

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT

RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 1114
TO BE ANSWERED ON 31.07.2024

HUMAN TRAFFICKING RACKETS

1114 SHRI M. MOHAMED ABDULLA:

Will the Minister of Women and Child Development be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the Union Government has undertaken any study about the number of children who lost their primary caregivers to COVID-19 in the country and if so, the details thereof;
- (b) whether Union Government has taken any steps to prevent potentially exposed unregistered children who have lost their primary caregivers to COVID-19 from falling into the hands of human trafficking rackets or forced labor, and if so, the details thereof; and
- (c) whether the Union Government is aware of the gaps in pre- and post-adoption counseling, which arose after the digitization of the adoption process, and if so, how it will be fixed?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT
(SHRIMATI ANNPURNA DEVI)

(a) & (b): The Hon'ble Prime Minister announced PM CARES for Children scheme on 29.05.2021 to support children who lost both parents or surviving parent or legal guardian or adoptive parents due to COVID-19 pandemic during 11.03.2020 to 05.05.2023. The objective of the Scheme is to ensure comprehensive care and protection of Children in a sustained manner and enable their well being through health insurance, empower them through education and equip them for self-sufficient existence with financial support till 23 years of age. The scheme is freely accessible through an online portal i.e. www.pmcareforchildren.in. Benefits under the Scheme have been given to 4532 eligible children so far. The Ministry regularly follows up with all the stakeholders of the scheme so as to ensure its proper implementation. Additionally, a Help Desk has also been set up to keep in touch with these children. Each child is being contacted regularly, through the Help Desk, for checking on their personal, emotional, educational and health related requirements.

Further, the children in distressed situations merit care and protection under the provisions of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015. The Act and Rules made thereunder mandate a safety net of service delivery structures along with institutional and non-institutional care for these children. The Ministry is implementing Centrally Sponsored Scheme namely 'Mission Vatsalya' (erstwhile Child Protection Services Scheme), through the State/ UT Governments on cost sharing basis for delivering services for children in difficult circumstances which include services of institutional and non-institutional care. The Child Care Institutions (CCIs) established under the Mission Vatsalya scheme support, inter-alia, age-appropriate education, access to vocational training, recreation, health care, counselling etc. Support under non-institutional care is provided by way of state sponsorship, foster care and after care to children in need of care and protection. The Mission aims to Support and sustain Children in difficult circumstances; develop context-based solutions for holistic development of children from varied backgrounds; provide scope for encouraging innovative solutions and to cement convergent action.

Further, National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) is responsible for ensuring that children get all opportunities and facilities to develop in healthy atmosphere and that their constitutional and legal rights are protected under different legislations. The Commission is mandated to monitor the implementation of J. J. Act, 2015, The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012 and the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009.

NCPCR has devised an online portal Bal Swaraj to do real time monitoring of children and keeping in view of the COVID pandemic, a link on the portal had been devised as COVID Care Link. All States/UTs were directed by the Hon'ble Supreme Court in Suo Moto WP (C) No. 4 of 2020 to upload the data of children who had become orphans or lost either of the parent to COVID pandemic or otherwise on the Bal Swaraj Portal post March 2020.

NCPCR has taken the following further steps/actions to combat trafficking :

1. Conducted a National level multi- stakeholder "E-Consultative Meeting to Combat Child Trafficking Post Lockdown Situation due to COVID-19" on 8th May, 2020 comprising of stakeholders from the background. Thereafter, the Commission formulated recommendations in consonance with the Advisory issued by MHA on 06th July 2020 for "Preventing and Combating Human Trafficking especially during COVID-19 Pandemic period". NCPCR in joint technical collaboration with the State Commission for Protection of Child Rights (SCPCR) organizes sensitization workshops for all the stakeholders responsible for dealing with issues of child trafficking in the identified bordering and adjoining districts. In these workshops, the Commission deliberates with the stakeholders for taking preventive steps at the District, Block, Village and Panchayat level to counter the menace of child/human trafficking. The commission propagates the 5M strategy viz. Meeting, Mapping, Matching, Mobilizing and Monitoring all the vulnerable children based on the indicators of vulnerability at the District, Block Village and Gram Panchayat level. Subsequently, efforts are made that all the vulnerable

children and their families can avail the benefits under various Schemes of Government of India and the respective State Governments.

2. NCPCR also runs a periodic campaign on combating child trafficking viz., “बाल तस्करी से आजादी”. This campaign was started on 1st August 2022 in 75 bordering Districts of India, in commemoration of World Day against Human Trafficking observed on 30th July each year and similar such campaign called “बाल तस्करी से आजादी 2.0” in 100 Bordering and Adjoining Districts of India to prevent and combat child trafficking.

3. The Commission has set up a Quick Response Cell (QRC) to deal with instance of children getting trafficked or missing as reported to the Commission. Quick action is initiated within 1st Hour of reporting to ensure speedy rescue, release, repatriation, rehabilitation, and re-integration of children who have fallen in the clutches of traffickers. The Commission provides technical assistance and support towards Vulnerability Mapping of Children and families who are at risk of trafficking.

(c): Counselling is indeed an essential part of the adoption process and the Ministry through its statutory body i.e. CARA (Central Adoption Resource Authority) emphasizes counselling through its stakeholders, like District Child Protection Units (DCPUs) and Specialised Adoption Agencies (SAAs) during the stage of pre-adoption, adoption and post-adoption as envisaged in the Adoption Regulations, 2022 notified by Government of India. CARA Helpdesk is also engaged for this purpose. In addition, initiatives have also been taken to strengthen the counselling mechanism by the stakeholders in collaboration with National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences (NIMHANS).

Further, after completion of adoption, post-adoption follow up of two years is mandatory in each case and is being followed strictly to ensure that the child and the adoptive parents have adjusted well with each other.
