



THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN FROM SEXUAL OFFENCES (POCSO) ACT, 2012 AND THE ROLE OF ITS STAKEHOLDERS

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Abstract : Justice is the foundational stone in any civilized society. Every human being regardless of their being a major or a minor should have the right to access equal justice in the society. However, justice delivery process to children especially in sexual offences prior 2012 is negligible as the existing laws (the Indian Penal Code, the Immoral Trafficking (Prevention) Act, etc. are not sufficient to address such offences. The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012 was enacted with the sole purpose to provide justice to children who are victims of sexual assault, sexual harassment and pornography, known as 'children in need of care and protection'. The prevention of child sexual abuse, protection of the victims, justice delivery and rehabilitation of victims is not isolated issues. To achieve these objectives, the POCSO Act requires that a co-ordinate response of all the stakeholders including the Support Persons, Special Juvenile Police Unit (SJPU) or local police and Child Welfare Committee (CWC) etc. among others is highly necessary. This paper attempts to examine the various roles played by these key players (Support Persons, SJPU /Local Police, and CWC) etc. in promoting access to justice for children with special reference to POCSO Act, 2012.

Keywords - Children, Support Persons, Child Welfare Committee, Special Juvenile Police, POCSO Act and Access to Justice.

“A society without access to justice for everyone is a society where injustice can come to anyone”

Anonymous

Introduction

The concept of justice is as old as the origin and growth of human civilization. In every society, tribe or community, justice plays a very crucial role for governing the mutual relationships and day to day life of persons living in that particular society. State establishes its justice in the society through its authority and law is the manifestation of such authority. Law defines and determines justice. It protects and dispenses justice in reality and treats everyone equally.

Access to justice is very essential for the protection of the rights of children. Access to justice can be defined as ‘the ability to obtain a just and timely remedy for violations of rights as put forth in international and national norms and standards’. Children’s access to justice thus refers to the general ability of children to obtain a timely remedy when their rights are being violated, not respected or violated. Access to justice for children is both a right and a means to restore the rights that have been violated. Without effective access to justice, children remain vulnerable to abuses from their family environment, society and even from the State. Due to their dependent status, children are most vulnerable to injustice in the society.

The importance of access to justice for children as a right in itself is well established in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) as well as in other main international human rights instruments. The UN system in general embraces an expanded notion of ‘access to justice’ which entails of ‘ensuring that the legal and judicial outcomes are just and equitable’.

The Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC), which monitors the implementation of the UNCRC, provides that;

‘Children’s special and dependent status creates real difficulties for them in pursuing remedies for breach of their rights. So the states need to give particular attention to ensuring that there are effective, child sensitive procedures available to children and their representatives. These should include the provision of child friendly information, advice, advocacy, including support for self-advocacy and access to independent complaint procedures and to the courts with necessary legal and other assistance. Where rights are found to have been breach, there should be appropriate reparation, including compensation, and, where needed, measures to promote physical and psychological recovery, rehabilitation and reintegration, as required by Article 39.’

Similarly, Children’s right to access justice has received adequate expression under the Constitution of India in various provisions of the Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles of State Policy. The Constitution of India under Article 14 has expressly incorporated the concept of ‘equality before law’, where the State is duty bound to provide to any person ‘equality before the law’ or the ‘equal protection of laws’ within the territory of India. The word ‘any person’ here includes children as well. The concept of equal access to justice laid down under Article 14 is also applicable to children. However, unfortunately, thousands of children have their rights been violated in our country till date. They experience violence, abuse, exploitation and are denied of access to education, health care or social benefits and they are also separated from their families. These violations are often carried out in the community. All children face barrier to justice and only few can access justice to put rights to wrong in their lives. Everywhere, groups of children are being left behind as victims of prejudice, discrimination and are facing barrier in access to justice.

Therefore, Article 15(3) of the Constitution of India has expressly empowered the State for making special provision/law for children, so that equal justice can be delivered to them particularly in sexual offences.

The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012

The sexual offences were covered under the Indian Penal Code (IPC). However, sexual offences against children are not adequately addressed by the existing law (IPC). It did not also distinguish between adult and child victims. To deal with child sexual abuse cases, the Government brought a special and most comprehensive law i.e., the Protection of children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012. The Act came into force with effect from 14th November, 2012 along with the Rules framed under.

The objective of the POCSO Act is to strengthen the legal provisions for the protection of children from sexual offences and provides justice for such children who are victims of sexual offences by safeguarding their best interest and well being at every judicial process by incorporating child friendly mechanism for mandatory reporting, investigation, recording of evidence and speedy trial of offences through designated Special Courts.

The POCSO Act defines a child as any person below the age of eighteen years. The Act identifies five sexual offences against children – Penetrative Sexual Assault, Aggravated Penetrative Sexual Assault, Sexual Assault, Aggravated Sexual Assault, Sexual Harassment, and using of child for pornographic purposes. These offences are gender neutral vis-a-vis the perpetrator as well as the victim. Abetment of or an attempt is also punishable under the Act.

For promoting access to justice as well as for its effective implementation, the Act calls for the effective and co-ordinate role of different stakeholders recognized under it. Each stakeholder has a unique and crucial role to play at different stages of dispensing justice to the victims. The important role played by some of these stakeholders viz., the SJPU, Support Persons, and CWC are discussed and analyzed herein under.

The POCSO Act and the Role of Support Persons

Support Persons

The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012 introduces the concept of ‘Support Services’ to provide support to the child through the pre-trial and trial process. The ‘support services’ provide information, emotional and psychological support and practical assistance which are very crucial for the recovery of the child and help such child to cope with the aftermath of the crime and with the strain of criminal proceedings. The POCSO Rules, 2012 as well as the POCSO Rules, 2020 contain provisions for the appointment of ‘Support Persons’, to assist a child during the legal procedures, medical examination etc. Under rule 4(3) (f) of the POCSO Rules, 2020 the Special Juvenile Police Unit (SJPU) or the local police as the case may be, when the information is received in accordance with the provisions under sub-section (1) of section 19 of the POCSO Act in respect of an offence that has been committed or attempted or is likely to be committed, the concerned police officers are duty bound to inform the child and child’s parent or guardian or other person in whom the child has trust and confidence of the availability of the ‘support services’ for counselling and assisting the child through the pre-trial and trial process. The child should

therefore, must have access to such support services, in which ‘support person’ is thus appointed for implementing/rendering the ‘Support Services.

Rule 2(f) of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Rules, 2020 defines that the term “support person” means a person assigned by the Child Welfare Committee (CWC), in accordance with sub-rule (7) of rule 4 (in whom the child has trust and confidence and with whom the child has been living and has the determination) to render assistance to the child through the process of investigation and trial, or any other person assisting the child in the pre-trial or trial process in respect of an offence under the POCSO Act.

Appointment of Support Persons

When an incident of child sexual abuse is reported to the Special Juvenile Police Unit/local police, they (police) must within twenty-four hours inform to the CWC about such incident. Base on the assessment and need of the child, the CWC, after taking the consent of the child and child’s parents or guardian or other person in whom the child has trust and confidence can provide a ‘Support Person’ to the child, to render assistance to the child in all possible manner throughout the process of investigation and trial. Rule 4 (3) of the POCSO Rules, 2020 states that it shall be the duty of the police official (SJPU/local police) who receives information in accordance with the provisions contained under sub-section (1) of section 19 of the act in respect of an offence that has been committed or attempted or is likely to be committed, inform the child and his/her parents or guardian or other person in whom the child has trust and confidence of the availability of support services including counselling, and assist them in contacting the persons who are responsible for providing these services and relief.

Rule 4 (8) of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Rules, 2020, States:

“The Child Welfare Committee (CWC), on receiving a report under section 19 (6) of the POCSO Act or on the basis of its assessment made under sub-rule (5) , and with the consent of the child and child’s parents or guardian or other person on whom the child has trust and confidence, may provide a support person to render assistance to the child in all possible manner throughout the process of investigation and trial, and shall immediately inform the SPJU or Local Police about providing a support person to the child.”

According to sub-rule 6 of Rule 5 of the POCSO Rules, 2020, Support person may be;

- (i) a person or
- (ii) organisation working in the field of child rights or child protection, or
- (iii) an official of a children’s Home or Shelter Home having the custody of the child, or
- (iv) a person employed by the District Child Protection Unit (DCPU).

The CWC may also appoint any professional or any other person as a 'support person' in the best interest of a particular child. However, in such cases, the CWC must ensure that there is no conflict of interest in the appointment of the 'support person' and must also give reasons in writing for having appointed as 'support person' such professional or person.

Proviso to Rule 5(6) of the POCSO Rules, 2020 states that nothing in these rules shall prevent the child and child's parents or guardian or other person in whom the child has trust and confidence from seeking the assistance of any person or organisation for proceedings under the Act.

Thus, the support person may be appointed either by the Child Welfare Committee or by the child and his/her family themselves.

Under Rule 4 (10) of the POCSO Rules, 2020 the SJPU or the local police shall within 24 hours of making such assignment, in writing, inform the Special Court about the appointment of such support person.

List of Support Persons

Rule 5 (1) of the POCSO Rules, 2020 provides that in each district, the District Child Protection Unit (DCPU), shall maintain a list of persons/NGOs who may be appointed as 'Support Person' to assist the child. Such persons could be any of those mentioned under sub-rule 6 of Rule 5 of the POCSO Rules, 2020. Persons employed by the DCPU, can be of:

- a) Legal cum-Probation Officer
- b) Social Worker
- c) Outreach worker
- d) Counsellor

The Child Welfare Committee (CWC) is also duty bound to maintain such list of persons who may be appointed as 'Support Person'.

Training of Support Person

The support person should fulfil the requirement of having basic training in communicating with and assisting children of different ages and backgrounds, to prevent the risk of re-victimization and secondary victimization. The support person must also have an understanding of the legal and Court procedures involved in the conduct of a case under the POCSO Act, 2012. Support person should be able to render concrete support to the child and facilitate the child in active participation in the proceedings.

To ensure this, the DCPU must arrange periodic training modules to impart this knowledge to those registered with it or with the CWC for engagement as support person.

Payment to Support Person

Payment for the services of Support person whose name is registered under the register maintained under sub-rule (1) of Rule 5 of the POCSO Rules, 2020 shall be made by the State Government from the Fund maintained under Section 105 of the Juvenile Justice Act, 2015 (Juvenile Justice Fund) or from other funds placed at the disposal of the DCPU.

Roles and Responsibilities of Support Persons

Support persons play a very crucial role in promoting access to justice for children under the POCSO Act, 2012. They take active part in addressing concerns, fears, and doubt that the children and their families may have encountered and hence, a handy friend to support them at a difficult juncture is therefore required. Support Persons are instrumental in maintaining the link between the child and the families with the law enforcement authorities by providing information to the child and his/her family about the progress of the case. Ravindra Bhat J, the Chairperson of the Supreme Court Juvenile Justice Committee said that Support Persons act as “a link or buffer for families and victims with the legal system to encourage reporting.” Support persons can play an important role in recognising signs of depression, post-traumatic stress, suicide ideation and substance abuse in survivors, who, due to psychological impact of the sexual violence, may be more vulnerable to these conditions.

The role of ‘Support Persons’ as per the POCSO Rules, 2020 are:-

- (i) The support person shall at all times, maintain the confidentiality of all the information pertaining to the child to which he or she has accessed. (Rule 4 (9) of POCSO Rules, 2020)
- (ii) To provide information regarding the proceedings of the case, including the available assistance, judicial procedures and potential outcomes to the child and child’s parents or guardian or other person in whom the child has trust and confidence.
- (iii) To inform the child of the role that the Support Person may play in the judicial process and ensure that any concerns that the child may have, regarding child’s safety in relation to the accused and the manner in which the Support person would like to provide child’s testimony, are conveyed to the relevant authorities.
- (iv) To submit monthly reports to the CWC till the completion of the trial, with respect to the condition and care of the child, including the physical, emotional and mental wellbeing, and progress towards healing from trauma; (Rule 4 (12), POCSO Rules, 2020)
- (v) To engage with medical care facilities and ensuring the need-based continue medical support to the child, including psychological care and counselling; (Rule 4 (12))
- (vi) To ensure the resumption of education of the child, or continued education of the child, or shifting of the child to a new school, if required; (Rule 4 (12))

Further, Rule 4 (15) of the POCSO Act, 2020 states that the information to be provided by the Support person to the child and child's parents or guardian or other person in whom the child has trust and confidence includes but is not limited to the following:-

- (i) the availability of public and private emergency and crisis services;
- (ii) the procedural steps involved in a criminal prosecution;
- (iii) the availability of victim's compensation benefits;
- (iv) the status of the investigation of the crime;
- (v) the arrest of a suspected offender;
- (vi) the filing of charges against a suspected offender;
- (vii) the schedule of court proceedings that the child is either required to attend or is entitled to attend;
- (viii) the bail, release or detention status of an offender or suspected offender;
- (ix) the rendering of a verdict after trial; and
- (x) the sentence imposed on an offender.

In the light of the above roles laid down under the POCSO Rules, 2020 it can be classified that "Support Persons" have two fold roles in assisting/promoting access to justice for children in cases of sexual offences-

- (i) Throughout the legal proceedings- from investigation to trial; and
- (ii) Ensuring long-term rehabilitation and well being of the child.

The "Support person" may be engaged during any of the following Stages:

(I) Role of Support Person at the time of registration of the complaint

In this stage, parents might approach or the Child Welfare Committee (CWC) might ask the Support person to intervene.

The following are the roles of Support person at the time of Registration of Complaint:

- (i) Accompany the parents/guardians to the police station to register the complaint
- (ii) Approach the nearest CWC to get an official order appointing such person or agency as Support Person in the case.
- (iii) To be present during the recording of statement of the child
- (iv) To be present during the medical examination of the child.

(vi) To conduct a thorough Needs Assessment/Home Study of the child with the prior permission of the CWC.

(vii) To support the child throughout the process of investigation and trial in courts.

(viii) To work towards a comprehensive care plan and long term rehabilitation of the child.

(II) Role of Support Person after the complaint has been registered and the case comes to the notice of the CWC

The following are the roles of the Support Persons after the complaint has been registered and the case has been brought to the notice of the CWC:

(i) To be present during the recording of statement and medical examination of the child (if it has not been done already)

(ii) To approach the nearest CWC for getting an official order in appointing such person or agency as 'Support person' in the case.

(iii) Conduct a thorough needs assessment/home study of the child with the prior permission of the CWC.

(iv) Support the child throughout the process of investigation & trial in the Court.

(v) Work towards a comprehensive care plan and long-term rehabilitation of the child.

The support person handle the child and his/her parents or guardians through the entire law enforcement/judicial process, thus making it easy for him/her to navigate the system as there is one person coordinating the entire effort and acting as the link between the survivor and the court process.

Termination of Support Persons

The services of the 'support person' may be terminated by the CWC upon the request made by the child and child's parent or guardian or person in whom the child has trust and confidence. Thus, where the child or his/her parent or guardian or person in whom the child has trust and confidence have reason to believe that such 'support person' is not acting in the best interest of the child, they may request for his/her removal. In case such support person is removed, a new support person may be provided/appointed by the CWC with the consent of the child and his/her parents or guardian or other person in whom the child has trust and confidence.

Under Rule 4 (11) of the POCSO Rules, 2020 when the CWC terminates the services of the support person (upon the request made by the child /child's parents or guardian or person in whom the child has trust and confidence), such termination should be informed to the Special Court in writing.

Role of Special Juvenile Police Unit (SJPU)/Local Police

As a functionary of criminal justice system, police play a crucial role in maintaining peace and in enforcing law and order in the State. Its primary duty is to safeguard the lives and property of the people, prevent and control crimes in the society. In this regard, Police also play a special role to protect the 'vulnerable sections' of the society especially the children. The Model Police Act, 2006 emphasizes the need to have a professional police 'service' in a democratic society, which is efficient, effective, responsive to the needs of the people and accountable to the Rule of Law. Similarly, the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012 has also mandated the police to play a huge role in ensuring that child friendly procedures laid down under the Act while dealing with cases of child sexual abuse is adopted and thus promotes access to justice for children. Section 19 (Reporting offences) and Section 24 (Recording of statement of a child) of the POCSO Act, provides that while reporting the offence and recording the statement of the child, the police officer shall follow the specific procedure mentioned therein. Thus, keeping in view the provisions under Sections 19, 24 and 33 of the POCSO Act, 2012, the Provisions of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 and the Juvenile Justice Model Rules, 2016, every Police Station is mandated to have either a child friendly room or corner where children who are victims under the POCSO Act, 2012 can be interacted with, in a sympathetic manner. At the same time, police have also been made accountable for failure to perform their duties under the Act.

(i) Recording of Statement of Child by Police

The police should record the statement of the child at his or her residence or at a place where he or she usually resides or at the place of his or her choice. As far as practicable, the statement must be recorded by a woman police officer not below the rank of Sub-inspector. Such police officer should not be in uniform while recording the statement of the child. While examining the child, the police officer investigating the case should ensure that the child should not come in contact with the accused and the identity of the child should be protected from the public media, unless the Special Court, in the interest of the child, directed otherwise. The police officer shall record the statement as spoken by the child, in the presence of the parents of the child or any person in whom the child has the trust and confidence. The police officer may also take the assistance of a translator or an interpreter while recording the statement of the child. If the police satisfied that the child against whom an offence has been committed is in need of care and protection, after recording the reasons in writing, immediate arrangement must be made for providing such care and protection, including admitting the child into shelter home or to the nearest hospital within twenty-four hours of the report. If the child is living with the abuser or is living in a child care institution or is without home or parental support, the police shall produce the child before the Child Welfare Committee within 24 hours.

In *State of Karnataka vs. Shivanna*, the Hon'ble Supreme Court held that, in case of rape, the Investigation Officer (IO) is bound to take the victim immediately, as far as possible to the nearest lady Judicial Magistrate for recording the statement under Section 164 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973. The IO should record the date and time at which he learnt about the commission of rape and the date and time at which the victim was to the Magistrate. Reasons for delay exceeding 24 hours should be recorded in the case diary and a copy should be handed over to Magistrate along with a copy of the medical examination report.

(ii) Medical Examination

For the collection of evidence, medical examination is very crucial in the case of child sexual abuse. Medical Examination is to be conducted as per the provisions of Section 27 of the POCSO Act, 2012 and Rule 6 of the POCSO Rules, 2020 and in accordance with section 164A of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973.

Rule 6 of the POCSO Rules, 2020 provides that child victims who are found to be in need of urgent medical care and protection are entitled to receive emergency medical care within 24 hours of receiving the information about the crime by the Special Juvenile Police Unit (SPJU), or the local police. The medical examination shall be conducted in the presence of the parents of the child or any other person under whom the child reposes trust and confidence. Police must ensure that the samples received for forensic testing are sent to the Forensic Laboratory at the earliest and must also ensure that the child should not come in contact with the accused during medical examination.

(iii) Reporting to Special Court and Child Welfare Committee

The Special Juvenile Police Unit (SJPU) or local police shall report to the Child Welfare Committee (CWC) and the Special Court (and in the absence of Special Court, the report must be submitted to the Session Court) about every Case of POCSO within a period of 24 hours. If the SJPU or the local police, after the assessment is satisfied that the child against whom such offence has been committed is in need of care and protection, information of the steps taken to provide the same to the child must be sent along with the information about the case.

(iv) Information to Informant and Victim

The SJPU or the local police shall inform the informant about their own name, designation, address, telephone number and also the names, designation and contact details of their supervisor. For the purpose of promoting access to justice for children who are victims under the POCSO Act, 2012, Police should inform the child victim as well their family about:

- (i) Right of the child to legal aid and representation and contact information of District Legal Services Authority (DLSA).
- (ii) Availability of private and public health services and emergency services.
- (iii) Procedures related to the case.
- (iv) Status of investigation.
- (v) Status of arrest of accused and status of the bail application.
- (vi) Availability of Compensation.
- (vii) Filling of Charge-sheet.
- (viii) Scheduled of Court proceedings including information about time, date and venue.
- (ix) Contents of judgment and its implications.

The POCSO Act and the Role of Child Welfare Committee (CWC)

The Child Welfare Committee (CWC) is another key player for promoting and ensuring justice to the child victims of sexual offences under the POCSO Act, 2012. Under Section 19(6) of POCSO Act, 2012 and Rule 4(4) of the POCSO Rules, 2020, the Special Juvenile Police (SJPU) or local police shall report the offence and produce the child before the CWC within 24 hours of receiving the report of such offence from the informant or child victim.

The CWC constitute under section 27 of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 has been assigned with various roles under the POCSO Act. The main roles of the CWC under the POCSO Act are:

(i) Production of Child in Need of Care and Protection before the CWC

Any child who is in need of care and protection must be produced before the Child Welfare Committee by any police officer or special juvenile police unit or a designated Child Welfare Police Officer or any District Child Protection Unit or inspector appointed under the labour law, any public servant, Child line Services, or any voluntary or non-government organisation or any agency as may be recognised by the State government, Child Welfare Officer or Probation Officer, social worker or a public spirited citizen, nurse, doctor or management of a nursing home, hospital or maternity home or by the child himself.

(ii) Placement of the child

On receiving the report of a child victim of sexual offences from the SJPU/ local police, the CWC must determine within three days, whether the child must be removed from the custody of his/her family or household and place in a Children's Home or Shelter Home constituted under section 50 and section 43 of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015.

Rule 4(4) of the POCSO Rules, 2020 lists the circumstances in which a child is to be brought before the CWC, i.e., the child is:

(i) living in the same or shared household with the person alleged to have committed or is likely to commit or attempt to commit an offence under the POCSO Act, 2012;

(ii) living in a child care institution and is without parental or other family support i.e., either orphaned or abandoned in such institution or

(iii) is found without any home or parental or other family support (destitute child).

(iii) Appointment of Support Person

Rule 4(8) of the POCSO Rules, 2020 provides that, the Child Welfare Committee, on receiving a report under section 19(6) of the POCSO Act or on the basis of its assessment made under sub-rule (5), and with the consent of the child and child's parents or guardian or other person in whom the child has trust and confidence and if it (CWC) feels that the child victim and family are in need of assistance during investigation and trial, it can appoint a Support Person to render assistance to the child in all possible manner throughout the process of investigation and trial.

(iv) Assessment Report

Under Rule 4(4) of the POCSO Rules, 2020, the SJPU or the local police on receiving information under section 19(1) of the POCSO Act, shall produce the child before the CWC within 24 hours of receipt of such report, together with reasons in writing as to whether the child is in need of care and protection and section 19(5) of the POCSO Act and request the CWC to prepare a detailed assessment report in regard to this matter.

Conclusion and Suggestions

From the foregoing discussion, it is evident that the POCSO Act, 2012 has truly been enacted for purpose of promoting and providing access to justice for the children who are victims of sexual offences. The prevention of child sexual abuse, protection of the victims, justice delivery and rehabilitation of victims is not isolated issues. Therefore, in order to achieve these objectives, the POCSO Act requires that a co-ordinate response of all the stakeholders including the Support Person, Special Juvenile Police Unit (SJPU) or local police, and Child Welfare Committee (CWC) etc. is required. Undoubtedly, it is a fact that these mentioned stakeholders are playing a vital role in providing and promoting access to justice for children

who are victims under the POCSO Act. However, at the same time it is also a fact that thousands of children who are victims under the POCSO Act, 2012 are still being denied of the right of access to justice as aimed and provided under the Act. This could be, either due to the lack of awareness of the POCSO Act or due to the delay in the trial of the offences registered under the POCSO Act (though under section 35 (2) of the Act mandates the Special Court to complete the trial within a period of one year from the date of taking cognizance of an offence) or due to the technicalities of the Act).

The POCSO Rules, 2020 do not expressly state what matters are to be assessed or what recommendations to be made in the detailed assessment called for under Rule 4(4). However, it is implied that in this respect, the CWC should be guided by the underlying principle of POCSO Act, that children who are victims of sexual assault and their parents or other guardians are to be given the widest possible support in bring the perpetrator to justice and securing medical and legal assistance for the child.

Hence, proper awareness to the public at large about the roles of the various authorities recognised and services provided under the POCSO Act for its effective implementation is urgently needed, so that access to justice for children who are victims under the Act is delivered speedily as intended and mandated by the Act in providing and promoting justice to children who are victims of sexual offences under the Act.

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