

Pakistan's New Legal Incubator Expands ATJ and Promotes Legal Entrepreneurship (News 2016)



Law school incubators continue to lead the way in teaching young lawyers to build a legal career around principles of access to justice, client centered business practices and encouraging legal entrepreneurship that views the lawyer as part of a larger ecosystem of legal and non-legal providers, which include legal self-help, legal information, legal advice and practical support. Since the first incubator launched more than a decade ago at City University of New York, there are [more than fifty incubator programs in the US](#). In 2015, [SRLN published SRLN Brief: Incubators - Changing the Practice of Law](#). Now, because of the tireless pioneering efforts of Fred Rooney, the innovator behind the law school incubator model in the States, there is an incubator in Pakistan.

Pakistan's legal incubator hosted by [Insaf Network Pakistan's Center for Legal Excellence \(opens as PDF\)](#) (INPCLE) will provide uninterrupted, high-quality, and affordable legal services while raising legal awareness in the general public. The INPCLE program aims to help over a thousand litigants during the first 18-month residency cycle for eight young lawyers.

This project focuses particularly on helping women: it is developing a workforce of young, primarily female lawyers, and is looking at how to specifically increase Pakistani women's access to legal support through the program. In Rooney's [Exporting the Legal Incubator: A Conversation with Fred Rooney article](#), who also launched an incubator model in the Dominican Republic, he described "access to justice is a never-ending problem in Pakistan since millions of people cannot afford the cost of legal representation." He added that, "while access to affordable lawyers in Pakistan can be difficult for most people, it exceptionally difficult or oftentimes impossible for individuals who lack the economic resources to retain private counsel. The situation is further complicated when the availability of NGOs or publicly funded lawyers is virtually non-existent."

Like in the States, more people than ever in Pakistan are going to court without the legal help they need. Legal education in the country also lacks practical training and as a result, a large number of young lawyers remain unemployed and live barely above the poverty line. Enter the INPCLE, a model both Rooney and INP hope will help young lawyers start practices while also closing the justice gap. The INPCLE will operate similarly to the U.S. incubator model, offering a training program to help young Pakistani interested in starting their own firms. The arrangement will benefit hosting organization, the young lawyers, and the surrounding community by expanding public legal access and knowledge while also increasing the availability of pro bono and low bono legal help for those in need.

The Center's goals for its first round of residency include:

- Training eight young lawyers to facilitate transition to solo practice.
- Offering litigation and other assistance will be provided for 120 poor and vulnerable community members with a focus on survivors of gender-based violence, minorities and people with disabilities.
- Providing legal advice, referral and assistance to a minimum of 500 beneficiaries over the phone.

- Conducting 40 legal awareness sessions (legal clinics) for the public in underdeveloped communities across Islamabad and will provide support to 800 poor and vulnerable community members.
- Conducting 18 bi-monthly visits to prisons will be conducted to provide legal representation to overlooked prison inmates. These visits will assist 200 inmates.
- Developing a web portal and fully functional, equipped and operational incubator space including a helpline and required reference.

The INPCLE's young lawyers will work in partnership with local legal aid clinics and will offer support through a helpline and at a physical location in Islamabad. In their 18-month residency, the young lawyers will learn skills in the following areas: human rights, constitution rights, legal research, and advocacy skills, drafting, client interviews, business skills, psychosocial support and ethics. INP hopes that this training, contextualized to meet the specific needs of the Pakistani legal system, will establish a reproducible model they can use to launch incubators in other parts of the country.

INPCLE's experience makes it a unique and powerful partner for launching the first incubator of its kind in Asia. The organization has focused on the expanding access to justice since 2012 when it launched "Enhancing Access to Justice by Strengthening Demand for Legal Empowerment of the Poor," a project it led with the UNDP that focused both supply and demand side of justice in Pakistan and was aimed at strengthening support mechanisms/initiatives for the poor, vulnerable and minority groups in selected project districts by enhancing increased access to justice services. INP has also worked with the World Bank and the Asia Fund on legal awareness projects and in last year alone trained fifty young lawyers on Advocacy & Research Skills and fifty senior lawyers on laws protecting GBV, Minorities and Persons with Disabilities. The organization has also opened 17 new Legal Aid Centers in 17 targeted districts, which provide legal aid, referral and psychosocial support to over 40,000 beneficiaries and manages the country's first and only legal resource center.

Visit the [American Bar Association's International Directory of Law School Incubator Projects](#) for more information about legal incubators generally.

Last updated on July 29, 2020.

Year published: 2016

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