

# **Seminar Report**

**on**

## ***SAFE SPACES FOR CHILDREN: REVISITING CHILD PROTECTION SYSTEM IN INDIA***

**20-21 May 2021**

*Organized by*

**Jawaharlal Nehru University**

*Supported by*

**Indian Council of Social Science Research**

**Technical Assistance by Anthropos India Foundation**



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### Contents

<i>Chapters</i>	<i>P. no.</i>
Acknowledgments .....	
Executive Summary.....	
Programme Schedule.....	
<b>I. Introduction</b>	
1.1 Background.....	
1.2 Review of Literature.....	
1.3 Some Facts and Figures .....	
<b>II Seminar Cum Workshop Proceedings</b>	
2.1 Inaugural Address.	
<b>III. DAY 1: Childhood, Child Rights and Child Protection</b>	
<b>IV. DAY 2: Child Protection Concerns During Pandemics</b>	
<b>V. Feedback of the Seminar .....</b>	
<b>VI Vote of Thanks.....</b>	
<b>Appendix</b>	

## Acknowledgments

We are extremely thankful to all the participants who participated with keenness and great enthusiasm in this National Seminar on ‘**Safe Spaces for Children: Revisiting Child protection System in India**’ and being a wonderful audience. We are grateful to the Indian Council of Social Science Research New Delhi (ICSSR) for collaborating with Jawaharlal Nehru University and supporting this endeavour.

We are grateful to Chairpersons Shri Amod Kanth ji, Founder General Secretary Prayas, JAC, and Dr. Anjaiah Pandiri, Executive Director, ChildLine India Foundation for accepting the invitation to chair the two sessions on consecutive days. Their knowledge and experience in the field form part of this report.

We are thankful to Prof Santosh Kumar, Head, GIDRR Division, National Institute of Disaster Management (NIDM), New Delhi for his immense support and for agreeing to speak on this important issue.

We are also grateful to all the Speakers, Dr Bula Bhadra, Dr Nimisha Kaur, Mr Amitabh Srivastava, Dr Biswajit Ghosh, Dr Javaid Rashid, Dr Abdul Bashir, Mr. Nasir Rahim, Dr Renu Shah, Dr Sangita Gaur and Ms Rosama Francis who talked on different issues on child abuse, child rights and child protection; shared their knowledge and interacted with the students and research scholars. With their inputs and involvement, the seminar was a success. The valuable suggestions and recommendations shared by all the speakers are valuable.

We would also like to thank our volunteers; Ananya, Aastha Gupta, Mumuksha Porwal, Karvileena Deka, Ruchika Bargali who have been our Rapporteurs for the seminar. Special thanks to Dr Gunjan Arora for helping in writing the report. A special thanks to our admin staff Mr Uma Shankar Singh and for taking care of the logistics. We hope this report will highlight some pertinent issues and advocate for child rights and child protection.

Dr Sunita Reddy  
Associate Professor, CSMCH, JNU &  
Founder Chairperson, Anthropol India Foundation.



## Executive Summary

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 abuse (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 structural and contextual basis of violence against children needs to be understood, to come up with a more strategic and pragmatic approach to prevent child abuse and also forward a strong case for child rights and child protection. With this aim, the National Seminar was organised by Jawaharlal Nehru University with support from the Indian Council of Social Science Research, New Delhi.

The speakers of the two-day seminar joined from all over India and spoke about their research in this area and also gave field instances to make the young scholars and researchers understand the gravity of the problem. All the lectures highlighted the need to contextualize child abuse in the socio-economic and political framework and raised concerns for the present legislative system which needs to be synergized. It was argued that the instances of abuse take place in a social space; a space that sometimes sanctions, allows, or tolerates, or at other times fails to stop the abuse. The empirical studies suggested that abuse has to be contextualized in the socio-economic milieu. and also, the ‘Culture of silence’ that accompanies child abuse has to be tackled and it is the adult members of the society who have to take care of the young children.

Though the varied legislations are in place, they all have to be brought to a common platform and only a synergic approach would be able to discuss the problems faced by the 39% of the population i.e., children. The diverse socio-cultural conditions of India provide another challenge to have a comprehensive look at the problem of child rights and child protection. A uniform law or legislation would not work and the idea of Universal childhood has been challenged. This calls for a regional approach and all the State chapters are to be mapped. For instance, in this seminar, we had three papers from Jammu and Kashmir stressing the need to look at the socio-political milieu of the region and not go for the Pan India approach. The statistics have been alarming and more studies are required in this neglected area.

# I INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background

Childhood has to be understood in the socio-economic and political context. The experiences of childhood are layered by the social structures in which they live, laced with caste, class, gender, ethnicity. Similarly, the experiences of child abuse have to be contextualised. David Lancy (2014) understanding of children as ‘Cherubs Chattel, Changelings’ shows how some children are precious, cute, and seen as gift ‘Cherubs’, some are seen as desired but pragmatically commoditized ‘Chattle’, and some are unwanted, inconvenient and neglected ‘Changelings’. This also guides how children are treated. This can be applied to the Indian context too. It would be interesting to see if children from all these categories face abuse, if so in what forms?

The protection and safety of children is a huge concern and has been neglected for a long time. Few studies have shown the extremely vulnerable conditions in which the children live and face abuse of different sorts. It can be within the family, on the streets, in the neighbourhood, in the community, and the institutions like schools and remand homes. They face not just neglect and verbal abuse, but also physical, sexual, and emotional/ psychological abuse. The everyday newspaper highlights violence against children, mainly coming from the marginalized sections of the society living in the slums and JJ colonies. That doesn't mean violence against children doesn't happen in the middle and upper-middle classes.

Ministry of Women and Children in India 2005 reports, puts the figure to 69% facing physical abuse, 53% sexual abuse and 49% emotional abuse. The data from the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) is startling and shows the gravity of the situation. The abuse stems from the general acceptability of inflicting such measures on children either as a form of disciplinary action or making them part of certain activities which they do not want to be part of like child labour. This can result in harm to the child's health survival, development, or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust, or power. This sheer scale of such instances calls upon the society in general and the interests' groups (government or NGOs) in particular to intervene and present a comprehensive action that protects child's rights.

## 1.2 Review of Literature

India is a young country with 39% of its population being children. While there is a huge literature on education, nutrition, and health, child protection is a neglected area of study. The national-level study by the Ministry of Women and Child Development, in 2007, done on 12447 children, showed that abuse is quite common among children; every third girl and the fifth boy are abused in their childhood. WHO puts the figure of 25-50% of physical abuse across the globe. It is revealed that children are prone to abduction, kidnapping, rape, and murder, and children living in *Jhuggi-Jhopadi* (JJ) Colonies are much more vulnerable due to the porous houses, lacking security and safety. Children in rural areas have different challenges of growing up. Most of the girls are stopped from pursuing secondary education due to safety issues and the fear of elopement, rape, and other concerns. It is essential to understand what all kinds of abuses girls and boys face in growing up, be it in the house, neighbourhood, schools, and community at large.

Studies have also shown that more than 80% of the perpetrators are known to children. Though violence is more among girls, boys too are victims of abuse, and child rights issues are most neglected (Durham, 2003; Smith, 2008; Howe, 2007; Rowan, 2006; Turton, 2007). With the increasing exposure of children through different digital media, children are also victims of cybercrime. In India, there are hardly any empirical studies on understanding Child Abuse from a holistic and comprehensive perspective. There have been efforts by the Ministry of Women and Child Development to start the helpline called Childline 1098, to capture any report of crime against children. There are also efforts by international organisations like UNICEF, UNIFEM, CRY, WVI, Save the Children, CARITAS, and other NGOs and government bodies, like Butterflies, BBA, NCPCR and CPCR, and child rights activists, to address issues of child rights and also violence against children.

Despite a stringent law like "The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act 2012" (POCSO), the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of children) Act, 2002, the crime against children continues to grow. However, the law is strong; there is hardly any provision in this law on "protection" and the entire legislation is focused on post-crime interventions. When 80% of crimes are done by the children known to the child and the family, there remains 'conspiracy of silence and the crime does not reach the courts and in the name of the family honor. The child suffers silently and carries the burden into adulthood with serious consequences.

### **The Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC)**

With the growing concerns for the safety and protection of children, advances have been made in Child Rights and enabling legislation and policy. CRC came into force, virtually all nations (the US and Somalia excepted) have committed themselves to advancing children's rights and to enacting legislation and policy following the doctrine of the 'best interests of the child'. Central to the CRC is a universal definition of childhood that defines childhood as beginning at birth and ending at age 18. In enumerating children's rights under the CRC, it is common to speak of the convention as embodying four basic sets of children's rights: the rights of participation, protection, prevention, and provision. The right of participation includes the right of the child to participate in decision-making and also includes freedom of conscience. The rights, protection, and prevention deal with protecting children from exploitation and abuse while the right of provision addresses issues of access to the resources of society including food, shelter, and education. In practice, the central focus of political and legal action has been protection and prevention.

The sweeping definition of childhood in the CRC is critiqued from the perspectives of the anthropological lens of understanding childhood. A single universal definition of childhood, under international law, ignores the fact that childhood is understood and experienced in different societies in divergent ways. There is a strong theoretical conflict, where the law and anthropology tend to approach the understanding of childhood differently. As there are multiplicities of childhoods, each culturally codified and defined by age, ethnicity, gender, history, and location, other factors define childhood in antithetical ways (David and Dickson, 2008).

This study thus follows anthropological perspective and methods to understand child abuse embedded in the socio-economic, cultural and political context and from 'emic' perspective – child-centric 'lived experiences of children.

Despite the laws, institutional mechanisms at the centre and states, and the helplines, which are commendable yet abuse against children continues. It is essential to understand the social context of child abuse thoroughly and put the concerted, comprehensive, and integrated approach to address and prevent child abuse. We need to understand the lived experiences of children; the abuses they face, how the abuse and restriction of movements jeopardies their dreams, and how they would like to be treated. In the Indian context, given the diversity of cultures and social structures laced with caste, class, gender, ethnicity, religion, and region, there are graded vulnerabilities for children. There cannot be a universal childhood and universal plans and interventions to make children safe and provide protected spaces. There is a need to understand the context-specific, social ecology of children and the unsafe spaces and situations which make them vulnerable to abuse. A nuanced understanding only can help in building strategies to prevent abuse.

### 1.3 Some Facts and Figures

- There are 10.13 million child labourers between 5-14 years in India (Census 2011). 4.15% of the boys and 3.63% girls of age group 5-14 years are workers.
- The total number of crimes against children reported in 2016 as per NCRB is 106958.
- Every day, around 150 children go missing in India – kidnapping and abduction is the largest crime against children in our country (National Crime Record Bureau 2016). As per NCRB data, a total of 1,11,569 children below 18 years of age comprising 41,175 boys and 70,394 girls were reported missing by the year 2016.
- A total of 96,900 cases reported under ‘crime against children were disposed of by police during 2016. The charge-sheeting rate under overall crimes against children (IPC & SLL) is 65.4% in 2016.
- As per the NFHS– 4 (2015-16), overall, 5% of children under age 18 years are orphans.
- Over the last 10 years, crimes against children have increased 5 times over (National Crime Record Bureau Data Series).
- More than 50% of crimes against children have been recorded in just five states, namely Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Delhi UT and West Bengal.
- Fear of failure in examinations is the second-highest cause of suicides in children (Accidental Deaths and Suicides in India ADSI 2014).
- The Census 2011 showed that in India, 20.42 lakhs children aged 0-6 years are disabled which constitutes 1.24% of all 0-6 age group children.
- NFHS -4 showed that 28% of women age 18-29 years and 17 % of men age 21-29 years married before reaching the legal minimum age at marriage (18 years for women and 21 years for men).



## II. SEMINAR PROCEEDINGS

### 2.1 Inaugural Address



In her Introductory cum Inaugural address Dr Sunita Reddy, Associate Professor, Centre for Social Medicine and Community Health, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi emphasized the gravity of the problem. Poverty, malnutrition, injustice, neglect and abuse are few issues that directly affect the well-being of children. The lived experiences are very diverse and there is a multiplicity of childhood and each region in our country has its own set of issues that directly or indirectly affect the children. The covid situation has further accelerated the problem and every age group has suffered. Dr Reddy also mentioned that there hardly any documentation of

child rights and child protection with academic rigor. The idea to hold this seminar is to invite academicians, child rights activists to share empirical findings and also look for solutions. The ideas generated and the deliberation by the experts in this Seminar will be brought in the form of chapters in an edited volume.

## III. DAY 1: Childhood, Child Rights and Child Protection

### Chairpersons Address



Mr. Amod Kanth, Founder General Secretary, Prayas, JAC, a social activist and a former policeman has been working for thousands of neglected street children and fighting for child rights for decades now. Being a child rights advocate, he is also the chairperson of the Delhi Commission for Protection of Child Rights. He has also written a book “Khaki in Dust Storm”, a gripping story of immersive investigations led by him. He started his talk by mentioning his views on the covid pandemic, thereby

quoted a line that ‘with or without the covid situation in the country, it is only the children who suffer the most. Children are vulnerable and people usually forget to look after them. He proceeded further by talking about the Juvenile Justice Act which provides the basic framework of child care and protection and argued that though the Juvenile system talks about the children, it does not promise protection to the children. The Indian society does not have this kind of juvenile concept as in other countries. He highlighted the fact that around 20 million orphans are homeless and need immediate attention. Prayas is working on this and a study conducted in 2007, in 13 states regarding physical, sexual, mental, and emotional abuse found that every second child is going through sexual abuse and the perpetrators are mostly



guardians, relatives, or by the known person to the child. He in his address also drew attention to the child helpline program (1098) whose results can depict the adverse situation the children are in. After that, he mentioned that there is a plethora of child acts, the important one being the CPCRA Act 2005, which defines child rights. In the end, he suggested various ways for protection mechanisms for children that were adoption, foster care, sponsorship and aftercare



**Dr Bula Bhadra**, talked about multiple childhoods, questioned the child rights issues, and said that the intersectional approach to childhood is often ignored. The intersectional approach emphasises culture and the notion of power. In her presentation titled **“Rethinking Children’s Rights Through the Lens of Multiple Childhood”**, she focussed on the need to acknowledge and analyse the existence of multiple and varied experiences of childhood as opposed to the colonized understanding of the same. She gave a critical account of the UNCRC and their rights on children and how it was based on Western knowledge. Prof. Bhadra pointed out that from this crisis comes out childhood studies. She then talked about the concept of these rights at the indigenous level and a move from decolonizing to an intersectional approach. The theory of intersectionality takes into account the historical, social, economic and impact of conversion and how very rare discussion has been made on intersectionality through the lens of childhood. In conclusion, she emphasised that in India too, there are flaws in the law and its implementation and its policies. There is the urban-rural divide, market strategies, regional disparity and the existing digitalization.



**Mr. Amitabh Srivastava**, a journalist, blogger, and poet. He is the head of media and communication and has written various articles in media publications such as Hindustan Times, Sahara times, etc. He is also working in the social sector. His talk titled **‘Child Rights and Legislations in India’** raised a very important question Juvenile Justice Act provides a different category for child consideration that is up to 14 years. Similarly, voting rights give a different category that is up to 18 years and many other acts give different categories. So, why there isn’t only one common category for all? Nobody focuses on that. He believed that in our system, many legislations, helpline numbers, and institutions are there but there is no proper implementation of these. He supported this statement by giving real-life statistics that 53.2% of children have faced sexual abuse in which surprisingly boys are more than girls and nearly 80% have been abused by their family members. Moreover, in 2007, that percentage went up to 90%. Discussing the root cause for this problem he opined that this ratio is going in an upward direction because of the parenting problem. Parents never talk to their children about their problems, or what they are feeling, and often parents ignore the child’s concerns. He mentioned that in our country, even though children account for 39% of the total population, they don’t matter because they are not voting and thus not a target for the government. He drew special attention towards media and quoted that “media is creating

monsters”. He supported his statement by giving various real case studies. He ended his talk by giving a deep message to everyone that stop judging children and start encouraging them.



**Dr. Aadil Bashir & Mr Nasir Rahim** presented on ‘**Institutional Care of Children of Kashmir: Issues and Challenge**’. In their talk, they focused primarily on the empirical study done in Kashmir. They started by addressing the 1997 Jammu and Kashmir Juvenile Justice system, though it talks about children there is no protection and social integration in it. In 2006, UNICEF reported that around 1 lakh children are without parental support, and in 2007, the number reached 2.4 lakh children. MSF study even shows that without parental support, it has a huge impact on the “mental health” of the children.

This is the reason why then various government and non-government institutions are formed to address the problem of these children. But there are various challenges faced by these institutions. More than 95% of children in the institutions are basically from the rural area than urban area and most of them are there because of their father’s death. He also believed that children lack “proper guidance” by the family because they usually get ignored. Kashmir is known for its “traditional support system” which is the joint family system and “community-level system” which is the Mohalla system. But now traditional support system is going down because of individualism and privatization. This has caused children to land in these institutions.



## IV. DAY 2: Child Protection Concerns During Pandemics



**Chairperson Dr. Anjaiha Pandiri** is the executive director of Childline India Foundation. He previously worked at an AID institution and co-authored two books and published them. He chaired the whole session for day two of the national webinar.



**Ms. Anuradha Vidyasankar** associated with the Childline India Foundation spoke on behalf of the Childline India Foundation. She started her talk by introducing the whole concept of Childline. Childline is India's first national-level response to its ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). The Childline 1098 service also receives special mention in the Juvenile Justice Act 2015. The nodal agency for Childline service is Childline India Foundation. It works with a vision to build a child-friendly nation that guarantees the rights and protection of all children. It is supported by the Ministry of

Women and Child Development. There is various multi-stakeholder involvement too, like a health department, municipality, police, NGO, etc. This is created for the vulnerable category of children like street children, beggars, slum daily wagers, highway travelers, and CCI children. The covid pandemic has severely affected children in many ways and their wellbeing is at stake. Giving statistics she highlighted that from April 1<sup>st</sup> 2020 to March 31<sup>st</sup> 2021, Childline fielded around 50,02,608 calls, averaging 13,706 calls daily. A total of 3,90,271 interventions have been carried out over the past 12 months, averaging 1,069 interventions daily. And if talk about them in the depth of these calls, then, 20.9% is due to child labour, 7.2% due to sexual abuse, 12.5% beggary, 4.2% trafficked, 0.7% from cybercrime, etc. Towards the end, she quoted by saying that they bring children from distress to protection.



**Prof. Santosh Kumar** is the head of the GIDRR Division, National Institute of Disaster Management, and has more than 30 years of experience in it. He is a disaster management specialist having experience in research, disaster management and disaster finance. He in his paper titled **Shattered Dreams: Disaster, Children safety and Mainstarming Resilience** primarily focussed on the concept of "shattered dreams by giving a classic example from 1990, where a cyclone hit the state Orissa, a large number of children became orphans. The cyclone affected each child differently because they have different dreams in their lives. He believes that the Child Protection Act is just a guideline with no

enforcement, so no protection in it. So, for this, he shared one idea with everyone about Child Centric Disaster Management that has been approved by the UNICEF for the protection of children. "Journey through a shattered dream to sustainability" will be the motto for CSDM and it will be working on that only. He also discussed that this year Finance Commission suggested having 1.6 lakh crore for the disaster mitigation and prevention fund for the pre and post-disaster period. Out of those 32 thousand crores specially designed for the state disaster mitigation fund. In the end, he quoted that there is an urgent to strengthen the system, all the institutions whether government or non-government should come together to bring synergy and save the shattered dreams.



**Dr. Bishwajeet Ghosh** is a professor of sociology at the University of Burdwan talked on **Vulnerability and Trafficking of Children in India amid Coronavirus Pandemic**. He started his talk by introducing the concept of child trafficking in India. Millions of children are trafficked every year. Trafficking occurs mostly in the young age group of people. He mentioned some statistics from the National Crime Report that more than 76,000 children are trafficked and more than 71,000 children are kidnapped. Talking about the legislations, then only Goa is the state where there is a law to tackle trafficking and it is implemented. That's why there are fewer cases reported in Goa. No other state in India is functioning like this, either they don't

have the law or have it with no enforcement. Trafficking is done to exploit the children in form of forced labour, sexual abuse, industry use, etc. He gave one example, that a study has been done in 16 states, that revealed only 20% of the anti-trafficking units are functional because most of the units are under-resourced. In 2019, the trafficking cases have reached 91.4% and it is still being ignored and not given much attention it. He also mentioned one common reason for trafficking is that the institutions are now already too overcrowded so, most of the children do not get shelter. Hence, they are trafficked. He draws attention to the fact that despite international conventions and corresponding regional conventions and national legislation and the efforts of numerous non-governmental, faith-based and international organizations, many girls (especially in developing countries) are still trafficked and/or subjected to forced and early marriages and the measurement of this practice remains relatively unsophisticated. Some child marriages have slave-like characteristics similar to those of child trafficking and can thus be argued to be a form of child trafficking. This is because children in forced marriages are coerced into these unions and are made to engage in acts similar to victims of sex and labour trafficking. He also gave one example, on 7th September 2020 in Kolkata, during the lockdown, a group brought 21 children from villages in the name of providing education and got caught by Kolkata Police. There is one more, Ayesha was approached by a lady to get new opportunities in one city and after exactly four years, she was rescued by an NGO. Child trafficking is given the least importance by the stakeholders. Overall, in his talk, he brought ground reality and presented a clear picture in front of everyone by giving numerous real-life-based examples.



**Dr. Renu Shah** and Dr. Sangita Guar together in their talk titled **Child Protection Concern and Response during Covid 19 Pandemic** talked about the impact of covid 19 pandemic-induced lock-down on children and understanding child protection concerns. Dr. Renu Shah is an assistant professor at College of Social Work, Nirmala Niketan, Mumbai, started the topic by discussing the situation of the covid pandemic and how children are adversely affected by this. Quoting data from the CMIE report, a hundred million workers have lost employment, mainly from the unorganized sector. Also, at the beginning of the pandemic, the country's unemployment rate was 7% but now at present, it is 27%. This covid period has caused developmental

delays, limited or no learning opportunities, and psycho-social problems in children like stress and anxiety. Children of migrant labour, single parents, daily wage earners, orphans, abandoned, differently-abled parents, etc. are at greater risk.





**Dr. Sangita Guar**, a consultant at Kailash Satyarthi Foundation, New Delhi talked about the various government initiatives to protect children from covid 19. These initiatives include covid 19 related arrangements in Anganwadi centers, public notice regarding illegal adoption, advisories regarding engagement of AWW, support for child psychological care and counseling during covid pandemic from SAMVAD center, training manual for counsellors on psycho-social support during the covid pandemic, and many more. She also gave a glimpse of state government initiatives like rehabilitation of children who either lost their

parents due to covid 19 or their parents in the hospital for treatment in Andhra Pradesh. Maintain routine immunization of women and children during covid 19 in Maharashtra.



**Dr. Javaid Rashid** is an assistant professor of the department of social work at the University of Kashmir.

His paper is titled **An Exploration into Child Protection Systems in Jammu and Kashmir**. The region is confronting a myriad of problems as it has been experiencing complex phases of violent strife and conflict for the last three decades. The reports depicted that thousand have directly been victims of the violence especially those whose families have been witnessed conflict-related deaths. Besides that, mental health has been deteriorating heavily as more young people became victims of mental illness. Children have been the worst

sufferers of the conflict, directly or indirectly, bearing the burnt from all sides: physical, social, educational, sexual, and mental. Children have been arrested, killed, or lost parental support, harassed by armed groups. The child protection system in this region is at its weakest. As per estimates by the government agencies and child rights organizations, Jammu and Kashmir to home to around 2.4 lakh orphans. He focused on understanding the functioning of the child protection system in Jammu n Kashmir by illustrating the working status of a centralized scheme called the Integrated Child Protection Scheme. This scheme covers and discusses the functioning of CCI, CWC, DCPU, JJB. It provides important leads to the scope and corresponding challenges that the CP system is confronting or has to confront. The data depicts a discouraging status of the standards of care and protection within child care institutions. Most of the CCI are quite far away from achieving a minimum level of care standards as indicated in Juvenile Justice Act 2013. The majority of CCI do not maintain records and registers as mandated under JJ Act 2013. Formulation of individual child care plans within institutions is not done in the majority of CCI. It is a fundamental violation of the standards of care. None of the institutions among 491 CCI across 22 districts reported having any child protection policy in place. Towards the end, he recommended strengthening the existing child protection systems, providing adequate and systematic training in children's rights to all professionals and children's right to be heard in relevant legal proceedings, etc.



**Dr Nimisha Kumar** is an associate professor of the department of clinical psychology at SGT University, Gurugram, and director at Ascend Psychology Care. She talked about the **Safety of children in the Indian context: Ecological Systems of Framework for Understanding Current Challenges and Delineating Future Directions**. Child protection refers to strategies and structures aimed at protecting children from abuse, exploitation, etc. the maltreatment of children includes early marriages, child labour, trafficking, and other forms of exploitation. Even though child protection is vital both for children's well-being and for the growth and development of societies, yet it is the lowest funded sector in humanitarian action. Lack of resources, multiple marginalizations, mental health issues, and lack of

awareness of child rights make children a 'soft target'. Levels of violent crime are higher in cities than in urban areas, and urban children are also exposed to particular forms of harmful child labour, including child domestic work.

The government of India has assigned focal responsibility for child rights and development to the Ministry of Women and Child Development. The sectoral management of schemes by this and other central ministries has not given children the convergent attention they deserve. Though a large number of NGOs are working in the field of child welfare and child protection and many have created valuable models of prevention, intervention, and rehabilitation, but because of the huge numbers of children requiring protection, the efforts can make a marginal effort only. The Center's budget allocation for child protection has never reached the level pledged for social development. She was of the view that children will never be free from exploitation until all levels of society from family to the international community work together, hearing children voices and enabling their empowerment in dialogue and decision making, external agencies and NGOs can strengthen government initiatives and help in capacity building to ensure sustainable action. In India, rather than viewing it as someone else problem, child abuse needs to be looked at as a shared problem with widespread implications for all stakeholders.



**Ms. Rosma Francis** is an educator, counselor, and life coach at Bangalore presented on **Child Rights and Life Skills: Parenting Challenges**. She started her talk by discussing and drawing attention towards the "stress" a child faces. Since there is so much competition, parents put pressure on children. The way of Upbringing has to be changed and parents should be supportive of their children. In this cut-throat competition, with no support, a child's individuality has lost completely. There is so much focus on content learning rather than learning about other activities. Through this, the development of a child does not take

place. There is also no holistic development. One of the major mistakes that parents do is either not listen to their children or not ask from them. They never have the conversation about what their children want, or what they want to become in their life. This is very important because then this will create misunderstandings and differences between a child.

## V FEEDBACK OF THE SEMINAR

This National webinar was conducted through an online Zoom Platform and had 370 registrations via a google form. The two-day seminar was held and each day had more than 120 participants. At the end of each day, the feedback form is circulated and recorded via chat box medium on an online platform to all the participants. On the first day, the number of attendees was over 100, and the number maintained till the end of the webinar. The feedback forms received was around 90. While on the second-day number of participants attendees were 150 + and the number of feedback form received were 102 participants.

The participants very enthusiastically participated crossing the barrier of age limit, gender, place, profession, and came forward for the child rights. The students, research scholars, faculty members from different universities, social workers, child development practitioners, child psychologists, lawyers, and teachers attended the webinar. The different departments of ministry like human resource, education department, social work department, women and child development, University departments like anthropology, sociology, school education, psychological studies were part of it.

The questions like how satisfied you are with the event and it's relevant to your research or work were marked 5 by most of the participants and very few went for even 4 scores on the scale of 1-5 in the feedback form. Participants enjoyed all the speakers and filled the chat-box with the remarks as informative session, presentation, and many others. The topics of laws related to the child, child trafficking, POCSO act, child safety, helpline working, pandemic effects on child safety, ecological intervention, loopholes, rehabilitation of children, mental health were covered in the Seminar and was appreciated by the participants.

All the panelists provided very informative content and each sentence was engaging from their side so participants enjoyed and find all speakers relevant to the topic somehow. The participants additionally commented to keep on organizing such webinars for better understanding and awareness of the topic. The participants also requested and showed their interest in online course series with the topics such as child rights, mental health, women rights, gender roles, negligence issues, ethnography, research designs, and methodology, criminal laws, girls' education, social issues, disabled childhood, childhood and sexuality, education system, tribal issues, the principle of adoption, media and tribal societies, counselling courses, forensic anthropology, orphanage and issues, domestic violence, demography, and many more. The participants also showed their interest in buying the upcoming book on this topic.

Overall, the webinar achieved its prior set milestones of satisfaction of the participants and successfully delivered its content.



## VI. VOTE OF THANKS



The Vote of thanks was extended by Dr Gunjan Arora, Post Doc Fellow, CSMCH, JNU. Thanking all the participants for being a kind and patient audience, thanks were extended to respected Chairpersons and all the speakers of the seminar. It was indeed an important topic and it was realized that still much has to be done in this field. We as adults should share the major responsibility to take care of our future generation. Speakers in their presentation also stressed the same.

Chair for the first day **Mr Amodh Kant ji**, who is founder secretary Prayas, a former policeman and a child rights activist, made us see the gravity of the problem. He mentioned that the issue of child rights and child protection are important issues and across the country, there are multiple adverse situations for children. The basic rights of survival and development of children are the responsibility of the adults. 35 million children in India need protection in India and out of this 20 million do not have family support. **Prof Bula Bhadra**, talked about multiple childhoods, questioned the child rights issues, and said that the intersectional approach to childhood is often ignored. **Mr Amitabh Srivastava**, gave some stories from the ground and also questioned the implementation laws and the state's responsibility towards children. **Dr. Aadil Bashir and Mr Nasir Rahim**, spoke from Kashmir, talking about the children in a conflict zone like Kashmir. Giving a glimpse of the changing socio-economic conditions in Kashmir and the way the children are affected in a conflict zone and the state machinery sometimes is not well equipped to tackle the local issues. **Dr Anjaiah Pandiri**, Chairperson for the second day resonated with the theme of the seminar. **Ms Anuradha Vidyasankar** talking about the childline helpline, whereas **Prof. Santosh Kumar**, advocated for the protection of the child especially during disasters. **Dr Biswajit Ghosh**, talked about a very serious issue on trafficking during the covid times, there is a lack of data and strengthened the argument that there is a lack of research in this area. **Dr Sangita Gaur and Dr Renu Shah**, in their talk on child protection concerns during the Pandemic and reflected on the interventions as well. Through their discussion it was brought out that there is an increase in child marriage, illegal marriages, selling of children, online abuse and lack of support system during the lockdown, the situation has worsened. **Dr Javaid** talked about child care institutions in Jammu and Kashmir. With the changing socio-political conditions, the children have been exposed to violence and have been the worst sufferers. And regional, political and cultural context is very important when we make policies for children. **Dr Nimisha**, in her presentation, highlighted that maltreatment of children is rampant and is on the increase, especially in disaster times. **Ms Rosama Francis** talked about child rights and parenting challenges.

The two-day deliberations by speakers from different disciplines and have highlighted very relevant issues about child rights and why in India it is still a neglected field. The lacunae in the legislatures and acts have been highlighted and there is a need for a distinct children legislature in India where there is resonance between various acts and laws to ensure the safety of our children.

## Appendix

### Certificate of the seminar distributed to the Participants



### Some Screenshots of the seminar

