



Zone Wise Mapping of Missing Children: Delhi and NCR

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Introduction

India, being the 2nd largest population in the world, is equivalent to 17.7% of the total world population. Out of this fraction, 26.6% of the population of our country is between the age groups of 0–14 years as per the 2020 report by the World Bank Collection of development indicators, and 41% of the population is less than 18 years old as per the 2001 census. To build a future, we need to nurture things from the roots up and "Save the Children" [1]. Instead, every eight minutes, a child goes missing in India. Overall, 73,138 children were reported missing, and the number of missing children has increased by 8.9 %, according to the 2019 report by the National Crime Record Bureau's (NCRB). According to the Delhi Commission for Protection of Child Rights (DCPCR), the National Capital City Delhi has more than 6000 children go missing every year. In the last one year, the Commission has issued notices to Delhi Police in 4798 FIR lodged wherein children were reported missing. Out of these cases of missing children, 1541 children had been traced by June 2021. Across India, hundreds of children go missing daily because of the law enforcement agencies' delayed action and lack of coordination in properly investigating the missing children. There are various barriers involved when it comes to rescue of missing children. Most of the times family members are not aware about the process of reporting the matter, whom to approach, etc.. India has recently ratified the UN protocol on trafficking in persons. It has accepted and acknowledged the fact that trafficking is an organized crime and a crime against humanity [2]. And Children are most vulnerable to these kinds of organized crimes. For the sake of convenience this paper is divided into two parts. Part-I deals with different definitions provided by various authorities. Part-II deals with Zone wise mapping of Delhi and NCR for the year 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020. The Ministry of Home Affairs has defined missing child as a person below 18 years of age, whose whereabouts are not known to the parents, legal guardians, and any other persons who may be legally entrusted with the custody of the child, whatever may be the circumstances/causes of disappearance. According to the SOP by the Ministry on Women and Child Development 'Missing Child' is defined as: A "missing child" may be one who is lost (separated from family), has left home on his/her own without a notice or has been abducted or kidnapped or trafficked or abandoned. The same definition has been provided in the SOP of Delhi Police Order No. 252/2019.

Discussion

Furthermore, the Rule 92(1) of the Juvenile Justice (Care and

Protection of Children) Model Rules 2016 defines a missing child as; "A child whose whereabouts are not known to the parents, legal guardian or any other person or institution legally entrusted with the custody of the child, whatever may be the circumstances or causes of disappearance, and shall be considered missing and in need of care and protection until located or his safety and well- being established [3]." This definition is quite similar to the one provided by the ministry of Home Affairs. Further, the Rule 84 of Juvenile Justice Act specifies that; "For the purposes of this Act, the provisions of sections 359 to 369 of the Indian Penal Code, shall apply to a child or a minor who is under the age of eighteen years and all the provisions shall be construed accordingly" [4]. Another definition was evolved by the Supreme Court in Bachpan Bachao Andolan case; wherein the 'missing child' has been defined as a person below eighteen years of age, whose whereabouts are not known to the parents, legal guardians and any other person who may be legally entrusted with the custody of the child, whatever may be the circumstances/causes of disappearance This definition seems the basis of the definition provided by the Ministry [5].

Conclusion

As per the Court, the child will be considered missing and in need of care and protection within the meaning of the later part of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 (JJ Act), until located and/or his/her safety/well being is established. There are so many definitions of 'Missing Child' provided by different authorities and it becomes difficult to figure out which definition should be relied upon to ascertain a missing child. There is lack of coherence and need a for a coherent definition.

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