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SUPREME COURT OF PAKISTAN PRESS RELEASE

CHIEF JUSTICE OF PAKISTAN HOLDS STRATEGIC ENGAGEMENT ON NATIONAL DESIGN COMPETITION FOR WOMEN FACILITATION CENTERS UNDER GENDER-RESPONSIVE JUSTICE INITIATIVE

Islamabad, April 2, 2026 - Hon'ble the Chief Justice of Pakistan/Chairman, Law and Justice Commission of Pakistan (LJCP), chaired a high-level consultative session as part of a strategic engagement on the Gender-Responsive Justice Initiative (GRJI) 2026–27, focusing on the proposed National Design Competition for Women Facilitation Centers (WFCs). The meeting was held at the Supreme Court of Pakistan.

The session brought together senior judicial leadership, representatives of key institutions, development partners, gender experts, and the architectural community, reflecting a broad-based consultative approach to advancing gender-responsive judicial reforms.

It was attended by Registrar, Supreme Court of Pakistan; Secretary, Law and Justice Commission of Pakistan; Ms. Noreen Bano, Acting Chairperson, NCSW; Barrister Haya Emaan Zahid, CEO, LAS, Ms. Humaira Zia Mufti, Secretary, NCSW; Ms. Ambreen Iftikhar, Gender Reforms Expert; Architect Rweeda Himayat, Chairperson, Institute of Architects Pakistan (IAP), Rawalpindi–Islamabad Chapter, along with a team of professionals from IAP including Architect Mustafa Abid Peracha, Architect Sinnan Ahmed, Architect Rana Atif, Architect Abdullah Khan and Manager Sheraz Gulzar.

While Mr. Muhammad Hafeezullah Khan, Registrar, Federal Constitutional Court and Registrars of all the High Courts, Resident Additional Secretaries, LJCP, Ms. Fahmida Khan, Deputy Country Representative, UN Women Pakistan; Architect Fawad Suhail Abbasi, President, IAP; and representatives of the Provincial Women Development Departments, including Ms. Faiza Ahsan, Additional Secretary, Government of Punjab; Ms. Jahanara Tabassum, Deputy Secretary (Gender), Government of Balochistan; Ms. Rubina Zehri, Women Development Department, Balochistan; and Dr. Amber Bhatiya, Deputy Director, Women Development Department, Government of Sindh, attended the meeting online.

Welcoming the participants, the Hon'ble Chief Justice highlighted that the National Judicial (Policy Making) Committee (NJPMC) has identified gender-responsive justice as a priority reform area for the financial year 2026–27. He underscored that the initiative envisages the establishment of Women Facilitation Centers within judicial complexes across Pakistan, aimed at providing safe, structured, and accessible support services to women litigants.

The proposed Centers are designed as integrated platforms offering legal facilitation, court-annexed mediation, supervised family visitation arrangements, and gender-based violence (GBV) support, within a dignified and secure environment.

Participants were informed that the Concept Note and Business Requirement Document (BRD) outlining the functional, architectural, and operational parameters of the WFCs have been shared with stakeholders, including relevant government departments and development partners. The

session focused on finalising the framework for the National Design Competition, which aims to develop a standardised, replicable, and adaptable architectural model through nationwide participation of architects, academic institutions, and professionals.

The discussion reflected strong support for the initiative as a shift from adjudication-centric approaches to user-centric justice delivery, aligning judicial infrastructure with evolving standards of access to justice, inclusivity, and institutional responsiveness.

During the deliberations, participants emphasised that the design of WFCs must ensure privacy, safety, inclusivity, accessibility, and cultural sensitivity, while also incorporating functional efficiency and sustainability considerations. Particular attention was drawn to the importance of acoustics, especially in mediation rooms, counselling spaces, and court areas, to ensure confidentiality, reduce noise interference, and create a calm and dignified environment for sensitive proceedings.

It was further suggested that the Centers be designed to enable integrated service delivery, allowing women litigants to access multiple support services within a single facility.

The Registrars of the Supreme Court and High Courts were requested to undertake category-wise mapping of infrastructure requirements, including covered area specifications and appropriate vertical or horizontal configurations, to facilitate effective planning across diverse jurisdictions.

After incorporating the inputs received during the consultative process in the final framework, the Institute of Architects Pakistan (IAP) will launch the national design competition.

Concluding the session, the Hon'ble Chief Justice emphasised the importance of inter-institutional coordination, transparency, and merit-based evaluation in the competition process. He reiterated that the selected design would serve as a reference model for Women Facilitation Centers, supporting the judiciary's commitment to inclusive, accessible, and gender-responsive justice.

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