



CENTRE FOR CHILD RIGHTS

NATIONAL LAW UNIVERSITY ODISHA



NEWSLETTER
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PREFACE

We are delighted to present the second edition of our bi-monthly newsletter, continuing our mission to spotlight child rights, share critical insights, and highlight our ongoing research, advocacy, and outreach efforts. This issue covers key legal and policy updates, landmark judicial decisions, international discussions on child protection, and significant observances dedicated to children's welfare.

With each edition, we strive to foster dialogue and action on issues that impact children the most. Your engagement and feedback are invaluable in shaping this initiative and strengthening our collective commitment to child rights.

We look forward to your thoughts and collaboration as we work towards a world where every child's rights are protected and upheld.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT & DISCLAIMER

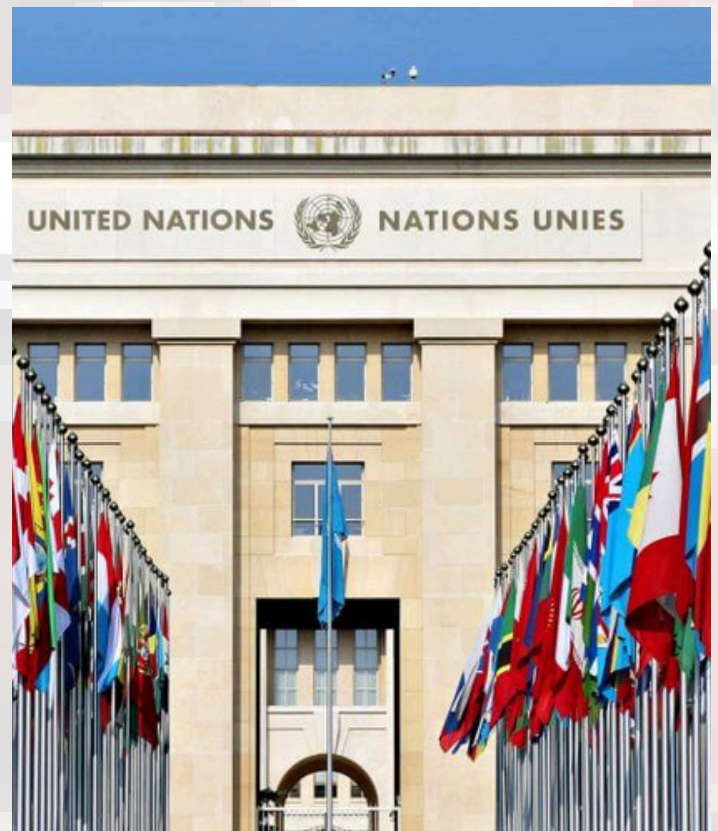
The Centre for Child Rights (CCR) expresses its heartfelt gratitude to the National Law University Odisha (NLUO) for providing a platform to think critically and engage meaningfully with the realm of Child Rights. This endeavour would not have been possible without the unwavering support of Prof. Ved Kumari (Vice-Chancellor of NLUO), Patron-in-Chief and Prof. Rangin Pallav Tripathy (Registrar of NLUO). Prof. Biraj Swain (Chief Minister's Chair Professor- Child Rights and Director of Centre for Child Rights, NLUO) has been instrumental in shaping this vision from its inception, and her invaluable guidance has played a pivotal role in bringing this Newsletter to fruition.

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Committee on the Rights of the Child Holds Sixteenth Informal Meeting with States

The Committee on the Rights of the Child conducted its sixteenth informal meeting with States, touching on key issues such as children's access to justice, artificial intelligence, and the impact of armed conflict on child rights. Committee Chair Ann Marie Skelton opened the meeting by reflecting on the thirty-fifth anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, emphasizing that while commemorations were held worldwide, children's rights remain under pressure due to global crises, including armed conflict and violence. Despite these challenges, States, including those facing conflicts, engaged with the Committee in constructive dialogues to uphold their commitments.

The meeting covered several pressing topics. The Committee is drafting a General Comment to further enhance children's access to justice, based on more than 300 global contributions and 100 consultations, including direct input from children. Committee Experts also discussed artificial intelligence's (AI) impact on children, both opportunities and risks.



A Working Group on AI and Child Rights has been established, and a joint statement on AI and child rights is being developed with input from States and experts. Another key focus was protecting children in armed conflict, with Committee Expert Mikiko Otani noting that nearly half a billion children live in conflict zones today, double the number from 1990.



The Committee reviewed reports from conflict-affected States, made recommendations, and signed agreements with UN Special Representatives on Children in Armed Conflict and Violence Against Children to strengthen global efforts.

A major concern was the liquidity crisis, which forced the cancellation of the pre-session working group, delaying the review of 62 pending State reports. The Committee stressed that financial constraints are limiting hybrid meetings, which in turn reduces participation from civil society, national human rights institutions, and children themselves. States were urged to support these crucial mechanisms. The Committee also indicated closer cooperation with the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, as well as follow-up visits together with knowledge-sharing to improve the protection of children in Africa.

State representatives assured the Committee during discussions that they were committed to the Convention and expressed particular concern over children affected by armed conflict and online safety. Some States insisted that there must be more efforts to entice ratification of the Optional Protocol on children in armed conflicts and sought advice from the Committee on the protection of child rights in Ukraine and Gaza. The Committee will hold its next public meeting on 31 January at 5 p.m. It will adopt concluding observations and recommendations for States reviewed in this session, including Slovakia, Eritrea, Honduras, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Peru, the Gambia, and Ecuador.

Chair Ann Marie Skelton concluded the meeting with the hope that ceasefires in conflict areas would lead to lasting peace and help rebuild children's lives. The Committee continues to promote children's rights globally despite continued challenges.

A Triumph for Juvenile Rights After Two And a Half Decades of Legal Battle

The man, identified as Om Prakash alias Israel, spent nearly 25 years in prison in a murder case, including 11 years on death row, before the court finally recognized his claim of juvenility and ordered his release. This landmark decision was largely driven by the relentless efforts of Project 39A at the National Law University, Delhi.

Initially tried as an adult, Om Prakash was awarded a death sentence by the trial court in 2001. Both the High Court and the Supreme Court upheld his sentence, despite his claim being supported by documents like his school certificates. Section 94 of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 deals with the determination of age of a child in conflict with law. According to this section official documents such as birth and school certificates are given the highest preference, and when they are not available, the age is determined through a bone ossification test.



His mercy petition to the governor was denied, adding another setback to his case. A later mercy petition to the President in 2012 led to the commutation of his sentence to imprisonment for life, but on a condition that he should not be released until he turned 60.

Under Section 9(2) of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015, individuals can raise a claim of juvenility at any point, even after being convicted. The courts repeatedly failed to acknowledge his claim fairly, ignoring the essential measures meant to protect children who come in conflict with the law.

Om Prakash challenged the presidential order in the High Court in the second round of litigation in 2019. He approached the High Court with another set of evidence proving his minor status at the time of the crime



A bone ossification test confirmed he was approximately 14 years old at the time of the crime. He also sought information under the RTI Act, which showed that minors were allowed to open bank accounts. Yet again, his efforts yielded no result, his plea was dismissed.

With the plea in High Court getting dismissed he approached the Supreme Court again. This time his efforts did not go in vain. The bench accepted the evidence and acknowledged that the reasoning was baseless, as even minors can legally open accounts under banking regulations. The failure over the years to properly address his claims not only delayed justice but also revealed serious gaps in the judicial process meant to safeguard the young. Despite systemic flaws, this ruling marks a significant victory for juvenile justice, offering hope to children in conflict with the law, who have long been neglected by the legal system.

Children in Conflict: Manipur's Disturbing Reality



The ethnic conflict between the Kuki and Meitei communities in Manipur has precipitated a severe humanitarian crisis, with the recruitment of child soldiers by armed factions emerging as a particularly alarming facet.

Since the outbreak of violence on May 3, 2023, over 60,000 individuals have been displaced, seeking refuge in 349 relief camps. The protracted nature of the conflict has led to the entrenchment of armed groups within both communities, with reports indicating that minors, some as young as 11 to 14 years old, are being coerced into joining these factions. These children are subjected to rigorous military training, forced to participate in active combat, and often utilized as informants or human shields, exposing them to severe physical and psychological trauma. The recruitment of child soldiers not only contravenes international human rights norms, such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), but also violates national legislation, including the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015.

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The recruitment of child soldiers not only contravenes international human rights norms, such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), but also violates national legislation, including the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children)



Act, 2015. Despite these legal frameworks, enforcement remains inadequate, allowing insurgent groups to operate with impunity. The Manipur Commission for Protection of Child Rights (MCPCR) has condemned the exploitation of children in the ongoing conflict, with Chairperson Keisham Pradipkumar highlighting media reports that suggest certain groups are actively recruiting minors as frontline fighters, a direct violation of international child rights conventions. The gravity of the situation is further underscored by the federal government's recent decision to impose direct rule over Manipur, following the resignation of the state's Chief Minister amid mounting violence that has claimed at least 250 lives over two years.

This move reflects the deteriorating law and order situation and underscores the urgent need for comprehensive interventions. Addressing the crisis of child soldier recruitment in Manipur requires a multifaceted approach. Strengthening the enforcement of child protection laws is paramount, as existing legislation, including the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015, is often inadequately implemented, allowing insurgent groups to exploit legal gaps. Implementing demobilization and rehabilitation programs is essential to reintegrate affected children into society; however, data on the success rates of such initiatives remain scarce, underscoring the need for comprehensive monitoring and evaluation. Fostering community outreach initiatives aimed at protecting at-risk youth can mitigate recruitment by addressing underlying socio-economic vulnerabilities. The political will and collaboration between state agencies, civil society organizations, and international bodies are crucial to dismantle insurgent networks that exploit children for armed conflicts. Despite the existence of robust child protection laws in India, enforcement challenges persist, necessitating concerted efforts to bridge the gap between legislation and practice. The recruitment of child soldiers is an egregious violation of human dignity and justice. Manipur's children deserve a future built on education and opportunity, not marred by violence and warfare. The ongoing conflict has already inflicted deep scars on the state's social fabric, failure to act decisively will only exacerbate the crisis. It is imperative that the government and all stakeholders unite to protect the fundamental rights of these children, ensuring they grow up with books in their hands, not guns. The fate of an entire generation hangs in the balance, and immediate intervention is essential.

Madras High Court Paves Way for Tamil Nadu Commission for Protection of Child Rights



The Madras High Court has cleared the decks for the constitution of the Tamil Nadu Commission for Protection of Child rights a crucial step

towards safeguarding the welfare and rights of children across the state. This development comes after years of advocacy by child rights activists who have been pushing for a dedicated body to address violations against children and ensure their protection by national and international legal frameworks. The commission will serve as a watchdog, ensuring effective implementation of laws related to child welfare, conducting inquiries into cases of child rights violations, and recommending policies to improve child protection measures in Tamil Nadu. The court's decision is expected to streamline efforts in tackling these pressing issues, reinforcing the commitment to securing a safe and nurturing environment for children.

The Tamil Nadu government, in light of this judgment, is now set to expedite the appointment of commission members and operationalize the body to fulfill its mandate.



Experts believe that a well-functioning commission will not only provide timely intervention in cases of child rights violations but also foster greater awareness and accountability among government institutions and society at large. The establishment of this commission aligns with India's obligations under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the Commissions for Protection of Child Rights Act, 2005, reinforcing the country's commitment to child welfare at a legislative and institutional level. Activists have welcomed the decision, stating that it provides a long-overdue institutional mechanism for ensuring justice and protection for children who are often voiceless in the face of exploitation and abuse. With the groundwork now set, stakeholders are hopeful that the commission will function with transparency and efficiency, addressing systemic gaps and strengthening the child protection framework in Tamil Nadu.

World Meeting on Children's Rights: Bring a smile to children suffering



On February 3, the Vatican hosted the first-ever World Meeting on Children's Rights, gathering global leaders, advocates, and policymakers to address the pressing issues faced by children worldwide

The event was themed “Love Them and Protect Them” and aimed at shedding light on the suffering of millions of children who endure poverty, war, malnutrition, exploitation, and the lack of basic rights.

Pope Francis opened the summit by welcoming ten children from different nations, emphasizing the Church's unwavering commitment to defending children's dignity and future. Distinguished panelists, including Queen Rania of Jordan, former U.S. Vice President Al Gore, and Nobel Laureate Kailash Satyarthi, spoke on various aspects of children's rights, such as access to education, family rights, protection from violence, and essential resources.

About 64 million children are not able to attend elementary school, while 1 in 3 children face severe food poverty. These statistics underscore the need for collective global action. MacFarlane Barrow,

Despite the harrowing realities presented, the summit was also a beacon of hope. Pope Francis announced his intention to write an Apostolic Exhortation dedicated to children, reinforcing the Church's advocacy for their rights. The gathering promoted a sense of unity among grassroots organizations and policymakers, highlighting the importance of collaboration to create meaningful change.

This World Meeting on Children's Rights marked an important moment in the fight for a future where every child is safe, educated, and cherished. As global leaders, organizations, and communities unite, the message is clear: no child should suffer in silence, and together, we can bring a smile to those who need it most.

No-Detention Policy Scrapped for Classes 5 & 8: A Step Forward or a Step Back? -

In a significant shift in India's education policy, the Central Government has scrapped the 'No-Detention Policy' (NDP) for students in Classes 5 and 8, allowing schools to hold back students who fail year-end examinations. This decision marks a reversal of a key provision under the Right to Education (RTE) Act, 2009, which sought to curb dropouts and learning gaps by ensuring automatic promotion up to Class 8.

Education experts argue that the lack of academic accountability fostered complacency, leaving students unprepared for higher grades. The National Achievement (NAS) and



ASER reports have consistently highlighted severe learning deficiencies among students in foundational grades, reinforcing the case for a merit-based promotion system.

However, critics caution that detention policies may disproportionately impact underprivileged children, increasing dropout rates, especially among those from marginalized backgrounds. Without adequate remedial measures, simply holding students back may not address core learning deficits but instead discourage school retention.

While the Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE) system under the RTE Act faced challenges in implementation, its principles of continuous assessment and feedback aimed at addressing learning gaps remain relevant. A combination of regular, personalized evaluations with targeted remedial support, teacher training, and improved feedback mechanisms could better equip students to meet learning outcomes without relying on grade repetition alone.



National Girl Child Day

“Strive for a society where the birth of a girl is celebrated as much as that of a boy.”- Savitribai Phule

National Girl Child Day is celebrated on January 24 every year. It is an initiative by the Ministry of Women and Child Development to raise awareness about empowering girls. It also highlights the Rights, Welfare, and educational rights of girls.



Launched in 2008 by the Ministry of Women and Child Development, National Girl Child Day aims to highlight the importance of girls' education, address gender inequalities, and promote awareness about their rights, health, and nutrition.

This initiative aims to provide awareness about girls, their rights, equal opportunity, and freedom from gender bias. The observance serves as a reminder of the urgent need to empower girls, ensuring they receive equal opportunities in every sphere of life, from education and healthcare to career prospects and leadership roles.

This initiative is significant because its purpose is to change societal attitudes towards girls, addressing issues such as female foeticide, raising awareness about the declining sex ratio, and creating a more inclusive and equitable environment for the girl child.

The government has launched various initiatives aimed at achieving the objectives necessary for the holistic growth of girls. This growth is vital not only for their well-being but also for the overall advancement of society. Specifically, recognizing and upholding the rights and opportunities of girls is essential for creating a more equitable future.



- **Beti Bachao Beti Padho was launched on 22 January 2015**
- **Sukanya Samridhi Scheme was launched on 22 January 2015**
- **Scheme for Adolescent Girls was launched in 2010**
- **POSHAN Abhiyaan was launched on 8 March 2018**
- **The National Scheme of Incentive to Girls For Secondary Education (NSIGSE) was launched in May 2008**

- **Scheme for Promotion of Menstrual Hygiene was launched in 2011**
- **Mission Vatsalya Scheme replaced the Child Protection Services (CPS) Scheme in 2009-10.**
- **Udaan (Ude Desh Ka Aam Nagrik) scheme was launched on April 27, 2017.**

In 2025, National Girl Child Day was celebrated on January 24. Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi reiterated the government's commitment to empowering the girl child and ensuring a wide range of opportunities for her.

In a thread post on X, Shri Modi wrote:

“Today, on National Girl Child Day, we reiterate our commitment to keep empowering the girl child and ensure a wide range of opportunities for her. India is proud of the accomplishments of the girl child across all fields. Their feats continue to inspire us all.”

“Our Government has focused on sectors like education, technology, skills, healthcare, etc which have contributed to empowering the girl child. We are equally resolute in ensuring no discrimination happens against the girl child.”

In 2025, the theme "Empowering Girls for a Bright Future" emphasizes the commitment to providing girls with equal opportunities to shape their futures and contribute to society.

Several challenges persist for girls in Indian society, including child marriage as per a posted by the PIB Delhi dated 11 August 2023 the highest child marriage in 2021 registered under PCMA, 2006 is 273 in Karnataka followed by Tamil Nadu with 169 and other states.

Foeticide/infanticide as per the PIB dated 18 February 2014 the case of female foeticide in the year 2012 was highest in Madhya Pradesh and followed by the Rajasthan, school dropouts, and malnutrition as per the NHFS 5 in the year 2019-21 the women whose BMI is below normal in percentage is 26.2 in Jharkhand, 25.6 in Bihar etc. This theme gives a message that if a girl is empowered then only our future will be also bright.

National Girl Child Day gives a message that girls are an asset to society and not a burden. To spread awareness about girl's education and ensure that they also have equal opportunities for growth and development. This day serves as a call to action for empowering the girls. The implementation of various policies and schemes of the government aimed at safeguarding the rights and welfare of girl children.

North Carolina Supreme Court upholds law that allowed 2 more years for child sex abuse suits

North Carolina's supreme court Unanimously approved the constitutionality of the SAFE Child Act's provision that enables child sexual abuse victims to file lawsuits past their original statute of limitations limits. This ruling ensures that lawsuits filed within the two-year window established by the SAFE

Child Act can proceed, helping survivors seek justice for child sexual abuse. The defendants in court such as the Gaston County school board sought to demonstrate that resurrected expired claims violated retroactive laws which are protected under constitutional standards. The court denied this defense by upholding that the legislature exercises authority to adjust civil claims deadlines when searching for fair outcomes.

The court drew separate conclusions about judgments that reached their conclusion before this particular ruling. The court established that all cases with established rulings that existed before the SAFE Child Act's enactment in 2019 would stay permanently closed to further action. Those who had their cases legally resolved before the legislation took effect remain restricted to the existing legal conclusions of their cases.





Legislators passed the SAFE Child Act in 2019 to increase child abuse protection measures. The most substantial provision of this act granted child sexual abuse victims additional time to lodge civil legal action after their twenty-eighth birthday as opposed to the prior twenty-one-year deadline. The legislation provided victims of every age bracket with special rights to file time-barred claims from January 2020 through December 2021.

Supporters argue that the legislation provides crucial legal justice to survivors, many of whom require extended time to recognize and report their abuse. This measure enables both the prosecution of past misdeeds done by abusers and institutions responsible for the misconduct. The opposition claims that resurrected judicial claims become an unreasonable weight for defendants because years have eroded evidence quality and witness availability. The court decision represents a crucial milestone that protects child victims because it reaffirms North Carolina's dedication to providing survivors legal access to justice. A national movement throughout several U.S. states stands behind these latest legal developments which extend child sexual abuse statutes of limitations.

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