

HAQ: CENTRE FOR CHILD RIGHTS

ANNUAL REPORT

2024-25

HAQ: CENTRE FOR CHILD RIGHTS
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A MESSAGE FROM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S DESK...



The acknowledgment of children as unique individuals and social actors with entitlement to basic human rights has been the most significant achievement of the child rights sector globally and within India. It came about after challenging deep rooted social norms and behaviour, public policies and practices. Children are no longer viewed as the targets of health, nutrition, care and education services but occupy the centre stage of a more comprehensive framework that incorporates their emotional, psychological, physical, social and environmental needs and aspirations with some efforts to listen to their voices.

In India, a plethora of policies and programmes addressing children's issues are now in place with evident efforts to create systems. Many organisations and entities have emerged with motivation and competence to work on specific children's issues. The available data tells us that the country has been doing well on most indicators related to children. However, the averages hide deeper divides in the lived experiences of children - the rural-urban and those based on caste, religion, region, ethnicity and (dis)ability. HAQ has sought to explore and highlight them in addition to children within issues and sectors that are often not seen to be about children.

But if truth be told, a lot more needs to be done. Times have changed since child rights were conceptualised in the international legal and development discourse. The state can no longer be the only arbiter and implementer of child rights in a more complex and interconnected global order with the advent of digital technologies in every facet of human life and ecological changes. The private sector and the civil society have a way more important role in promoting child rights that they have been credited with. The child rights sector also has to contend with conflicting narratives while championing the basic rights and well-being of every child.

Against this backdrop, HAQ wishes to punch above its weight by working with and for children and adolescents in collaboration with various stakeholders within and beyond the sector, questioning common assumptions, exploring newer vistas and looking for solutions to bring about positive changes and hope.

Neelam Singh
Executive Director,
HAQ: Centre for Child Rights

25 YEARS OF PASSION & PERSEVERANCE

In 2024, HAQ: Centre for Child Rights turned 25. It has been a long, arduous, frustrating and yet fulfilling journey since two women envisioned an organisation that would contribute to realising the rights, dignity and well-being of every child by working for systemic change, guided by justice, and grounded in evidence. Enakshi Ganguly and Bharti Ali with encouragement and support of Adi Patel (Late), a development professional, Urvashi Butalia, a publisher of feminist literature, writer and activist; Jaya Shrivastava, social activist; Aanchal Kapur, development researcher and communicator; Susmit Bose, urban folk singer; and Amar Kanwar, filmmaker, with support of Usha Ramanathan, legal researcher and activist, Achyut Yagnik (Late), journalist and academic, laid the foundation of one of the first few child rights organisations in India.

The question “should we set up yet another organisation in a country that already has so many?” vexed Enakshi in the initial conversations on a comprehensive and inter-sectoral initiative on children and she toyed with the idea of being part of an existing organisation to offset huge organisational costs and avoid duplication of efforts and resources. This line of thinking was abandoned by the time Bharti joined her in 1998 as they could not find an organisation prepared to accommodate their vision and ideas. Both of them wanted to bring together diverse themes, groups, campaigns and initiatives to complement and strengthen each other, which could in

due course lead to a collectively owned child rights movement. The idea was simple and yet difficult - to centre stage the issues of children in the rights-based framework of the country.

The name - HAQ, which in Urdu means "Rights", was chosen for the weight and strength it conveys, especially as children's issues had for long been considered soft and thus never a priority. The logo, which carries a gender neutral image of a dancing child in the 'Q' of the word HAQ, resulted from artful touching up of the doodles by Enakshi's children Shiuli and Atish by Rustam Vania, an illustrator and designer, who offered his services as a gift of love. Syed Mushtaq Ali helped tirelessly in getting HAQ registered and completing all the formalities, while Kishore Thukral bought the first lot of stationery required and loaned his office. Finally, HAQ was registered on 28 June 1999 and it has been a rollercoaster ride ever since.

While the story of the two and a half decades may need to be told another time, an apt conclusion would be the words of the renowned Hindi poet, Late Dushyant Kumar, that we at HAQ use to motivate ourselves and others:



सिर्फ हंगामा खड़ा करना मेरा मकसद नहीं,
सारी कोशिश है कि ये सूरत बदलनी चाहिए।
मेरे सीने में नहीं तो तेरे सीने में सही,
हो कहीं भी आग, लेकिन आग जलनी चाहिए।

“Simply creating noise is not my goal;
the effort is to ensure change.
If not in my heart, at least in yours
- wherever the fire may be, it must keep burning.”

HAQ celebrated its 25th anniversary with its old friends, collaborators, former colleagues, supporters, and well-wishers from across sectors—legal, academic, government, civil society, and international agencies — many of whom having been part of the organisation’s journey since its inception at the India International Centre (IIC), New Delhi.

The evening was a celebration as well as a moment of reflection, honouring the initial vision of the founding members, and the influence of several individuals who helped the organisation evolve over the years. It was a time to acknowledge the strength and resilience of the children and families with whom we have worked over the years and who keep inspiring us to be innovative and assertive.



**WHAT WE HAVE BEEN
UPTO!**

LEGAL AID & CHILD ASSISTANCE

OUR TEAM (Restorative Care)



Varuna

Team Lead, Restorative Care

Programme Officers (Social Workers)



Kushnoor Bano



Meeta Bhandari



Nisha



Poonam



Pooja



Safeena Bano



Sakshi Arya



Vipin Maurya

Programme Assistant (Assistant Social Workers)



Noor Jahan



Shmreen

LEGAL AID & CHILD ASSISTANCE

OUR TEAM



In Memory of Bhawana Joshi!

With profound sorrow, we share the passing of our dear colleague, Ms. Bhawana Joshi. A dedicated social worker and a cherished member of the HAQ family, Bhawana's deep commitment to child rights and justice left an indelible mark on countless lives.

Her warmth, compassion, and relentless spirit inspired us all. While words cannot express our loss, we find solace in the impact she made and the lives she touched.

Our thoughts are with her family and loved ones during this difficult time. She will always be remembered, honored, and missed.

LEGAL AID & CHILD ASSISTANCE

OUR TEAM (Legal Intervention)



Anant Kumar Asthana
Mentor, Legal Team

Lawyers



Adv. Ashish Kumar



Adv. Arvind Kumar



Adv. Bahuli Sharma



Adv. Debabrata Reddy



Adv. Nidhi Nagpal



Adv. Sakshi Jayant



Adv. Shiv Pratap



Adv. Tara Narula



Adv. Vineet Dwivedi



**Adv. Zishaan
Iskandari**

Law Clerk



Sanjay Singh

MIS Management



Dhan Pal

IMPROVING EXPERIENCES OF CHILD VICTIMS OF SEXUAL ABUSE: A RESTORATIVE CARE APPROACH

In 2024-25, the last year of second phase of support from Azim Premji Foundation, HAQ: Centre for Child Rights continued to provide legal aid and psycho-social assistance to child survivors of sexual abuse. We received a total of 568 referrals of child sexual abuse (CSA) cases from a diverse set of stakeholders including Child Welfare Committees (CWCs), Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), Police, Child Care Institutions (CCIs), and concerned individuals during April 2024 and March 2025. Every referred child underwent a rigorous exercise of needs assessment prior to focussed interventions.

Of the 568 referrals, HAQ's legal team represented 34 cases before Juvenile Justice Boards (JJBs) and Special POCSO Courts while children were provided only psycho-social services in the remaining 534 cases. These interventions ensured improved experiences of the victims in a complex criminal justice system and strengthened their resilience to overcome the trauma of abuse. By the end of March 2025, HAQ was providing active legal representation in 380 cases before the JJBs, Special POCSO Courts, Children's Courts and Delhi High Court.

During this period, the courts disposed of 52 cases with HAQ's consistent legal follow-up and active representation of child victims before Courts contributing to a high conviction rate. A total of 31 convictions were secured, 14 resulted in acquittals, 2 cases were abated, 2 involved proclaimed offenders (POs), and one case was closed through a closure report by the police. A review to assess the need for legal remedy or appeal followed each of these outcomes.

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

- Four applications opposing bail of the accused in sensitive cases to protect and prevent re-traumatisation of the CSA victims;
- One criminal appeal challenging an acquittal in pursuit of justice for the CSA victim;
- Twenty six applications opposing the appeals filed by

the accused against conviction to ensure sentences were upheld and survivors' rights were protected;

- Two appeals against criminal revision orders that adversely impacted the survivor's access to justice.

HAQ's interventions have been based in the restorative care approach, combining the psycho-social rehabilitation and legal aid, and clubbed with robust case management, monitoring, and generation of datasets often unavailable in the public domain but are essential for improved understanding of the justice system for children.

Of the 568 referrals received in the year 2024-25, in 75 cases emotional needs were identified. Similarly, in 134 cases medical needs were identified. Overall, in 25% cases, HAQ team was able to full-fill all the needs, while in 59% cases, efforts are still ongoing at the time of writing this report.

Psycho-Social Intervention: A Snapshot

Emotional Need	Needs Identified	Needs Fully Met	Efforts Ongoing
	75 Cases	23 Cases	48 Cases
Medical Need			
	32 Cases	18 Cases	11 Cases
Shelter Protection Need			
	28 Cases	12 Cases	12 Cases
Education Need			
	52 Cases	12 Cases	38 Cases
Financial Need			
	134 Cases	7 Cases	82 Cases
Paralegal Need			
	86 Cases	28 Cases	51 Cases
Familial Need			
	17 Cases	5 Cases	11 Cases

Legal Intervention: A Snapshot



347 children represented in courts

- Juvenile Justice Boards
- Sessions Courts
- Delhi High Court



Case Outcomes (52 disposed cases)

- ✓ 31 Convictions
- ✗ 14 Acquittals
- ⊘ 2 Abated
- 🚫 2 Proclaimed Offenders
- 📁 1 Closure Report filed by police



High Court Filings (33 Cases)

- 4 Bail Oppositions
- 📄 1 Appeal against Acquittal
- 📄 26 Responses to Appeals by Accused
- 🌱 2 Appeals in Criminal Revision

Unspoken Courage... A Story of Resilience

Dev (name changed), aged 16, is the eldest among 5 brothers and one sister. Both the parents are engaged in manual labour while the siblings take care of each other in their absence. Dev's mental and physical disabilities make communication with others difficult, more so as his mental age is of a 5 year old.

One evening in 2020 when he went out to play, he was taken to an abandoned construction site and sexually assaulted. He tried to make a noise or cry for help but was beaten every time. Even two years after the incident, Dev could not testify in court due to the unavailability of a special educator who could understand and help him speak in court.

The lawyer from HAQ informed the court about his condition and requested the court to appoint a special educator. Following the inability of the judge to communicate with the child, a special educator was appointed. Notwithstanding repeated efforts by the social worker assigned to the case, the special educator could not undertake sessions with the child victim and even failed to appear before the court on the date of the hearing.

To build on the advantage for the accused, his lawyer falsely claimed to know the special educator from other cases pleaded that the special educator does not want to associate herself with the case without any basis to create doubt in the mind of the court and that the child victim should be dropped as a witness so that the main

witness against his client does not testify. Countering this claim, HAQ's lawyer submitted that if the claims of the defence about knowing the special educator are true, there is a possibility of her being influenced by the defence in the future and therefore, a new special educator must be appointed. Agreeing with the submission, the court directed the HAQ lawyer to coordinate the sessions to assist the family and the newly appointed special educator.

Dev and the special educator were able to communicate well after four sessions. But as the special educator had never testified in a court and had many questions and doubts about the legal procedures and the child victim was also nervous, the HAQ lawyer recreated the vulnerable witness deposition centre in the court and organised a mock testimony session. The special educator sat in her office with the child ready for a video call to him with earphones in their ears while the lawyer sitting outside enacted the roles of the public prosecutor and defence lawyer. He asked them questions just as they do in the deposition centres. At the end of the session, a smiling Dev looked ready to testify in the court and the special educator felt confident about the court processes and proceedings.

Section 164 (5A) (b) Cr.P.C. allows the statement of a physically or mentally disabled victim given in the presence of a Metropolitan Magistrate to be considered in place of examination in chief during the testimony of the victim in cases of sexual abuse. Dev did not have to repeat everything that happened to him and just needed to respond to the questions of the accused's lawyer.

Clearly unhappy about this, the defence lawyer made an application to the court that the investigating officer of the case had not put on record anything that confirmed the disability of the child victim and that disability cannot become a fact in a case merely on the basis of a court observation without any expert opinion. The HAQ lawyer countered that he had placed the medical documents as well as the disability certificate of the child victim while filing the interim compensation application three weeks ago, which made the disability certificate a part of the record. The court dismissed the application of the defence lawyer.

Dev answered every question well and did so very comfortably. His testimony was concluded after two years of uncertainty, which means he could put the case behind him and get on with his life.

ANNUAL FACTBOOK: MAKING THE UNAVAILABLE AVAILABLE

As part of its commitment to evidence-based advocacy and knowledge creation, HAQ: Centre for Child Rights continued to compile its field interventions into an accessible and data-driven resource. The Annual Factbook is a comprehensive set of factsheets that present critical insights into the patterns, challenges, and outcomes of support extended to child victims of sexual abuse. It serves as a unique repository of judicial data related to POCSO Act that is otherwise scattered or unavailable or inaccessible. This initiative seeks to promote transparency, accountability, and informed policy dialogue on child protection and justice delivery.

Like every year, HAQ published the Annual Factbook 2024 highlighting the crucial dataset which provides insights into the implementation of POCSO Act in Delhi. The publication includes aggregated datasets from HAQ's direct intervention work, capturing both psychosocial and legal support provided to children. It highlights case trajectories, trial durations, conviction rates, and the role of support systems throughout the legal process. By systematically documenting these details, the Factbook not only validates the experiences of child victims but also draws attention to systemic gaps and areas in need of urgent reform.



TOWARDS A TRAUMA-INFORMED JUSTICE SYSTEM FOR CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE SURVIVORS: MULTI- STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION



On 12th March 2025, HAQ: Centre for Child Rights organised a Multi-Stakeholder Consultation on Restorative Care and Access to Justice at the India International Centre, New Delhi. Anchored in HAQ's decade-long work with child sexual abuse (CSA) survivors, the consultation brought together legal professionals, child protection authorities, mental health experts, social workers, and civil society representatives to collectively address the systemic gaps in India's response to CSA.

Despite the legal safeguards provided under the POCSO Act, 2012, survivors of child sexual abuse often face secondary victimisation within the justice system due to repeated disclosures, lack of coordination among institutions, prolonged legal processes, and insufficient psychosocial care. The consultation aimed to address these challenges by fostering dialogue on building a survivor-centric, trauma-informed framework that promotes healing alongside justice.



The event featured two critical panel discussions:

“Bridging the Gap: Integrating Trauma-Informed Care into the Criminal Justice System” and **“Healing Beyond the Courtroom: Building Resilience and Mental Well-being for CSA Survivors.”** Participants included key representatives from the Delhi Legal Services Authority, Special Police Unit for Women and Children, Child Welfare Committees, the India Alternative Care Network, Delhi High Court, and grassroots organisations working closely with survivors and their families.

Discussions emphasised the importance of early psychological interventions, the role of trained support persons and trauma-informed professionals, and the need for seamless coordination across legal, medical, and protection systems. The consultation also highlighted the urgency of shifting from a punitive approach to a more restorative, child-sensitive justice model that upholds the dignity and rights of CSA survivors.

This consultation marked a significant step in HAQ’s advocacy for integrated, trauma-informed child protection responses and set the tone for future collaborative efforts toward systemic reform.

PROMOTING AND IMPROVING CHILDREN'S ACCESS TO JUSTICE

HAQ: Centre for Child Rights, in collaboration with UNICEF India, embarked on implementing a multi-state initiative aimed at strengthening child-friendly justice systems and improving access to justice for children. Launched in 2023, the programme covered two districts each across three States and one Union Territory—Jammu & Kashmir (Jammu and Srinagar), Madhya Pradesh (Indore and Jabalpur), Rajasthan (Jaipur and Jodhpur), and Uttar Pradesh (Meerut and Prayagraj).

This intervention was grounded in collaborative action, leveraging the shared commitment and ownership of UNICEF State Offices, State and District Legal Services Authorities (SLSAs and DLSAs), and the Juvenile Justice Committees of the High Courts. It also relied on the active involvement of the police, child protection systems, and other key justice actors.

Key Programme Components and Achievements

1. Capacity Building of Legal Aid Lawyers and Para-Legal Volunteers

Recognizing the importance of a trained and sensitized justice ecosystem, HAQ facilitated intensive capacity-building workshops for Legal Aid Lawyers and Para-Legal Volunteers (PLVs) in multiple districts.

In Madhya Pradesh, two training programmes were successfully conducted in Indore (May 2024) and Jabalpur (September 2024). These were supported by the Madhya Pradesh State Legal Services

Authority (MPSLSA) and inaugurated by senior High Court judges, including the then Acting Chief Justice of Madhya Pradesh High Court, Hon'ble Justice Sanjeev Sachdeva reflecting strong institutional backing.

- Over 130 participants, including lawyers, PLVs, and law students, were trained on child protection laws, diversionary mechanisms under the JJ Act, 2015, and best practices for child-sensitive legal representation.
- Participants received customized legal kits, including bare acts, judgements, resource guides, and digital training materials to enhance post-training application and retention



Child Rights Training Programme for Lawyers and Para Legal Volunteers

Organized by Madhya Pradesh State Legal Services Authority
in collaboration with
HAQ: Centre for Child Rights and UNICEF



Chief Guest:

Hon'ble Shri Justice Sanjeev Sachdeva
Acting Chief Justice
High Court of Madhya Pradesh

Guest of Honor:

Hon'ble Shri Justice Vivek Agarwal
Judge
High Court of Madhya Pradesh



21.09.24 – 24.09.24



MPSLSA Auditorium



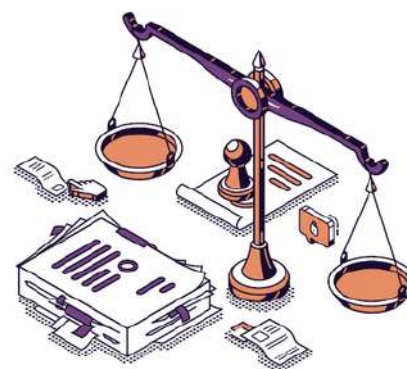
2. Launch of the HAQ Child Rights Legal Fellowship (HAQCRLF)

- A flagship component of the programme is the Child Rights Legal Fellowship, aimed at creating a dedicated cadre of lawyers equipped to represent children in conflict with the law and victims of abuse.
- The Fellowship was rolled out across all eight districts, with a structured selection process including written assessments and panel interviews led by experienced child rights lawyers, academics, and state representatives.
- The Fellowship, launched in May 2024 at RML National Law University (RMLNLU), Lucknow, aimed to build a dedicated cadre of young lawyers trained in child rights litigation to represent children before Juvenile Justice Boards, Children's Courts, and POCSO Special Courts. The structured programme included orientation, ongoing mentorship, and practical case engagement.
- A total of 18 Fellows (3 per district) were selected and began engaging with trial courts, Juvenile Justice Boards (JJBs), and Children's Courts.
- During the course of the Fellowship, 95 cases of child rights violations (including cases of Children in need of care and protection as well as children in conflict with law) were taken up by Fellows, providing those children with quality legal representation.
- A mentorship model was instituted with two senior mentors—Adv. Anant Asthana and Adv. Abdul Rashid Malik—providing strategic legal guidance and district-specific support. Monthly check-ins and Case Review and Strategy Discussions (CRSDs) have been held, fostering collective problem-solving and learning



3. Strengthening Standards of Child-Friendly Legal Practice

To institutionalize best practices, HAQ developed a Handbook on Diversion and the Role of Duty Bearers. Diversion and Non-Custodial Alternatives to Detention have been the guiding principles of juvenile justice across the globe. In India too, the law has changed with time to incorporate these principles. However, application of the Principle of Diversion in the administration of juvenile justice requires a greater understanding of the concept and guidance on how it can be rolled out effectively using the current provisions of the law. The highlight of the handbook is reference to the international standards and the various provisions in the national law, which can be used by different authorities to apply and implement diversion and non-custodial measures at different stages of a case. The Handbook was finalized and a digital print copy was prepared. This could not be published and shared widely as the approval from UNICEF is pending.



A HANDBOOK ON
**Alternative
Approaches
and Strategies
for Dealing with
Children in Conflict
with the Law**

POCSO VICTIM SUPPORT PROGRAMME IN MADHYA PRADESH AND ODISHA

Laws such as the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act are undoubtedly progressive but the survivors of child sexual abuse (CSA) face immense challenges in accessing justice and care due to a lack of trained support persons in remote areas, secondary trauma due to insensitive handling by institutions, poor coordination between child protection systems, victims and their families and legal systems, lack of affordable quality legal representation, and the inability of the system to adopt a holistic trauma informed psycho-social rehabilitative approach. Against this backdrop, HAQ: Centre for Child Rights initiated a Victim Support Programme across the states of Madhya Pradesh and Odisha to strengthen institutional responses to CSA by building a robust Support Person programme based on HAQ's restorative care model of intervention with victims.

This initiative has been made possible through collaboration with five grassroots partner organisations, namely Aarambh (in Bhopal and Indore), Catalyst for Social Action (in Jabalpur and Ujjain) and Aawaz (in Bhopal and Katni) from Madhya Pradesh and Disha (in Sundergarh) and Ruchika (in Jajpur) from Odisha and financial support of Azim Premji Foundation. The partner organisations have decades of work experience in child protection, legal aid, and community mobilisation and their grassroots presence and credibility in tribal and rural districts is valuable for ensuring sustained and localised child victim support.

As part of the initiative, HAQ: Centre for Child Rights organised a five-day residential training programme for newly appointed Support Persons associated with partner organisations in Bhopal from 22 to 26 November 2024.



The training enabled the participants to deep dive into the roles and responsibilities of Support Persons as defined under the POCSO Act, child psychology and trauma-informed engagement, as well as understand the intricacies of court procedures, evidence handling, and FIR registration, given the highly procedural nature of cases under POCSO. Special emphasis was on inter-agency coordination—particularly how Support Persons can effectively liaise with the police, Child Welfare Committees (CWCs), Juvenile Justice Boards (JJBs), and District Legal Services Authorities (DLSAs)—to ensure timely and appropriate support for the child.

The training adopted a participatory and experiential learning approach. Sessions were designed to include role plays and case simulations, allowing participants to enact real-world scenarios and practise their responses in a safe learning environment. Since the genesis of this whole initiative has been HAQ's Restorative Care Model of intervention with child victims of sexual abuse, the approach of the training was more towards the knowledge sharing and experience sharing. Therefore, HAQ's team of experienced social workers, Ms. Kushnoor Bano and Ms. Safeena Bano were included for the first time for a training of this nature. On the other hand, Ms. Varuna and Kumar Shailabh alongwith partner organisations played a significant role in designing and executing this training programme.

This intensive training initiative allowed HAQ to lay the foundation of a district-level victim support system embedded within local civil society networks. These trained Support Persons can bridge the gap between child survivors and the justice system, offer both legal handholding and emotional support through every stage of the judicial process. The training marks a significant step forward in HAQ's mission to institutionalise trauma-informed, child-friendly justice practices in underserved regions.

As a part of this initiative, two trained social workers from HAQ also made 5-days visits to DISHA and RUCHIKA in Odisha for handholding the teams on the ground while making interventions with child victims of sexual abuse. These field visits are designed to provide real time assistance to the team which was trained during the 5-day training programme at Bhopal in November 2024. During the visits, HAQ team alongwith the team of social workers and counsellors met with various stakeholders and shared the experiences of working closely with child protection functionaries to ensure meaningful rehabilitation of the victims of child sexual abuse. A similar visit will be conducted with other partner organisations as well to facilitate the understanding and learnings from the training programme in handling the cases of child sexual abuse.



This initiative holds significance in terms of expanding a holistic victim support programme to small districts and tier two cities where no such victim support programme is being offered either by the State machinery or by the civil society organisations. After the guidelines issued by the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) qua the appointment of Support Person in POCSO cases, this programme can prove to be a milestone in the quest of justice and rehabilitation for child victims of sexual abuse. During the visits to project areas in Odisha, it was observed that the key stakeholders are either not aware of many of the provisions of POCSO which often creates hurdles in rehabilitation of victims. As the partner organisations are taking the learnings of the 5-day workshop in their field areas, it resonates with the rationale of launching this initiative. In the remaining period of this intervention, HAQ team will be engaging closely with team of lawyers from the partner organisations as well so that the concept of rehabilitation of child victims does not remain limited only to stakeholders like Child Welfare Committees, but the understanding of rehabilitation and child- friendliness gets realised within the complex judicial system.

CHILD ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME: COVID-19 SPONSORSHIP SUPPORT

In the aftermath of COVID-19 pandemic, HAQ: Centre for Child Rights had initiated COVID-19 Sponsorship Support Programme to provide sustained educational assistance to children who had lost one or both parents to the pandemic. In 2024-25, 14 children (including 6 girls and 8 boys) continued to benefit from this programme, which covers their school fees, stationery, uniforms, and other essential educational needs. They were able to continue their education with dignity and stability.

The programme, launched in collaboration with the Delhi Commission for Protection of Child Rights (DCPCR) and an initial grant support in terms of INR 10 lakh from Vedantu, an online learning platform, enabled HAQ to reach 25 children in the first year. Mr. Donald Lobo, through DASRA, provided critical support for the second year, ensuring that the children did not face interruptions in their schooling. To sustain the initiative beyond the initial support cycles, HAQ launched a crowdfunding campaign in August 2023 to mobilise public contributions. The funds raised through this effort helped cover most of the programme costs during the year. A one-month funding gap which emerged was generously covered by Youthreach, a non-profit organisation working extensively in the areas of child welfare, disability, youth development, and environmental sustainability.

Youthreach has continued its partnership with HAQ by committing support for the children in the current academic year as well. Their contribution has played a vital role in bridging funding gaps and ensuring uninterrupted educational access for the sponsored children.

Through the continued collaboration with philanthropic partners and supporters, the COVID-19 Sponsorship Support Programme reflects HAQ's commitment to ensuring all rights for all children by reaching out to those children who have not been covered by the State interventions targeted for children affected by the pandemic.

RESEARCH & ADVOCACY

OUR TEAM



Monika Shailesh



Shubhangi Sharma



Garima Sharma



Dhan Pal



Kumar Shailabh



Sneha Bhati

BUDGET FOR CHILDREN: QUICK ANALYSIS

Every year, HAQ: Centre for Child Rights undertakes a rigorous and time-sensitive analysis of the Union Budget of India, examining the (shifting) priorities for children. Budget for Children (BfC) analysis has been a constant feature of HAQ's work on looking at the governance of children related programmes and has established itself as one of the most impactful interventions since the inception.

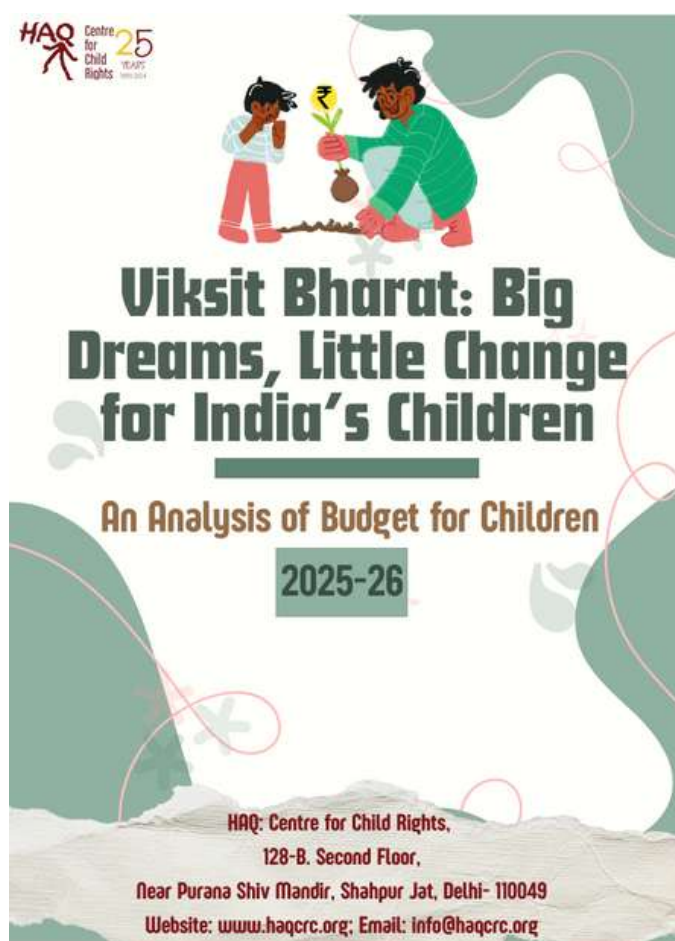
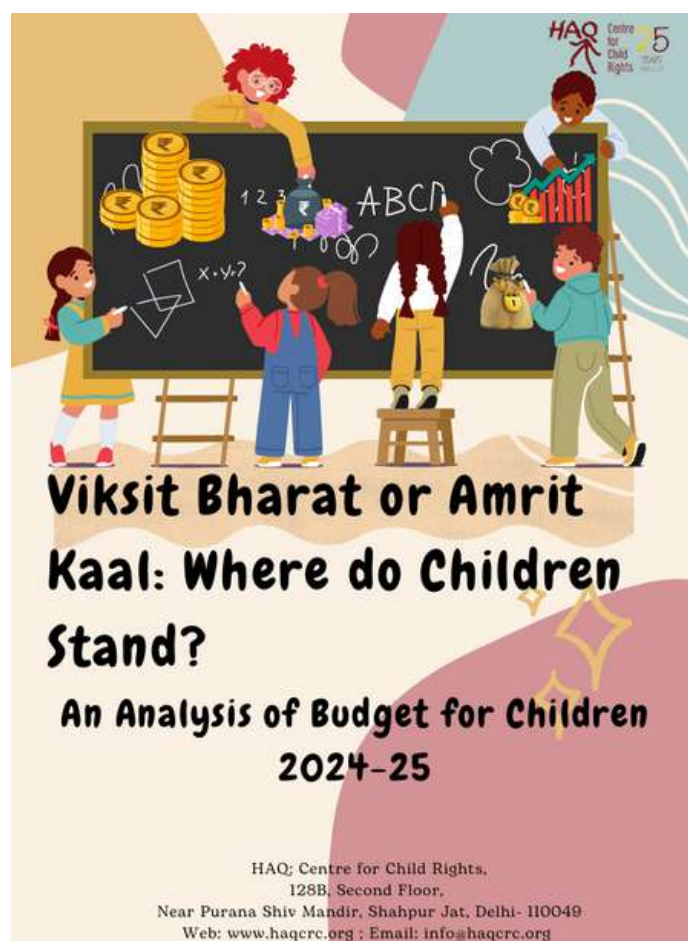
After having done the analysis of the interim Union Budget of the outgoing Government in February 2024, HAQ released a quick analysis of the full Union Budget 2024-25 as the new Government assumed power in June. With the formation of the new Government, hopes and priorities were renewed for children and therefore the analysis of the full-fledged Union Budget was an important task focussed on identifying how children had been prioritised in terms of fiscal resource allocation.

In February–March 2025, HAQ published its detailed BfC report on the Union Budget 2025-26, dissecting allocations across child protection, development, education and health

sectors using data from Statement 12—the official government disclosure on child-related spending.

Despite being positioned as blueprints for a "Viksit Bharat", both the 2024-25 and 2025-26 Union Budgets offered little real change for India's children. In fact, the share of children in the Union Budget has continued to decline. In 2024-25, the share of BfC stood at 2.28%, and further dropped slightly to 2.29% in 2025-26, continuing a downward trend from 4.76% in 2012-13.

Though the absolute allocation towards child-related schemes did increase marginally—from ₹1,09,920.95 crores in 2024-25 to ₹1,16,132.50 crore in 2025-26—the real share of children in the total Union Budget remained negligible. In both years, child education consumed the maximum share of allocation (around 77%), while child protection remained severely underfunded at just 0.04% of the total budget.



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FOR CHILDREN IN THE MINING AFFECTED STATES IN INDIA

HAQ: Centre for Child Rights launched a multi-stakeholder intervention in 2023 to address the systemic vulnerabilities of children and families living in and around mining zones across Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, and Karnataka in collaboration with grassroots partner organisations and with financial support of *terre des hommes* and *Misereor*. Incorporating a comprehensive range of activities aimed at building community capacity, generating evidence, and influencing policy for children's rights in mining areas, the intervention seeks to uphold the right of mining-affected children and their families to sustainable development, rooted in social justice, environmental restoration, and inclusive governance of the sector.

1. Building an Evidence Base: Child Labour Geotagging and Interviews

In 2024–25, a child labour database was developed through geotagging and stakeholder interviews. Training sessions on geotagging were conducted in Mirzapur (UP) and Bagalkot (Karnataka) and real-time orientation was made possible through field visits to mining zones. Data on child protection, dropout rates, and service delivery gaps collected through interviews with Gram Panchayat members, district officials, and civil society actors was used in district-level advocacy.

2. Advancing Child-Friendly Governance through GPDPs

Two-day workshops were conducted across all five project districts to integrate children's concerns into Gram Panchayat Development Plans (GPDPs). With over 260 participants, including Panchayat members, youth, and community leaders, the workshops led to the prioritisation of education, nutrition, and safety issues in the local development agenda.

3. Strengthening Community-Government Dialogue: District Convergence Meetings

District-level convergence meetings were organised in four districts in Year I and across all project locations in Year II, reaching a total of 184 participants in the latter phase. These meetings brought together children's and youth groups, SHGs, mine workers, and government stakeholders from Labour, Education, Women and Child Development, DMF Trusts, and more. The meetings

created spaces for direct dialogue on access to schemes, labour practices, and DMF fund utilisation. The growing attendance and engagement each year reflects increasing community trust and enhanced coordination between civil society and local administration.

4. National Policy Engagement

HAQ amplified local concerns through **national forums and networks**, linking the mining intervention with broader child rights movements. Highlights include:

- Participation in a National Consultation on Child Labour in Mining (June 2024) with CACL, UNICEF, and ILO.
- A multi-network dialogue at the Constitution Club of India (December 2024), which was attended by two Members of Parliament and civil society leaders.
- Flagging of the educational needs of mining-area children at the meetings of the RTE Forum.
- Conversations on the concept of Child-Friendly Panchayats with national experts.

These platforms helped local partners understand national discourses and strengthened efforts to connect field-level experiences with macro-level advocacy.

5. Information and Education Materials (IEC)

To support outreach and rights awareness, HAQ designed and distributed brochures on reporting mechanisms for child labour, available in English and Hindi. Further IEC materials focused on District Mineral Foundation Trusts (DMFTs) and local rights mechanisms are being developed to support Year III advocacy.

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What to do when you spot a child working in your area?

As per The Child and Adolescent Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Amendment Act, 2016 "child" means a person who has not completed his fourteenth year of age.

HAQ Centre for Child Rights
25th Anniversary
For more information, Contact Us
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Roles and Responsibilities

- Once you meet the child, make the child comfortable and try figuring out why the child is working.
- Obtain basic details about child's name, education, family details and place of stay.
- Assess the kind of work child does, working condition and working hours.

Process of Reporting

Process Number 1

Step 1: Call 112 or 1098

Step 2: Following details are to be shared:

- Name of the child (if known).
- Age (an estimate).
- Description of the Child. (Physical appearance).
- Address (specifically give the exact location and nearby landmarks, if known)

Process Number 2

- Step 1:** Search PENCIL Portal on google (<https://pencil.gov.in/Complaints/add>)
- Step 2:** Go to fifth section called "Complaint/Report Child"
- Step 3:** Click on New Complaint
- Step 4:** Page will navigate to a form named "Complaint Form (Child Labour)".
- Step 5:** Enter details in the form and click on submit.

Process Number 3

- Step 1:** Visit your nearest police station
- Step 2:** Lodge a complaint against Child Labour
- Step 3:** While filing an FIR, one must try to give as much information as possible about the incident.
- Step 4:** One can simply dial 100 to complain against child labour.

Child Welfare Committee located in each district can also be reached for reporting of Child Labour.

PROMOTING THE HEALTH, NUTRITION AND RIGHTS OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN IN BRICK KILNS

HAQ: Centre for Child Rights entered Year 4 of its intervention with children and their families working at brick kilns in Surur (Uttar Pradesh), Ajmer and Bhilwada (Rajasthan). Initiated with support from BMZ and Terre des Hommes Germany, the intervention aims to secure the right to food, health, and nutrition for women and children working in brick kilns, while advocating for dignity of labour and decent working conditions. The initiative also seeks to bridge the data and policy gap around brick kilns—an area that, despite persistent challenges, remains under-researched in the Indian child rights landscape.

In partnership with Centre for Labour Action and Research (CLRA) and Centre for Education and Communication (CEC), HAQ has been able to access the kilns and engage directly with workers, facilitating a range of evidence-based, participatory interventions.

One of the core components of the programme was the delivery of health budget training sessions, which were conducted across project sites. A total of 29 training sessions reached 1,094 families, both new and returning.

These sessions focused on equipping families with the knowledge and tools to prepare weekly health budgets and to recognise the nutritional value of locally available foods. A notable outcome of this intervention was a marked shift in health-seeking behaviour, with many families now preferring to access government healthcare services over costly and often unregulated private village clinics.

In 2024-25, HAQ released two editions of the project newsletter, capturing ground realities, success stories, and ongoing challenges. These newsletters have become an important communication tool for sharing updates with supporters, donors, and policymakers, and for building solidarity around the rights of children and families in the brick kiln sector.



HAQ also strengthened its advocacy and national-level by engaging with various prominent national networks. In April 2024, HAQ participated at the National Summit on the Right to Education in Delhi, which brought together 68 representatives from 7 national campaigns and civil society organizations (CSOs). During the Summit, discussions focused on infrastructure deficits in Indian schools and the educational challenges faced by migrant children, particularly those working in the brick kiln sector. Later in the year, on December 5, 2024, HAQ joined hands with the Campaign Against Child Labour (CACL) to organise a Dialogue with Parliamentarians on a

Child Labour-Free India. The event brought together civil society organisations and policymakers to deliberate on child labour in hazardous sectors such as brick kilns. During this dialogue, HAQ, along with its partners CLRA and CEC, presented a policy brief titled **“Urgent Attention Required to Ensure Portable Benefits for Children of Brick Kiln Workers”**, which highlighted the lack of continuity in health, education, and nutritional entitlements for migrant families, and called for immediate policy attention.

To reinforce the messages of the health and nutrition budgeting trainings and to promote sustainable behavioural change, HAQ developed and distributed five information, education, and communication (IEC) posters. These focused on practical health and nutrition topics such as water purification methods, the benefits of cooking in iron utensils to reduce anaemia, and the nutritional value of citrus fruits and green vegetables. These IEC materials were discussed during community meetings involving both male and female workers, creating shared spaces for learning and reflection within the brick kiln communities



COLLABORATIONS AND PARTNERSHIPS

OUR TEAM



Neelam Singh



Kumar Shailabh



Preeti Singh



Raman Sharma

COLLABORATION WITH CAMPAIGN AGAINST CHILD LABOUR (CACL)

#CHILDLABOURFREEINDIA - 12 JUNE 2023

To mark the World Day Against Child Labour on June 12, 2024, HAQ: Centre for Child Rights collaborated with the Campaign Against Child Labour (CACL) to support and amplify a 44-day national online campaign titled #ShramNahiShiksha was launched on April 30, 2024.

The campaign culminated in a National Consultation held at the Constitution Club of India, New Delhi, under the banner “Let’s Act on our Commitment: End Child Labour.” The event was designed not only as a space for reflection on campaign learnings, but also as a platform for urgent policy dialogue. The Consultation brought together over 100 participants representing grassroots organisations, national alliances, and UN agencies.



The consultation opened with a welcome and campaign overview by Mr. Ashok Kumar, National Convener of CACL, followed by a panel discussion which explored the impact of mining on children and families, challenges in accessing DMF funds, and emerging practices such as Child Friendly Gram Panchayat Development Plans and Child Friendly Villages. Representatives from UNICEF, Mines, Minerals & People (MMP), Aadhar, MSEMVS, and HAQ shared insights on ground realities and systemic bottlenecks.

Subsequent sessions featured remarks from the International Labour Organization (ILO) and Terre des Hommes (Zimbabwe), regional campaign reflections, and expressions of solidarity from national networks such as the Right to Education Forum, EDUCO, NACG for Ending Violence Against Children, and Youth Ecological Sustainability (YES). The day concluded with a cultural evening showcasing children’s creative expressions through theatre and music.



HAQ AT 9TH CRC ASIA PACIFIC CHILD RIGHTS COALITION MEETING AT PHILIPPINES

In July 2024, HAQ: Centre for Child Rights was invited to participate in the Asia Pacific Partnership Meeting of Child Rights Coalitions and Networks (APPM), held from 31 July to 2 August 2024 in Manila, Philippines, and hosted by Child Rights Coalition Asia (CRC Asia). The meeting brought together regional and national coalitions to reflect on emerging child rights challenges and opportunities in the Asia-Pacific region. The meeting served as a critical platform to align regional priorities with global child rights agendas, engage in collective learning, and strengthen civil society collaboration.

The Asia Pacific Partnership Meeting (APPM) underscored key emerging priorities in the global child rights landscape, including the urgent need to integrate children's rights into climate action, digital safety, and education. Drawing on UNCRC General Comment No. 26, the meeting stressed environmental protection as a child rights issue and highlighted efforts toward a new Optional Protocol to guarantee early childhood and free secondary education. It also addressed the impact of evolving technologies like Generative AI on children, the importance of gender-transformative approaches to tackle malnutrition and adolescent pregnancy, and the development of General Comment No. 27 to strengthen children's access to justice through timely and child-sensitive remedies.



TRAINING AND CAPACITY BUILDING

OUR TEAM



Neelam Singh



Kushnoor Bano



Safeena Bano



Varuna



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Adv. Ashish Kumar



Adv. Zishaan Iskandari



Garima Sharma



Adv. Sakshi Jayant



Adv. Shiv Pratap

TRAINING & CAPACITY BUILDING

Training and Capacity Building remains a core intervention of HAQ: Centre for Child Rights' efforts to promote and protect all rights for all children. In 2024–25, HAQ focussed on school-based training programmes, recognising the need to reach out to children and not only make them aware about their rights but also talk to them about the issues which are evolving in everyday life and impacting them directly or indirectly.

Throughout the year, the HAQ team conducted customised sessions with school students across age groups, addressing a range of child safety and protection issues. These included sessions on safe and unsafe touch, online safety, understanding consent, and building respectful relationships. The sessions were designed to be age-appropriate, interactive, and inclusive, ensuring that children could openly discuss concerns and learn about available support mechanisms.

HAQ team was invited by Tagore International School and Laxman Public School to engage with students from Grades 6 to 12, offering structured, need-based training aligned with the developmental stages of adolescents. These sessions empowered students with both knowledge and confidence to identify, report, and respond to risks in their surroundings.

In addition to individual school engagements, HAQ continued its ongoing partnership with Amazon India to extend outreach to both private and government schools across Delhi NCR. These joint awareness sessions provided crucial knowledge to children from diverse socio-economic backgrounds, further strengthening the programme's inclusivity and impact.

Over the course of the year, HAQ's school training initiatives reached a total of 5,704 students and 88 teaching and auxiliary staff members, building capacities to identify and address child protection concerns within school ecosystems. Apart from conducting School Training Programmes, HAQ's team of trainers also conducted sessions with Investigating Officers from various police districts in collaboration with the Special Police Unit for Women and Children (SPUWAC).



OTHER INITIATIVES

HAQ's Submission on the Draft General Comment No. 27 (Access to Justice) to UN Committee on CRC

In 2024, HAQ: Centre for Child Rights contributed to the development of the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child's General Comment No. 27, which focuses on children's rights to access to justice and effective remedies. As part of the global consultative process, HAQ submitted detailed inputs, drawing from its experience of working with child victims, survivors of abuse, and children in contact with the law. The submission highlighted the importance of experience-centric justice systems, emphasising the need for child-friendly procedures, age-appropriate legal remedies, and investment in skilled professionals to support rehabilitation and reintegration.

HAQ also advocated for the establishment of a Child Justice Fund, free and quality legal aid at the first point of contact, and recognition of informal justice mechanisms—while ensuring safeguards against discrimination and power imbalances. The submission called attention to the unique barriers faced by children from marginalised communities, including girls, children with disabilities, transgender children, and indigenous groups, and underlined the role of civil society in bridging systemic gaps.

Inputs on General Comment No. 27 Children's Rights to Access to Justice and Effective Remedies



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INTERNSHIP PROGRAMME

HAQ: Centre for Child Rights continues to engage with students through its internship programme, offering them an opportunity to contribute to ongoing research, advocacy, and field-based interventions. In 2024-25, HAQ hosted interns from diverse academic backgrounds and institutions, including the National Law School of India University, Jamia Millia Islamia University, Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), Department of Sociology at Gandhigram Rural Institute, and Symbiosis Law School, Noida. The internship programme attracted students pursuing law, sociology, social work, and development studies, who brought with them a keen interest in child rights and social justice. Interns were involved in supporting HAQ's legal aid and child assistance work, field documentation, analysis of child budget data, and resource development. The programme not only enriched the interns' understanding of rights-based approaches and ground realities but also enabled HAQ to strengthen its own work through the interns' valuable contributions.

HAQ'S ADMIN & FINANCE TEAM



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Tekchand
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