, worries, thoughts, and concerns, because helplines are easy to access, safe, secure, trustworthy and free of charge.

In Pakistan, while non- government organizations are operating helplines for support of women victims of violence, these are restricted geographically to a few districts and in their access to government facilities/ services. The PCSW Helpline was set up in August 2014 to empower women across Punjab by providing a platform to women for support on economic, social and legal issues through information, referrals to relevant departments and opportunities within the

Government. Through the Helpline, a system of referrals was established for support of women victims.

The PCSW Punjab Women Helpline is one innovative intervention to promote women's empowerment and raise awareness about women rights, in the context of a weak social protection system for women. The Toll-free Helpline 1043 has proven to be an effective instrument for providing an avenue to women for reporting State inaction and discriminatory policies/practices, especially to women who have mobility and access problems due to their remote locations as well as enabling trends analysis with reference to violence against women (VAW). Additionally, the robust data collection, management and analysis of the Helpline has been effective for advocacy and outreach.

PCSW aims to establish best practice by expanding the legal and counselling scope of services of the existing Helpline. The main rationale for documenting "best practices" is to share this experience with others keen on providing similar services to enable women to realize their rights and seek redressal and support survivors of gender-based violence.

Global Best Practices

Violence against women and girls is one of the most prevalent human rights violations in the world. It knows no social, economic or national boundaries, affecting women of all ages, races, ethnicities, and religions.

Helplines are crucial drivers of system transformation to fill critical gap in countries where women protection systems are non-existent or weak. Many countries have introduced toll-free helplines for victims of human rights violations. The guidance and experience of the best practices of helplines are vital roadmaps and should be socialised at the regional level, to optimise resources and minimize failures. Key features of some of the more successful helplines, which have relevance to the PCSW toll-free Helpline are summarized below.

USA

The National Domestic Violence Hotline, SAFE (7233), has been exploring new ways to provide services via digital channels – through live chat. The live chat is one of the most robust digital channels offering confidential, one-on-one chat session with a Hotline advocate. The staff is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and users can get information in more than 170 buttons found on each page of the website, the Hotline staff can connect to shelters and services in the neighborhood.

Kenya

Healthcare Assistance Kenya (HAK) operates the only and the first ever Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) Rapid Response Call Centre which is manned 24 hours and runs the national Toll-Free GBV Helpline run by male and female volunteer tele-counsellors, enabling men, women, boys, and girls who suffer domestic violence to access quick GBV services such as prevention of infections such as HIV.

The main aim of HAK's helpline is to help survivors access quick GBV services on a referral basis through confidential SMS system. It also provides the various GBV stakeholders (Government, Civil Society, and UN agencies) with an opportunity to improve their coordination, elaborate further on ways for clear referral and

develop SGBV preventative messages which are transmitted during the election period.

South Africa

The Department of Social Development's Gender-Based Violence Command Centre (GBVCC)– a 24-hour call centre dedicated to providing support and counselling to victims of gender-based violence. It uses mobile technology to estimate the location of a victim, assign the closest social worker in the field to the case, and record and receive continuous feedback on the case. The Centre is also staffed by trained social workers/command center agents who provide immediate counselling to victims and help them to avoid or minimise further exposure to gender-based violence.

When a caller contacts the GBVCC from a mobile phone, they are (with explicit permission) geographically located, enabling the Centre to determine the resources nearest to the caller,

whether it be a social worker, a police station, a hospital or safe house. In this way, help is dispatched in quick fashion.

Messages for help can be sent from mobile phones to specific numbers, requesting a call back (Please Call Me) or Help or to Skype HelpMeGBV.

Nepal

At a World Bank organized Violence Against Women Hackathon, innovators got together to find

IT-based innovative solutions to address GBV in Nepal. The National Women Commission in Nepal, with the help of the Hackathon winner, has established a 24-hour toll-free helpline to provide support to survivors of GBV. Anyone can call in and anonymously report their own incident, or even an incident they have witnessed, to receive coordinated and sustained support. The helpline allows GBV supporters to register their complaints, and also connects them to the service providers, including the Nepal Police, One-Stop Crisis Management Center, and civil society organizations (CSOs) that provide shelter, healthcare, legal aid and psycho-social counselling. This integrated helpline also has an online Case Management System (CMS) that uses technology to register, manage, and track cases referred to service providers. By storing the details of the incident, the CMS eliminates the need for the survivor to recount the incident on every visit, reducing the risk of re-victimization of the survivor.

Turkey

A state-run hotline provides services not only to survivors of VAW but to all survivors of violence in the family, including disabled and elderly people, children, and martyrs' families. Legal provisions, allowing authorities to emit restraining and protection orders in situations of immediate danger, exist; they order the perpetrator of the domestic violence to leave the residence of the victim or they prohibit the perpetrator to enter the residence of the victim or endangered person or to contact her. The law also provides for financial assistance by the State, as well as alimony and sole access to the joint residence. It ensures that the survivors have free access to rehabilitation and treatment, as well as healthcare insurance.

Mali

To provide appropriate measures to combat and prevent gender-based violence in Mali and, in particular, to reduce the risk of this calamity

escalating during crisis and post-crisis situations, UN Women—working in partnership with the National Police of Mali—launched a hotline to provide support for women and girls experiencing gender-based violence.

The toll-free hotline is available country-wide and around the clock. Operated by police officers, it fields emergency calls and reports of gender-based violence. The emergency calls are immediately passed on to the police station nearest to the victim for appropriate investigation and judicial procedures. Situations are also often referred to another partner, the Association for the Defence of Women's Rights in Mali (APDF). It provides holistic support to survivors of gender-based violence, including legal assistance and economic reintegration through income-generating activities.

To ensure the quality of the care and service provided by operators, training police officers and hotline operators, their supervisors and other professionals involved, in gender concepts and gender-based violence is provided.

India

There are many public and privately-operated helplines catering to women in conflict and extend help to those requiring legal intervention in India.

"Legal provisions, allowing authorities to issue restraining and protection orders in situations of immediate danger, exist; they order the perpetrator of the domestic violence to leave the residence of the victim or they prohibit the perpetrator to enter the residence of the victim." - Turkey

Almost every state has its own 'State Commission for Women' that runs a helpline for women to exclusively cater to victims of sex trafficking, domestic violence or sexual

harassment. Upon complaint, the commission will then inform local police, collector or women and child development (WCD) officer to intervene and assist the complainant. In the helpline, a victim will get her token number by the message that will be registered on an online database for state government or complainant to track. The offender against whom the complaint is registered will receive either an e-mail or message about the complaint. Besides women, the helpline also gets calls from the elderly who are being harassed at home or lose their way somewhere in the city.

Canada

The Assaulted Women's Helpline offers free, 24-hours, 7-days-a-week crisis counselling, emotional support, information, and referrals via telephone to women in up to 200 languages-completely anonymous and confidential. Moreover, the helpline provides comprehensive services to Deaf, Deaf-Blind victims/survivors and hard of hearing women through the use of TTY line. Relay Operators facilitate phone/internet "calls" between people who are Deaf or have hearing or speech disabilities and other individuals. Hotline advocates are prepared to both receive and place these calls.

Bangladesh

A National Helpline established under the Multi-Sectoral Programme on Violence against Women (MSPVAW) of the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, Bangladesh, delivers psycho-social counselling support for women and children.

The helpline communicates the messages and requests to the local authorities and agencies both at district and upazila level through SMS, e-mail, and fax for support. Not only that, the online platform provides interaction between the victims and other professionals (doctor, counsellor, lawyer, DNA expert, research officer and police officer).



PCSW Helpline 1043

Helpline Overview

The PCSW Act 2014, Section 9 (2)(b) states 'the commission may inquire into any complaint of violation of women's right, call report from authorities & make appropriate recommendations for action to the concerned agency.' In order to discharge this function, PCSW operates Toll Free Helpline 1043 since 2014 to provide awareness, guidance, and redress to aggrieved women. This 24/7 toll-free service helps women register complaints regarding official inaction, obtain advice concerning their fundamental rights, and inquire about their rights in marriage, divorce, inheritance, criminal offences, domestic violence, harassment, employment, harmful traditional practices, financial support, political violence or any other issues.

Statistics of Helpline August 2014 to June 2018



The Helpline started functioning as an Government of Punjab, Annual Development Programme (ADP)²(at a total cost of Rs.29 million, with co-funding provided by Enhanced Democratic Accountability and Citizen Engagement project (EDACE) of the United Kingdom Foreign and Commonwealth Office with a gestation period of 15 months which ended on 30th June 2016. After which, Women Development Department, GoPb, supported this project from the allocated ADP budget. The Helpline ² (at a total cost of Rs.29 million, with co-funding provided by Enhanced

"Helpline has given Voice to the women. The concerns which they were not able to discuss with their families or neighbours, they can do that by just calling the Helpline 1043 and talk with the CSR." – Helpline Legal Executive

Democratic successfully proved to serve as an efficient resource and guiding tool for the women of Punjab. Hence, in the light of the directions of Planning and Development Department (P&DD), Schedule of New Expenditure (SNE) of the scheme 'Toll-Free Women's Helpline' was submitted to shift Helpline from Development to the Non-Development side to ensure its permanence. After Government of Punjab's critical evaluation of the Helpline by the DG M&E, regularization was immediately recommended. The Helpline since July 2016 is continually operational without any break.

² Annual Development Program (ADP) represents a key policy instrument for implementing development vision of the government through strategic resource allocation with a medium-term perspective.

The main objectives of the Helpline are as under:

- 1** To empower women all over Punjab and to enhance their economic, social and legal status by providing them a platform where they can call to get information, discuss their issues and get help.
- 2** To serve as one window for complaint redressal regarding women empowerment from departments of government of Punjab, district coordination offices, district police officers and other concerned.
- 3** To provide access to government facilities to women from remote areas and from their homes.
- 4** To reduce workplace harassment, acid throwing cases, property deprivation, job discrimination, social injustice and legal barriers for the women of Punjab through increasing awareness of available support system.

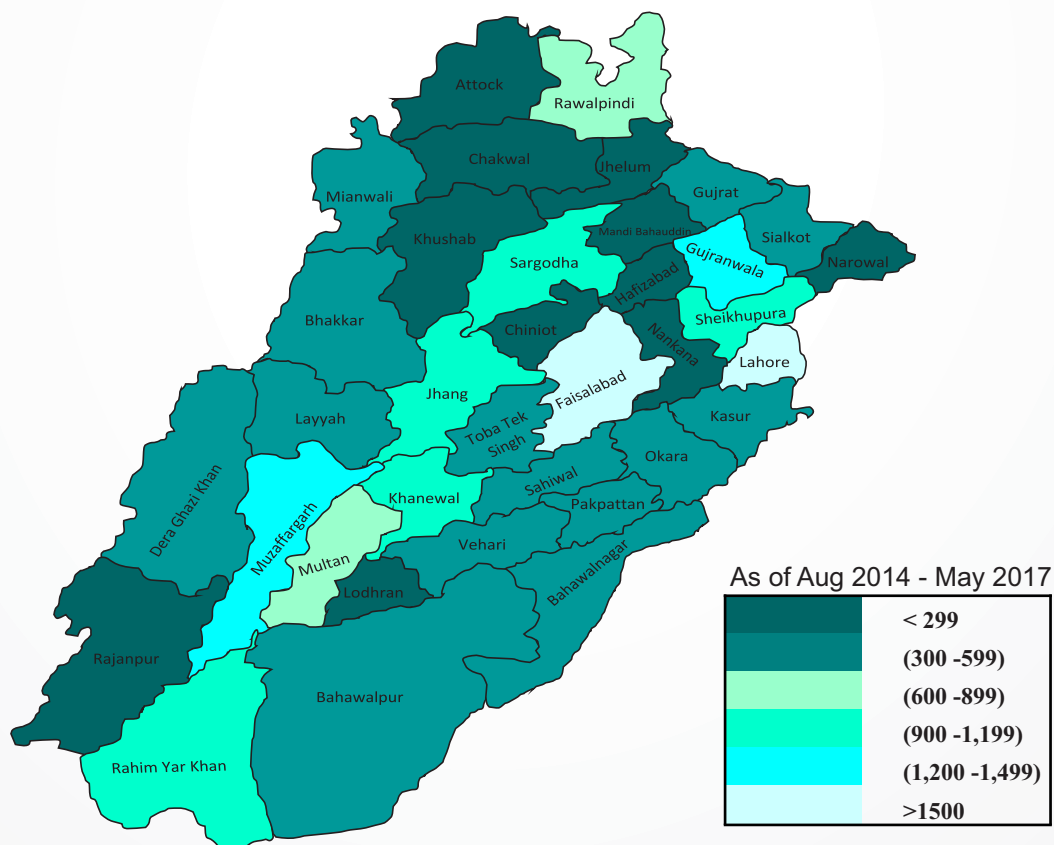
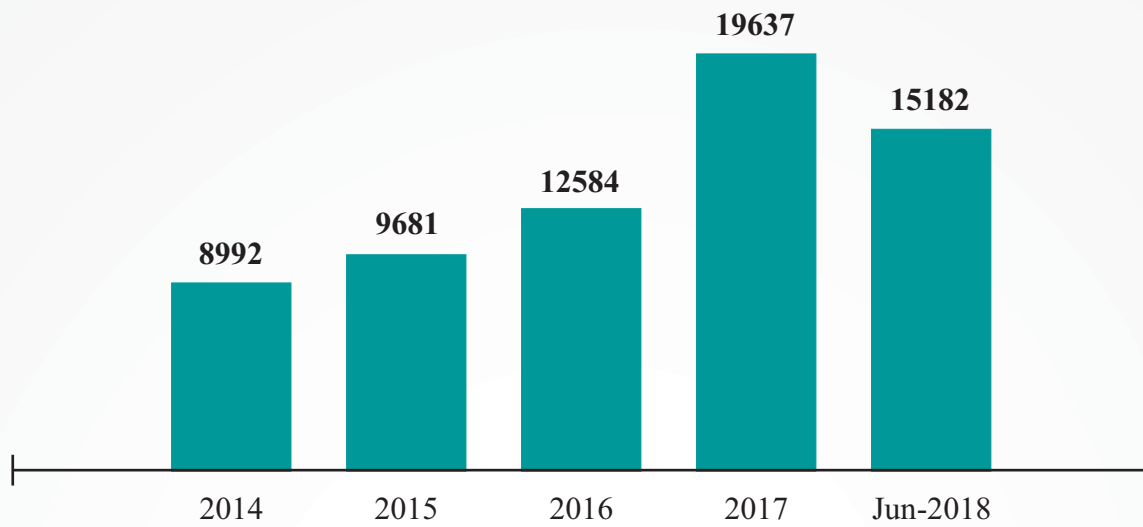
The Helpline serves as a comprehensive repository of information related to women's rights and Government initiatives, as well as recent pro-women laws that protect women from psychological, physical and sexual violence. Through the Helpline, women are advised about all legal options regarding their issues and are referred to the concerned government departments for redressal as per law and procedure. Although not a direct redressal mechanism per se, the Helpline provides an avenue for disciplinary action against official authorities, including but not limited to, the police and other government departments/services.

To date, the Helpline has addressed 75,128 inquiries to the satisfaction of callers, with the number of inquiries increasing over the years (as shown in the figure below). This is indicative of the success of increased awareness efforts, including awareness calls and advertisement campaigns to publicise Punjab Women's Helpline (1043).

"When we know our rights, we can fight against the destructive cultural norms that fuel gender inequality. Before the Helpline, the girls were unaware of their fundamental rights. Now just by calling the Helpline 1043, they are now more aware." – Helpline caller

The number of inquiries received from different districts varies and could indicate varying population numbers or demographic compositions. For instance, the districts of Lahore and Faisalabad had more than 1,500 inquiries between August 2014 and June 2018, as shown in the figure below. This could be a result of a larger proportion of urbanized populations or higher population overall, increased awareness and increased the propensity of the population to educate themselves about their legal and civil rights.

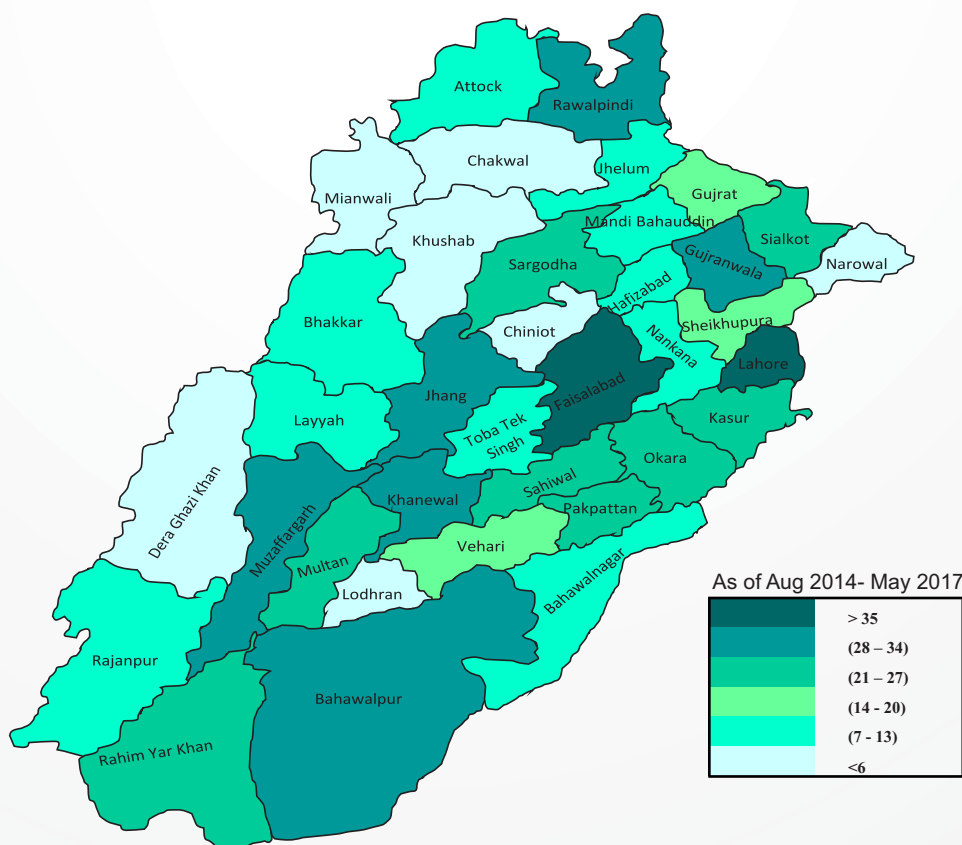
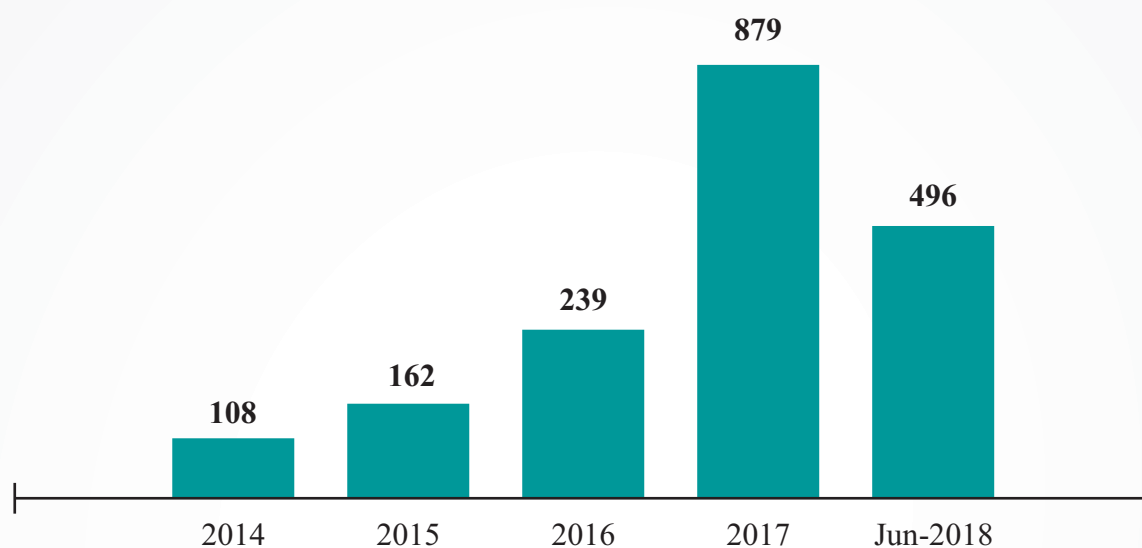
of Inquiries Received



As of June 2018, the number of complaints received as compared to in 2016, witnessed an upsurge. While this may indicate that there were more crimes committed against women, it may also show that there is increased awareness regarding rights and redressal mechanisms in the province. Cumulatively, the complaints against criminal offences are the highest in number (573), followed by violence/torture (432) and property matters (235).

The figure below shows the district-wise distribution of complaints implying that Lahore and Faisalabad have the highest number. This is not necessarily reflective of a higher incidence of violence, harassment and/or other related issues but may well depict that the Helpline has higher outreach and impact in these districts

of Complaints Received



How the Helpline works

At first blush, implementing a helpline may seem to be a simple endeavor, but planning an effective reporting process can be quite complex. It must adequately protect the confidentiality of anonymous callers while providing quality information. A modern helpline project requires planning regarding how information is received, how information is distributed, and how records of complaints and investigations are maintained.

PCSW operates 24/7 Toll Free Helpline 1043 since 2014 to address inquiries and complaints on workplace harassment, domestic violence, property disputes, inheritance rights, skill development, and various other economic and social issues.

The helpline services are managed through a call-center that has international recognition and uses technology to ensure efficient delivery of services as well as maintaining an MIS and database. Operational at the provincial level it is linked effectively to government offices and facilities in a structured manner.

Complaints can be lodged by calling the Helpline at 1043, submitting an online application on PCSW's website (www.pcsw.punjab.gov.pk) or through a postal service, and by walking into PCSW's Secretariat in Lahore, and meeting Helpline officials.

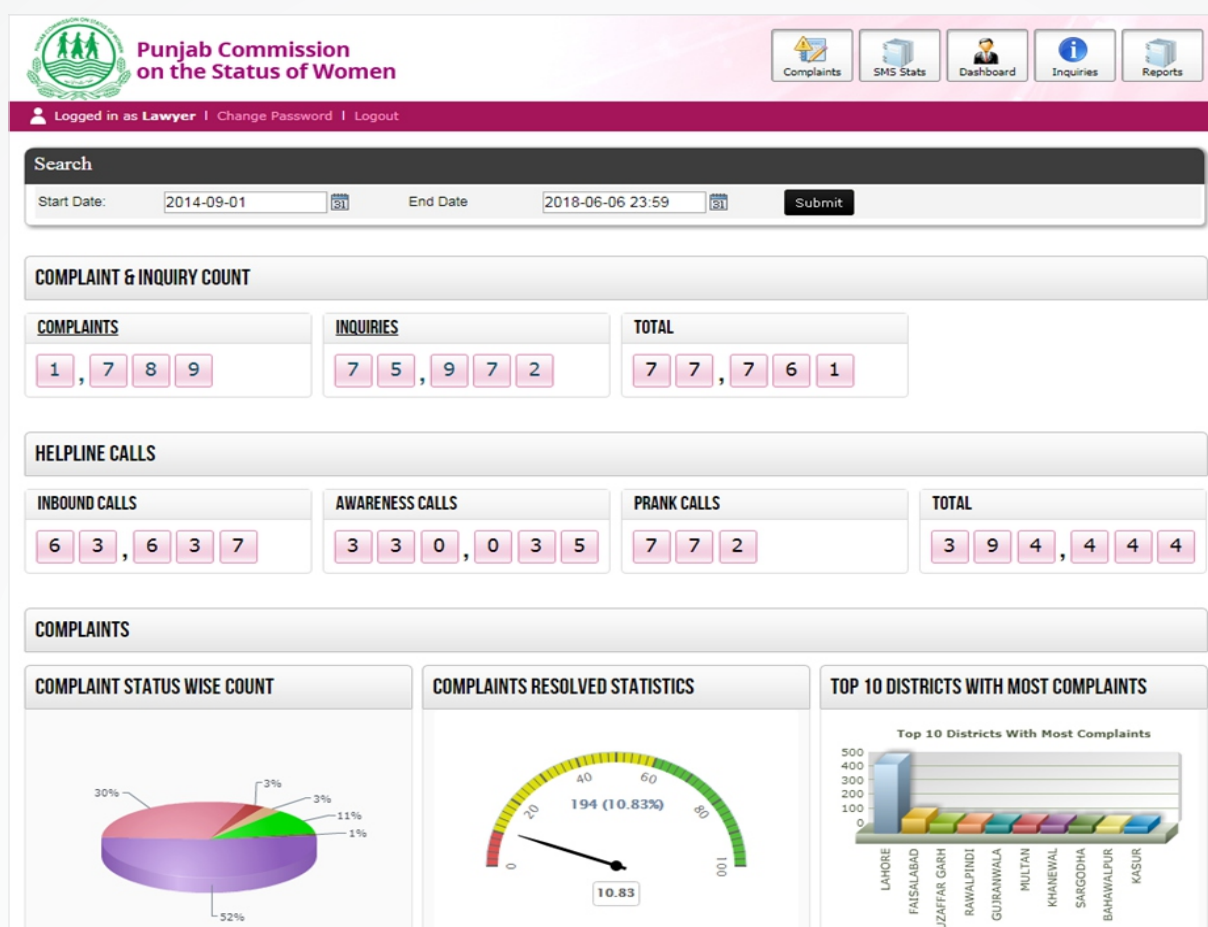
These complaints are handled by a professionally trained team of one senior lawyer, two women lawyers, 12 women call agents/ customer service representative (5 call agents at morning shift, 4 call agents at evening shift and 2 call agents at night shift, affording women the opportunity to talk comfortably about their case, and often share personal information regarding their case.

The online complaint management system is a unique, highly interactive, and live monitoring system that is linked with the relevant monitoring authorities such as the deputy commissioner officer, respectively. The complaint dashboard ensures effective and efficient data capture of all calls pertaining to inquiries and complaints. It displays the visual status of the exact number of the inbound calls disaggregated by districts, types of inquiries and complaints, and hourly call analytics in real time. When a complaint is generated, a specific complaint number is assigned to each complaint with the date. Once a complaint is lodged, PCSW initiates the redressal by engaging with concerned government bodies for speedy resolution of the complainant's grievance.

To maintain professional integrity in the Helpline's operations, a number of measures are in place to guide operators and monitor all aspects of their performance. These protocols are incorporated in a comprehensive PCSW SOPs Manual (See Annex 1), as well as in other guidelines that may be communicated by PCSW to the Helpline staff from time to time. To ensure that all callers' personal data and other material documented in the form of case files and audio recordings remain confidential, the Helpline staff follows strict protocols. Sensitive information which may, directly or indirectly, jeopardize the position of the female complainant/caller, is only accessible after official approval of Chairperson, PCSW.

At the time of recruitment, all new staff members are required to undertake a new hire training, specifically





designed to disseminate basic guidelines on customer service. All trainees are thoroughly briefed on telephone etiquette and provided instructive material to improve their individual communication skills as well as time-management and multi-tasking abilities. Moreover, the Helpline call agents/CSR are regularly trained by legal professionals to ensure they remain up-to-date with the most recent developments in the law with respect to rights of women in cases of marriage, divorce, custody, inheritance, harassment, and violence

The Helpline staff has also developed a 'Resource Directory' that is a compendium of information and a helping tool for the helpline call agents CSRs. It is a combination of unique information about the departments, institutions of the Punjab, government, semi-government as well as private organizations at district and tehsil level. Information consists of contact details, initial info about their role and functions of the departments. Call agents during calls handling use this directory for their own help to guide the caller as per their respective query/s.

In addition, to providing guidance and redressal, the Helpline team also proactively creates awareness among the public through outbound awareness calls. Another crucial part of the Helpline is the media outreach strategy which includes Whatsapp and SMS messaging, public awareness sessions, advertising of the Helpline on rickshaws, newspaper and mass print advertising, and promotional campaigning on social media and the PCSW website.

"The women and girls have little or no knowledge about their rights and most of the time do not know how to proceed when something goes wrong and requires legal intervention, thus Helpline aims to fill this void in the need for legal help." – **Helpline CSR**

Best Practices, Challenges & Conclusion

Best Practices

The Punjab's toll-free women helpline 1043 is a landmark project of PCSW. It is an essential service which has since inception been instrumental in empowering women of Punjab, informing them of their rights and providing support. Documenting the Helpline as a best practice affords the opportunity to share and disseminate the experience and knowledge gained widely.

This section presents details on practices which have been tested, validated and have been proven to work well and produce good results. The Toll-Free Punjab Women Helpline is recommended as a model, which has proved to be a very effective as a tool for monitoring violations of rights and remove discrimination against women which ranges from physical to emotional and financial abuse.

Presence of Legislation/statutory law

An Act or a legislation is crucial for protecting people from discrimination and harassment. It sends a powerful message that violence, discrimination or harassment on the basis of gender is unacceptable. As per its mandate in section 9 (2) of the PCSW Act, "monitor the mechanism and institutional procedure for redressal of violation of women's rights", enabled PCSW through its helpline to effectively provide redress to complainants who have been victimized in any way.

Pro-active and close collaboration with the Government

Helpline started functioning as a ADP Scheme at a total cost of Rs.29 million with initial financial support from Enhanced Democratic Accountability and Citizen Engagement project (EDACE) of the United Kingdom Foreign and Commonwealth Office. After which, Women Development Department, GoPb, supported this project from the allocated ADP budget. The Helpline successfully proved to serve as an efficient resource and guiding tool for the women of Punjab. Hence, in the light of the directions of P&D, after the evaluation by the DG M&E, SNE of the scheme 'Toll Free Women's Helpline' was submitted to shift Helpline from Development to Non-Development side to ensure its permanence.

After Government of Punjab's critical evaluation of the Helpline, regularization was immediately recommended. It is pertinent to mention here that

the Helpline since July 2016, is continually operational without any break. Hence, a more proactive and supportive attitude from the competent authorities is recognised. This made it easier to get buy-in and the financial support for the running of the helpline.

Outsourcing to experienced organization for project execution and management of the Helpline

Implementing a helpline service can be an expensive and time-consuming endeavor. Instead of setting up a call center, the PCSW identified relevant organizations offering such services and the initial the call center service contract was awarded to international company, IBEX Global and later to Mindbridge Pvt Ltd. as per PPRA rule. The citizen interaction includes (inbound / outbound calls, Helpline / compliant line with Interactive Voice Response (IVR) facility, provide outbound survey calls facility and SMS query. As a best practice, hiring an experienced firm for the execution and management of helpline services encompassed quicker engagement and redressal (especially in cases of call backlogs), increased cost competitiveness, and improved service levels for the complainants.

Dedicated and specially trained staff

The Helpline staff receives extensive training at the time of recruitment. The training consists of providing general and legal specific information, developing skills for victim support, and also on

helpline operations.

The Helpline's legal team regularly conducts awareness sessions on various topics, to build the capacity of CSRs and keep them fully updated so that they can guide callers accordingly. In August 2017, PCSW Helpline's legal team organized a 10-day training course for paralegals and CSRs about the Constitution of Pakistan, women-related laws, including family laws, property laws, harassment laws, the Pakistan Penal Code, and procedures followed in Court. Information regarding Government of Punjab's Initiatives e.g. Shelter Homes, Dar-ul Aman, and Day Care Centers. Therefore, the Helpline staff are well-informed.

Effective Referral and Complaint mechanism

PCSW as a matter of the fact is not an implementing agency. It writes to the concerned authorities and seeks reports on the action taken. To serve as one window for complaint redressal regarding women empowerment, there is a proper complaint handling system within PCSW. The rigorous follow up of complaints registered at Helpline is carried out both by the Helpline staff as well as the Commission on the daily basis.

Expediency of report handling is another example of how the helpline constitutes best practice. Women and girls need to feel that their complaint is being handled and addressed in a timely manner as opposed to being stored in a desk drawer. There is a dedicated staff for follow ups and issuance of reminders which are regularly sent to the concerned departments and authorities by enclosing the previously made correspondence for ready reference with copies to the Government departments. In order to resolve the complaints even the authorities are contacted personally for quick resolution of the grievances. Hence, the complaint is handled timely and their proper and correct follow up is recorded in the system.

Client-friendly and responsive environment

Neutrality is reflected as a key value of PCSW Helpline work, dealing with callers needs without bias or agenda. The Helpline staff 'meet the caller where they are at' and support caller in a completely neutral way offering any and all information and support available or required. The PCSW Helpline helps to create a safe environment within which callers feel to speak most freely. This service is ethical sound and sticks to the principles of anonymity and confidentiality anonymity also.

Effectual provision of services to women who want to take their complaints to the next level

The PCSW Helpline strives to ensure that any redressal of complaint be consistent and fair for both the complainant and against which the complaint was made. PCSW can inquire into any complaint of violation of women's rights and call for information or report from any agency or authority of the Government or civil society organization. In case of legal action, the complainant is assigned to a dedicated and professionally trained team of lawyers. Also, as per PCSW Act, it can exercise the powers vested in a civil court under the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908 (V of 1908) to enforce the attendance of any person and compel the production of documents.

Strong monitoring and evaluation mechanism

Monitoring and evaluation is essential to maintain and improve the quality of the Helpline service and to understand whether these interventions have achieved the planned goals. PCSW monitors the operations and functioning of the Helpline to assess the quality of service. Regular visits to Helpline are also carried out by PCSW staff. Monitoring and evaluation is integrated into the daily workings of the Helpline service too. The quality assurance team is responsible for evaluating the calls (inbound/outbound) daily. As a best practice, weekly team meetings are held to address to Helpline staff concerns right away for

smooth operations. Weekly meeting with the lawyers are also held to discuss about the challenges being faced and opportunities which can bring improvement.

In addition, there is Monthly Review of the Helpline Monitoring Committee. Regular Monthly Review Meetings are conducted by PCSW to have updates and to discuss the issues related to Helpline.

Efficient co-ordination and linkages with the stakeholders

Interventions by PCSW through the Helpline have strengthened outreach and resulted in efficiency of government bodies that deal with and subsequently resolve cases of women across Punjab. In a recent case dealt with by the Helpline, SHO Faisalabad's quick legal action led to prevention of child marriage in Chak Jhumara, Faisalabad.

In another instance, PCSW successfully rescued a woman from domestic abuse in Lahore, by coordinating efforts with district police officials. Prior to PCSW's intervention, local police had refused to register her complaint and take legal action, due to her husband's influential position within Punjab Police. PCSW facilitated the release of pension to widow who was not able to get it by engaging with the office of the Accountant General, Punjab,

Comprehensive Media awareness initiatives

Punjab Women's Helpline awareness campaign incorporates print, electronic and digital media to ensure widespread outreach across Punjab. Furthermore, brochures, pamphlets, newspaper articles and mobile floats are widely disseminated

in all nine divisions of Punjab. Apart from these conventional marketing methods, multiple infomercials, digital posts and

Gifs are created for social media users. The campaigns highlights women rights, and pro-women legislation for protection of women's rights

in Punjab. Focus was placed on child marriages, penalties for gender-based violence, cybercrimes, honor killing, property and inheritance rights, as well as workplace harassment across Punjab.

As a best practice, district-wise analysis of the complaints was performed to check number of complaints received from each district. The analysis showed that 29.42% complaints were received from district Lahore. Further, as per Punjab Gender Parity Report, Vehari, Pakpattan, Rahim Yar Khan, Jhelum and Multan were the worst ranked districts related to violence against women. The total number of complaints received from these areas were 12.71% of the total complaints. Hence, media awareness campaigns including print and electronic media were launched in these areas with the objective to raise awareness about the Helpline in these districts. Letter was written to the Secretary Transport and directions were issued to all Secretary RTAs for displaying Helpline 1043 on every public transportation vehicle. Hence, PCSW posted 42,159 stickers to publicize Punjab Women's Helpline (1043) at bus stations, public offices and LTC buses across all the divisions of Punjab, so women using public transport could obtain information and ask for help in case of harassment.

Strengthened partnerships and innovative ventures

The Helpline has led to a strong network of partners to facilitate information sharing and knowledge exchange through joint events, consultative sessions and collaborations. Last year, a PSCA - Women Safety smartphone was developed. The interface is simple and user friendly. The app includes PCSW's Helpline 1043, for people to report emergencies or incidents of harassment and obtain information regarding legal and other

recourse.

Cybercrimes are a more recent form of violence against women that is on the rise in Pakistan.

They are rarely brought to the limelight. An effective redress is difficult to provide. A consultative session on redress mechanisms for cyber and phone

"Even educated women do not have legal knowledge of the pressing circumstances they face. Thus, the helpline provides them with guidelines, options and legal way out to resolve their matters, which they were not aware off.

Empowering girls and women is powerful."

- Helpline Legal Executive

harassment with Federal Intelligence Agency, Punjab Forensic Science Agency, Punjab Safe Cities Authority, Pakistan Telecommunication Authority and other government stakeholders was held. That led recently, to the MoU signing to give effect to a complaint management system, including rapid complaint registration through an exclusive complaint registration officer for cybercrimes. This pilot initiative will set a good example for other provinces to follow.

In addition, PCSW and Federal Intelligence Agency has signed Memorandum of Association (MoU) for early redressal of Cyber Harassment

Complaints, especially focus on women's victim. PCSW has launched media awareness campaign for this facility for the women's of Punjab to lodge complaint of cyber harassment via PCSW Helpline 1043. Hence, through this media awareness campaign the call ratio has increased on PCSW Helpline regarding Cyber Harassment issues. PCSW Helpline after taking initial information refer the matter to the FIA. Moreover,, one female lawyer and one clerk from PCSW visit daily FIA Office, and as a joint venture conduct follow-up of women's complaints. This exercise is paying a vital role for redressal of women's complaints.

PCSW 24/7 toll-free Helpline serves to model best practice as it has a positive impact on the Helpline callers/complainants to serve as a one window for complaint redressal regarding women empowerment from departments of GoPb, district coordination offices, district police officers and other concerned. Thus, these best practices provide tried and tested strategies that have proven its strategic relevance as the most effective way in achieving the objective of empowering women all over Punjab by enhancing their economic, social and legal status. Hence, the PCSW Helpline can be successfully adopted and replicated giving fruitful results to other provinces for similar setups.

Domestic Violence

DPO Sheikhpura ordered SHO Sharq Pur Sharif police station to proceed with investigation of a case involving a woman who had been tortured mercilessly by her husband. She lodged a complaint with Punjab Women's Helpline, and claimed that the concerned SHO had refused to lodge an FIR, in spite of the fact that her medico-legal report mentioned sections 337-A1 and 338-F1 of the Pakistan Penal Code. PCSW instructed the concerned DPO to provide speedy redress to the Complainant. The SHO called both parties and ensured that the husband returned all dowry articles and paid for those that were damaged during the 3 years of marriage. He also registered a written notice of talaq in the Union Council. Subsequently, the Complainant called the helpline and expressed her gratitude for PCSW's intervention.

Detained Italian Girl Rescued

PCSW successfully rescued a 19-year old girl from wrongful confinement by her parents and other members of her family in Lahore. Reportedly, the girl was brought to Pakistan from Italy in February 2018 for 10 days, under pretense of her brother's engagement. However, it later transpired that her parents wanted to marry her off against her will, thus brought her to Pakistan. While in Italy, her father had put a stop to her studies. The Italian Embassy informed PCSW chairperson about the matter with the request to ensure safety of the girl, while the interior ministry continuously followed up and assured of full support.

Nikkah Registrar's License Cancelled due to Solemnizing Child Marriage

DPO Jhang referred a case against a man accused of committing polygamy and contracting child marriage with a 13 year old girl in Tehsil Shor Kot, District Jhang, to the Family Court. In her complaint, the Complainant, the man's first wife, alleged that her husband contracted a child marriage without her permission, which is a violation of section 6 of the Punjab Muslim Family Laws (Amendment) Act 2015. Upon receipt of Complaint, the Administrator Union Council cancelled the license of the Nikkah Khwaan under section 5 of the Act, and proceeded to refer the complaint to Family Court for redressal. Upon investigation, the DPO found that the accusation of polygamy and contracting a child marriage were correct. The case was subsequently referred to Family Court for further redress.

Success Stories

Lady Constables Punished for Physically and Verbally Abusing Young Girls

AIG Pakistan Railways Police has held 4 Lady Constables liable for official misconduct on account of disgracing and harassing 2 young girls at Lahore Railway Station. A complaint was lodged with the PCSW Helpline (1043), regarding verbal and physical abuse, misbehavior and harassment perpetrated by 4 female constables of Pakistan Railways Police. Upon enquiry into the complaint, Chairperson PCSW was informed that the 4 constables were found guilty of misuse of official powers and misconduct during the course of their duty. They have been punished by "withholding 1 annual increment for the period of 1 year."

Sexual Harassment at the Workplace

PCSW's coordinated efforts with District Police Officer (DPO) and District Coordinating Officer (DCO), Tehsil Tunsia, District Dera Ghazi Khan (DG Khan), resulted in lodging FIR and penalizing the accused, including termination of his employment in Government Elementary School, DG Khan. The Complainant accused a school teacher in Government Elementary School of sexual harassment and torture. Due to the accused person's influence with local authorities, a complaint was not registered by the concerned Tehsil police station. Due to inaction by local authorities, the complainant lodged a complaint with PCSW helpline (1043). Coordinated efforts at the district level resulted in penal consequences and termination of services of the accused.

Women's Right to Inheritance

DC Gujranwala ordered Secretary LG&CDD to issue a death certificate for the Complainant's Father, who died a few months prior to lodging a Complaint with PCSW's helpline. The Complainant stated that Secretary Union Council had not issued a death certificate of her late father Muhammad Zareef, even though he was duty bound to register and issue death certificate under LG&CDD Notification No. SOR (LG) 36-2/2005. The Complainant required this Death Certificate in order to affect transfer of her father's property. Punjab Commission on the Status of Woman followed up the matter and a Death Certificate was issued to her. She shared that she was also able to obtain her rightful share in her father's property.

Challenges

The 24/7 toll-free Helpline has become a very popular way of providing "live" answers to women's inquiries and complaints. Despite positive headways, concerted action is still required to work on the challenges, both internal and external, that are being encountered during the implementation.

I. PCSW is an oversight institution, thus, as per the PCSW Act, when the Helpline receive complaints of domestic violence, sexual harassment and discrimination, it links the complainants to the offices of Ombudsperson and other relevant redress forums within the government. Referrals to relevant departments do not lead to immediate resolution of cases leading to frustration on the part of the complainants.

II. Longer response time was indicated as an obstacle to a timely action for the complaint redressal. PCSW writes to the concerned authorities and seeks reports on the action taken. The Government departments especially the district authorities tend to not take quick action and constant follow-ups are required. However, the Helpline staff conducts follow ups and issuance of reminders which are regularly sent to the concerned departments and authorities by enclosing the previously made correspondence for ready reference with copies to higher authorities.

III. High customer service representative turnover and inadequate staffing posed a problem. The value of outsourcing the Helpline HR lies in their ability to effectively deliver services to a community at low cost. However, this causes burnout by being

"Most of the women don't even know their address when they call, making rescue operations difficult."
– **Helpline Customer Service Representative**

overinvolved and overworked resulting into higher staff turnover, thus, high employee cost attributable to increased frequency of training. The large volume of calls and complaints at the Helpline is more than what the three lawyers could handle. One lawyer spends part of her time dealing with walk in complainants and the other lawyer follow ups with the survivors and district/provincial government officials. Thus, there is an urgent need for engaging additional lawyers in the Helpline for to make legal services accessible to all effectively.

IV. Limited budget for awareness raising and media campaigns. As per Punjab Gender Parity Report, districts of South Punjab are the worst ranked districts related to violence against women and the total number of complaints received from these areas account to approximately 13% of the total complaints. This points to a need to create awareness about the helpline service in such areas. Media campaigns had been organized and divisional co-ordinators have engaged as much as possible in on-going awareness raising but budgets are insufficient for expanding media coverage.

V. High numbers of prank/test calls on the toll-free 1043 Helpline. This has a significant impact on the service availability and can be very challenging for the staff.

Conclusion

As the old adage says, "Help will be given to those who ask for it." Problems that seem insurmountable can be solved, when one gets support and guidance, especially from professional organisations that consist of people who are trained and want to help. One small step, just a phone call, can change life into the affirmative experience.

The establishment of the toll-free 24/7 Helpline by the PCSW has made a difference in the lives of the women of Punjab. Not only has it improved access to knowledge for survivors of violence against women and encouraged women to speak out, but it has also saved lives.

Helpline has been an essential service which has since inception been instrumental in empowerment of women in Punjab. Although, there is still room for improvement on what has been a very rewarding progress for to promote awareness about pro women laws and women rights; and for monitoring violations of rights and remove discrimination against women which ranges from physical to emotional and financial abuse.

To assist the Helpline in the process quality enhancement the Helpline staff needs to increase their call logging efforts in the complaint handling system to avoid blank entries and incomplete information. For this, it is essential that helplines employ a brief recording template to collect all relevant data about service users. Regular information briefings and training programmes to assist Helpline staff in dealing with new arising issues and challenges can be provided.

Also, user surveys and questionnaires would be a good way to obtain information for evaluation purposes. These should be administered on a regular basis, at least once a year. Furthermore, follow-up qualitative studies (e.g. telephone interviews, focus groups) with staff and users of Helplines would also provide valuable feedback on the performance of the helpline. Results of user feedback would also be useful for documenting additional best practices.

Lastly and more importantly, an amendment to the PCSW Act may be entailed to enable the Commission to function effectively. It is important that it is given sufficient powers/levers that compel law enforcement authorities and individuals to comply with its binding advice or direction.

The Helpline has proven itself as a beacon of hope for women and girls in Punjab, especially in backward and remote regions, where it is ever so difficult for them to raise their voice. The number of calls received by the Helpline is increasing overtime, since women have begun to actively use the Helpline and register their complaints against the state bodies and individuals.

The Helpline's objectives and its resultant implementation are directly relevant to provincial and national priorities, regarding women's economic empowerment. The Toll-free Helpline 1043 has demonstrated to be an effective instrument for providing an avenue to women for reporting State inaction and discriminatory policies/practices, especially to women who have mobility and access problems due to their remote locations. It is hoped that Government of Punjab's efforts towards addressing women's issues continue, and collaboration between PCSW and other institutional mechanisms results in reducing the incidence of violence against women in Punjab and to pave the way for the achievement of greater political, social and economic empowerment of women in Punjab.

Annex

Annex 1: Categorization of Complaints

Types	Sub Types
Court Related	I. District Courts Related II. High Courts Related III. Legal Aid IV. Other Matters related to Courts V. Supreme Court Related VI. Tehsil Court Related
Criminal Offences Related To Women	I. Acid Burns II. Assault III. Attempt to Murder IV. Attempt to Rape V. Defamation VI. Drugs, Chemical Related VII. Forced Conversion VIII. Fraud IX. Illegal Detention, Arrest X. Insulting Modesty XI. Kidnapping, Abduction etc. XII. Murder XIII. Offences related to decency XIV. Operating and running Brothel XV. Other Criminal Matters related to Women XVI. Rape XVII. Sexual Offences
Education	I. College Level II. Establishment of Women Degree Colleges III. Higher Education IV. Other Matters related to Education V. Scholarships VI. School Level VII. University Level

Employment/ Job Related	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I. 15% Quota for Women in Punjab II. 33% Women Representation III. Additional Chance of Transfer IV. Age Relaxation V. Maternal And Paternal Leaves VI. Minimum Equal Remuneration VII. Nomination of at Least One Woman in Every Department VIII. Other Matters Related to Employment, Jobs IX. Pension X. Promotion XI. Salary XII. Transfer
Family Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I. Conjugal Rights II. Custody III. Divorce IV. Dower V. Dowry VI. Jactitation VII. <i>Khula</i> VIII. Maintenance IX. Other Matters related to Family Issues X. Polygamy
Financial Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I. Allocation of funds out of PESRP II. FS for Business III. FS for Education IV. FS for Medical Treatment V. Loans VI. Other Matters related to Financial Support VII. Provision of Micro Credit For Women VIII. <i>Zakat</i> and <i>Ushr</i>
General Inquiry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I. General Inquiry about other matters II. General Inquiry about PCSW
Harassment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I. Harassment at other Place II. Harassment at Work Place III. Other Matters Related to Harassment

Harmful Traditional Practices	I. <i>Badl-e-Sulh</i> II. Child Marriage III. Court related IV. Forced Marriage V. <i>Karo Kari</i> VI. Marriage with the Quran VII. Other Matters related to Harmful Traditional Practices VIII. Provision of Boundary Walls IX. <i>Swara</i> X. <i>Vani</i> XI. <i>Watta Satta</i>
Health	I. Abortion II. Doctor Related III. Family Planning IV. Hospital Related V. Ill Treatment/ Negligence VI. LHV Related VII. Other Matters related to Health VIII. Staff Related
Police Related Issues	I. Delay In Lodging FIR II. Investigation Related III. Negligence IV. Other Matters related to Police V. Professional Misconduct VI. Torture by Police
Political Violence	I. Political Violence related to Political Candidates II. Political Violence related to Voters III. Other Kinds of Political Violence
Punjab Govt. Initiatives for Women	I. Birth Registrations II. Canteens III. Day Care Centers IV. Death Registrations V. Hostel Facility in at least one Degree College VI. Local Government related Matters VII. Other Matters related to Punjab Govt. Women Initiatives VIII. TEVTA IX. Transport Facility X. Vocational Training Institutes XI. Women Friendly Public Amenities XII. Women's Stalls in Govt. Public Bazar XIII. Working Women Hostels

Revenue Related	I. Penal Action Against Delinquent Revenue Officers II. Other matters related to Revenue
Violence/ Torture	I. Domestic Violence II. Other Kinds of Violence/Torture
Women Shelter Related	I. ABBA Home II. CPWB III. Crises Center IV. <i>Dar-ul Aman</i> V. <i>Dastak</i> VI. Edhi Homes VII. Other Matters related to Women Shelters
Others	Others

Annex II: Frequently Asked Questions

What is Punjab Government Women's Helpline and who can call?

A Toll-Free Helpline # 1043 has been established by the Government of Punjab. Through all female call centre executives and legal advisors, this facility provides guidance and legal advice to women all over Punjab facing problems related to harassment, property disputes, domestic violence etc.

What are the timings of the Helpline?

24/7.

How much will it cost to dial the Helpline?

Calling from a land-line number will be free of charge. However, making a call from a mobile phone will have charges depending on the mobile company's charges.

What if I require any professional legal advice?

The Helpline staff is trained and experienced to answer queries or launch complaints. In case further legal guidance is required, a legal advisor is available to cater to the queries in the light of the current legal framework.

Are there any charges for legal advice?

Legal advisors are available at the Helpline to assist complainants free of cost over the phone.

How can I speak to a Call Center Agent?

Upon dialing Helpline # 1043, caller will be asked to select the preferred language i.e. (English or Urdu). After language selection, the call will be transferred to an available agent. The caller can ask for guidance, help and information. In case of legal advice, the call may be transferred to an available lawyer.

Is my data protected with the Helpline?

Data is protected at all times and will only be shared with concerned personnel.

Do I need to have some information before calling the Helpline?

It is advised to have the following information handy: Complainant's Name, CNIC (or any other identity), Address, Source of information, and precise summary of information required to lodge a complaint

Are there any particular complaints that the Helpline deals with or can I call for any matter?

Helpline staff will evaluate the nature of call and will advise you in case a complaint needs to be lodged.