



"Justice Guardians: Empowering Women in Pakistan's Judiciary"

by

Isma Maqbool



Inspiration:

- ❖ My dream was to be a Justice, inspired by my father, but the reality is that the legal profession in Pakistan is often deemed unsafe for women.
- ❖ This project is driven by the belief that **no woman's dream of serving justice should be sacrificed for her safety.**



The Challenge: A Crisis of Safety and Representation

- ❖ **Severe Underrepresentation:** Women constitute <6% of the Superior Judiciary (High Courts, Supreme Court), limiting gender-sensitive judicial perspectives.
- ❖ **Safety & Hostility:** Female judges/lawyers face persistent issues of **harassment, intimidation, and inadequate security** in and out of court, leading to low retention.
- ❖ **Infrastructure Gap:** Court complexes often lack basic female-friendly facilities (secure chambers, restrooms), creating systemic barriers to professional stability.

The Solution: Creating a Secure & Supportive Ecosystem

- ❖ **Project Goal: Goal:** To enhance the safety, inclusion, and well-being of women entering and serving in the Pakistani judiciary, thereby increasing female representation and improving access to justice.
- ❖ **The Outcome:** A safer, more inclusive judiciary that restores public trust and empowers female justice leaders

Target Group:

- ❖ **Primary:** Female law students, aspiring female judges, and women currently serving in judicial roles (magistrates, judges, public prosecutors).
- ❖ **Secondary:** Judicial academies, bar councils, law enforcement agencies, and the general public (for awareness).

Key Idea (What makes it innovative or inspiring):

- "Justice Guardians" moves beyond simply encouraging women to join the judiciary.
- It proactively addresses the significant **safety and well-being concerns** that hinder women's careers in this field in Pakistan.
- By creating a supportive ecosystem that includes specialized safety protocols, mentorship, and a peer network, it aims to make judicial careers not only accessible but also sustainable and secure for women.
- The "Guardian" aspect signifies both personal and institutional support.

Key Actions or Tools:

Strong alignment with SDG 5 (Gender Equality) and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions).

1. "Secure Chambers" Initiative:

1. Goal: Enhance physical and digital safety for female judges and prosecutors.

2. Actions:

- ❖ Advocate for and facilitate the installation of enhanced security systems (CCTV, panic buttons) in judicial chambers and homes of female judicial officers, especially in remote or high-risk areas.
- ❖ Provide cybersecurity training and tools for digital communication and case management to protect against online harassment and threats.
- ❖ Establish a confidential 24/7 hotline for female judicial officers to report threats or seek immediate assistance.

2. "Judicial Sisterhood" Mentorship & Networking Program:

1. Goal: Foster a strong support network and provide guidance for women in the judiciary.

2. Actions:

- ❖ Pair aspiring or junior female judicial officers with senior female judges/lawyers for mentorship, sharing experiences, and career guidance.
- ❖ Organize regular workshops and seminars focused on challenges faced by women in the judiciary, mental health and stress management, and practical safety measures.
- ❖ Create an online forum for secure peer-to-peer support and resource sharing.

3. "Gender-Sensitive Justice Advocacy" Training:

1. Goal: Build capacity within judicial institutions to understand and address the unique challenges faced by women.

2. Actions:

- ❖ Develop and deliver mandatory training modules for male and female judicial officers, court staff, and law enforcement on gender sensitivity, unconscious bias, and the specific security needs of female colleagues.
- ❖ Advocate for the inclusion of female judicial perspectives in policy-making regarding court administration and security.

4. Public Awareness Campaign: "Her Bench, Our Justice":

1. Goal: Challenge societal stereotypes and promote public acceptance and respect for women in judicial roles.

2. Actions: Utilize social media, public service announcements, and community dialogues to highlight the contributions of female judges and the importance of their role in a fair justice system.

Partnerships (Who you'd cooperate with):

- ❖ **Judicial Academies of Pakistan:** For training development and integration into judicial education.
- ❖ **Supreme Court of Pakistan & High Courts:** For policy advocacy, implementation, and endorsement.
- ❖ **Bar Councils & Bar Associations:** For legal community support, mentorship, and advocacy.
- ❖ **Law Enforcement Agencies (Police, CTD):** For security assessments, response mechanisms, and intelligence sharing.
- ❖ **NGOs specializing in Women's Rights & Legal Aid (e.g., AGHS Legal Aid Cell, Aurat Foundation):** For expertise on women's issues, advocacy, and outreach.
- ❖ **Universities & Law Schools:** To engage female law students and foster future talent.
- ❖ **Ministry of Law and Justice:** For governmental support and resource allocation.
- ❖ **International Donors/Organizations (e.g., European Union, UN Women):** For funding, technical assistance, and sharing best practices.

Future Vision:

“Women belong in all places where decisions are being made.”

(Late Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg)

