Newsletter Volume IV

Committee for Juvenile Justice and to Regulate and Monitor the Progress of Trials under the POCSO Act
High Court of Kerala



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Committee for Juvenile Justice and to Regulate and Monitor the Progress of Trials under the POCSO Act



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HONOURABLE MR. JUSTICE K.BABU
Member



HONOURABLE MR. JUSTICE P.G. AJITHKUMAR
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HONOURABLE MRS. JUSTICE C.S. SUDHA
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Nurturing the Tender Shoots of Innocence

In this intricate tapestry of our society, children are the luminous threads that illuminate the harmony of our world. And yet, far too often, they are exposed to the harsh realities of life, their innocence bruised by the cruel winds of adversity. It is our bounden duty to ensure that every child has a safe and nurturing environment to grow and thrive, to flourish like a garden in full bloom.

Justice P.N. Bhagwati, in the landmark case of *Sheela Barse vs. Union of India (1986) 3 SCC 596*, observed that "the child is a soul with a being, a nature and a personality all its own, who must be nurtured and protected." This observation underscores the importance of creating a society that prioritizes the well-being and protection of its children. Therefore, we must strive to create a society that values and safeguards the well-being of its most precious resource: its children. A culture that cherishes the beauty of childhood, that honours the

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dignity of youth, and that protects the rights of its most vulnerable members. As Nelson Mandela so eloquently put it, "There can be no keener revelation of a society's soul than the way in which it treats its children.

The committee for Juvenile Justice regulates and monitors the progress of trials under the POCSO Act and has been working tirelessly to ensure that these goals of the society are realized to the extent possible. The committee focuses on a rights-based approach, constantly endeavoring to undertake progressive initiatives for the holistic development of children under the state's care. While ensuring the protection and welfare of the children in care, an issue with regard to the repatriation of a child from Bihar had come to my attention during an inspection of the children's Home for boys at Muttikulangara, Palakkad. An urgent action was taken, and the child was successfully repatriated to his native state. The incidents like these enhance the committee's efforts in promoting the well-being of children.

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The launch of the 4th edition of the e-newsletter on juvenile justice and protection is a beacon of hope in this endeavor, a testament to the power of collective action, and a clarion call to all those who believe in the transformative potential of compassion, empathy, and justice. Through this, we hope to create awareness among the masses and foster better collaboration among stakeholders, share best practices and innovative approaches in juvenile justice to inspire and guide others working in this field. Let us work together to create a world where children are given the freedom to grow, learn, and flourish. A world where their laughter is contagious, their smiles are radiant, and their dreams are limitless. Ultimately, I envision the newsletter as a platform for sharing knowledge, inspiring action, and promoting positive change in the lives of children.

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28/03/2025

MESSAGE

As opined by Justice S. Ravindra Bhatt, Former Judge and Chairman of the Juvenile Justice Committee, Supreme Court of India, the true measure of a society's equity and justice lies in how fairly it treats its children.

The role and objectives of the juvenile justice system in India are pivotal in ensuring care, protection, and rehabilitation of children in conflict with law and children in need of care and protection. It aims to provide a child-centric and child-friendly approach, prioritizing the best interests of the child in all proceedings and decisions. The juvenile justice system also emphasizes the importance of education, skill development, counselling, and support services as a multidisciplinary inter-sectoral approach through psycho social intervention is needed to ensure holistic care and support for children.

To this end, the High Court Juvenile Justice Committee has collaborated with the State Government and other stakeholders in upholding the rights of the children of our society, especially the underprivileged.

As a Member of the present Committee for Juvenile Justice and to regulate and monitor the progress of trials under the PoCSO Act, I have had the opportunity to interact with the children who come from varying socio economic backgrounds. The Committee has been

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steadfast in its commitment to prioritizing the 'best interests of the children,' pushing boundaries to create a transformative environment conducive to their all-round development.

The 4th edition of the e-newsletter of the JJ-PoCSO Committee is an effort to share the commitment of the Committee and the concerted efforts of the State Government and other stakeholders in creating a transforming environment for the holistic development of the less fortunate children of our society and overcoming the various challenges faced by children today in an ever changing social and cultural environment.

I'm confident that our activities will continue to effect changes that will result in a better environment and provide hope and support for children who are in conflict with law. I am hopeful that this edition of the newsletter would achieve its objective of creating an awareness and inspire every individual in fulfilling their roles as child duty bearers, ensuring that every child receives the care and protection they deserve. As in the words of Oprah Winfrey, *"Every time a child is saved from the dark side of life, every time one of us make a difference in child's life, we add light and healing to our own lives"*.

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"Children are the world's most valuable resource

and our best hope for the future."

— Franklin D. Roosevelt

A child in conflict with the law is first and foremost a child. The difference between a responsible adult and a troubled youth is often absence of guidance, care, and opportunity. We were all children once, shaped by the adults around us. Today's children are tomorrow's leaders, decision-makers, and guardians of this world. It is our collective duty to equip them to shoulder this responsibility with wisdom and empathy.

The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015, is not a law of retribution but one of reformation. It recognizes that children, by their very nature, are still growing, still learning. Some may stray from the right path, but the law must not cast them

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away,it must bring them back. Juvenile justice in India is built on the principle that children are not to be treated as adults but as individuals deserving of special protection and care. Their deviant behavior is often a result of circumstances rather than intent. The goal should be to help young people avoid future delinquency and mature into law-abiding adults.

The Indian judicial system adheres to the doctrine of *Doli Incapax*, presuming that children are incapable of committing a criminal offense. This principle was reaffirmed by the Hon'ble Supreme Courtin in its decision in **Om Prakash @ Israel @ Raju @ Raju Das v. Union of India** [AIR 2025 SC 787] by holding that the foundational principles of child protection and welfare enshrined in the Constitution. Hon'ble Justice Sri.M.M.Sundresh, who authored the decision, poignantly noted that children in conflict with the law are often *"inheritors of crime"*, victims of circumstances such as

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poverty, lack of education, or adverse social environments and that one must not lose sight of the fact that the child is not responsible for an act of crime, but is rather victimized by it and that such a child is nothing but an inheritor of crime, a legacy which it does not wish to imbibe.

This vision is firmly rooted in the Indian Constitution, with provisions such as Article 15(3), which allows the State to make special laws for children, and Article 39(e) and (f), which call for their protection against exploitation and abandonment. These constitutional principles, combined with international commitments under treaties like the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), form the bedrock of India's juvenile justice framework.

Different stakeholders under the JJ Act are forums of hope, through whom the society extends its hand to children who have fallen

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through the cracks. A society is measured by how it treats its most vulnerable. If we fail our children today, we fail our future.

This News Letter is the testament of dedicated and committed service of the staffs of the High Court and Government to achieve the goals set out in the Statute. Let the Almighty shower all blessings to them to achieve the best results for their dedicated and committed efforts. I am sure that their hard work and dedication will surely lead to incredible results in the future also.

Dated this the27th March, 2025

M A Abdul Hakhim, Judge

Introduction

“Every single minute matters, every single child matters, every single childhood matters”: Kailash Satyarthi

The Juvenile Justice system in India operates with the aim of providing special protection and care to both children who are in need of care and protection and children in conflict with law, aligning with international norms and standards. This legal framework, as defined under the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015, seeks to safeguard the rights of children in conflict with the law, as well as children in need of care and protection.

India's Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 represents an umbrella legislation that harmonizes the provisions of the UNCRC with Indian legal practices. It ensures that children who commit offenses are not treated as adults but instead undergo a process of rehabilitation. The Act also extends its provisions to children in need of care and protection, offering them a legal framework for care, education, and overall development.

The establishment of Juvenile Justice Committees within the Supreme Court and the High Courts of India played a crucial role in monitoring the effective implementation of the Act. These Committees were set up as a result of resolutions passed during the Chief Justices' Conferences, especially the 2013 resolution, which aimed to set up such committees in all High Courts to ensure that the provisions of the Juvenile Justice Act were being properly enforced. This approach was initially piloted in the Delhi High Court under the Juvenile Justice Act of 2000.

The Committee for Juvenile Justice and to regulate and monitor the progress of trials under the PoCSO Act constituted in the High Court of Kerala has been integral to the effective implementation of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015, and POCSO Act, 2012 ensuring that the core objectives and principles of the Acts are upheld throughout the State. The Committee oversees the enforcement of the Acts, guaranteeing that children are treated in accordance with the provisions that prioritize their rights and rehabilitation. The Committee ensures that the system nurtures rehabilitation, education, and social reintegration, offering every child an opportunity to rediscover their path to dignity and a brighter future.

Revisiting 2024: An Overview of Committee's Activities

The Committee for Juvenile Justice and to regulate and monitor the progress of trials under the POCSO Act has been working resolutely to ensure the welfare and protection of children. Dedicated to safeguarding and upholding the rights of the vulnerable sections of society, the Committee works in tandem with stakeholders to prevent their exploitation, provides support services and creates a safer and supportive environment for the children. The Committee aims for a brighter and more secure future for the children through policy reforms, capacity building and community engagement. The Committee is committed to monitoring and guiding the implementation of laws related to juveniles, ensuring that the best interests of children are prioritized at every stage of the legal process.

A Glimpse into the Committee's Initiatives:

The Committee has been actively engaged in a range of initiatives to safeguard the rights and welfare of children. Some of the key activities include:

- Monitoring and inspecting child care institutions to ensure compliance with standards.
- Advocating for policy reforms to strengthen child protection frameworks.
- Building capacity among stakeholders through training and workshops.
- Engaging with communities to promote awareness and participation in child protection efforts.
- Reviewing and monitoring trials under the POCSO Act to ensure timely justice for child victims.

Ensuring Compliance with the Juvenile Justice Act: Committee's Inspection of Juvenile Justice Homes

As part of its mandate to monitor the implementation of the Juvenile Justice (JJ) Act, the Committee has been conducting regular inspections of government-run Juvenile Justice Homes across the State. These inspections have yielded encouraging results, revealing that the Homes generally provide a supportive environment conducive to the overall development of the children in their care. The Homes offer a comprehensive range of facilities, including tuition classes, sports and recreational activities, arts and creative skills programs, libraries, farming activities, and regular medical check-ups and counseling sessions. These facilities are widely available across almost all the Homes, demonstrating a commendable commitment to ensuring the well-being and holistic development of the children.

While the inspections have highlighted the positive aspects of the Homes, they have also identified certain challenges that hinder the optimal functioning of some institutions. To address these challenges, the Committee issues directives to the relevant Departments, ensuring timely resolution of the issues and maintaining high standards of care and support for the children.

Through these inspections and follow-up actions, the Committee remains steadfast in its commitment in ensuring the effective implementation of the Juvenile Justice Act, thereby safeguarding the rights and well-being of children across the State.

INSPECTION OF JJ HOMES BY THE COMMITTEE











Directions to chalk out a plan for inspection of private / NGO run JJ Homes

In addition to the monitoring and inspection of Government run Juvenile Justice Homes in the State, considering Apex Court judgments and JJ Act provisions, the Committee has expanded its monitoring to include private Juvenile Justice Homes, amid rising complaints of inadequate facilities, ill-treatment, and suicides. To address this, the Committee has directed the Women & Child Development Department to chalk out a plan for regular and surprise inspections. The State Government is expected to submit a comprehensive report on the inspections conducted, to the Committee.

Committee's Successful Intervention in a Child's Repatriation

The Committee has been focused to ensure and protect the welfare of the children in care. During an inspection of the Children's Home for Boys at Muttikulangara, Palakkad on January 5, 2024, Honourable Mr. Justice D.K. Singh, Chairperson of the Committee, had found that the repatriation of a child by name, Rohan, a native of Bihar, was significantly delayed. Despite Rohan revealing his father's name and native village, the process was slow. The Chairperson promptly issued directions to the Chief Judicial Magistrate to take urgent action, locate Rohan's native place, and trace his parents to restore custody. Following these directions, Rohan was successfully repatriated to his native state on January 11, 2024, and reunited with his maternal uncle.

Sensitizing Judicial Officers: A Collaborative Effort with Kerala Judicial Academy

The Committee thoroughly examined a petition from the Public Prosecutor of the FTSC Court, Pattambi, Palakkad, highlighting concerns about the living conditions of POCSO survivors in care homes, inadequate prosecution support for victims, and delays in court case disposal. To address these issues, the Committee took a multi-faceted approach and reached out to the Women & Child Development Department and the Police Department to ensure that these government bodies take necessary steps to improve the care and support provided to POCSO survivors. The Committee urged the Kerala Judicial Academy to sensitize Judicial Officers of POCSO Courts about the importance of safeguarding the best interests of child victims. By taking a comprehensive approach, the Committee aims to create a more supportive and protective environment for POCSO survivors, ensuring that their rights and interests are safeguarded throughout the judicial process.

Strengthening Judicial Excellence: Capacity building programmes for Judicial Officers by SAMVAD

The Committee has acknowledged SAMVAD's (an initiative of NIMHANS, Bengaluru) request to conduct capacity-building programs for Judicial Officers. These programs aims to provide support, advocacy, and mental health interventions for children in vulnerable circumstances and distress. The Committee's objective is to enhance and extend child-centric modules among the District Judiciary, ensuring a more informed and sensitive approach to juvenile justice.

Intervention of the Committee against abuse of children

The Committee had observed with mounting concern, the rise in number of cases of atrocities against newborns and infants. The Government has therefore been addressed regarding the imminent need to revive “Ammathottil”, an initiative of the State Government and also to create more awareness among the public regarding its functioning.

The Committee swiftly responded to the alarming rise in sexual assault cases against minor children of migrant labourers, emphasizing the need for immediate action from State authorities to ensure their safety. To address this issue, the Committee urged the Government to implement statewide measures, seeking regular feedback on the progress. In response, the Government has informed of the proactive steps taken by them, engaging major stakeholders in intervention measures. These initiatives include support systems, parenting clinics, and schemes like “Roshni”, which focuses on continuing education for migrant children. Notably, the KAVAL Plus program of the State Government has been extended to provide psychological support, social rehabilitation, and counseling to migrant children in vulnerable situations.

The Committee has taken swift action regarding the disturbing incident of a two-and-a-half-year-old girl's abuse by three temporary women employees of Kerala State Council for Child Welfare in Thiruvananthapuram. The Committee had directed to call for a report on the incident to ensure accountability and justice. In a related development, the Women & Child Development Department has proposed to the Government a plan for the care of children under six years of age in approved adoption institutions. This proposal aligns with the provisions of the Juvenile Justice Act, Rules, and Adoption Regulations, aiming to safeguard the well-being and safety of vulnerable children. To further strengthen the protection of children, a draft Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) has been prepared by the W&CD Department and submitted to the Government. This SOP outlines the procedures to be followed by institutions caring for children under six years of age, registered under the Juvenile Justice Act.

Launch of Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for Anti-Drug Activities and Proposal for Exclusive De-Addiction Centre for Children at Thavanur in Malappuram District

The Regional Judicial Colloquium on POCSO Act, Juvenile Justice & Drug Abuse among Children for five Southern States and the Union Territory of Puducherry, conducted by the High Court of Kerala on 25th and 26th February, 2023, had strongly recommended the Union and State Governments to take proactive steps to establish drug treatment and rehabilitation centres for children as per the guidelines and directives of the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India.

In a significant move to combat the growing menace of substance abuse among children, the Committee for Juvenile Justice and to regulate and monitor the progress of trials under the POCSO Act had directed the Government to consider the expansion of School Protection Committees to CBSE and ICSE schools across the State and also to consider the scope of developing a three-tier mechanism at the School, Sub-District and District level, so that the issue of drug abuse could be tackled at both micro and macro levels.

As a result of the frequent follow up on the same, a Standard Operating Procedure for Anti- Drug Activities have been developed by the State Excise Department in consultation with other stakeholders, inculcating the three tier mechanism as suggested by the High Court Committee.

Post finalization of the Standard Operating Procedure by the Committee, the Excise Department has requested the State Government for appropriate orders for the formation of Local Jana Jagratha Samithis, District Level Monitoring Committees and State Level Monitoring Committees in schools, including all curriculums, across the State, i.e., CBSE, ICSE, ISC, Kendriya Vidyalaya, Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas and Sainik Schools.

Launch of Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for Anti-Drug Activities and Proposal for Exclusive De-Addiction Centre for Children at Thavanur in Malappuram District

Furthermore, recognizing the need for specialized care and support, the Committee has proposed establishment of an exclusive de-addiction centre for children. The High Court is closely monitoring the Committee's proposal to establish de-addiction centers exclusively for children. In a positive development, the State Government has taken concrete steps to implement this proposal, with a focus on setting up a de-addiction center near the Government Children's Home for Boys at Thavanur, Malappuram.



Annual Consultations 2024: Committee's State and National Engagement

The National Annual Stakeholders Consultation on "Children with Disabilities" was a pivotal event held on September 28-29, 2024, in New Delhi, under the aegis of the Honourable Supreme Court of India.

As a preface to the National Annual Stakeholders Consultation with focus on “Children with Disabilities”, a State level Consultation with various stakeholders, including Kerala State Legal Services Authority (KELSA), Kerala Judicial Academy, Judicial Officers having jurisdiction under the POCSO Act cases and JJB matters, Women & Child Development Department, Social Justice Department, Police Department, General Education Department, Kerala State Commission for the Protection of Child Rights (KeSCPCR), State Commissionerate for Persons with Disabilities and expert agencies/ organizations (government/ non-government), specialized Civil Society Organizations (NISH, NIPMER, NEST and PARIVAAR Kerala), was convened by the Committee for Juvenile Justice and to regulate and monitor the progress of trials under the POCSO Act, on 13th August, 2024.



Annual Consultations 2024: Committee's State and National Engagement

The Consultation deliberated on the key progress, gaps and challenges, way forward and best practices on various topics under the core concept "Children with Disabilities". The Consultation explored the availability of services to inform judicial processes for children in conflict with law, and child victims including survivors of sexual violence, availability of professional functionaries/specialized and skilled workforce and availability of services for the well-being of Children with Disabilities who are in Child Care Institutions.

The meeting reviewed in detail, how much the rehabilitation of differently-abled children and their care are facing challenges in today's society and the procedures required to solve them. Constructive and healthy suggestions have emerged from all the participants representing various stakeholders.

The National Level Consultation held on 28th – 29th September, 2024 marked the culmination of the State Level Consultations held across the country. The Chairperson of the Committee, Honourable Mr. Justice D.K. Singh and Members, Honorable Mr. Justice P.G. Ajithkumar and Honorable Mrs. Justice C.S. Sudha, along with the State level representatives of Social Justice Department, Women & Child Development Department, Police Department, Kerala State Legal Services Authority and State Commissionerate for Persons with Disabilities represented the State of Kerala at the National level Consultation. The Consultation aimed to foster dialogue among stakeholders and generate actionable insights to ensure the protection and welfare of children with disabilities.

Ensuring Education for Children in JJ Homes: Chairperson's directive to the Government

The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015, emphasizes the importance of education and rehabilitation of children in need of care and protection. Ensuring access to education is crucial for their development and future prospects. The District Juvenile Justice Committee in Idukki had raised concerns about children in Child Care Institutions facing difficulties in securing admission to nearby Higher Secondary Schools due to technical issues and lack of necessary Government Orders. This has resulted in delayed education for these children, who require special care and attention.

To address this issue, the High Court Committee has intervened, directing the Women & Child Development Department and the Education Department to take effective steps to resolve any difficulties and issue necessary orders to ensure admission to inmates from Child Care Institutions in Higher Secondary Schools without delay or technical hurdles.

Repatriation of Manipur Students: Committee Member's Intervention ensures safe return of students

Honourable Mr. Justice K. Babu, Member of the Committee, addressed concerns raised by leaders of the Kuki Students Organisation during an inspection of the Government Children's Home for Boys in Pathanamthitta on July 13, 2024. The concerns revolved around the relocation of children from Manipur, affected by ethnic violence, from Sathyam Ministries Home in Thiruvalla to the Children's Home in Kollam and St. Nicholas Home in Thiruvalla, as per the orders of Child Welfare Committee (CWC), Pathanamthitta.

A meeting, presided over by Honourable Mr. Justice K. Babu, was convened with the District Legal Services Authority, Pathanamthitta, and the Chairmen of the Child Welfare Committees in Pathanamthitta and Kollam, to discuss the matter. Following this, a team from the Manipur CWC arrived in Kerala on October 18, 2024, and the children were handed over to the custody of the Chairperson, CWC, Churachandpur, Manipur.

Ensuring Child Rights: A Report from the District Judiciary

Transforming Child Care Institutions (CCIs) into nurturing environments where children can heal, grow, and reach their full potential is a crucial step toward promoting their welfare. It reinforces the belief that every child deserves the opportunity to express themselves, live with dignity, and experience happiness and fulfillment. This approach highlights the collective responsibility of the stakeholders to protect and support children, who are among the most vulnerable members of society.

The Juvenile Justice Homes in the State focus on physical and emotional well being and academic requirements of children. The monthly inspections carried out in Children's Homes by the District Judiciary have contributed to the overall development of the Juvenile Justice Homes in the State.



Ensuring Child Rights: A Report from the District Judiciary

The JJ Homes are implementing a variety of activities to keep inmates engaged and promote their well-being. These activities— library access, yoga classes, art and craft sessions, pet keeping and outdoor activities—help to improve the mental and emotional health of the residents. By offering these opportunities, the facility helps to foster a sense of routine, creativity, and physical activity, which are vital for rehabilitation and personal growth of children. Turfs have been built in several of the Homes to cater to the outdoor recreational activities of the children. These Homes also provide periodic medical check ups and counselling sessions to the children who are entrusted in their care.

Young Artists in Bloom






Ensuring Child Rights: A Report from the District Judiciary

Farming activities are being taken up in many of the Homes The Agricultural Department and Krishi Bhavan have been providing grow bags, potting mix and manure. Staff members are regularly motivating the inmates to maintain the same as it provides recreation as well as stress relief. The yields from the same are used in the kitchen.

"Tumkur mozhi" aerobic waste disposal System was inaugurated at the Children's' Home, Kottayam in August, 2024 with the support of Ayarkunnam Grama Panchayat, wherein aerobic tanks are used to convert biodegradable waste into compost.







Ensuring Child Rights: A Report from the District Judiciary

The authorities of these JJ Homes are also keen on the holistic development of the children under their care. Master Srikrishna, an inmate of Children's Home for Boys, Thalassery, secured an A Grade with top marks in the State School Festival's mono act is a significant milestone, not just for him, but also for the Government Homes, as it is for the first time in the history of the Government run JJ Homes, an inmate, secured an A Grade in State School Festival with a top mark. Kumari Jyothi of Children's Home for Girls, Ernakulam bagged the Best Manager Award at the State level Commerce Fest conducted in Thrissur. Nithin Manoj, an inmate of Children's Home for Boys, Wayanad secured several prizes in the drawing competitions held at the District and State level.



Ensuring Child Rights: A Report from the District Judiciary

These achievements reflects how opportunities for creativity, such as art and craft classes or other activities at JJ Homes, help foster confidence and self-expression. It also shows the importance of encouraging inmates to pursue their interests, as they might surprise everyone with their potential.







Celebrating Innocence and Joy

Empowering Children: Report from the Women & Child Development Department on its key initiatives and schemes

Stakeholders' Workshop

A two-day stakeholders' workshop was conducted (31/01/2024 & 01/02/2024) at Thiruvananthapuram to discuss the Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for the Child Welfare Committees and draft the Kerala State Juvenile Justice Rules.

Children's Fest 2023-24

The State Children's Fest is organized every year to discover and promote the creativity of children in juvenile justice institutions run under the Department of Women and Child Development, which includes various art competitions. In the current financial year, Children's fest was conducted on 26th - 28th January, 2024 at Rajagiri College of Social Sciences, Kalamassery, Ernakulam.







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Empowering Children: Report from the Women & Child Development Department on its key initiatives and schemes

State-Level Orientation Program on Adoption Regulations, 2022

A State Level Orientation Programme for stakeholders from the field of child care and protection, conducted by the Department of Women and Child Development in a joint venture with Central Adoption Resource Authority was held on 16th February, 2024 at Thiruvananthapuram. Around 180 persons participated in this session including DMOs, Law Officers, CWC Members, DCPOs and DCPU officials, officials from passport agencies, SAA representatives, Child Helpline representatives. Eminent resource persons experienced in this field handled the session on Adoption Regulations, 2022, role of stakeholders in adoption, procedures to be followed in adoption etc. Representatives from Central Adoption Resource Authority handled the sessions on technical aspects on adoption.



Empowering Children: Report from the Women & Child Development Department on its key initiatives and schemes

Hridaya Sangamam 2024

A Family Meet of adoptive parents, foster parents and prospective adoptive parents was conducted by the Department of Women and Child Development in collaboration with Central Adoption Resource Authority on 17th February 2024 at Thiruvananthapuram.The programme aimed to clarify the concerns of prospective adoptive parents regarding adoption through an open discussion. Cultural programmes by children made the programme more colourful. Around 300 persons participated in the programme.

Ujjwalabalyam Awards 2022

As part of the State Children's Day celebrations, the Department awards Ujjwalabalyam every year to children, including the differently-abled, who demonstrate extraordinary abilities in various fields including education, sports, literature, science, social, IT, agriculture etc.







Protecting and Serving Children: Programmes launched by the Police Department

Counter Child Sexual Exploitation Centre (CCSEC): It is effectively functioning under the Kerala Police Cyberdome for prevention and detection of online crimes against children. The specialised wing has been embarking on a sustained digital analysis of the virtual trends thereby monitoring, reporting and removing online child abuse materials. The online transmission of Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM) has increased manifold, due to easy availability of various applications and portals which provide anonymity. Considering the seriousness and gravity of the issue, Kerala Police Cyberdome has initiated a covert drive namely “Operation P-Hunt”, to curb the crime which poses a serious threat to the society and to bring culprits to book. In a bid to ensure that those circulating and uploading videos and pictures with child sex content are dealt with stringently, the Kerala Police had conducted state wide raids and arrested the accused guilty of digitally circulating, storing, viewing and sharing child sexual abuse material.

The Social Policing Division: Formed under Kerala Police for the effective administration and coordination of various socially committed and child-friendly projects and programmes viz Student Police Cadet (SPC) programme, CHIRI Help Line (24x7), the One Stop Call Centre for children, Project HOPE, Child Friendly Police Station(CFPS), Domestic Conflict Resolution Centres (DCRC) etc. Children and Police (CAP) House State Resource Centre under Social Policing Division is a unique initiative of Kerala Police based on the realisation that it is one of the fundamental duties of police to create an invisible wall of protection around every child. Since the past few years, CAP House has initiated many child friendly projects at State level and has proven very effective and successful for imparting and developing confidence, self-awareness and enthusiasm among our children.

Protecting and Serving Children: Programmes launched by the Police Department

The Student Police Cadet (SPC) Project: It is a school-based capacity development programme launched in 2010 intending to develop qualities of character, courage, comradeship, discipline, leadership, secular outlook, spirit of adventure, sportsmanship and the ideals of selfless service among the students to transform them as responsible citizens of the nation. The SPC program has completed 14 years since its inception and has achieved much recognition both nationally and internationally as the biggest youth initiative in school level in the country and the first organization to function with gender equality. As on the academic year 2023-24, the project was active in 998 schools in Kerala, more than 85,630 students have undergone training and more than 3,21,116 students have successfully completed the training programme. In 2024-25, the project is expected to be active in 1049 schools in Kerala, with more than 86,063 students expected to be enrolled in the SPC Programme.



Protecting and Serving Children: Programmes launched by the Police Department

Children's Happiness and Innocence Rejoicing-Initiative (CHIRI) Project: It has been launched for ensuring the well-being of children, identifying and addressing their behavioral, emotional, interpersonal, learning and somatic challenges. The project is aimed at developing a mental health support system with the collective intervention of relevant stakeholders responsible for the care and protection of children. The Counsellors appointed in the Family and Women Counselling Centres are being utilized for imparting necessary online and offline counselling services to tackle the mental stress, anxiety and psychological/mental health issues of the children. Through the CHIRI project, Kerala Police have resolved issues regarding phone addiction, game addiction, mental stress, study problems, family problems and other critical issues which may have detrimental effects to the best interests of these children.



Protecting and Serving Children: Programmes launched by the Police Department

The Project Hope: It is an educational support project launched by the Kerala Police in 2017, to students who have failed in 10th and 12th classes or early school dropouts and provide them with academic and psychosocial support for attaining basic education. Project Hope addresses this social exclusion by bringing the target group into the societal mainstream rather than allowing these children falling into the web of drugs and substance abuse as well as drug peddling. During the period from 2017 to 2024, a total of 3,455 dropouts have successfully acquired their basic educational qualifications, which is a testament to the program's effectiveness in facilitating their educational journey and enabling them to overcome previous setbacks.



Protecting and Serving Children: Programmes launched by the Police Department

The Child Friendly Police Stations (CFPSs): A unique venture of Kerala Police which aims to develop a child friendly atmosphere at Police Stations whereby children can approach Police for their varying needs. The concept of the project is based on the fact that the number of children at risk of abuse and neglect is relatively high and a small percentage will be referred to the Police or other child protection agencies for ventilating their grievances. In 2017, with the aim to change the very idea of policing among children and to help them develop a friendly relationship with Police so that they can approach Police for their needs, this program was launched on pilot basis in six Police Stations i.e., Thiruvananthapuram Fort, Kollam East, Ernakulam-Kadavanthra, Thrissur East, Kozhikode Town and Kannur Town. Through this venture, 148 Police Stations have been converted as Child Friendly Police Stations in a phased manner.



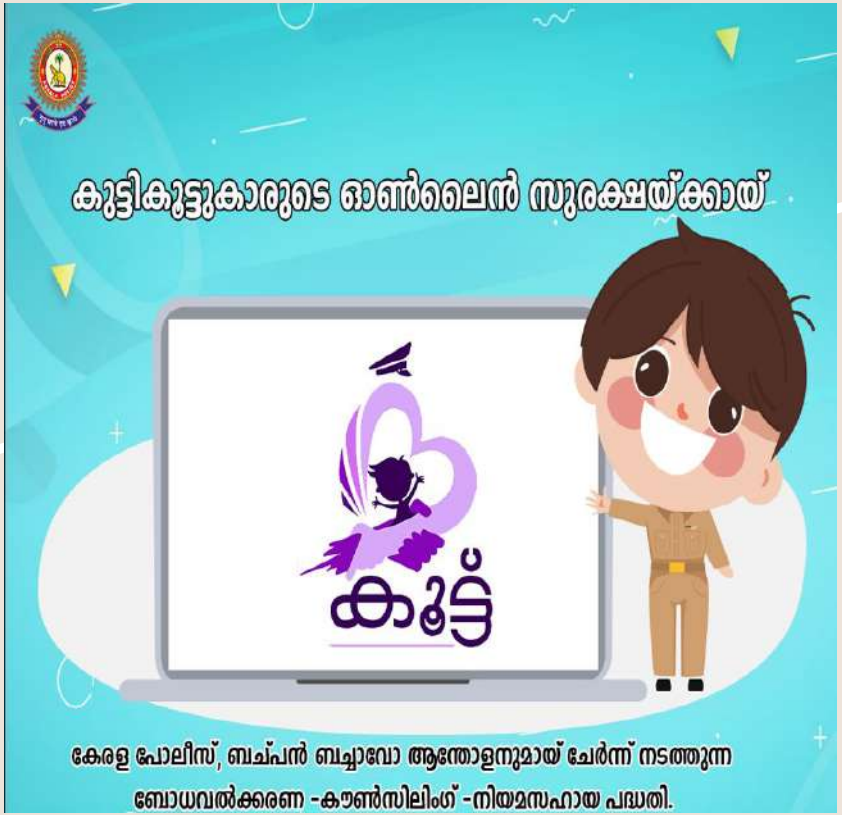
Protecting and Serving Children: Programmes launched by the Police Department

Digital De-Addiction Centres: Established in six City Police districts i.e., Thiruvananthapuram City, Kollam City, Kochi City, Thrissur City, Kozhikode City and Kannur City, for effectively dealing with the unhealthy behavioural deviations emanating among children due to the excessive screen time and enhanced internet usage. With the support of experts in the field, these centres are imparting de-addiction services for children addicted to internet and online games. In the reformative process, the centres focus on interactive education, device free retreats and scientifically supported diversion tactics. The D-DAD centres are giving necessary professional advice to parents, teachers and other agencies dealing with children facing these psychological issues. D-DAD centres have been manned with trained psychologists capable of providing internet de-addiction services to children and necessary guidance to their guardians.

Special Juvenile Police Units: Kerala Police have developed a three-tier mechanism at the State, District and Police Station levels for monitoring Juvenile Justice issues. The Deputy Inspector General of Police, Thiruvananthapuram has been appointed as the State Nodal Officer for monitoring JJ issues. Special Juvenile Police Units were formed in all the Districts, as per the provisions of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 and the Deputy Superintendents of Police, Crime Branch in all districts were designated as Officers-in-Charge of the Special Juvenile Police Units. Child Welfare Police Officers (CWPOs) have been appointed in all the Police Stations of the State to exclusively deal with children either as victims or perpetrators, in coordination with Police, voluntary and non-governmental organizations.

Protecting and Serving Children: Programmes launched by the Police Department

Project "KOOTTU": "KOOTTU" is a prestigious child safety initiative by Kerala Police, set up with the help of Bachpan Bachao Andolan, to enable secure cyberspace for children. The project aims to build comprehensive awareness among teenagers and to build infrastructure at specific districts across Kerala where P-Hunt cases are reported the most. The project put forward two levels of action. At the first level, the project focuses on spreading awareness among children, teachers and parents on the threats and challenges in cyberspace, by blending modern IT techniques, robotics etc. The second level is dedicated for rehabilitation of children who are victims of online crimes. Counselling Centres and Legal Aid Posts are established for the victimised children in selected districts where P-Hunt cases are highly reported. The service of the centres is free of cost and the centre equip the victims to tide over exploitation in all respects.



Protecting and Serving Children: Programmes launched by the Police Department

OPERATION BALASURAKSHA: As part of observing the World Day against Child Labour, Kerala Police organized a month long rescue campaign against the child labour from 1st June to 30th June, 2024. In this regard, all the District Nodal Officers of the Anti Human Trafficking Units/ SJPUs were directed to conduct a month long rescue drive namely "Operation Balasuraksha" in different child labour prone areas in the districts including small and big establishments in the organized and unorganized sectors. It also directed to ensure the participation of all members from the stakeholder departments included in the DTF, Child Welfare Police Officers (CWPOs), Child Protection Officers (CPOs) and the members of SJPU for protecting the best interests of the rescued children. During this operation 16 children have been rescued and properly rehabilitated.

BACK TO HOME: In order to trace illegally migrated children from other States, the nodal officers of all the District Special Juvenile Police Units in the State had conducted a special drive called "BACK TO HOME" on 06-03-2024 and 07-03-2024. The team visited orphanages/child care institutions/Yatimkhanas, which are functioning in government and private sectors, for repatriating children from other States to their home States.

STORM MAKERS II: As part of the international operation STORM MAKERS II, Kerala Police has performed a statewide special drive from 16.10.2023 to 20.10.2023 to trace out illegal human trafficking in the State. Two human trafficking cases have been registered during the special drive.

Fostering Child Friendly Justice: Training programmes and initiatives by the Kerala Judicial Academy

A special training programme on the topic “Online Child Sexual Abuse” was held for PoCSO Judges on 05.02.2024 & 06.02.2024. Twenty four PoCSO Judges attended the programme. The Hon’ble Dr Justice Kauser Edappagath, Judge, High Court of Kerala, Sri Manoj Abraham IPS, ADGP (Int.), Sri Prakash IPS, IGP, Kerala State Human Rights Commission, Dr. Karnika Seth, Legal Advisor MoD, GOI, Smt. Teresa Jauregui, COO, NCPTF, USA & Sri Sanoj M.A., Asst. Director, FSL, Thrissur addressed the participants.





Fostering Child Friendly Justice: Training programmes and initiatives by the Kerala Judicial Academy

Training programme for Special Judges dealing with PoCSO Act cases was conducted at the Kerala Judicial Academy, Athani in collaboration with SAMVAD- NIMHANS on the Topic: “Psycho-social and Mental Health Considerations in Juvenile Justice and Integrating Child Forensics into the Implementation of PoCSO Act,2012” in offline mode, from 7th to 9th August, 2024 and in online mode on 17.08.2024. Sri Subham Krishna Borah, Project Officer (Policy and Law), SAMVAD-NIMHANS, Bengaluru addressed the participants.



Fostering Child Friendly Justice: Training programmes and initiatives by the Kerala Judicial Academy

The Kerala Judicial Academy has conducted a training programme to the Principal Magistrates and Members of Juvenile Justice Board and a Stakeholders' Consultation on "Diversion and Justice for Children" in association with the Department of Women and Child Development & UNICEF on 20.12.2024 and 21.12.2024. Hon'ble Mr. Justice P.G. Ajithkumar, Judge, High Court of Kerala, Sri. S. Sreejith IPS, ADGP (Head Quarters), Smt. S.Ajeetha Begum IPS, Nodal Officer- SPD, Dr. Sharmila Mary Joseph, Principal Secretary, WCD, Adv. E.V.Chandru, Special Prosecutor, National Investigation Agency, Madras High Court, Sri. K. Krishna Moorthy, Programme Manager, SCPS, Sri.Sreenesh.S.Anil, Programme Coordinator, KAVAL, Sri. Baby Prabhakaran, CEO, Blue Point, Sri.Premjith. P, State Child Protection Consultant had addressed the participants.



Supporting Child Rights and Welfare: Initiatives by the Kerala State Legal Services Authority

SAMVADA - A project for school students organised by KeLSA under NALSA(Child Friendly Legal Services to Children and their Protection Scheme), 2015. The mission of the project is to inculcate value based civic sense in students and equip them to resist the vices and corruption in the system and with a vision to mould them as responsible citizens of the country. Students of 8th to 12th classes are targeted for the programme. Students are given an opportunity to interact with Member Secretary,KeLSA followed by a life skills/social skills session by a Psychologist. The students are also provided with a session on ‘Familiarizing Social Policing and Digital De-addiction' by the Police. The Samvada Programme concludes with a session called, 'Judges Interaction' where a Judge from High Court of Kerala interacts with the students and provide them with a badge of Civic Citizen.











Supporting Child Rights and Welfare: Initiatives by the Kerala State Legal Services Authority

UNARVU - KeLSA has initiated a programme titled “Unarvu” to spread legal awareness against drugs, child abuse and need for respecting, protecting and caring for senior citizens.

MIND OUR MIND: Training programme on Mental Health and related laws held on 15/10/2024 & 17/10/2024 - The programme was a joint venture of the Kerala State Legal Services Authority, District Legal Services Authority, Ernakulam and Maithri - Link with Life. A three day programme on TOT Model held at Muvattupuzha, Aluva and Ernakulam which covered all seven Taluks of Ernakulam district, the programme aimed at generating awareness on mental health issues among the school students, teachers and parents of Ernakulam district.



Mind OUR Mind Training Programme by KeLSA



Supporting Child Rights and Welfare: Initiatives by the Kerala State Legal Services Authority

State Consultation on Access to Justice for Children in India for general comment no. 27 of the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child held on 14.11.2024 - The programme was hosted by KeLSA and Centre for Constitutional Rights Research and Advocacy at the High Court of Kerala. Hon'ble Mr. Justice Muhamed Mustaque A., Judge, High Court of Kerala / Executive Chairperson, KeLSA delivered the valedictory address and the introductory address on the 'Role of KeLSA in ensuring Access to Justice'. Introduction to the program was delivered by Dr. Mohit C.S, District Judge/Member Secretary, KeLSA.

NYAYA PRAVESHIKA, Winter Edition, 2024 (27/11/2024 –20/12/2024) - The winter edition of the Nyaya Praveshika is an Internship Programme for the Law students, which had started on 27/11/2024 and extended till 20/12/2024 including sessions on laws relating to legal services, Alternate Dispute Resolutions and Mediations, NALSA & KeLSA Schemes, practical aspects relating to fundamental rights and duties, laws relating to women and children, industrial workers, SC&ST, NDPS Act, RPWD Act, Mental Health Care Act etc. The participants were also given a research topic, at the submission of which they were given a Certificate of Internship.

Supporting Child Rights and Welfare: Initiatives by the Kerala State Legal Services Authority

Introduction of POCSO laws in school curriculum - A report from the Victim Rights Centre was considered by the Honourable High Court of Kerala, following which the State Government was directed to incorporate POCSO laws into the school curriculum starting from this academic year. The Expert Committee formed by the State Government which included the VRC's Project Coordinator developed teacher sensitization modules and age-appropriate school curricula. KeLSA also provided trained lawyers to educate teachers statewide using a state-approved module. Nearly 8,417 teachers across the State have been trained by KeLSA. Both the State Government and CBSE have revised their curricula. KeLSA will also supply resource persons to train teachers in Lakshadweep before implementing the new curriculum, which includes POCSO laws.

The 13th State Level Legal Awareness Competition held on 20.01.2024 -The Quiz Competition is one of the most prestigious programmes of KeLSA which is conducted every year where students from all the 14 districts who had qualified at the District Level would participate for the State Level. This would equip them with an idea about the Legal Service Institutions, basic laws and general knowledge. In 2024, the students of Kasaragod were the state level winners.

Supporting Child Rights and Welfare: Initiatives by the Kerala State Legal Services Authority

Child Legal Assistance Program (CLAP), 2023 - The High Court of Kerala in its order dated 04.09.2023 in OP (FC) 360/2023 [2024:KER:36010] had directed KeLSA to frame a scheme for Child Legal Assistance in guardianship matters and also in matters involving child sexual offences. The present scheme is formulated, to appoint lawyers who are willing to independently represent children who will be hereafter referred to as 'Child Support Lawyer' in custody matters and all such litigations, where child rights are involved in the Courts/Authorities concerned in the State of Kerala. Psychological support will be provided through District Resource Centres under the Women and Child Development Department, Government of Kerala. Child Support Lawyers are empaneled through a prescribed selection process by KeLSA. CLAP is implemented across the entire State by KeLSA.

Reconnecting Youth - This initiative, rooted in Article 47 of the Constitution of India, seeks to address the escalating challenge of drug abuse in the State. KeLSA aims to spread awareness to prevent substance abuse and provide comprehensive treatment and rehabilitation to addicted youth. Operating at school and community levels, the initiative's multifaceted approach involves awareness classes, anti-drug oaths, peer vigilance cells, counseling, and collaboration with youth organizations.

State and National Level Consultation, 2024

As done in the previous years and as a prelude to the National Level Consultation, the High Court Committee for Juvenile Justice and to regulate and monitor the progress of trials under the POCSO Act convened a State Level Consultation on 13th August 2024 on the theme ‘Effective implementation of the Juvenile Justice Act and the POCSO Act with specific focus on Children with Disabilities’. The State Consultation was conducted by the High Court of Kerala as per the guidance of the Honourable Supreme Court Committee of Juvenile Justice and Child Welfare.



The State Level Consultation addressed the prevailing situation of children in child-care institutions (CCIs) and in conflict with the law, including children with disabilities, experiences of personnels and caregivers interacting with such children, opportunities for early interventions, and the applicable legal regime. The Consultation saw the participation of various stakeholders.

State and National Level Consultation, 2024

It includes KELSA, KJA, Judicial Officers having jurisdiction under the POCSO Act cases and JJB matters, Women & Child Development Department, Social Justice Department, Police Department, General Education Department, Kerala State Commission for the Protection of Child Rights (KeSCPCR), State Commissionerate for Persons with Disabilities and expert agencies / organizations (government/ non-government) and specialized Civil Society Organizations (NISH, NIPMER, NEST and PARIVAAR Kerala).

The Stakeholders Consultation facilitated a robust discussion to gather insights for planning a way forward to improving the lives of children with disabilities. Specifically, the need for interdepartmental and interdisciplinary coordination was emphasised to address the complex challenges faced by CwDs at point of contact with the system. The challenges and the recommendations put forward by the stakeholders at the State Level Consultation was forwarded to the Supreme Court Committee, towards preparing national strategy.









State and National Level Consultation, 2024

The Supreme Court Committee on Juvenile Justice and Child Welfare supported by UNICEF India organized a two – day National Annual Consultation on the theme “Protecting the Rights of Children living with Disabilities” on 28th and 29th September, 2024 at the Supreme Court in New Delhi. The Consultation was organized in collaboration with the Ministry of Women & Child Development (MWCD), other relevant Government Ministries and Departments, respective High Courts from across the country, State Commissions for Persons with Disabilities and Civil Society Organizations.

Following the tradition of previous years, the ninth round of National Annual Stakeholders’ Consultation at the Supreme Court was the culmination of the State Level consultations led by the Honourable High Courts in association with the key departments and agencies entrusted with child centric justice delivery and UNICEF.



National Stakeholders Consultation, 2024 held at the Supreme Court of India

State and National Level Consultation, 2024

The two-day event, focusing on the theme of ‘Protecting the Rights of Children Living with Disabilities’—specifically Children in Conflict with the Law (CiCL) and Children in Need of Care and Protection (CNCP)—also explored the intersectionality of disabilities. The Consultation aimed to strengthen access to justice programmes to Children with Disabilities. The primary goal of this year’s Consultation was to deepen understanding and accelerate efforts towards building a society that is more inclusive of children with disabilities, particularly those in need of special care and protection or those involved in legal conflicts. Participating stakeholders emphasized their commitment to ensure the rights of such children and their access to justice in an effective way.



Honourable Chairperson and Honourable Members at the National Consultation



Committee's Roadmap for Future Action

The Committee, in collaboration with stakeholders, is dedicated to provide children in Child Care Institutions with a nurturing environment that fosters their personal growth and well-being. While notable progress has been achieved, the Committee has identified areas for improvement, including infrastructural deficiencies. To further enhance the lives of these children, the Committee recommends the appointment of specially trained Counsellors to address their emotional needs and provide vocational training to support their academic development and future employability. These initiatives have the potential to profoundly impact the emotional well-being, academic success, and long-term prospects of these children.

Addressing these critical issues is paramount to creating a nurturing environment that holistically supports the development of children in care. By providing access to academic and emotional support, as well as safe spaces for recreation and growth, children can be empowered to become well-rounded individuals equipped to thrive in all aspects of life. The Committee aims to bring happiness, joy, and fulfillment in the lives of these children, empowering them to thrive and reach their full potential.

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