



Left out, abused

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The shocking neglect of child care institutions must be urgently reversed

- 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.
- 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.