

#DIGNITYNOTCHARITY

HAQ's RESPONSE to COVID-19

Introduction

As the world struggles against COVID 19, many are struggling to simply survive.

Having worked for protection, promotion and recognition of child rights for more than 20 years, the struggle to uphold the human rights of children has been a constant saga. The current situation in the wake of COVID-19 pandemic has thrown yet another challenge to the whole world and even greater challenge to the marginalised and the underprivileged, including children. Children are not a homogenous group and neither do they live in isolation. In such times, needs of children and those they live with in different settings requires attention - be it children living with families, street and homeless children, children in institutional care, children of persons with disability, child victims of abuse, etc.

The country has had to take certain sudden measures to deal with the spread of the virus and follow a preventive approach of long-term lockdown, which has pushed many people to the margins. During times like these, mere survival is a huge question for many.

HAQ's Response So Far...

HAQ's mandate is to work towards the recognition, promotion and protection of human rights of children. COVID-19 has presented a different set of challenges before the whole civil society community, which calls for coming together and protecting the human rights of marginalised and the most needy ones, while addressing the needs of women and children in particular. Thus, while continuing to serve its mandate, HAQ has engaged in various kinds of relief work in order to amplify its reach to the children and their families in different parts of the country. Simultaneously, HAQ has also designed few children specific programmes to cater the specific needs of children during the challenging times of COVID-19. Some of its intervention have been:

- 1) Emergency Relief Kit, milk and essential supplies to identified families
- 2) Mental Health Well-Being of Children in various age groups
- 3) Intervention towards ensuring Access to Justice for children
- 4) Collaboration with various civil society groups on critical issues of child rights during COVID-19

The support provided will always remain inadequate with an ever growing number of children and their families and caregivers to be reached. At the same time, there is a need to replenish essential food, cooking fuel and hygiene items for those already supported once. There is also a need to look after health care providers, front-line workers and those caring for children in institutional settings, though HAQ has not been able to cater to this need due to lack of funding support. Reports about government objecting to provision of protection equipment for doctors and health care personnel by NGOs further held us back from venturing into this arena.

Indeed the needs have varied and expanded. We began with simple food and hygiene kit and went on to add milk and essential supplies like refilling of gas cylinders and meeting certain requests for medicines. Demands have also come in for rent, mobile recharge, and even used computers or laptops or tablets for children who do not have these gadgets to pursue online education. Some of the requests have been met through collaboration with the Delhi Commission for Protection of Child Rights (DCPCR) and its NGO partners.

Emergency Relief

Food and Hygiene Kit

Food security for the marginalised and underprivileged communities has emerged as one of the most urgent needs. HAQ collaborated with local NGO partners in various parts of the country and helped them prepare an emergency food and hygiene relief kit for each family with an average family size of 5 to 7 persons. The kit is expected to last one month per family and varies from location to location, depending on the dietary needs and habits of different communities. As per HAQ's preliminary enquiries and ongoing experience with relief assistance in Delhi, the food requirements of people in Kashmir vary from those in Delhi or the refugee population in Delhi and Uttar Pradesh. Some kits have been smaller to cater to a week to 10 days, where the request came through NGOs already working in those

areas requiring additional support. The maximum amount to be spent on a food and hygiene kit for a family of five to seven persons for one month is kept at INR 3,000/-.

A basic kit falling within this cost contains the following items:

- 10 kg rice
- 10 kg flour
- 2 kg salt
- 2 kg sugar
- 3 litre cooking oil
- 5 kg daal (different types)
- 1 kg masala (different types)
- 500 gm tea
- One big tooth paste
- 3 bathing soaps
- 3 dish washing soap cakes
- 1 kg surf/any other washing powder for clothes
- 2 packets of 10 sanitary napkins each
- 3 packets of glucose biscuits

COVID-19 SOLIDARITY & SUPPORT FUND An Appeal !!!

As COVID 19 takes its toll across the world, the poor and the vulnerable citizens and non-citizens in India are struggling to simply survive!
Doctors, health care providers and those engaged in relief outreach too are braving dire conditions!

HAQ: Centre for Child Rights, a Delhi based NGO, appeals for generous donations that can help contribute to the ongoing efforts at addressing some of these needs.

We need your support to make this possible!

WE APPEAL to you to donate generously for providing Emergency Relief Kits to 300 vulnerable families for the next three months. Each kit will cost Rs. 3000/- per family per month (average family size of seven persons).

Emergency Relief Kit				<u>Who will Benefit:</u>
 Rice 10 Kg	 Flour 10 Kg	 Salt 2 Kg	 Sugar 2 Kg	Children & Families of Daily Wage Labourers
 Cooking Oil 5 Ltr	 Lentils (daal) 5 Kg	 Cooking Spices 1 Kg	 Tea 500 gm	Children and Families of Refugee Communities
 Tooth-paste 1 Big	 Bathing & Dishwashing Soaps (3+3)	 Washing Powder 1 Kg	 Sanitary Napkins	Households headed by Single Women
Scan & Donate				Children whose parents have been detected COVID-19 positive or are in Quarantine
				Donate Now Through: http://haqccr.org/donate-now/
All donations are exempted from income tax U/s. 80(G) of the Income Tax Act, 1961				For Direct Bank Transfers:
				Indian Donations:
www.haqccr.org				Account Name: HAQ: Centre for Child Rights Account Number: 010104000149242 Bank Name: IDBI Bank IFSC Code No.: IBKL0000010
				Foreign Contributions
				Account Name: HAQ: Centre for Child Rights Account Number: 911010059226404 Bank Name: Axis Bank Ltd. IFSC Code No.: UTIB0001338

Milk and Bread Supplies to Children

During the lockdown, when resource crunch is at its peak and the definition of essentials keeps changing, HAQ is putting all its effort to reach out to children in the age group of 6 months to 12 years with daily supplies of essential items like milk and a loaf of bread. This intervention is limited to Delhi currently due to the limited funds, but we are committed to take this initiative beyond Delhi depending upon the

funds raised. The target was to reach 1 litre milk and a fresh loaf of bread daily for one month to at least 500 identified vulnerable families in Delhi with children under 12 years. With the available resources, we could reach out to 739 children identified through our local partners and HAQ team. As the pandemic continues to spread, the deprivations and vulnerabilities continue to increase.

Target Beneficiaries:

Families are identified on the basis of the following vulnerability criteria:

- 1) Daily wage labourers who do not have a ration card or are unable to procure ration
- 2) Single women headed families
- 3) Persons with disability
- 5) Women and children who are victims of violence, abuse and exploitation

Process Followed:

HAQ has partnered with known local NGOs and individuals for identifying vulnerable people and families. The NGO partners also help in distribution of the kits maintaining records in a prescribed format. Apart from collaborating with NGOs, HAQ also received direct requests from families who needed emergency supplies. Such requests are verified by the local NGO partner or government sources, or HAQ’s social workers and counsellors. The concerned NGO partner or individual beneficiaries are directed to shops from where they can procure ration and other essential supplies easily. The payments are made directly to the vendor/shopkeeper.

Meanwhile HAQ has found a partner in DeliteDeals, a company run by an industrialist who promised procurement of all items in the food and hygiene kit as well as daily milk and bread supplies along with door step delivery at same rates as being charged by shopkeepers. HAQ believes in DIGINITY NOT CHARITY!



Partners in Relief Work and communities reached:

We are thankful to our partner organisations who have stood with us in common agreement to reach out to the families who need utmost support. For the purpose of identifying and reaching out to families in Kashmir, HAQ partnered with School for Rural Development and Environment (SRDE) and Save The Destitute Foundation. These NGOs helped connecting HAQ to families of fisher-folk community, carpet and pashmina weavers, casual labourers, persons with disability and single women headed families in the areas of Srinagar, Bandipora (Wullar area), Shunglipora and Baramullah (Pattan area).

One of the main objectives of HAQ's relief work is also to reach those generally ignored by the system and who remain untouched by any relief work provided by the government. In this endeavour, HAQ partnered with the Rohingya Human Rights Initiative (ROHHRingya) to reach out to the children and families of the Rohingya Community in Saharanpur, Meerut & Dasna in Uttar Pradesh.

Similarly, Delhi has a huge population of Afghan refugees and during times like these, when every service provided by the government is based on the identity and nationality one carries the relevant documents, such refugee communities are always left behind. Although, there are a few civil society organisations who are involved in relief work with the refugee communities, additional resources are always required. Thus, HAQ partnered with Khadim-E-Insaniyat, a Delhi based organisation to provide emergency food and hygiene kit to the families of Afghan refugees in Khirki Extension and Hauz Rani areas in South Delhi. Further, during our relief work, we also came across few Hindu refugee families from Pakistan who were in desperate need of help and were grossly overlooked by the authorities despite their populous claim to rehabilitate such families. We partnered with Action India to reach out to such families with emergency relief kit.

Families in Old Delhi and riot affected areas were reached through the Delhi Youth Welfare Association (DYWA). In addition requests placed by organisations and individuals who are part of the Delhi Relief Collective and other such networks have been met with. These were mainly through Action India, Who is Hussain, Makaam, SANG, Milestone, Association for Development (AFD) and Rescue Foundation.

Apart from establishing significant partnership to reach out to vulnerable communities, HAQ continues to provide support to the children and families whom we work with as part of Access to Justice programme. HAQ has been able to link the needy families to Delhi Government's existing emergency relief services, assisted families file for ration through e-coupons and to full-fill immediate needs linked families to the Delhi Commission for Protection of Child Rights (DCPCR) as well.

Outreach So Far...

So far, HAQ has reached out to 2829 families and 13617 individuals in Delhi-NCR, Kashmir, Haryana, Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. An area-wise break up of beneficiaries is as follows:

Area-wise break up of beneficiaries reached as on 10.08.2020			
FOOD AND HYGIENE KIT			
Sl. No.	Areas	No. of Families	No. of Individuals
DELHI			
1	South East Delhi - Badarpur and Okhla Industrial Area	26	108
2	South Delhi - Chirag Dilli, Dakshinpuri, Tigri	123	524
3	West and South West Delhi - Sadar Bazar and Kirbi Place in Delhi Cantt., Tilak Nagar, Mohan Garden, Nilothi, Najafgarh, Mangolpuri, Israil Camp Rangpur Pahari	465	2089
4	North and North West Delhi - Jahangirpuri, Suraj Park, Bhalswa, Mahendra Park, Rohini Sector 28	201	872
5	East and North East Delhi - Seemapuri, Gokalpuri, Yamuna Khader, Trilokpuri and Jitarnagar	195	915
6	Central Delhi - Families reached out through DYWA	598	2956
7	HAQ's supported families of CSA survivors in Delhi	89	484
8	Families of Afghan Refugee Community	22	98
9	Families of Pakistani Hindu Refugees Community	120	386
KASHMIR			
10	Srinagar (Kashmir)	100	438
11	Bandipora - Wullar area (Kashmir)	90	476
12	Baramullah - Pattan (Kashmir)	142	708
13	Shunglipora	150	722
UTTAR PRADESH			

14	Saharanpur - Rohingya Refugees	30	132
15	Meerut	10	48
16	Dasna	14	53
OTHERS			
17	Faridabad (Haryana) and Dausa (Rajasthan)	3	11
18	Chhattisgarh, Pithaura, District Mahasamund	91	328
19	Stranded Migrant Workers at Screening Centres in Delhi		1530
20	Desert Cooler for Children's Home for Girls, Gurgaon	1	
MILK & BREAD			
21	Devli	17	17
22	Sundar Nagari	30	75
23	Chandu Nagar	70	77
24	Kapashera	94	293
25	Turkman Gate	20	91
26	Dakshinpuri	25	25
27	New Seemapuri	5	22
28	HAQ's supported families of CSA survivors in Delhi	98	139
	TOTAL	2829	13617



HAQ's Supporters in the Relief Work

The unprecedented situation before the world has brought the civil society, government, international NGOs and donor agencies and corporates close to respond to the crisis and protect and preserve the basic human rights of individuals.

HAQ's endeavour to engage with the relief work could not have been possible without the support of Azim Premji Philanthropic Initiatives, Terre des hommes (Germany), Help for Children in Need Foundation and Ford Foundation and many individual donors.

HAQ thanks all its well-wishers and supporters for their generosity and solidarity in the fight against COVID-19.

HELP US HELP OTHERS



SCAN & PAY



OR
Donate Via Direct Bank Transfer

(Domestic Contributions)
Account Name: HAQ, Centre for Child Rights
Account Number: 010104000149242
Bank Name: IDBI Bank
IFSC Code No.: IDBI0000010

(Non-Indian Contributions)
Account Name: HAQ, Centre for Child Rights
Account Number: 911010059226404
Bank Name: Axis Bank Ltd.
IFSC Code No.: UTBI00021558

All donations are exempted from Income Tax u/s 80 (C) of Income Tax Act, 1961.

HAQ, Centre for Child Rights, B-1/2, Ground Floor, Malviya Nagar, New Delhi - 110017. Web: www.haqcr.org | Email: info@haqcr.org
For Regular Updates, Please follow us on: <https://www.facebook.com/haqcenterforchildrights/>

हम होंगे कामयाब... एक दिन



COVID-19 के दौरान समाज के हाशिये पर खड़े कई परिवारों तक मदद पहुंचाने की हक़: सेंटर फॉर चाइल्ड राइट्स की मुहीम में साथ जुड़ें !

आपकी मदद से हमारी कोशिश है कि कश्मीर, दिल्ली, उत्तर प्रदेश और हरियाणा के:
 >> दिहाड़ी मजदूरों के बच्चे और परिवार
 >> बात फौज अफगानों से प्रभावित बच्चे और परिवार
 >> विकलांग बच्चे
 >> और भारतीय शरणार्थी समुदाय के बच्चे और परिवार
 >> यौवव सैनिक

तक काम से कम एक रुपये से लेकर एक महीने का ज़रूरी राशन पहुंचा सके आप कैसे मदद कर सकते हैं?
 >> मात्र ₹. 750 से एक परिवार के लिए एक हफ्ते की राशन सामग्री
 >> मात्र ₹. 3000 से एक परिवार के लिए एक महीने की राशन सामग्री

आपकी मदद से हक़: सेंटर फॉर चाइल्ड राइट्स ने पिछले 3 हफ्तों में 1366 परिवारों को एक महीने का राशन मुहैया कराया !
हमारी कोशिश है कि कम से कम 2000 परिवारों तक मदद पहुंच सके !

अनुदान के लिए स्कैन करें



या बैंक द्वारा ट्रांसफर करें

पारसीय अनुदानकर्ताओं के लिए:
 आकाश कानूनी सेवा केंद्र
 आकाश कानूनी सेवा केंद्र
 आकाश कानूनी सेवा केंद्र
 आकाश कानूनी सेवा केंद्र
 आकाश कानूनी सेवा केंद्र

हिंदी-भाषीय अनुदानकर्ताओं के लिए:
 आकाश कानूनी सेवा केंद्र
 आकाश कानूनी सेवा केंद्र
 आकाश कानूनी सेवा केंद्र
 आकाश कानूनी सेवा केंद्र
 आकाश कानूनी सेवा केंद्र

HAQ, Centre for Child Rights, B-1/2, Ground Floor, Malviya Nagar, New Delhi - 110017. Web: www.haqcr.org | Email: info@haqcr.org
For Regular Updates, Please follow us on: <https://www.facebook.com/haqcenterforchildrights/>

DONATE TO FIGHT HUNGER



WILL YOU JOIN US IN TAKING MILK AND BREAD TO 500 VULNERABLE CHILDREN (AGE 6 MONTHS TO 12 YEARS) IN JJ CLUSTERS AND RESETTLEMENT COLONIES ACROSS DELHI ?

Here's how we'll do it:

We, HAQ, Centre for Child Rights, and Delitedeals, our Procurement and Delivery Partner, will ensure that milk and bread reaches the doorstep of 500 vulnerable children.

Identification and Coordination by HAQ, Door-to-door Delivery by Delitedeals, AN INITIATIVE BY HAQ, CENTRE FOR CHILD RIGHTS TO KNOW MORE CONTACT US ON:

HAQ, CENTRE FOR CHILD RIGHTS, B-1/2, Malviya Nagar, New Delhi - 110017
 +91 - 7269935411

SUPPORT ONE CHILD BY DONATING JUST ₹ 90! ₹ 60 for litre Milk + ₹ 30 for half loaf bread

HOW MANY CHILDREN CAN YOU SUPPORT & FOR HOW MANY DAYS?

You can donate using our Payment Gateway at Danamojo:
<https://www.haqcr.org/donate-now/>

<p>For Direct Bank Transfers (Domestic Contributions):</p> <p>Account Name: HAQ, Centre for Child Rights Account Number: 010104000149242 Bank Name: IDBI Bank IFSC Code No.: IDBI0000010</p>	<p>For Direct Bank Transfers (Non-Indian Contributions):</p> <p>Account Name: HAQ, Centre for Child Rights Account Number: 911010059226404 Bank Name: Axis Bank Ltd. IFSC Code No.: UTBI00021558</p>
---	---

The Bill should be in the name of:
HAQ, CENTRE FOR CHILD RIGHTS, B-1/2, Malviya Nagar, New Delhi - 110017.




Narratives of Hardship: Glimpses from Delhi

S is a domestic worker and a resident of West Vinod Nagar, Delhi. She is a single mother with 4 children to look after. The lockdown has taken away all work, leaving them with no alternate livelihood option or support. The family was facing serious crisis to survive.

PS is suffering from kidney ailment and is unable to work. He resides in Trilokpuri, East Delhi. His wife works as a domestic helper to support a family of 6. Due to COVID and further lockdown her employers are not allowing her to continue work. The family tried to get the government's aid in the form of cooked meal from the nearby school, but it was impossible for PS and his small children to stand in queues daily for long hours. One month's ration and essentials were like a blessing in disguise.

MN is a widow and resides in Trilokpuri, East Delhi. She has four children to support. Before lockdown, MN was fulfilling the needs of the family by stitching clothes at home. But due to COVID and further lockdown the work has stopped and the family is facing huge financial crisis. The family was mostly surviving on one meal a day to save something for the next day due to uncertainty.

M is a widow and 100% disabled. She resides in Prem Nagar Kirari, Delhi with her minor son. Her only source of income is disabled pension and that too is mostly spent on her medicines. She was desperately looking for any assistance that could keep herself and her son alive.

LS is 100% disabled and resides in Prem Nagar with his wife and 2 minor children. The wife used to work in a factory to earn livelihood, but due to lockdown this work has also stopped.

HC is a Hindu refugee from Pakistan, he resides in a refugee camp of Adarsh nagar, Delhi. He used to earn his living by repairing mobile phones but lockdown has effected the work. Then he started doing farming in Yamuna floodplain but there too suffered huge losses. He also tried to sell small items on hand cart but the police did not allow him. The timely ration support ensured his family's survival.

P is 9 months pregnant and resides in refugee camp of Adarsh nagar. Due to lockdown and COVID, she was not registered with any government hospital.

Narratives of Hardship: Glimpses from Kashmir

AG is a widower with 2 minor children to look after. He is a casual labourer; the vagaries of the opportunities in labour forced him into occasional beggary to provide food for his two children. His son started working in a tea shop to supplement the family income and the daughter used to look after the household while giving up her studies. In the wake of Coronavirus epidemic, the family lost all means of subsistence with no availability of labour for AG and his son as the tea stall was closed since the outbreak of the pandemic. Also, his beggary fetched nothing as the lockdown constrained him to remain indoors. Some neighbors did help occasionally but their own poor economic conditions constrained any prospects of sustained help.

MA is a casual labourer and resides in Singpora village. His family consists of his wife and three minor children. The family leads a hand to mouth existence with no further assistance in the income from any sources. The Coronavirus epidemic profoundly affected the economy of the family as all avenues of securing labour were lost. MA could not secure any labour opportunities at Srinagar and back home there were none to supplement income to his household.

Securing Mental Well-Being for Children and their Caregivers

Amongst the myriad challenges thrown up by the COVID-19 pandemic is the challenge of ensuring mental well-being of all, particularly children. Mental health is one of the most crucial aspects of HAQ's work with children under its Access to Justice programme. Recognising that child survivors of sexual abuse, whose cases were marked to HAQ would require continued counselling support during the lockdown, HAQ started pondering over how to continue the service and also reach out to other children and their caregivers to deal with the lockdown in a healthy manner. The uncertainty combined with confinement to the four walls of home is certainly not a preferred option for people. Maintaining personal hygiene and emotional balance and mental health was identified as an essential need. HAQ started a counselling helpline number for children and families in distress, which was later discontinued when HAQ's counsellors became part of the counselling helpline of the Delhi Government.



As a part of its mental health intervention, we were aware that during the lockdown, when schools are closed, there will be many children without any resources to engage with through the day. Thus, HAQ thought of putting together a repository of online story books and comics, educational materials and worksheets, puzzles, music, movies, magic, hairstyling techniques and such other activities that would interest children aged 12 to 18 years. This repository has been designed keeping in mind the ease of access, ease of understanding and execution without any specialised supervision and the fun factor. HAQ's team of social workers and counsellors are taking this repository to children whom we work with on a regular basis in order to minimise their anxieties related to lockdown and other domestic issues. The repository is titled **"Young Busy Bees: A One Stop Treasure Trove for Engaging Young Minds!"** and has been conceptualised as a living repository which is being updated on a weekly basis. It can be accessed at <https://www.haqcrc.org/blog/young-busy-bees/>

Besides the repository for children, HAQ's website also hosts a number of educational and recreational materials, which can be accessed by children through phone during the period of lockdown. The idea behind putting out such a wide ranging collection of infotainment is to provide children with healthy modes of keeping themselves busy and taking them away from age inappropriate materials on the web.

HAQ has also partnered with other civil society organisations working towards providing healthy and age appropriate materials for children in order to help them cope with the lockdown better. In this direction, HAQ is committed to sharing and spreading AplanChaplan, a story telling initiative of Leher, a Delhi based partner NGO.



Access to Justice

Access to Justice has been one of the focus areas of HAQ's work since its inception. Under the current access to justice and restorative care programme, HAQ provides psycho-social and legal aid services to child victims of sexual abuse in Delhi as well as children in conflict with the law.

Monitoring release of prisoners as well as children

During the COVID-19 outbreak, functioning of courts and other child protection agencies and functionaries has also got affected. Regular court proceedings have been suspended except in urgent matters. Also, as per the directions of the Hon'ble Supreme Court, jails are being decongested and prisoners released on bail for 60 days, causing anxiety for a lot of the victims supported and represented by HAQ. Another direction of the Supreme Court directed decongestion of child care institutions, raising concern for ensuring best interest of the child while being considered for release or restoration to family and thereafter. A child in conflict with law was released on bail but no measures were put in place to ensure he reached his family safe and secure or his family could fetch an emergency movement pass to bring him home from the institution without having to face the wrath of the police. Another child, a victim of sexual abuse, and her family were being intimidated by the accused released on bail in the name of decongesting prisons. Several measures were taken as queries and reports started coming in from concerned children and their parents/caregivers. These include:

Letter appeal to the Juvenile Justice Committee of the Delhi High Court

In the Suo Motto Civil Writ Petition by the Supreme Court titled as IN RE CONTAGION OF COVID 19 VIRUS IN CHILDREN PROTECTION HOMES, the Hon'ble Supreme Court in its order dated 03.04.2020 passed various directions with respect to ensuring the safety of children staying in the Child Care institutions in the times of COVID-19 pandemic.

In furtherance to this direction passed by the Hon'ble Supreme Court and to ensure the implementation of the Supreme Court guidelines both in letter and spirit, HAQ sent a letter with an appeal and suggestions for consideration of Juvenile Justice Committee of the Delhi High Court. The suggestions included appropriate measures for smooth functioning of various stakeholders like the Juvenile Justice Boards (JJBs), Officers in-charge of Observation Homes, Special Homes and Place of Safety; Delhi Police, Department of Women and Child Development and the State Legal Services Authority.

The letter was acknowledged by the Committee. Subsequently, suitable directions were issued by the Committee as well as the Delhi Department of Women and Child

Development fixing responsibilities for actions to be taken. These include setting up a panel of persons who could be approached in case of an emergency or a complaint along with their mobile numbers on public display. A circular was also issued providing for monthly allowance to children who are released so that they do not add to the economic burden of their family in the wake of the lockdown and the families are able to provide necessary care and protection while the children are in their custody.

Monitoring of Court Orders and Non-Compliance of High Court Directions

During COVID-19, many functionalities of the judicial system were suspended and practice directions were issued by Hon'ble Supreme Court (***Suo Motu Writ Petition (C) No. 1/2020, In Re: Contagion of COVID-19 Virus in Prisons; Sua Moto Writ Petition (Civil) No(s). 4/2020, In Re Contagion of Covid-19 Virus in children protection homes***) and different High Courts for decongestion of prisons and court premises. The State immediately adopted a proactive approach in addressing the pre-existing issue of overcrowded prisons and to avoid consequent responsibility against the spread of contagion in prisons, the accused persons were either released on interim or regular bail. In the whole process of decongesting the prisons, the Courts ignored their responsibilities of ensuring the safety of victims in the cases of sexual offences.

HAQ: Centre for Child Rights conducted a short research on Sessions Court bail orders during the COVID-19 Lockdown, which were fortunately available online and found that in 122 substantive orders passed in regular / interim Bail Applications in POCSO cases between 18.04.2020 to 21.05.2020, court notices were not sent to the victims and victims did not have representation except the public prosecutors. The orders were further silent on whether information of the bail hearing was given to the victim by the investigating officer. Of these, regular or interim bail was granted to the accused in 36 cases, without hearing the victim. In this process, **the Courts did not feel the need to inform the victims about the release of their alleged perpetrators and thereby failed to ensure any victim-centric safeguarding measures. Needless to say, the representation of victims through their lawyers or DLSA DLSA counsel was not even contemplated by the courts during such proceedings.**

The concern was grave as in the case of a now 14-year-old girl child supported by HAQ, who was raped in the presence of her younger sister at the age of 11, the Sessions Court granted interim bail to the accused without hearing the victim or her legal representative. The child and her family had faced intimidation and threats from the accused and his family in the past, pressurising them to withdraw the case and had sought police protection. This was not brought to the notice of the Court,

nor was the Court apprised that the home of the accused was in close proximity to the victim. The victim was not informed of the release of the accused and only came to know once he had come home. The intimidation continued post the release of the accused on interim bail. All this happened in utter violation of the Criminal Law Amendment Act, 2018, Practice Directions issued by the Hon'ble High Court of Delhi on the administrative side **(No.67/Rules/DHC dated 24.09.2019)** and on the judicial side in *Reena Jha & Ors. vs. Govt. of NCT of Delhi [W. P. (C) No. 5011/2017]*, which extended the requirement to secure the presence of the victim or her representative at the time of deciding a bail application to cases under the POCSO Act as well. HAQ approached the Hon'ble High Court of Delhi in *Miss G (Minor) through Her Mother vs. State of NCT of Delhi & Anr. [Crl. M. C. No. 1474 of 2020]* wherein the Hon'ble Court issued fresh directions to all District Courts for compliance of the Criminal Law Amendment Act, 2018 and the directions passed in the *Reena Jha* judgment. Additionally, directions were passed for the police to provide immediate steps for protection for the victim child and her family members in this case. In one of the subsequent hearings, the Hon'ble Court has called for an urgent report from the Registrar General and all Delhi District judges on the number of bail applications decided without notice and/or representation on behalf of the victim. It is also mandated that legal representation through own or legal services counsel and all the relevant documents required for the victim/complainant/informant to effectively represent the case for opposing the bail shall be ensured.

With this positive set of directions received from the Hon'ble High Court, the rights of the victims of sexual abuse were reinforced during the pandemic.

Rights of Children In The Time of COVID-19: A Policy Brief

HAQ was a part of the network of various civil society organisations, individuals and experts which came together to put together policy level recommendations for strengthening and ensuring children's rights during the COVID-19 on a range of issues. The Policy document enlists set of recommendations of various stakeholders like government functionaries, judiciary, focussed groups and institutions working with children directly and indirectly. The Policy Brief was shared widely with Ministries and State Governments. The Policy Brief can be accessed at <https://www.haqcrc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/rights-of-children-17-july-2020.pdf>



**RIGHTS OF CHILDREN
IN THE TIME OF COVID-19**



COVID Response Alliance of India on Child Protection

The need for working out appropriate and functional alternatives to ensure timely and necessary response to child protection concerns during the lockdown and post lockdown period has grappled many minds over the past two months. This also calls for coming together and collective thinking. HAQ is a part of the newly formed alliance of more than 80 civil society organisations and individuals across the country working on child protection issues. The alliance meets every week to share the existing knowledge and good practices, discuss violations of children's rights due to COVID and brainstorm on way forward. The alliance is currently an informal network.

While the situation of COVID-19 is not going to get over any sooner and there may be many unforeseen challenges the pandemic will pose in the times to come, HAQ is committed to continue its relief work and simultaneously, advocate for more inclusive, practical, child sensitive pandemic-response policies and action on the ground.