

# LIFTING THE TIME BAR WILL ACT AS A DETERRENT TO SEXUAL ABUSERS

Relevant for: Government Policies & Welfare Schemes | Topic: Welfare of Children - Schemes & their performance; Mechanisms, Laws, Institutions & Bodies

In recent times, a lot has been done in India to protect the rights and dignity of women and children. The latest is the ratification by the Union ministry of law and justice of the proposal from the women and child development (WCD) ministry to do away with the time bar and age limit for reporting cases of sexual abuse among children (anyone below the age of 18 years). This is in keeping with the opinion of the WCD ministry that the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (Pocso) Act, 2012, does not lay down a time limit. It adds clarity to the Act which was earlier somewhat ambiguous. It also comes a few months after India joined eight countries in setting up a public sex offenders list.

According to the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), the average reporting rate of rape is 6.3 per 100,000 people. A government-commissioned survey conducted in 2007 showed that 53% of children had been sexually abused. This move helps in many ways: One, the victim may not have had the mental capability to fully understand until much later that what they were going through was, in fact, a violation of their bodies. Two, memories can sometimes remain suppressed until various triggers lead them to resurface, a common occurrence among those suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. Although some may want to address the issue immediately, the aftermath can be discouraging, since over 50% of the children who are abused know their perpetrator.

While the burden of proof on the victim continues to remain heavy since considerable time can pass between the incident and the complaint, it may still prove to be a deterrent, as perpetrators can be held accountable for their actions many years later by being jailed, fined, or both, and added to the public registry of sex offenders. Those who sexually violate children under the age of 12 can be handed the death penalty. This move should be complemented with measures to help survivors deal with a number of things: the repercussions of reliving trauma; address the triggers for sexual assault; combat mental health effects; and find ways to ensure psycho-social rehabilitation (assisting them in leading a normal life).

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