

# LEFT OUT, ABUSED: ON THE STATE OF CHILD CARE INSTITUTIONS

Relevant for: Government Policies & Welfare Schemes | Topic: Rights & Welfare of Children – Schemes & their Performance, Mechanisms, Laws Institutions and Bodies

Child care institutions in India have been trapped in an administrative blind spot, as revelations of the sexual abuse of inmates in a *balika grih* at Muzaffarpur in Bihar showed last year. A home meant to protect girls rescued from exploitation itself turned into a den of predation. The shocking rot in the management of such shelters has now been reported by a Central government committee. It studied 9,589 Child Care Institutions and Homes, mostly run by NGOs, that come under the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act. Only an emergency measure to address the serious lacunae can bring some semblance of order to these faceless shelters. Most of the inmates are orphaned, abandoned, sexually abused, trafficked or victims of disasters and conflict. Among them are 7,422 children in conflict with the law, and 3,70,227 in need of care and protection, including 1,70,375 girls. That they often have to live in facilities without proper toilets, secure compounds or the opportunity to vent their grievances as provided for under law underscores the painful reality that they remain virtually invisible. Reform of this depressing system, as the Ministry of Women and Child Development seeks, can be achieved only through systematic scrutiny by State governments. This could be done by appointing special officers whose task it would be to ensure that all institutions register under the JJ Act, account for funds received by each, and enforce mandatory child protection policies during adoption.

As per the recently disclosed study, only 32% of Child Care Institutions or Homes were registered under the JJ Act as of 2016, while an equal number were unregistered, and the rest were either empanelled under other schemes or awaiting registration. The priority should be to bring about uniformity of standards and procedures, evolving common norms for infrastructure, human resources, financial practices and external audits. The panel found child care standards were poor in many institutions, sans proper bedding, food and nutrition and sanitation. Some States obviously have too few homes, giving authorities little incentive to take up cases of children in distress. Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra and Kerala together account for 43.5% of all shelters. A few States do not have even one home of every category, such as child care, observation and adoption. The Ministry's study lays bare the disconnect between civil society and the welfare system for children, and the poor engagement elected representatives have with such a vital function. The imperative now is to turn the findings of the Ministry's committee into a blueprint for action. Credentialed NGOs should take a greater interest in this effort, holding the authorities to account.

As India takes over operations in the Iranian port, the possibilities and challenges are huge

**END**

Downloaded from [crackIAS.com](http://crackIAS.com)

© **Zuccess App** by crackIAS.com