

ANNUAL REPORT 2025 – 26



HAQ: CENTRE FOR CHILD RIGHTS

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About This Report

This report covers the work of HAQ: Centre for Child Rights between April 2025 and March 2026: legal aid and psycho-social support for child survivors of sexual abuse, the Victim Support Programme across Madhya Pradesh and Odisha, research and advocacy on children in brick kiln and mining-affected communities, and the training and capacity-building carried out through the year.

Legal Aid & Child Assistance

Improving Experiences of Child Victims of Sexual Abuse

Through the year, HAQ: Centre for Child Rights continued to provide legal aid and psycho-social assistance to child survivors of sexual abuse. HAQ received 799 referrals of child sexual abuse (CSA) cases from Child Welfare Committees (CWCs), Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), the Police, Child Care Institutions (CCIs), and individual stakeholders. Psycho-social support was extended to 568 children, and HAQ's legal team represented 340 children before Juvenile Justice Boards (JJBs), Sessions Courts, and the High Court of Delhi.

Courts disposed of 49 cases during the year. Of these, 28 resulted in conviction and 17 in acquittal; one case was abated, one inquiry was terminated in a matter involving a Child in Conflict with Law (CCL) — an outcome HAQ counts alongside its convictions — and two cases were quashed.

Outcome	Number
Convictions	28
Acquittals	17
Abated	1
Inquiry terminated (CCL matter)	1
Quashed	2
Total disposed	49

In continued efforts to strengthen appellate advocacy, HAQ filed 33 matters before the High Court of Delhi during the year. These included:

- applications opposing bail for the accused in sensitive cases, numbering eight;
- one appeal challenging an acquittal;
- applications opposing appeals filed by the accused against conviction, numbering twenty-four; and
- two appeals against criminal revision orders.

POCSO Victim Support Programme in Madhya Pradesh and Odisha

Laws such as the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act are progressive on paper, but survivors of child sexual abuse continue to face real barriers to justice and care — a shortage of trained support persons in remote areas, secondary trauma from insensitive handling by institutions, weak coordination between child protection systems and legal processes, and the absence of affordable, quality legal representation. HAQ's Victim Support Programme, running across Madhya Pradesh and Odisha in

partnership with five grassroots organisations — Aarambh and Aawaz in Bhopal, Indore, and Katni, Catalyst for Social Action in Jabalpur and Ujjain, and Disha in Sundergarh and Ruchika in Jajpur — with support from the Azim Premji Foundation, moved into its final phase during 2025-26.

HAQ carried out multiple rounds of field mentoring visits across the two states during the year, providing on-site technical support tailored to each partner organisation's needs. Ahead of every visit, HAQ consulted with the partner concerned to understand its expectations, operational challenges, and capacity gaps, so that each agenda was built around what the field actually needed rather than a fixed template.

The visits focused on strengthening partners' ability to provide comprehensive support to POCSO victims. Through case discussions, practical demonstrations, role plays, and interactive sessions, participants built their understanding of casework management, stakeholder coordination, restorative care practices, documentation standards, and the criminal justice process, with particular emphasis on HAQ's own Restorative Care Model — first-response protocols, first-interaction checklists, needs assessments, mental well-being assessments, counselling approaches, report writing, caseload management, case categorisation, and the upkeep of daily and monthly caselogs.

Mentoring also expanded to strengthen collaboration between lawyers and Support Persons, so the two could offer integrated legal and psychosocial support to child victims together. Case discussions, role plays, and interactive exercises worked through some of the hardest categories of cases — incest, romantic relationships treated as offences under the law, grooming, children in conflict with law, and children with disabilities and special needs — alongside courtroom procedure, legal terminology, documentation for legal intake, preparing children for testimony, and coordination across the different stages of a court proceeding. Regular reflection sessions built into the visits gave partners space for peer learning and joint problem-solving.

As the programme progressed, HAQ organised a three-day residential training for lawyers in Bhopal, from 13 to 15 June 2025, to strengthen victim-centric legal representation under the POCSO Act. The training covered child-friendly provisions under the new criminal laws, victims' rights under POCSO, and age-determination principles, and went deeper into complex legal issues such as charge-framing, pre-chargesheet interventions, bail proceedings, victim compensation, and statutory presumptions. Group work, case-based discussions, role plays, courtroom simulations, and drafting exercises gave participants a chance to practise courtroom skills and think through strategy from the standpoint of a victim's lawyer.



Monthly check-in meetings and knowledge-sharing sessions ran through the year as a standing platform to review case progress, work through implementation challenges, reinforce key concepts, and support cross-learning between partner organisations. As the programme entered its final phase, HAQ also

developed a comprehensive reporting framework combining qualitative and quantitative indicators, to strengthen documentation, capture programme outcomes, and support evidence-based learning across the partnership.

Taken together, the field mentoring, the legal and psychosocial capacity-building, and the standing rhythm of monthly check-ins and knowledge-sharing sessions meaningfully strengthened partner organisations' ability to offer integrated, trauma-informed, and rights-based support to POCSO victims.

Under HAQ's Victim Support Programme, in addition to five organisations in Madhya Pradesh and Odisha, HAQ also strengthened the capacities of partner organisations working with child sexual abuse victims, including Jawahar Jyoti Bal Vikas Kendra (JJBVK), Samastipur, Bihar, and RIHR, Jaipur. A team of social workers, counsellors and a lawyer from JJBVK visited the HAQ office for a three-day exposure and orientation process during which they were introduced to HAQ's restorative care model for child sexual abuse victims, with special emphasis on child-centred and trauma-informed intervention. The team was also taken through key stakeholder systems and processes, including the Child Welfare Committee, District Legal Services Authority, District Child Protection Unit and Special Courts, to deepen their understanding of coordinated response mechanisms and to strengthen their ability to navigate the protection and justice ecosystem effectively. In parallel, HAQ also facilitated a detailed session on MIS and casework management to reinforce documentation, follow-up and case tracking practices essential for effective victim support.

In addition, HAQ conducted a three-day training, orientation and capacity-building programme in Jaipur for support persons, with the objective of strengthening their legal, procedural and psychosocial competencies in handling child sexual abuse cases. The training, guided by the agenda developed for RIHR, covered a comprehensive range of themes, including child rights, the Juvenile Justice Act, the POCSO Act, child-sensitive criminal procedures, the powers and functions of the Special Court, CWC and DLSA, the role and responsibilities of support persons, psychological first aid, need assessment, report writing, rehabilitation care planning and casework management. The sessions also introduced participants to HAQ's restorative care model, including rapport building, first home visits, interaction checklists and mental well-being assessment, thereby linking legal processes with practical, child-sensitive case support. Undertaken with the support of APF, these capacity-building initiatives represented an important step in equipping frontline functionaries to work within a safe, informed and rehabilitation-oriented framework for children affected by sexual abuse.

Child Assistance Programme: COVID-19 Sponsorship Support

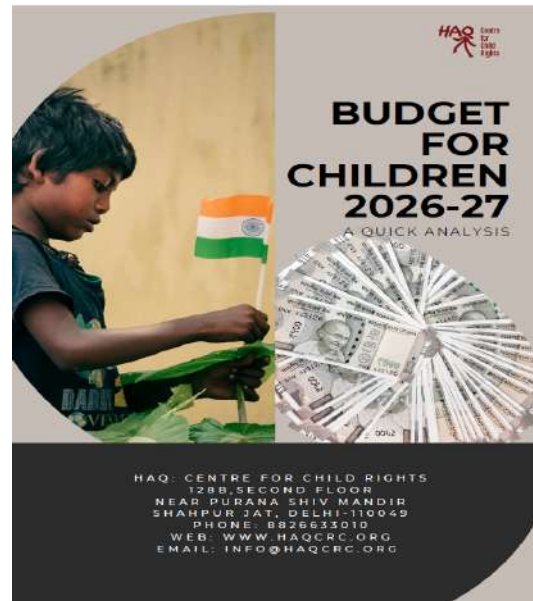
HAQ has supported children who lost one or both parents to COVID-19 through a dedicated Sponsorship Support programme since 2021. In 2025-26, 12 children — 5 girls and 7 boys — continued to receive educational support through the programme.

The programme began with a grant of INR 10 lakh from Vedantu, supporting 25 children through their first year. Mr. Donald Lobo, through DASRA, extended support for the second year, and a crowdfunding campaign was launched to help sustain the initiative beyond that. Funds raised through the campaign covered most of the children's needs through the year, and a one-month shortfall was covered by Youthreach, a non-profit organisation working with underprivileged children, youth, environment, and disability issues. Youthreach has continued its support into the current academic year as well.

Research & Advocacy

Budget for Children: Quick Analysis

The Finance Minister, Ms. Nirmala Sitharaman, presented the second budget of the NDA government's third term during the year. HAQ's quick analysis found that the share of children in the Union Budget 2026-27 stands at 2.47 per cent — a rise from the 2.29 per cent recorded against the Budget Estimates of 2025-26, though still well short of the 4.76 per cent share recorded in 2012-13. HAQ published and disseminated its analysis, "Budget for Children 2026-27," to policymakers, civil society organisations, and the media as part of its continuing advocacy for greater fiscal investment in children.



Children of Seasonal Migrant Brick Kiln Workers

During the reporting year, HAQ continued its engagement with children and families of seasonal migrant brick kiln workers through the project Building a Child Rights-Based Model of Sustainable Food Sovereignty for Children of Seasonal Migrant Families. Implemented across the source states of Bihar and Chhattisgarh, and destination districts in Ajmer, Bhilwara, Surir and Mathura, the project aimed to address the persistent vulnerabilities faced by migrant children by strengthening outcomes related to health, nutrition, education and protection. The programme adopted a multi-pronged approach that combined capacity building, community-based communication, research, documentation and multi-stakeholder convergence to advance a more sustainable, child rights-based model of support for seasonal migrant families.

Capacity Building and Community Outreach

A significant component of the programme focused on strengthening household and community capacities to respond to the everyday realities of migration, precarious work and limited access to services. During the year, HAQ conducted twenty health budgeting trainings across twenty brick kilns in Ajmer and Bhilwara, reaching 1,748 participants. These sessions enabled families to better understand, plan for and prioritise health expenditures, including emergency health needs, thereby contributing to improved preparedness in contexts marked by economic insecurity and restricted access to public health systems.

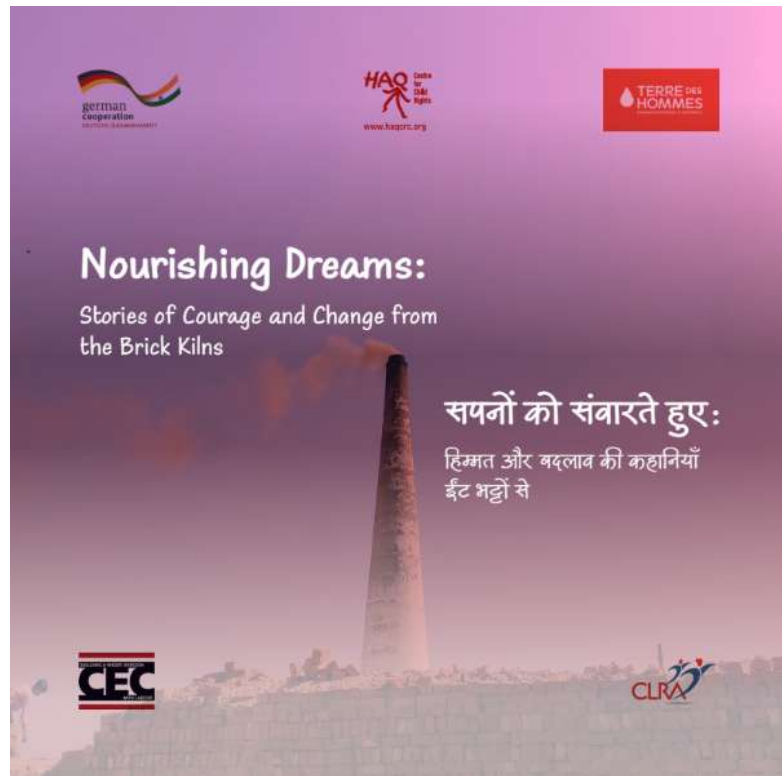
In addition, HAQ developed a set of sensitisation materials to support awareness generation within kiln communities. Five posters were produced on key themes including anaemia, menstrual hygiene and sanitary napkin disposal, iron-rich diets for women and adolescent girls, and the first 1,000 days approach to early childhood nutrition. These materials were intended to reinforce critical health and nutrition messages in formats that were accessible, practical and relevant to the daily lives of migrant workers and their families.

Community Knowledge and Documentation

During the reporting period, HAQ also continued to document and disseminate community knowledge through a series of printed materials designed to reflect the lived experiences and practices of migrant families. The third issue of HAQ's recipe register was produced, featuring low-cost, nutritious regional dishes drawn from the kitchens of migrant communities themselves. By highlighting locally available and affordable food practices, the publication contributed to broader conversations on nutrition, food security and household resilience.

The eighth edition of Brickwalled, HAQ's newsletter on migration and brick kiln realities, was also published

during the year. The newsletter served as an important channel for sharing field insights, emerging concerns, programme developments and reflections from the ground. In addition, HAQ prepared and released the booklet *Nourishing Dreams: Stories of Courage and Change from the Brick Kilns*, which brought together narratives of resilience, transformation and agency from the project sites and was launched at the national consultation held during the year.





Communications and Audio-Visual Materials

Recognising the importance of accessible and compelling communication tools, HAQ developed a range of audio-visual materials to strengthen outreach and advocacy. Two animated films were released during the year: one on safe migration and another on household health budgeting for migrant families. These films were designed to communicate key messages in a simple and engaging manner, and to support awareness generation among workers, families, community stakeholders and programme partners.

HAQ also produced a documentary on life at the brick kilns of Ajmer, Bhilwara and Surir. The film documented the programme's impact, highlighted the perspectives of employers, and examined linkages with government schemes and entitlements. Through this work, HAQ sought to deepen public understanding of the complex realities of seasonal migration and the structural constraints that shape the lives of brick kiln workers and their children.

Research and Policy Engagement

Research remained central to HAQ's work with seasonal migrant brick kiln workers. During the year, HAQ developed the report *The Architecture of Invisibility: Why Migrant Brick Kiln Workers Fall Through the Cracks?*, which draws together five years of findings from 2021 to 2025. The report examines migration patterns, labour exploitation and child well-being at brick kilns, and provides a consolidated evidence base for policy engagement and advocacy.

The report underscores the structural invisibility experienced by migrant workers and their families, particularly in relation to access to services, entitlements and protection mechanisms. It also offers recommendations for civil society actors and policymakers to strengthen systems of support and ensure that the rights of migrant children are better recognised, protected and fulfilled. At the time when this Report was written, the final draft of the Research Report is being finalised.

Programme Significance

Taken together, the year’s interventions reinforced HAQ’s commitment to advancing a rights-based, community-informed and evidence-driven model of work with seasonal migrant families. By integrating direct engagement with research, documentation, communications and advocacy, the programme sought not only to respond to immediate needs but also to address the deeper structural factors that perpetuate exclusion and vulnerability. The initiative further affirmed the importance of centring migrant families as active partners in shaping solutions that are grounded in dignity, participation and child rights.

Consultations

In November 2025, HAQ organised a two-day National Consultation of Children, held on 20 and 21 November at Vishwa Yuvak Kendra, Delhi, in collaboration with the Dr. A. V. Baliga Memorial Trust and with support from terre des hommes and BMZ. Held under the banner “Our Dream — Child Labour Free and Safe Spaces” to mark Child Rights Week, it brought together 27 children — 14 girls and 13 boys — from thirteen states: Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Delhi, Uttarakhand, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, West Bengal, Jharkhand, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Manipur, and Assam. HAQ facilitated a mentor-mentee session exploring the challenges migrant children face around education, health, safety, and general well-being, and the children drew up a set of demands that were carried forward to the national consultation held the following month.



On 16 December 2025, HAQ convened “Manthan 2.0,” a National Consultation on Advancing the Rights of Women and Children in Brick Kiln Communities to Health, Nutrition and Integrated Care, at the YMCA in New Delhi, in partnership with CLRA, CEC, the Campaign Against Child Labour (CACL), and the Right to Education Forum. The consultation drew 82 participants — 44 women and 38 men — including civil society organisations, youth, labour unions, researchers, brick kiln owners, and community members, who

discussed integrated approaches to children's rights, inclusive public budgeting, the portability of welfare entitlements across states, cross-state learning, and a collective platform for brick kiln workers' rights.



"Manthan 2.0" National Consultation, YMCA, New Delhi, 16 December 2025.

Three state-level network meetings rounded out the year's consultative work: in Chhattisgarh, 61 participants discussed continuity of education for migrant children; in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh, 42 participants addressed the portability of entitlements; and in Gaya, Bihar, held in March, 40 participants focused on nutrition, vaccination, labour rights, and child protection.

Field visits and district convergence

HAQ's source-area visits covered ten villages across four districts of Chhattisgarh, with stops at schools, Anganwadi centres, hostels, and Panchayat offices. Meetings with the Labour, Health, and Women & Child Development departments, together with district officials, secured commitments to strengthen monitoring of the Migration Register (Palayan Panji), raise awareness and use of Mamta Cards, and hold labour contractors (thekedars) accountable for safe travel and adequate amenities for migrating families. The visits also advanced advocacy for migrant documentation and for Transfer Certificates that let children's education continue across states, and laid the groundwork for pilot interventions in three districts.

District convergence meetings followed in Mathura (11–12 March, 59 participants), which recommended stronger district-level convergence, portability of entitlements, flexible registration, mobile outreach, and support for a transition to low-carbon kilns; in Ajmer (49 participants), which reinforced labour rights, implementation of the POSH Act, mandatory crèche provisions, and measures to secure school admission and child protection; and in Bhilwara (52 participants), which focused on coordinating labour protection, health, nutrition, anti-trafficking work, legal aid, and access to social security. Together, these meetings produced commitments on Aadhaar–mobile linkage, registration under the Building and Other Construction Workers (BOCW) Act, digital literacy, and continued outreach to sustain access to ICDS, education, and ration entitlements.

HAQ also joined the Campaign Against Child Labour's World Day Against Child Labour consultation on 12 June, working alongside the Campaign and the Right to Education Forum to keep child labour, education, and migrant children's rights aligned across partner advocacy.

Sustainable Development for Children in Mining-Affected States

In the final phase of its multi-state mining intervention, HAQ's work reached 100 villages across Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh, and Karnataka — states where mining has disrupted schooling, driven labour migration, and strained children's access to protection and health services. Year III of the project focused on consolidating the previous two years' gains, bringing education, protection, health, nutrition, and climate action together under one strategy anchored in a participatory governance model built around local partners, Gram Panchayats, and District Mineral Foundations (DMFs).

A central thread running through the year was building awareness of the District Mineral Foundation (DMF) Trust and pushing for DMFT funds to be directed toward women and children affected by mining. HAQ worked within the existing government framework, running technical Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP) workshops and District Convergence Meetings to connect policy with practice. Ahead of each convergence, HAQ and its partners did their own groundwork — meeting high-ranking officials and District Collectors individually — which in turn gave local partner organisations greater visibility and standing in their own regions.

Child-friendly Gram Panchayat Development Plans

Gram Panchayat trainings through the first half of 2025 centred on child-centric local governance, with partner organisations following up through regular meetings and field monitoring. Panna, in Madhya Pradesh, stood out as the only district where child-friendly priorities actually made it into formal GPDP documents — the result of sustained engagement that turned a training session into genuine planning commitments, and a model other districts might follow.

When HAQ began working with Gram Panchayat representatives in Panna, most members knew little about how the GPDP process worked, let alone how to bring children's rights into it. A two-day workshop changed that: panchayat members, secretaries, youth leaders, and civil society partners worked through real local problems together — children dropping out after primary school, families migrating for mining work, no child protection committee in place. The training stayed close to practical exercises rather than talking points, and partners kept following up afterward, helping local leaders turn what they had learned into actual GPDP drafts. Panna was the only district where that follow-through happened — evidence that, with the right support, awareness can turn into real institutional commitment.

Multi-stakeholder convergence meetings

Building on this groundwork, HAQ held Multi-Stakeholder Convergence Meetings across five districts — Giridih, Mirzapur, Shivpuri, Panna, and Bagalkot — bringing together 154 participants from children's, youth, self-help, and mine workers' groups. Giridih and Mirzapur met in person; Shivpuri, Panna, and Bagalkot met online because of funding constraints, which kept the meetings on schedule but meant less of the informal relationship-building that usually deepens trust between civil society and government. In Shivpuri, HAQ ran a dedicated session on children's rights covering the POCSO Act, the Juvenile Justice Act, education, and the role of Gram Panchayats in child protection, with government departments — from Labour to Child Welfare Committees — sharing their own initiatives. Each meeting closed with a joint review of progress and a conversation on sustaining the momentum going forward.

Information, education, and communication material

HAQ produced bilingual (Hindi and English) IEC material on child-friendly Panchayats, Silicosis awareness, employer responsibility, and reporting mechanisms against child labour, while bringing national networks together under a shared Charter of Demands. The Silicosis material covers early symptoms and where to

seek help; this and the Panchayat material were shared digitally with implementing partners for their own outreach.

Collaborations and Partnerships

HAQ marked World Day Against Child Labour on 12 June by joining the Campaign Against Child Labour's (CACL) consultation, continuing its long-running collaboration with the Campaign and working alongside the Right to Education Forum to keep child labour, education, and migrant children's rights aligned across partner advocacy.

The year's two major consultations on children in brick kiln communities — the National Consultation of Children in November and “Manthan 2.0” in December, both detailed under Research & Advocacy — were themselves built on multi-partner collaboration, bringing together the Dr. A. V. Baliga Memorial Trust, terre des hommes, BMZ, CLRA, CEC, CACL, and the Right to Education Forum alongside HAQ.

Training and Capacity Building

HAQ's school-based training programme reached more than 2,000 students and over 400 teaching and auxiliary staff during 2025-26, continuing its work on child protection, safety, and rights awareness in the classroom.

Much of this outreach was delivered in partnership with Amazon India, with joint sessions covering child protection, consent, personal safety, safe and unsafe touch, school safety, and adolescent development, extending these conversations across private and government schools alike.



HAQ's other major training initiative of the year — a three-day residential workshop for lawyers held in Bhopal from 13 to 15 June 2025 — is detailed under the Victim Support Programme, above.

Our Team

as on 31 March 2026

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 Kumar Shailabh — Head of Programmes
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 Shiv Pratap Singh
 Tara Narula
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