

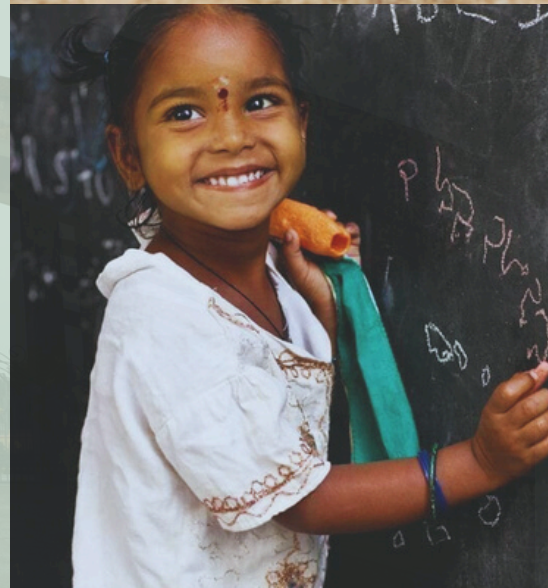


NATIONAL LAW UNIVERSITY ODISHA



**CENTRE FOR
CHILD RIGHTS**

THE BI-MONTHLY NEWSLETTER



June - July 2025

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.

Disclaimer & Acknowledgement

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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About Centre for Child Rights

Centre for Child Rights (CCR) is the specialized research centre of the National Law University Odisha, Cuttack (NLUO). The Centre was founded on April 12, 2015 with ceremonial inauguration by Hon'ble Justice Dipak Misra, former Chief Justice of India and Visitor, NLUO in the august presence of the Hon'ble Chief Justice and Judges of Orissa High Court, and Secretary, Department of Women and Child Development, Government of Odisha. The Centre aims at building a rights temper amongst the children and the society, strengthening law and justice for children and child wellbeing by supporting and initiating research, policy advocacy and community action on children's issues. The Centre aims to provide integrated support and consultancy to different layers of institutional governance for protection and insurance of child rights, child protection, understand and reform enabling and disabling factors to furthering child rights and the inter-sectionalities.

Headlined by the Vice Chancellor, Prof. Ved Kumari, one of the foremost chroniclers of Juvenile Justice and everything Child Rights in the world, NLUO got its first ever Chair Professorship on Child Rights with a five-member staff team sanctioned by the Hon'ble CM of Odisha in 2023. This is led by the Chief Minister Chair Professor. This is the only fully functional chair professorship on child rights in the universe of National Law Universities across India.



COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD OPENS 99TH SESSION WITH RENEWED COMMITMENT TO CHILD PROTECTION

REYANSH THAKUR

Considered as a major milestone in the striving for child rights, the ninety-ninth session of the Committee on the Rights of the Child commenced on 12 May 2025 in Geneva. The session started with the adoption of a new Bureau consisting of Sopio Kiladze as Chairperson, reflecting a sustained commitment to urgent matters concerning child protection.

The main area of consideration in this session is the report of Bahrain and other States received under Optional Protocols concerning sale of children, child prostitution, and child pornography. These reviews are meant to study and assess the scope of national laws constituting the State's response to such dire criminal violations against children.

In the face of rapid developments in artificial intelligence (AI), the Committee has, thus, established a Working Group on AI and Child Rights. The purpose of this project is to support States in harnessing the positive effects of AI whilst safeguarding children from related risks, such as risks relating to cyber exploitation and data protection. A joint statement on AI and child rights is also in preparation, emphasizing the importance of child-

centred digital policies.

Also, the Committee is exercising a general comment on children's access to justice and effective legal remedies. This document will provide authoritative guidance to States on how to ensure that children are able to seek and receive redress for violations of rights, affirming the principle that children are active rights holders.

Yet, notwithstanding the progress that has been made, the Committee is beset by problems, including a backlog of 67 State reports for consideration brought about mostly by inadequate resources. The Committee has called on the member States for assistance to overcome this backlog and to enable the Committee to continue to efficiently carry out its work.

In its ninety-ninth session, the Committee reaffirmed its long-standing commitment to promoting children's rights all over the world, addressing new challenges, and working to ensure that every single child has a voice in various settings.

CHILD PROTECTION MONTH, 2025: LET'S ROOT OUT CHILD ABUSE TOGETHER!

SHEHNAZ N. CHOWDHURY

June officially signals the start of Child Protection Month, which is a timely reminder of the collective social responsibility of protecting children's rights, and their well-being. The 2025 theme, Child Protection Month - 'Let's Root Out Child Abuse Together', identified on premises of collective responsibility, and underscores the urgency to act together against child abuse and exploitation, which are woven into the very social and economic fabrics of our world.

Child abuse today is manifest in many forms, including physical abuse, emotional and psychological abuse, as well as economic exploitation. UNICEF has estimated children face abuse of various forms in many parts of the globe - with most children being abused by people they know and trust or where they should feel safe, such as their homes and schools. Child abuse leaves victims with traumatic injuries that last a lifetime, and the psychological, emotional and physiological impacts are lasting and omnipresent in children's lives and can inhibit their development and growth in every way, from education, to health, and futures.

The 2025 campaign is about stopping child abuse at the community level and promoting a shared sense of responsibility for this pervasive global issue. It is the belief that child protection begins with increased awareness, including the recognition of indicators of abuse, listening to children attentively, and familiarity with the several structural determinants of their lives, including poverty, illiteracy, and gender discrimination, all of which increase the vulnerability to child abuse. The campaign also emphasizes the need for forward thinking and vigilance towards the enforcement of several codes of legislation, including India's Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act and the United States' Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA), both of which provide important mechanisms for the protection of children.

It is a matter of great priority that schools, health workers, police, and civil society organizations work together to build trust, sensitize people, and rapidly report and respond to abuse.

CHILD PROTECTION MONTH



**ACT
NOW !!!**

Equally crucial is teaching the children about proper age information in regard to their rights and bodies- spaces in which they are empowered to speak out.

The commemoration of 2025 demands that all the concerned parties-parents, teachers, legislators, and community leaders included, to reflect and act. Protection of well-being by children is not merely a mandate but an even higher moral responsibility that shapes the well-being of generations to come. May this month be the impetus for enduring change, so that all children can be empowered to live without fear in a world whose priority is their safety and dignity.

A PLEDGE TO PROTECT OUR CHILDREN – APRIL AS NATIONAL CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION MONTH

ABHINANDAN



During April, National Child Abuse Prevention Month, we should care about awareness and also each take our own commitment to help, guide and care for any child at risk.

Being around children in tough situations helped me notice the quiet grief they often feel. The damage from abuse can be hidden in silence, fear and the lack of trust. The thing children require most is not only to be safe from harm, but also to be safe, have dignity and be loved without conditions. They need to be aware that others share their situation.

During his recent statement, President Trump made it clear: children are important right now, not only in the future. What he said is a basic principle: every child deserves to live without fear and instead receive stability, compassion and hope.

This year's statement also brings us into debates that are sometimes heated around what it means to have an identity, give care and stay protected. Compared to other matters, we must stand united around this belief: all children should never feel unloved, unsafe or unseen.

Not doing anything is just not an option.

Everyone matters in this effort — parents, teachers, neighbors, policymakers and citizens. No matter if you identify abuse, provide support, speak up, make the system safer or simply believe a child — every little thing matters.

Let this month be more than a moment of reflection. Let it be a turning point. Let us recommit ourselves to building homes, schools, and communities where children can laugh freely, dream boldly, and grow up knowing they are cherished, protected, and enough — just as they are.

Because when we protect children, we don't just shape better futures. We heal our present.

SAFEGUARDING CHILDHOOD, STRENGTHENING COMMITMENT – THE WORK OF THE CDENF

ABHINANDAN



As children encounter a range of new and lasting problems today, it is now more crucial than ever to act as a team to protect their rights. As a result, the Steering Committee for the Rights of the Child (CDENF) which was formed in 2020, takes the lead in helping the Council of Europe defend and look after children's interests and well-being across Europe.

Serving as the main council for children's rights in the Council of Europe, CDENF leads standard-setting, guides the main political goals and prepares rules and policies. It directs the Committee of Ministers on required measures and the future strategy and contributes to making recommendations, declarations, policy suggestions and guidance on best practices that guide child protection nationwide.

It's not only about paper developments; the CDENF achieves real results. Starting in 2022, the Committee took on the duty to ensure the Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2022–2027) is broadly implemented and children's rights are integrated in different Council institutions. Internationally, its work lets each child feel noticed, guaranteed their s

afety and respected by national authorities.

Under its current Terms of Reference (2024–2027), CDENF also supervises key expert bodies:

- The Committee of Experts on the prevention of violence (ENF-VAE),
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- The Committee of Experts on access to child-friendly justice through multidisciplinary and interagency services (ENF-JUS), and
- The Committee of Experts on the rights and best interests of the child in parental separation and care proceedings (CJ/ENF-ISE), in partnership with the European Committee on Legal Co-operation (CDCJ), which concluded its work in 2024.

The CDENF builds on the legacy of the Ad hoc Committee for the Rights of the Child (CAHENF), which guided the Council's intergovernmental work in this area from 2016 to 2019.

These efforts are more than institutional obligations — they are moral commitments to our youngest citizens. Every decision made, every guideline adopted, is a step toward a world where children are not only protected but empowered to thrive.

Let us continue to stand together — for children, with children, and because of children.

UNICEF RAISES ALARM OVER GLOBAL NUTRITION EMERGENCY THREATENING MILLIONS OF CHILDREN

AMIT KUMAR SAMAL



UNICEF issued a dire warning today that no less than 14 million children may be denied access to essential nutrition services and assistance in 2025 because of new and anticipated cuts in global funding. The crisis, unmasked as global leaders gather for the Nutrition for Growth Summit in Paris, puts millions of vulnerable children at increased risk of severe malnutrition and death. The funding gap comes when children across the globe are already facing an unprecedented level of displacement, new and ongoing conflicts, disease epidemics, and the climatic devastation that has all disrupted their access to adequate nutrition. UNICEF Executive Director Catherine Russell reiterated that decades of worldwide progress in the child's nutrition stand at the risk of being undone. Since 2000, 55 million children under the age of five have lost stunting, and many lives have been saved. But Russell cautioned that unless global financing is committed urgently and in renewed ways, the gains might be reversed. The effects are already apparent: over 2.4 million children with severe acute malnutrition risk being left without Ready to use Therapeutic Food (RUTF) in 2025.

A further 2,300 lifesaving stabilisation centres could close or reduce their services, and nearly 28,000 outpatient therapeutic centres that are UNICEF supported risk closure, with some already being compelled to shut down.

The crisis impacts adolescent girls and women as well, who are particularly susceptible to malnutrition. Since 2020, the population of pregnant and lactating women and adolescent girls with acute malnutrition has risen by 25%, from 5.5 million to 6.9 million. Projected to grow further if no urgent donor assistance is provided and more national investments are not made, UNICEF is urging governments and international donors to act swiftly to prioritize health and nutrition programs, requesting national governments to put more domestic resources into these services. Russell reminded that good nutrition not only supports child survival and development but also brings long-term benefits to families, societies, and global security.

To overcome the long-term issues of maternal and child malnutrition, UNICEF initiated the Child Nutrition Fund (CNF) in 2023 with the support of the UK Foreign Commonwealth and Development

Office, the Gates Foundation, and the Children's Investment Fund Foundation. It seeks to build prevention, early detection, and treatment systems for child undernutrition. The organisation calls all partners, national governments, donors, and philanthropic actors to contribute to the CNF and other flexible funding mechanisms so that no child is left behind in the battle against malnutrition.

PINKI VS STATE OF UP: SUPREME COURT ISSUES GUIDELINES TO CURB CHILD TRAFFICKING

KRITI JAIN



In a landmark judgment in *Pinki v. State of Uttar Pradesh and Anr* (2025), the Supreme Court, presided over by Justices JB Pardiwala and R. Mahadevan, has directed that all cases of child trafficking shall be tried within six months.

This ruling came in a case uncovering an interstate child trafficking syndicate, where children from poor families were abducted and sold between states for amounts ranging from ₹40,000 to ₹10 lakhs. The top court acted on it after the Allahabad High Court released on bail the 13 accused, who then absconded, thus derailing trial proceedings.

The Court strongly criticized the State of Uttar Pradesh for being lethargic and for not attempting to cancel the bail. It issued a direction for the expeditious committal of cases to session courts and framing charges within a week thereafter. Day-to-day trial hearings and posting of special public prosecutors were also ordered, along with protection to victims and compulsory education to rescued children under the RTE Act, 2009.

The Court provided specific guidelines. It directed all High Courts to collect data on pending cases of human trafficking, and circulate orders ensuring their disposal

within a time frame of six months, and report on compliance with the orders. In addition, it stressed that any case of a missing child should be initially marked as a potential case of traffic or abduction unless compelling evidence to the contrary is available. The order further requires that all states should adopt the recommendations contained in the 2023 BIRD (Bharatiya Institute of Research and Development) report.

These recommendations include the strengthening of Anti-Human Trafficking Units, the improvement of victim care services, regulating high-risk industries, the development of child-friendly courtrooms and the beginning of increased collaboration with non-governmental organizations. The Court also directed that hospital licenses should be revoked if infants are trafficked from the hospitals and even went so far as to state that non-compliance with the orders can result in contempt proceedings.

This judgment is an important step taken by the judiciary to combat child trafficking and deliver quick justice to the victimized population, as the Court plans to verify the implementation status in October 2025.

OVER PROCEDURAL LAPSES IN DNA EVIDENCE, SUPREME COURT ACQUITS ACCUSED IN POCSO CASE

AKSHAT PRAKASH



In a major decision given by the Supreme Court, in the case *Karandeep Sharma @ Razia @ Raju v. State of Uttarakhand* 2025, Karandeep Sharma (also known as Razia or Raju) was acquitted in the rape and murder of a young girl, overturning a death penalty. The Court identified significant flaws in the handling of DNA evidence and several procedural failures, due to which it overturned the previous trial court and Uttarakhand High Court decisions.

The case involved the kidnapping, rape, and murder of a minor girl in June 2016. The prosecution's case relied mainly on circumstantial evidence, as well as a DNA report. However, the Supreme Court noted serious shortcomings, especially because the DNA expert who completed the profiling and prepared the report was never called to testify in court. This made the DNA report inadmissible under Section 45 of the Evidence Act. The prosecution also failed to prove the proper handling, sealing, and chain of custody of forensic samples, and that they were delivered without tampering to the Forensic Science Laboratory (FSL).

The Court took serious exception to the manner the accused's confession was held in the trial court.

Sharma's confession statement, which was recorded during the investigation, was allowed to be narrated by the officer in the trial court. According to sections 24, 25, and 26 of the Indian Evidence Act, the law does not allow confessions made to a police officer to be used as evidence unless a magistrate records them in accordance with section 164 of the Code of Criminal Procedure. The Court characterized this procedural mishap as "grossly illegal," and stated that it made the trial "lopsided and distorted." The apex Court observed that the prosecution was unable to establish the appellant's guilt beyond reasonable doubt and therefore acquitted him.

The court's observations in this case must act as a warning for cases involving heinous crimes, such as those under the POCSO Act. Non-adherence to proper legal procedures can lead to serious repercussions, as was seen in this case. The act intends to protect children from sexual abuse, and it does so with its stringent provisions (e.g., under Sections 5 and 6), which have severe penalties, including life imprisonment and the death penalty. This ruling emphasizes the need to adhere to strict procedures to prevent miscarriage of justice.

Following the procedure becomes even more critical in cases where the emotional burden of the offense sometimes overpowers procedural requirements.

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