



Pakistan adopted the 18th Amendment to the Constitution of Pakistan in 2010, handing over significant powers to the provinces, and recognizing free, compulsory education as a fundamental right. Except for criminal law, procedure and evidence related to child rights, the Federal Government is no longer responsible for legislation related to child rights in the provinces, including administration and financial allocation in the provinces (except in the Federal territories and those areas that are not part of a province). While hailed widely as potentially improving governance, the transition has not been a smooth one, leading to significant confusion regarding roles and responsibilities at every level, including international commitments such as the UNCRC. Technically, any child rights developments, whether stemming from domestic need or international conventions, are now the responsibility of the provinces; but there is currently no mechanism to ensure effective implementation or accountability.

Despite our government's forceful claims to the contrary, and some ad hoc positive initiatives, the state of children's rights has not improved notably in the last 25 years since Pakistan ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) in 1990. Since then, the country has submitted five periodic reports, the last of which was submitted to the Committee on the Rights of the Child (hereafter referred to as 'the Committee') in 2014. The Concluding Observations and Remarks (CORs) of the Committee submitted to date (4 reports have been considered) consistently reflect the failure of the government to protect and promote children's rights in any meaningful and sustainable manner. The overall absence of commitment and political will to improve child rights is demonstrated by a lack of focus on coordination, data collection, awareness raising, capacity building and attitudinal change, sustainability and a holistic approach.