

RESEARCH -EXECUTIVE SUMMARY REPORT

# THE INDELIBLE INK ON YELLOW SLIPS: A STUDY ON CHILD ABUSE IN SELECTED INDIAN STATES

ANTHROPOS INDIA FOUNDATION  
&  
JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY

SUPPORTED BY  
WORLD VISION INDIA



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Dr. Sunita Reddy (Founder Chair, AIF and Asso. Prof. JNU)



# **Executive Summary**

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### **A study on child abuse in select Indian states**

#### **Introduction**

The protection and safety of children have been a huge concern, and government organisations and various national and international NGOs have put concerted efforts to address the issue of child abuse. Four basic forms of abuses (i.e. physical, emotional, sexual and neglect) are classified. These broad categories, though give the intensity and volume of abuse, but the child-centric lived experiences of various forms of abuse, are not understood. The nuanced understanding of the social and cultural aspects of violence against children needs to be understood, to come up with a more strategic and pragmatic approach to prevent child abuse.

World Vision India promotes the protection of the child in all the 6000 communities that it serves and specifically through a campaign. "It takes every Indian to end child sexual abuse". One such effort is the present study World Vision India undertook to understand the nuances of child abuse. This study was conducted with Jawaharlal Nehru University assisted by Anthropos India Foundation.

#### **Methods**

The study was conducted in four states of India: Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan and Delhi. It is a micro-level qualitative study carried out in two study sites; one rural and one urban selected purposively to examine the structural realities of the state and the social and cultural diversities in which these children grow up and face abuse.

The study intended to understand various forms of abuse, the social and cultural determinants of vulnerabilities of children and explored unsafe places for children. Using the illustration of various forms of abuse on the wall posters and asking children to express their views helped in icebreaking and getting the grasp of the issue of child abuse. Using innovative methods to get to the sensitive and personal experiences and keeping confidentiality, 518 children in the government school from the XIth and XIIth standards were asked to write their experiences on yellow slips. This gave them the confidence to share their personal experiences without the fear of being judged. They also listed out safe and unsafe places. Significant others like parents, teachers and community leaders were also interviewed.

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# Findings

- The study gave insights on forms of abuse in the process of raising children, cultural notions of child and childhood, micro-management, control and discipline.
- Patriarchy, gendered nature of the society and the culture of silence surrounding abuse are certain issues that aggravate the situation and often masks the subaltern voices of the children.
- The report informs about the ground realities laced with caste, class, gender, and other structural inequalities produce challenges both for the growing child and his/ her parent.
- The study also challenges the discourses on universal childhood and universal plans and interventions to provide protected spaces to children would not work in a culturally diverse situation like India
- There is a need to understand the context-specific social ecology of children and the unsafe spaces and situations that make them vulnerable to abuse.
- The four states covered under the study though are distinct entities and vary in terms of language, cultural practices and the associated norms have certain common underlying values like patriarchy, parenting methods of disciplining and control, gendered arrangements and caste/class conditions that have an impact on the lives of children and childhood.
- The child abuses in this report are covered under 24 different but overlapping categories which the children experienced, the common one being physical abuse, neglect, discrimination based on caste and gender and sexual violence.
- The other defined categories were eve-teasing, kidnapping, stalking, child labour, cyberbullying, incest, domestic violence, restriction and control of authority, honour killing, etc.
- The report also highlights that most children felt that the parents try to control their everyday activities and micro-manage their lives which can be related to the culture of disciplining due to social values and pressures.
- They also highlighted homes and neighbourhoods as unsafe places to be in.
- The unique feature of each state, Punjab dealing with drug abuse, Haryana with honour killing and caste-based discrimination, Rajasthan with child marriage and child labour and Delhi with higher rates of kidnappings are shared by most of the children.
- This report brings out the structural violence the children face in their everyday life.



# Recommendations

While there are efforts by the government, international agencies, child right agencies for child protection, still everyday abuse is all-pervasive given from the child perspective. What comes out in media is minuscule. Efforts like 'beti padao, beti bachao' 'nirbhaya funds' campaigns for child safety and rigorous laws like POCSO are only one step that is yet to realize their potential.

The institutions of NCPCR and every state-level CPCR are yet to protect each and every child. While larger political and structural issues like, poverty, caste-based discrimination are taking a long time to make children safe, it is the culture of child-rearing and parenting which needs interventions. The social norms and values and the competitiveness and pressure on children to perform compared with more successful have to be discouraged. As David Lancy puts it every child is different and need to understand their worth and encourage. While the study questions today's education system and the consequences of it are the parental and societal pressures on the child, needs to be reduced. POCSO is a strong law, but when 80% of perpetrators are known to the children and in the primary and secondary kin circle, the cases of abuse are not going to see the courts, only solutions are to make everyone aware of the child rights, the laws, the consequences of child abuse on children as they grow up as adults. Further children not as personal property but individuals having dreams and aspirations which needs to be fulfilled by the parents and the state and protect their fundamental rights.

There is a need to come together to work and dialogue with the implementing agencies to recognise this as a serious issue that needs immediate action. It is also essential to recognise that there are graded vulnerabilities among the children belonging to different social groups, especially from marginalised communities. Further, those living in highly vulnerable areas and social ecologies like slums, streets and shelter homes need more attention.



## More specific recommendations are

- 1.To bring in gender-sensitive messages, gender equality and child rights in the school curriculum in all the classes as per the comprehension of the children. This will go a long way to educate children, parents and teachers at the same time.
- 2.Build-in sexual health in the school health program to identify children who are abused and take appropriate actions.
- 3.Mark all the specific areas mentioned as unsafe needs to be surveillance to make them safer.
- 4.IEC on positive parenting and gender equality should be prepared and widely circulated.
- 5.Workshops in schools on gender equality and reduce bullying, abuse not just for children, but also for teachers, parents and others working in a school.
- 6.Schools to keep mandatory, anonymous grievances cell and complaint box.
- 7.Like Internal Complaint Committee ICC- such committees to be mandatory in schools for child protection.
- 8.More value to the girl child through different mediums and general culture of respect for girls and women. Reduce misogynist and sexist attitudes and practices of all, especially of men.
- 9.Make boys and men more sensitive towards women and girls and pledge to protect women and not be mute bystanders.
- 10.Building confidence among girls and learning self-defence to protect oneself.
- 11.Build trust in the community and take responsibility for child safety as a collective endeavour.
- 12.Positive social messages to treat girls and women equal.
- 13.Make schools, streets, neighbourhood, transport safer.
- 14.Bystanders need to be encouraged to intervene and stop any kind of abuse they see.
- 15.Reduce vulnerable and risky spots and make them safer.
- 16.Make all the Anganwadi centres into child-friendly places and keep them open for a full day for children even after school, as daycare centre equipped with trained teachers and learning material.



17. Sustained Campaigns for the safety of children at all levels.
18. Fast track courts and quick judgements for child abuse cases.
19. Sensitive and empathetic police personnel and easy filing of a complaint without hindrance. Sensitivity for police personnel is a must, who can rise above caste, class, ethnicity, and gender in registering the complaints. Thus there is a need for training of all those who deal with children to be sensitive to child issues.
20. Ministry of Women and Child development should organize meetings with CBOS, NGOs and INGOs working with children to coordinate different aspects of child rights and child protection.
21. Make the laws like POCSO, JJ Act simplified for the understanding of common people and disseminate widely.
22. Carve out separate ministry and department for Children to give exclusive focus on children.

## **ANTHROPOS INDIA FOUNDATION: A GLIMPSE**

Anthropos India Foundation ( AIF) is a trust, registered in Delhi in October 2011. The aim is to promote the discipline of Anthropology, its philosophy and methods and engage in applied and Action Research. AIF through its work seeks to address issues in the local/ regional context, based on the 'emic' perspectives and bottom-up approach to solve the problems faced by the communities and their people. Taking due consideration of the local knowledge and respecting the local culture and ecology, AIF has been conducting community-based research and in its effort has tried to inform the Policy initiatives too.

Apart from conducting community-based action research, AIF also organizes distinguished guest lectures by eminent anthropologists and social scientists which are recorded and available on the official website. The main aim of this lecture series is to share knowledge with young scholars and future generations. AIF is also promoting Visual Anthropology through vibrant, authentic, meaningful ethnographic films and photo documentation.

