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Theme – **Violence against Girl Children**

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Editor’s Desk

“I call on men and boys everywhere to join us. Violence against women and girls will not be eradicated until all of us – men and boys refuse to tolerate it. ”

-Ban Ki-Moon

(8th Secretary - General of the United Nations from January 2007 to December 2016)

Global violence uniquely affects the girl child. Although international legal instruments have been in place for decades to protect the girl child, thousands of brutal acts of violence and neglect specifically targeting the girl child can be observed around the world on a daily basis. For centuries, girls who have barely attained adolescence have been forced into marriage, often with men many years their senior. They have suffered in female genital mutilation rituals. They are traded, bought, and sold across national borders as commodities to be put to use as prostitutes or slaves, or merely to be sold again at a profit. The girl child often faces discrimination from the earliest stages of life, through childhood and into adulthood. Her low status is reflected in the denial of fundamental needs and rights and in such harmful attitudes and practices as a preference for sons, early marriage, female genital mutilation, domestic abuse, incest, sexual exploitation, discrimination, less food and less access to education. In many countries, both developed and developing, the status of girls is significantly worse than that of boys, the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995, identified the persistent discrimination against the girl child and the violation of her rights as one of the 12 critical areas of concern requiring urgent attention by governments and the international community. Though the government has enacted many legal and constitutional laws to prevent violence against girl children, the number victims affected by the violence increases day by day. So, it is in the hands of every citizen to hold hands and to protect the girl children from the social evils.

CHILD - DEFINITION

The Census of India considers children to be any person below the age of 14. According to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child 'a child means every human being below the age of eighteen years unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier'. This definition of a child allows for individual countries to determine according to the own discretion the age limits of a child in their own laws. But in India, various laws related to children define children in different age limits.

- The Indian Penal Code (IPC) 1860 finds that no child below the age of seven may be held criminally responsible for an action (Sec 82 IPC).
- In case of mental disability or inability to understand the consequences of one's actions the criminal responsibility age is raised to twelve years (Sec 83 IPC).
- With regard to protection against kidnapping, abduction and related offenses the given age is sixteen for boys and eighteen for girls.
- According to Article 21 (a) of the Indian Constitution, all children between the ages of six to fourteen should be provided with free and compulsory education.
- Article 45 states that the state should provide early childhood care and education to all children below the age of six.
- Article 51(k) states the parents/guardians of the children between the ages of six and fourteen should provide them with opportunities for education.
- The Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986 defines a child as a person who has not completed fourteen years of age.
- The Factories Act, 1948 and Plantation Labour Act 1951 states that a child is one that has not completed fifteen years of age and an adolescent is one who has completed fifteen years of age but has not completed eighteen years of age. According to the Factories, Act adolescents are allowed to work in factories as long as they are deemed medically fit but may not for more than four and half hours a day.
- The Motor Transport Workers Act 1961, and The Beedi and Cigar Workers (Conditions of Employment) Act 1966, both define a child as a person who has not completed fourteen years of age.
- The Merchant Shipping Act 1958 and Apprentices Act 1961 don't define a child, but in provisions of the act state that a child below fourteen is not permitted to work in occupations of the act.

- The Mines Act, 1952 is the only labour related act that defines the adult as a person who has completed eighteen years of age (hence a child is a person who has not completed eighteen years of age).
- The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006 states that a male has not been reached major until he is twenty-one years of age and a female has not been reached major until she is eighteen years of age.
- The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2000 has changed the definition of child to any person who has not completed eighteen years of age.

Because of its umbrella clauses and the latest law to be enacted regarding child rights and protection, many are of the opinion that the definition of a child found in the Juvenile Justice Act, 2000 should be considered as the legal definition for a child in all matters.

VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

According to UNICEF violence against children can be "physical and mental abuse and injury, neglect or negligent treatment, exploitation and sexual abuse. Violence may take place in homes, schools, orphanages, residential care facilities centre, on the street, in the workplace, in prison and in places of detention." Such violence can affect the normal development of a child impairing their mental, physical and social being. In extreme cases, abuse of a child can result in death.

Child abuse has many forms: physical, emotional, sexual, neglect, and exploitation. Any of these that are potentially or actually harmful to a child's health, survival, dignity and development is abuse.

4 MAJOR TYPES OF CHILD ABUSE

Types of child abuse are broken down into four distinct categories:

- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Emotional abuse / Psychological abuse
- Neglect

1. Physical abuse

Physical child abuse is an injury resulting from physical aggression. Even if the injury was not intended, the act is considered as physical abuse. The injury from physical child abuse may be the result of:

- ❖ Beating, slapping, or hitting.
- ❖ Pushing, shaking, kicking, or throwing.
- ❖ Pinching, biting, choking, or hair-pulling.
- ❖ Burning with cigarettes, scalding water, or other hot objects.
- ❖ Severe physical punishment.

Some other specific types of physical child abuses are:

- ❖ Shaken Baby Syndrome - Shaking a baby or toddler can cause serious head injuries.
- ❖ Munchausen by Proxy Syndrome - Inducing medical illness in a child or wrongly convincing others that a child is sick in both dangerous and abusive.
- ❖ Use of drug during pregnancy - Drug and alcohol use during pregnancy or lactation can harm the child and leads to the problem such as Fetal Alcohol Syndrome

Some Signs of Physical Child Abuse

- ❖ Burns bite marks, cuts, bruises, or welts in the shape of an object.
- ❖ Resistance to go home.
- ❖ Fear of adults.

2. Child Sexual Abuse

Child Sexual Abuse is any sexual act between an adult and a child, including penetration, intercourse, incest, rape, oral sex, and sodomy. Other examples include:

- ❖ Fondling - Touching or kissing a child's genitals, making a child fondle an adult's genitals.
- ❖ Violations of bodily privacy - Forcing a child to undress, spying on a child in the bathroom or bedroom.
- ❖ Exposing children to adult sexuality - Performing sexual acts in front of a child, exposing genitals, telling "dirty" stories, showing pornography to a child.
- ❖ Commercial exploitation - Sexual exploitation through child prostitution or child pornography.

Sexual child abusers can be:

- ❖ Father, mother, siblings, or other relatives.
- ❖ Teachers or athletic coaches.
- ❖ Foster parents or host families of foreign-exchange students.
- ❖ Neighbors or friends.
- ❖ Strangers

Some Signs of Sexual Child Abuse

- ❖ Inappropriate interest in or knowledge of sexual acts.
- ❖ Seductiveness.
- ❖ Avoidance of things related to sexuality, or rejection of own genitals or body.
- ❖ Either over compliance or excessive aggression.
- ❖ Fear of a particular person or family member.

3. Emotional abuse

This occurs when a child needs love, security, praise and recognition are not met. It may result in a child becoming anxious, withdrawn, unhappy or lacking in confidence. Emotional abuse may happen when an adult constantly behaves in an uncaring way to a child. A child who is often criticized or subjected to bullying or racial abuse may also experience emotional abuse. Parents who are over-protective to an extreme degree so that they prevent their child from doing usual childhood activities can also cause emotional abuse. Children who live with domestic violence also suffer this type of abuse.

Some Signs of emotional abuse

- ❖ excessively clingy or attention seeking behaviour
- ❖ very low self-esteem or self-criticism
- ❖ withdrawn behaviour or fearfulness
- ❖ despondency
- ❖ a child who is too eager to please
- ❖ eating disorders
- ❖ a child made to carry out tasks inappropriate to their age
- ❖ a child not allowed to play with friends or do usual childhood activities
- ❖ a child living in a household where there are many arguments and violence.

4. Neglect

This can result when adults fail to meet the basic physical needs of children. All children need warmth, shelter, food, clothing, love and attention in order to grow properly.

Some signs include:

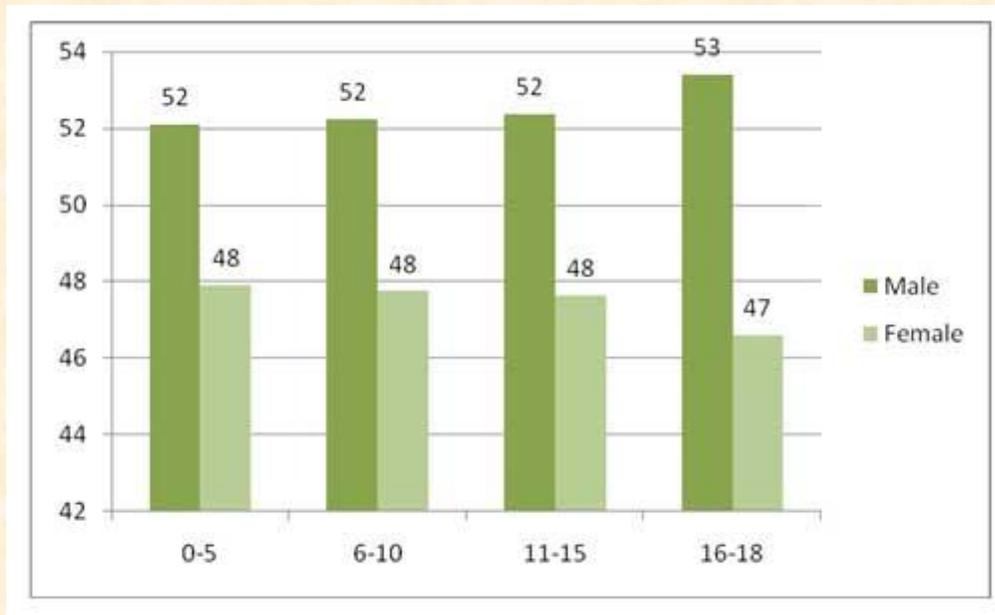
- ❖ inadequate supervision or being left alone for long periods
- ❖ lack of stimulation, education or social contact
- ❖ constant hunger, stealing or gorging food
- ❖ failure to seek medical advice when needed
- ❖ inappropriate clothing for conditions
- ❖ a child who appears dirty and smelly
- ❖ a child who looks thin and ill
- ❖ a child who is not safely supervised.

SAVE THE GIRL CHILDREN – RECENT STATISTICS OF CHILD ABUSE

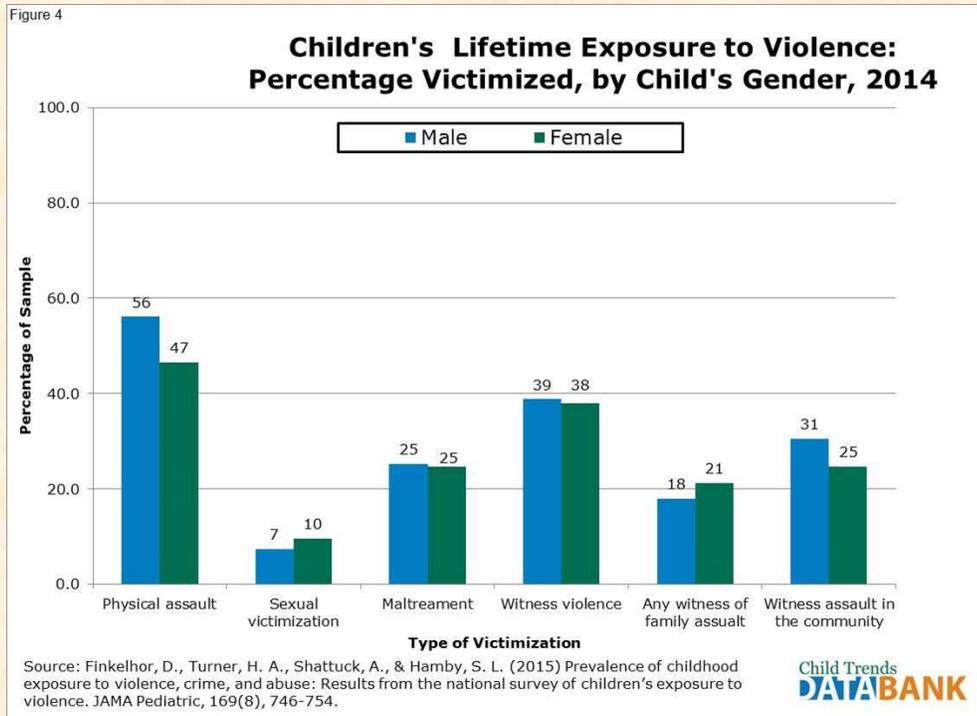
- ❖ 25% of rapes of children in the year 2015 were committed by their employers and co-workers. This fact has been extracted from the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) 2015 data on the 8,800 child rape cases registered using the Protection of Children Against Sexual Offences Act (POCSO).
- ❖ The registered rape cases, in which women were sexually assaulted in their workplace, were only 2%. In child labour cases, boys were abused as frequently as girls according to the 2007 study conducted along with the Ministry of Women and Child Development. 488 cases saw the victim raped by grandfathers, brothers, fathers and even sons. At 55% and 49% respectively, Tamil Nadu and Gujarat reported the highest number of child workplace sexual abuse cases.
- ❖ The number of cases registered for child abuse raised from 8,904 in the year 2014 to 14,913 in the year 2015, under the POSCO Act. Sexual offences and kidnapping account for 81% of the crimes against minors.
- ❖ POSCO: State wise cases - Uttar Pradesh led the highest number of child abuse cases (3,078) followed by Madhya Pradesh (1,687 cases), Tamil Nadu (1,544 cases), Karnataka (1,480 cases) and Gujarat (1,416 cases).

- ❖ 94.8% of rape cases saw children being raped by someone they knew, not strangers. These acquaintances include neighbors (3,149 cases) who were the biggest abusers (35.8%). 10% of cases saw children being raped by their own direct family members and relatives.

Age group VS Gender of India's Children



While an absolute increase of 181 million in the country's population has been recorded during the decade 2001-2011, there is a reduction of 5.05 million in the population of children aged 0-6 years during 2010-11. The decline in male children is 2.06 million and in female children is 2.99 million. The share of Children (0-6 years) in the total population has shown a decline of 2.8 points in 2011, compared to Census 2001 and the decline was sharper for female children than male children in the age group 0-6 years.



TYPES OF VIOLENCE FACED BY WOMEN AND GIRLS DURING THEIR LIFE CYCLE



CONSEQUENCES OF GIRL CHILD ABUSE

- ❖ Attachment and interpersonal relationship problems
- ❖ Emotional and mental health problems
- ❖ Delinquency and crime, often stemming from substance abuse, are more prevalent in adolescents with a history of child sexual abuse
- ❖ Academic problems in childhood
- ❖ Physical and psychological health problems
- ❖ Aggression, violence and criminal activity
- ❖ Teenage pregnancy
- ❖ Homelessness
- ❖ Fatal Abuse

The Government of India's 2005 National Plan of Action for Children has identified 12 key areas keeping in mind priorities that require utmost and sustained attention in terms of outreach, interventions and resource allocation. These are:

- Reducing Infant Mortality Rate.
- Reducing Maternal Mortality Rate.
- Reducing malnutrition among children.
- Achieving 100% civil registration of births.
- Universalization of early childhood care and development and quality education for all children.
- Complete abolition of female foeticide, female infanticide and child marriage as well as ensuring the survival, development and protection of the girl child.
- Improving water and sanitation coverage both in rural and urban areas.
- Addressing and upholding the rights of children in difficult circumstances.
- Securing for all children all legal and social protection from all kinds of abuse, exploitation and neglect.
- Complete abolition of child labour with the aim of progressively eliminating all forms of economic exploitation of children.
- Monitoring, review and reform of policies, programmes and laws to ensure the protection of children's interests and rights.
- Ensuring child participation and choice in matters and decisions affecting their lives.

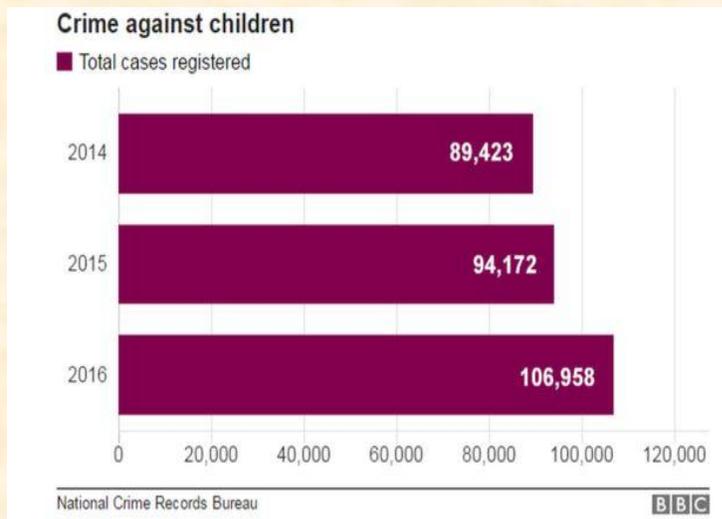
Measures taken by the Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India to protect Child Rights

The Government has taken several legislative and policy measures to protect child rights in the country. It is already implementing several laws, policies and programmes for the protection of child rights in the country. Some of the key legislative and policy measures are:-

- Enactment of Commissions for Protection of Child Rights Act, 2005 for setting up of National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) and State Commission for Protection of Child Rights (SCPCR)
- The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act of 2000 amended in 2006 and 2011 and Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Bill 2014.
- The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006
- The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012
- National Policy for Children, 2013
- National Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Policy, 2013
- The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009.
- Child Labour (Prohibition & Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2012.

The following Schemes are also being implemented:-

- (i) Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS) in 2009.
- (ii) Indira Gandhi Matritva Sahyog Yojana (IGMSY), 2010.
- (iii) Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for Empowerment of Adolescent Girls (Sabla), 2010.
- (iv) Restructured Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS), 2012.
- (v) Rajiv Gandhi National Creche Scheme
- (vi) Ujjawala
- (vii) Child line and Track Child.
- (viii) Multi-sectoral programme to address Maternal and Child under nutrition
- (ix) BetiBachao, BetiPadhao.
- (x) Rashtriya Bal Swasthya Karyakaram (RBSK) launched in 2013.



The human rights of female children in India and elsewhere, even when protected on paper, are violated in practice. An equitable and egalitarian world order must be established. A comprehensive campaign is needed that combats gender-based inequalities, discrimination, exploitation, oppression, abuse, violence, inhuman values, and violations of human rights, particularly against female children. People must radically change their attitudes and actions towards female children. Female children are not a commodity or sex-object but "an equally worthy human being to be loved, respected, and cared for.

