

Child Protection in India: Examining the Need for a Centralized Agency Similar to Child Protective Services in the United States

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Abstract

Child protection is one of the most important responsibilities for a country. In India, the protection of children is governed through multiple legal and institutional mechanisms, including the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015¹, Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012 (POCSO)², Child Welfare Committees, District Child Protection Units, and Childline services. Despite the existence of these frameworks, incidents of child abuse, trafficking, neglect, abandonment, and exploitation continue to raise concerns regarding the effectiveness of the present systems. Unlike the United States, which functions through a specialised Child Protective Services (CPS) model, India follows a decentralised approach involving multiple authorities with overlapping responsibilities.

This paper aims to critically examine whether India requires a separate and specialised child protection agency that is similar to CPS in the United States. It aims to analyse the existing legal framework governing child welfare in India and identify practical challenges. The research paper also aims to do a comparative study between the Indian child protection system and the CPS model to evaluate their respective strengths and limitations.

Keywords: Child Protection, Child Welfare, Child Rights.

Introduction

Children form one of the most vulnerable groups in society, and therefore, they need special protection and care by both the family and the State. There is a growing trend in India of child abuse, trafficking, child neglect, child abandonment, child labour, and sexual offences against children. This has posed serious questions about the effectiveness of the prevailing child protection regime in the country. Despite various laws like the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015, and the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012 (POCSO), enacted by the Indian Parliament to protect the children, their enforcement tends to be poor because of inadequate coordination, late intervention, and inefficient administration.

At present, India follows a decentralised child protection framework where different bodies such as Child Welfare Committees, District Child Protection Units, police authorities, Juvenile Justice Boards, and Childline services collectively handle issues relating to child welfare. Even though the system aims to

¹ Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015

² Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012

provide protection to vulnerable children, the involvement of multiple agencies sometimes creates confusion regarding responsibility and accountability. In many situations, children continue to suffer due to delayed action and inadequate monitoring mechanisms.

In comparison, the United States functions through a specialised agency known as Child Protective Services (CPS), which mainly deals with cases of child abuse, neglect, foster care, and rehabilitation. The existence of a dedicated agency allows for quicker intervention and a more organised child protection mechanism. This creates an important area of discussion regarding whether India should also establish a separate and specialised child protection authority similar to CPS.

Historical Background

Child protection in India has been an idea that developed gradually with time. Until recent times, the care and well-being of children have been seen as the duty of families and communities rather than a State responsibility. Traditionally, Indian societies depended on joint families and communities to provide for the care and upbringing of children. As time passed, due to various social and economic changes like urbanization, poverty, migration, and rising crime against children, the need for the protection of children through law increased.

In the colonial era, child welfare laws in India were not well-developed and were mostly concerned with the reform of juvenile offenders and not the care of children in any way. Some examples include the Reformatory Schools Act of 1897, which dealt with the reform of juvenile offenders in reform schools. Other provinces made some laws about neglected and delinquent children, but there were no child protection laws.

With the passage of time, especially after independence, the importance of child welfare laws emerged. In order to secure the welfare of children, the Constitution of India provides some provisions to promote child welfare in its Articles 15(3), 21, 21A, 24, and 39. Over time, India enacted various legislations dealing with child rights, child labour, trafficking, adoption, and juvenile justice.

One of the significant initiatives taken was the implementation of the Juvenile Justice Act, 1986, that laid down a legal framework for the care, protection, treatment, and rehabilitation of juveniles. The act was amended by the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2000, with a view to bringing Indian law into alignment with international conventions, especially the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child that India agreed to in 1992. Currently, the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015,³ is in force for juvenile justice and child protection in India.

In view of the rise in incidents of sexual violence against children, the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012⁴ was enacted in order to combat offenses against children. This included the adoption of measures that were child-friendly in terms of legal procedure. Other measures taken to improve the effectiveness of the child protection system included institutional interventions like Child Welfare Committees, District Child Protection Units, Special Juvenile Police Units, and Childline services.

Despite these developments, India's child protection system continues to face several practical challenges, including a lack of coordination among authorities, inadequate infrastructure, a shortage of trained personnel, and delays in rehabilitation. These concerns have led to discussions regarding whether India

³ Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015

⁴ Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012

requires a more specialised and centralised child protection agency similar to Child Protective Services (CPS) in the United States.

Current Scenario

Child protection issues have emerged as a key issue in India in recent years owing to rising numbers of child abuse cases, child trafficking, child neglect, child abandonment, child labor, child cyber exploitation, and sexual abuse of minors. Although multiple legal and social security measures are in place, children in India continue to encounter various types of physical, mental, and psychological injuries. Issues like fast urbanization, poverty, ignorance, social stigma, family instability, and increased use of the Internet have made children more vulnerable in contemporary society.

The prevalence of crimes against minors is an indication of the severity of the current scenario. As per data from the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), 1,62,449 offenses were committed against minors in 2022⁵, up from 89,423 incidents in 2014, a considerable rise over the period. Additionally, the crime rate against children rose from 33.6 in 2021 to 36.6 in 2022. In these offenses, 45.7% involved kidnapping and abduction, whereas offenses under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offenses Act, 2012, contributed to roughly 39.7% of the total offenses against minors. Creating an institution similar to Child Protective Services (CPS) in the United States.

A significant challenge in the current situation is the increasing trend of committing crimes against children using technology. Incidents like cyber grooming, online sexual abuse, exploitation of children through social media channels, and dissemination of abusive content are on the rise due to the rapid proliferation of internet use. The traditional enforcement agencies may find it difficult to combat and address such cases because they lack specialized technological capabilities and coordination systems.

In India, a decentralized system exists where there are various agencies responsible for child protection, including Child Welfare Committees, District Child Protection Units, Juvenile Justice Boards, police authorities, Child Care Institutions, and Childline facilities. Despite having different agencies working towards ensuring the welfare and rehabilitation of children, certain challenges exist. Lack of coordination, delays in intervention, inadequate workforce, insufficient infrastructure, and ineffective monitoring systems hinder the effectiveness of these institutions.

While the government has initiated several welfare measures along with policy changes, the problem of disparity between law and implementation is still an issue. Consequently, legal experts and child welfare advocates have started discussing whether there is a need for India to develop an institution like Child Protective Services (CPS) in the US.

Review of Literature

Several scholars and researchers have examined the effectiveness of India's child protection framework and highlighted both its strengths and continuing shortcomings. A significant portion of the literature focuses on the gap between legislative intent and practical implementation, particularly in relation to rehabilitation, institutional accountability, and coordination among child welfare agencies.

Majumdar and Sarkar, in their study Family Centered Approach to Child Protection Services in India⁶, analyse the functioning of India's child protection mechanisms through the perspective of family-based

⁵ National Crime Records Bureau, Crime in India 2022 (Ministry of Home Affairs 2022)

⁶ Majumdar and Sarkar, 'Family Centered Approach to Child Protection Services in India' (2025) Journal of Open Innovation: Technology, Market, and Complexity

and community-centred care. The authors argue that although India has introduced important welfare measures and rehabilitation schemes under Mission Vatsalya and related child welfare programs, effective implementation remains a challenge due to poor infrastructure, shortage of trained personnel, and limited coordination between institutions. The study further emphasizes the important role played by non-governmental organizations in supporting vulnerable children and strengthening child protection at the grassroots level.

Similarly, Bhushan's work titled *Child Protection in India: Examining Institutional Governance and Legal Frameworks Under POCSO*⁷ critically examines the institutional functioning of child protection mechanisms under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012. The study highlights that the effectiveness of child protection laws depends not only on legislation itself but also on proper coordination between educational institutions, healthcare providers, law enforcement agencies, and child welfare bodies. The author identifies major issues such as weak enforcement, inadequate monitoring systems, and a lack of institutional accountability, all of which continue to weaken the practical effectiveness of the existing framework.

Comparative and regional perspectives on child protection are explored by Shekhar and Rai in their study relating to child protection systems in South Asia⁸. The authors note that despite legislative progress, countries such as India continue to face difficulties relating to implementation, accessibility, and inter-agency coordination. The study recommends stronger institutional cooperation, capacity-building measures, and specialised child protection systems capable of responding more efficiently to cases involving abuse, neglect, trafficking, and exploitation. In another related study on street children and vulnerable minors⁹, the authors discuss how socio-economic inequality, homelessness, lack of education, and weak institutional support systems expose children to exploitation and violence. The study demonstrates that legal protections alone are insufficient without effective rehabilitation and welfare mechanisms.

The issue of rehabilitation and institutional care has also been examined by Kanungo in the chapter *Comparing the Role of Child Care Institutions in Rehabilitation of Children in Conflict with Law in India with Global Best Practices*¹⁰. The author compares India's rehabilitation framework with child care models followed in countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, and Germany. The study argues that child protection should extend beyond rescue and institutional placement to include psychological support, education, healthcare, counseling, and long-term social reintegration. It further highlights the need for professionally managed and better monitored child care institutions in India.

The existing literature therefore demonstrates that India possesses an extensive legal and institutional framework for child protection, but continues to face serious challenges relating to implementation, coordination, rehabilitation, and accountability. While several studies discuss institutional weaknesses and comparative international practices, limited research has specifically focused on whether India requires a specialised and centralised child protection agency similar to Child Protective Services (CPS) in the United States. The present study seeks to address this gap by critically analysing the strengths and

⁷ Bhushan, 'Child Protection in India: Examining Institutional Governance and Legal Frameworks Under POCSO' (2025) Proceedings of IMASEE 2025

⁸ Shekhar and Rai, 'Assessment of Child Protection Systems in South Asia' (2025) SSRN Electronic Journal

⁹ Shekhar and Rai, 'Street Children and Child Protection Challenges in India' (2025) SSRN Electronic Journal.

¹⁰ Elisha Kanungo, 'Comparing the Role of Child Care Institutions in Rehabilitation of Children in Conflict with Law in India with Global Best Practices' in *Child Rights and Juvenile Justice* (Taylor & Francis 2025)

limitations of India's existing framework and examining whether a more centralised child protection mechanism is necessary within the Indian socio-legal context.

Existing Child Protection Framework in India

India has evolved an elaborate legal and institutional framework for the protection and welfare of children. The basis of this legal framework can be traced back to the Constitution of India, which provides certain rights and protections to children as per Articles 14, 15(3), 21, 21A, 24, and 39. Through these Articles, the Constitution ensures equality, respect, education, protection, and proper development for children. Several legislations have been passed by the Indian Government in the past to deal with various forms of child abuse and exploitation. One of the key pieces of legislation that comes into this category is the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015¹¹. The Act covers both children in need of care and protection and children who are in conflict with the law. Some of the institutions that have been created by this Act include Child Welfare Committees (CWC), Juvenile Justice Boards (JJB), District Child Protection Units (DCPU), and Child Care Institutions. The legislation is based on the philosophy of 'child-centric' and 'rehabilitative' by placing the utmost priority on the welfare of the child.

Another significant legislation is the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012¹², popularly known as the POCSO Act. This legislation has been passed to address the problem of sexual offences against children and provide child-friendly procedures for the reporting, recording, investigation, and trial of offences. Further, the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009¹³ provides the right to free and compulsory education for children aged six to fourteen years, acknowledging that education is a key component of child development and protection. Likewise, the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Amendment Act, 2016¹⁴ strives to ban child labour and ensure that no child is economically exploited, whereas the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006¹⁵ attempts to prevent child marriages and protect children from social and physical exploitation.

Apart from legal provisions, there are also some institutional mechanisms and emergency interventions involved in the child protection system of India. Childline 1098 acts as a national emergency number and helps children in need by rescuing them immediately. Similarly, organizations such as the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR), State Commissions for Protection of Child Rights, Special Juvenile Police Units, and District Child Protection Units also perform crucial roles in monitoring the child welfare scenario, receiving complaints, and implementing child protection laws.

Hence, the existing child protection regime in India comprises constitutional safeguards, statutory provisions, welfare interventions, and specialized institutions for protecting and rehabilitating children.

Advantages of the Existing Framework

There are some significant strengths associated with the current Indian child protection system, which help protect and promote the welfare of children. The first major advantage of the current child protection system in India lies in the presence of an effective legal framework that deals with various forms of abuse, exploitation, neglect, trafficking, and offences against children through special legislations. Legislation

¹¹ Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015

¹² Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012

¹³ Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009

¹⁴ Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Amendment Act, 2016

¹⁵ Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006

like the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015¹⁶, and the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012¹⁷ provide comprehensive guidelines for protection, rehabilitation, adoption, fostering, counselling, and speedy trial. The presence of various special legislations enables the Indian legal system to deal with different aspects of child protection through special laws rather than one generic law.

The second important strength of the current Indian child protection system is that the approach adopted in Indian child protection laws and institutional mechanisms is welfare-oriented and centered around the welfare of children. In addition to punishing the perpetrators of child abuse, Indian child protection laws emphasize the importance of the rehabilitation, reintegration, and development of children who have been abused. The best interests of children have become an integral part of many Indian child welfare legislations and judicial pronouncements. Moreover, the structure enjoys constitutional backing because the Constitution of India ensures various safeguards in matters relating to dignity, equality, education, and freedom from exploitation. The constitutional provisions increase the legitimacy of child protection legislation, making it obligatory for the State to protect the interests of children. Furthermore, the Indian child protection structure adheres to the standards of international child rights and draws inspiration from conventions like the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which aims to provide protection and promotion of children worldwide.

One more major advantage of the Indian child protection framework is its decentralisation. As various institutions at the national, state, district, and local levels have roles and responsibilities in child protection, there is sufficient flexibility in dealing with problems associated with regional and sociocultural aspects concerning children. Various states can adopt welfare policies depending on their requirements and cultural values. The presence of emergency support programs like Childline 1098 also enhances the child protection framework by offering immediate rescue services to distressed children.

Overall, the existing framework demonstrates that India possesses a broad legal and institutional mechanism aimed at protecting children and promoting their welfare. Despite several practical challenges, the framework has laid an important foundation for child rights protection and continues to play a significant role in safeguarding vulnerable children across the country.

Disadvantages, Challenges, and Legal Gaps in the Existing Framework

Although there exists a comprehensive legal and institutional mechanism for child protection in India, the country still faces a number of practical and systemic hurdles. The first problem that needs to be addressed is the lack of coordination within the agencies responsible for the protection of children. As the responsibility for child welfare is shared by various entities, including Child Welfare Committees, District Child Protection Units, police authorities, Juvenile Justice Boards, Child Care Institutions, etc., there is often confusion in terms of jurisdiction and accountability, which results in the delay of rescue and rehabilitation operations as well as decisions. As a result, many children do not receive timely protection because of inefficient administration. The second serious issue relates to the insufficient implementation of the existing laws on child protection. While legislations such as the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015, and the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012¹⁸ establish numerous safeguards for children, their implementation varies from state to district. Child Care

¹⁶ Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015

¹⁷ Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012

¹⁸ Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012

Institutions usually face a range of problems related to poor infrastructure, lack of competent staff, and monitoring mechanisms. There are many deficiencies that exist in the area of Child Care Institutions, such as deficient infrastructure, absence of trained staff, inadequate monitoring, and lack of proper rehabilitation facilities. Child Welfare Committees and protection officers are generally overworked due to the rising number of child-related cases. This problem arises mainly because of the lack of sufficient administrative resources at their disposal.

Several other problems are also associated with the present legal framework as well. Firstly, there is no single specialized agency in India that deals with all kinds of problems associated with child abuse, child neglect, child trafficking, foster care, and rehabilitation. Rather, there are many independent organizations that handle different areas, and sometimes this leads to disjointed administration and institutional accountability issues. There are also problems in implementing uniform procedures with respect to child rescue operations, foster care system, rehabilitation process, and monitoring of Child Care Institutions.

One more problem that has arisen with the development of technology and use of Internet by young children is cyber crimes such as child pornography, grooming of children, trafficking of minors and cyber-bullying. Even though existing laws provide some solutions to such problems, there are still problems in enforcing those laws properly. Additionally, there are various other social and economic issues that make the child protection mechanism even less effective. Oftentimes, poverty, illiteracy, social stigmatization, lack of awareness, and unstable families hinder the reporting of child abuse cases or exploitation. The children who are economically weaker, the street children, the orphan children, or the children in institutional care are particularly vulnerable to the problems posed by the child protection system.

Therefore, despite the fact that the child protection system in India enjoys good laws and policies, many loopholes in this system and practical difficulties render it ineffective. This has created a lot of debate about whether a specialized institution like Child Protective Services (CPS) in the United States should be set up in India.

Case Study

In *Sheela Barse v. Union of India*¹⁹, the Supreme Court dealt with the condition of children who were detained in prisons and other custodial institutions. The Court expressed serious concern over the fact that children were being kept in jail environments, which were clearly unsuitable for their physical and mental development. It emphasized that children must be treated with special care and that the State has a positive duty to protect their welfare. The judgment highlighted the need for legal aid, proper supervision, and child-friendly treatment of minors in custody. This case is important because it reflects the Court's recognition that child protection is not merely a matter of punishment or detention, but one of care, rehabilitation, and human dignity.

In *Lakshmi Kant Pandey v. Union of India*²⁰, the Supreme Court examined the growing practice of inter-country adoption and laid down important safeguards to prevent abuse, trafficking, and exploitation of children through the adoption process. The Court observed that adoption must always be guided by the best interests of the child and not by the convenience of the adoptive parents or private agencies. It stressed the need for proper verification, monitoring, and legal supervision to ensure that children are not treated

¹⁹ *Sheela Barse v Union of India* AIR 1986 SC 1773.

²⁰ *Lakshmi Kant Pandey v Union of India* AIR 1984 SC 469.

as commodities. This case is highly relevant to child protection law because it established that adoption is a welfare-based legal process and must be handled with strict caution and accountability.

In *Sampurna Behura v. Union of India*²¹, the Supreme Court took note of the serious failures in the implementation of the Juvenile Justice framework across the country. The Court pointed out that many states had not properly constituted or strengthened key institutions such as Child Welfare Committees, Juvenile Justice Boards, Special Juvenile Police Units, and child care homes. It expressed concern that although the law existed on paper, its actual implementation remained weak and inconsistent. The judgment is especially important for this topic because it shows that the main problem in child protection is often not the absence of law, but the failure of institutions to function effectively. This case strongly supports the argument that India may need better coordination, stronger monitoring, and possibly a more specialised child protection mechanism.

Overall, these judgments show that the Indian judiciary has consistently treated child protection as a serious constitutional and social obligation. They also make it clear that child welfare requires more than legislation alone it depends on effective implementation, institutional responsibility, and a child-centred approach.

Child Protective Services (CPS) Model in the United States

The United States has a specialized system of child protection services that are known as Child Protective Services (CPS)²². The role of Child Protective Services is to protect children from any form of abuse, neglect, exploitation, and hazardous environments. As compared to India's system of decentralization where more than one agency is involved in dealing with issues of child abuse and protection, the CPS operates as a specialized agency which takes care of all matters related to the protection of children. While there may be variations in the structure of the CPS across various states, its function is quite similar as it involves the protection and welfare of children.

The main areas of complaints under the CPS cover issues of physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, neglect, abandonment, and domestic violence. These complaints can be raised by anyone, including parents, teachers, doctors, neighbors, and even friends. However, in many cases, individuals like teachers and healthcare professionals have the legal duty to raise a complaint against child abuse. Upon receiving a report, the agency investigates the matter to ensure whether the child is at risk or needs to be protected immediately.

One of the strengths of the CPS approach is its ability to intervene directly when children are faced with grave risks or cases of neglect. CPS agents are allowed to conduct home visits and engage with the parents and the children, as well as collaborate with educational institutions and healthcare professionals. In some cases, CPS agents can take extreme steps, such as removing children from dangerous situations temporarily. Those children who cannot be kept in their homes will be provided with alternative options such as placement into foster care or shelters until they have been successfully rehabilitated.

Rehabilitation and family services also feature prominently in the CPS approach. Instead of focusing merely on separating the children from their families, CPS often provides various counseling services as well as assistance to families to create a safe environment for the children. Court supervision of the

²¹ *Sampurna Behura v Union of India* (2018) 4 SCC 433.

²² U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 'Child Protective Services' (Child Welfare Information Gateway) <https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/systemwide/services/protective/>

intervention is another critical element of the CPS model since courts play an essential role in overseeing decisions about custody and foster care placement.

Finally, another strength of the CPS approach is in its specialised nature. Since the issue of child protection is handled exclusively by a specialised body, it tends to facilitate cooperation and supervision. It makes the process faster in emergencies and ensures better distribution of responsibility.

Nevertheless, there have also been criticisms against the CPS model in America. The issues include excess state intervention in private family affairs, overburdening of foster care institutions, discrimination against certain racial and socio-economic groups, scarcity of skilled personnel, and sometimes, wrongful separation of the child from parents. Overreliance on state intervention in such cases can adversely impact the family relationship as well as the psychological development of the child. Nonetheless, the CPS approach continues to be one of the most prominent child protection approaches in the world. It has also been used extensively in comparative law due to its unique structure of institutions and emphasis on intervention, investigation, and child welfare services. The approach thus serves as an important benchmark while studying whether India should opt for a similar model.

Comparative Analysis of India and the United States Child Protection Systems

It is clear that child protection is viewed by both India and the United States as a core obligation of the government; however, the two countries have quite different structures in terms of how the child protection system operates. Specifically, India operates under a decentralized approach with child protection obligations being assigned to a number of different organizations, namely, Child Welfare Committee, Juvenile Justice Boards, District Child Protection Unit, police authorities, Child Care Institutions, and Childline. The United States has a central and specialized authority called Child Protective Services (CPS) that deals exclusively with all issues associated with child abuse, neglect, foster care, and child welfare intervention.

It should be pointed out that one of the key differences in child protection strategies employed by the two countries consists in institutional coordination. Namely, in the US, CPS plays a role of a special body dealing with child protection-related cases, which makes it much easier to take rapid action in case of any emergency. In India, on the contrary, responsibilities related to child protection are assigned to several institutions that might cause overlapping jurisdictions and coordination problems, thus making rescue and rehabilitation operations ineffective. Yet another significant difference pertains to the approach to interventions. The CPS system allows for immediate and direct interventions by the state to ensure that the child is removed from a dangerous and abusive situation. CPS officers can make investigations regarding complaints filed, perform home visits, and even move away the child if needed. The process of intervention in India involves a combined effort made up of cooperation between police, CWC, social welfare, and child protection officers. While the Indian system works on protecting children as well, the lack of specialisation and involvement of multiple bodies can delay the process.

Another major difference is seen in terms of the institution itself. The Indian model is focused on welfare and revolves around the concepts of rehabilitation and reintegration of children through the means of legislation, such as the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015²³ and Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012²⁴. It tries to strike the right balance between protecting children

²³ Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015

²⁴ Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012

and considering the socio-cultural and family environment. The CPS system focuses more on investigations, monitoring, foster care programs, and state control of child welfare cases.

Even with its specialised system, CPS has also been criticised on grounds of too much government interference, burdened foster care systems, and child abduction. Likewise, the Indian system has been subject to criticism for its lack of enforcement, unavailability of skilled workers, poor infrastructure, and disjointed administration. Thus, it can be seen that the Indian system also has strengths and weaknesses just like the American CPS system.

India's decentralised approach might seem better for the Indian scenario in light of its large population, cultural diversity, and federal structure. But then again, the American CPS system has shown that it is beneficial to have a special agency responsible for child protection services.

Need for a Centralised Child Protection Agency in India

There have been many instances of child abuse, exploitation, trafficking, neglect, cyber-exploitation, abandonment, and institutional violence. This issue has become a major concern for the efficacy of the current child protection measures available in India. Despite having many legal and institutional provisions in place for the protection of children in India, there have been several problems associated with their proper implementation, coordination, overlap of jurisdictions, and delay. Therefore, there have been various debates on whether India needs a specialized and centralized body similar to the Child Protective Services (CPS) in the US.

Firstly, there is a need for better coordination and accountability when it comes to child protection measures. Currently, the issue of child protection is dealt with by various institutions like the Child Welfare Committee, Child Protection Unit, police force, Juvenile Justice Boards, Child Care Institutions, and Childline services. Each of these organizations plays its own significant part; however, due to the involvement of many authorities, there may be confusion on the responsibility and quickness of action on child welfare issues.

A centralized child protection organization would help in improving monitoring and enforcement procedures. It has been seen that in many child care institutes and welfare homes in India, there is inadequacy in infrastructure, supervision, availability of trained staff, and rehabilitation of children. A specialized agency comprising of professionals who work on the basis of common standards can help in making the inspection process more effective and result in better rehabilitation of children.

There is another strong justification for advocating institution reforms, i.e., the emergence of cyber-crimes against children. There is an increase in online abuse, cyber grooming, trafficking of children via digital media, and dissemination of abusive material. This issue is difficult to handle in a decentralized system due to a lack of technical and investigative knowledge and resources. It requires specific action and quick responses to such situations.

At the same time, it should be understood that simply implementing the CPS structure in India could not prove entirely suitable due to various reasons. The large Indian population, along with diversity in terms of culture and socio-economic background, could make the implementation of such an approach more complicated for the country. Moreover, the involvement of the state in issues within families too much could raise the question of violation of individual privacy. Therefore, rather than creating a whole new system, India can try improving the present one by coordinating efforts, special training, and uniform processes.

Therefore, the creation of a centralised body for child protection in India needs to be considered from a balanced point of view. Although the current legislation creates a firm basis, practical problems still prevent it from achieving the desired efficiency. Creating a more coordinated, specialized system of child protection can help achieve timely interventions and better results overall.

Suggestions and Recommendations

For improving the protection of children in India, institutional changes and proper enforcement of the laws need to be taken into account. Though there is already a very sound legal structure available in India for ensuring welfare of children, several problems still exist. Thus, some of the necessary changes and measures can make things better for the protection, rehabilitation, and welfare of children.

The most significant of such recommendations is the creation of an appropriate and coordinated child protection system in India. Rather than creating a completely new system altogether, the government can take steps in the direction of forming a coordinating body at the national level to ensure that Child Welfare Committees, District Child Protection Units, police officials, and child care homes can function in a coordinated manner. Moreover, there is a need for the government to develop effective oversight and accountability systems for Child Care Institutions and rehabilitation centers in order to ensure that such institutions do not indulge in any form of abuse or negligence. There is a need for regular inspections and reporting mechanisms, and independent reviews to ensure proper maintenance of records and evaluate rehabilitation initiatives.

Increasing the involvement of professionals in child protection services can also play an important role in addressing this issue. At present, many Child Care Institutions lack adequate personnel in terms of counselors, social workers, psychologists, and officers trained in handling child cases. Thus, it is necessary for the government to initiate specialised training programmes in terms of child psychology, cyber security, and investigation of cases involving children.

Since there is also an increase in child exploitation via digital means, India must ensure that digital child protection initiatives are in place. The development of special cyber units to deal with crimes committed against children is essential. There is also a need for greater collaboration between technology firms and law enforcement agencies, while awareness initiatives concerning online safety measures should also be conducted among children and their parents. Apart from these, there is also a need for increased public awareness about child rights and procedures for filing complaints. There are many instances where children do not come forward with their issues because of reasons like fear, societal stigmatization, lack of education or knowledge, and so forth. Public awareness programs, legal assistance programs, and community involvement can play an integral role in helping the victims come forward in time and receive timely help.

Lastly, it is imperative to ensure strict implementation of laws and regulations. As mentioned earlier, there are many decisions of the Supreme Court of India emphasizing the need for proper functioning of Child Welfare Committees, Juvenile Justice Boards, and other child protection organizations. Hence, effective implementation and institutional responsibility should be prioritized.

In conclusion, while India does not necessarily have to replicate the CPS system in the United States, it will surely benefit from a more specialized, coordinated, and effective system for the protection of children.

Conclusion

The welfare of children has always been regarded as an essential duty of every welfare state because children are considered the most vulnerable sections in society, which need special care, protection, and assistance to help develop healthily. With the passage of time, India has made tremendous progress in terms of establishing laws, policies, and institutions dedicated to the welfare of its children. The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015, and the Protection of Children from Sexual Offenses Act, 2012, are two examples that demonstrate India's dedication to the welfare and protection of its children.

Though there have been significant legal achievements, the current child protection system still faces many practical issues in its operation. Such problems include weak implementation, lack of qualified personnel, poor coordination among administrators, overlapping of duties and functions, and the absence of efficient supervision methods. Furthermore, the increasing prevalence of cases related to sexual exploitation, abuse, trafficking, neglect, and violence against children underlines the necessity of improving the current child protection system. Comparative examination of India and the USA indicates several advantages of the CPS approach, such as special administration, timely response, and accountability, along with its problems associated with over-involvement of the state institutions and their burdens. Moreover, though the decentralized system of India appears more flexible in terms of social and administrative diversity of the country, there are always issues of coordination and enforcement associated with it.

Thus, one cannot say that the perfect approach implies the transition of India from its current practice towards the complete CPS-like model. Rather, there is a need for an institutional development aimed at enhancing the process of coordination, accountability, monitoring, and provision of specialized services related to child protection and care. In addition, there should be professional management of the process together with appropriate technologies and trained staff.

To summarize, despite the fact that India has a good legislative base concerning child protection, the real effectiveness of the processes in question depends on proper implementation and a responsible attitude to children's well-being.