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An International Journal on Alternative Care

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SPECIAL ISSUE: 'CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE IN ALTERNATIVE CARE'

Focused on the South Asian Region



Institutionalised Children Explorations and Beyond

An International Journal on Alternative Care

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Editorial

Monisha C. Nayar-Akhtar 1-4

Foreword to the Special Edition

Child Sexual Abuse: The Loss of Innocence 5-8
Monisha C. Nayar-Akhtar

Interview

Interview with Dr. Asha Bajpai 9-23
Leena Prasad

Research Articles

Child Sexual Abuse in Institutionalized Settings 24-30
Adrian Phillips, Ratna Saxena and Ronny Thomas Abraham

Child Pornography and Sexual Abuse in Child Care Institutions 31-37
Syed Aatif

Child Sexual Abuse and Media: Coverage, Representation and Advocacy 38-45
Pradeep Nair

Rescue and Remedy: A Process Documentation of Psychotherapy with
Children in Institutions 46-59
Manjeer Mukherjee

Child Sexual Abuse: A Prime Violation of Child Rights 60-66
K. Bhuvaneshwari

Another Forgotten Child: Towards Implementation of Reforms to Better
Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse in Alternative Care Settings
in Sri Lanka 67-73
Nayomi Wickramaratne and Nadee Gunaratne

Good Practices and Models of Alternative Care

Preventing Child Sexual Abuse in Alternative Care Settings: SOS 74-77
Children's Villages Approach
Shubha Murthi, Rajeev Kumar and Indrajit Bose

International Perspective

Child Sexual Abuse in Alternative Care: Glimpses on Prevalence, Policy
Implications and Children's Needs 78-85
Lakshmi Madhavan

Opinion Piece

- A Plea to Use Terms ‘Safe Touch’ and ‘Unsafe Touch’ Instead of
‘Good Touch’ and ‘Bad Touch’ in Personal Safety Education 86-88
Shubhangi Shinde

Movie Review

- The Unloved 89-91
Maninder Kaur

Book Review

- Damaged: Heartbreaking Stories of the Kids Trapped in Britain’s Broken
Care System by Chris Wild 92-93
Kakul Hai

Brief Communications

94-105

- Centre Orders Audit of Over 9,000 Child Care Homes in 60 Days: Official 94
- Centre Approves Setting up of 1023 Fast Track Courts for Rape, Child
Abuse Cases 95
- Child Sexual Abuse: Key Advice for Social Workers Working in This Area 96
- POCSO Act Amendments: Cabinet Introduces Death Penalty for Aggravated
Assault on Children 98
- Delhi Police Employing Various Techniques to Deal with Victims of Child
Sexual Abuse 99
- Elderly Man Who Allegedly Sexually Abused Foster Daughter Turned in
by his Partner 100
- 2,322 Child Abuse Cases Reported in Six Months 101
- Sexual Abuse of Boys Often Overlooked by State Laws, Global Study Warns 102
- Out of the Shadows: Shining Light on the Response to Child Sexual Abuse
and Exploitation: A 40-Country Benchmarking Index - Executive Summary 104

Upcoming Events

106-107

- Child Sexual Abuse: A Public Health Perspective Annual Symposium 106
- 2019 Coalition to End Sexual Exploitation Global Summit 106
- International Symposium on Child Abuse 107
- Working With Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse 107

Editorial

The March 2019 issue is a special edition dedicated to the exploration and prevention of Child Sexual Abuse (CSA) in institutional settings. We have presented on this topic before, reflecting our concern for this growing societal problem. In prior issues of this journal beginning 2014 when the journal was launched, several papers on this topic have been published. This special edition on CSA is a reiteration of our ongoing concern and commitment to the exploration and examination of this increasingly disturbing trend in institutional settings. I hope that as you peruse through the journal, you will find particular areas of interest, exploration and examination pertinent to your area of concern and practice.

As is customary for me, I begin with an acknowledgement to the dedication of our editorial board. I am extremely grateful to the existing members of the board and to the extended team of peer reviewers who give their time and energy and help in the selection of the papers for this journal. In the past year, we have had several changes in the composition of the board. Beginning with the film review editor, Ms. Kavita Nayar, who left to pursue her graduate studies in her field, she has been replaced by Ms. Maninder Kaur, who holds a Masters degree in Social Work from the Department of Social Work, University of Delhi and is currently pursuing her Ph.D. in Social Work from Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai. To our general advisory board, I am pleased to announce the addition of two stellar individuals. Dr. Jhuma Basak, who has a Ph.D. in Psychology from Kyushu University, Japan and a Masters in Comparative Literature from Jadavpur University, Kolkata, is a fellow psychoanalyst and brings a rich array of experiences as well as literary contributions to the field. In addition, Ms. Shubha Murthi, the Deputy Chief Operating Officer of SOS Children's Villages International, has also joined our board. She brings a wealth of knowledge derived from her training and experiences, managing large-scale alternative childcare programmes in 40 countries across Asia and Africa.

I am extremely pleased to announce that from the neighboring countries of Pakistan and Nepal, Dr. Seema Arif and Ms. Sumnima Tuladhar respectively have joined our country editorial board. Dr. Arif is the Founder and Chief Editor of the academic journal 'UMT Education Review' and serves on many editorial boards. She is internationally known and has a wealth of knowledge and experience that will

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undoubtedly add to ICEB in its academic pursuits and regional representation. Sumnima Tuladhar has extensive experience in child protection issues, child sexual abuse and commercial sexual exploitation of children, street children, trafficking in women and children, child participation and children in armed conflict. Both Dr. Arif and Ms. Tuladhar are dedicated in their intellectual pursuits and activist ideals. We are extremely pleased and honored to have them join the board.

Finally, I wish to extend a warm welcome to Lakshmi Madhavan, who has joined our core team as Udayan Care's Research and Development Coordinator. Ms. Madhavan has academic pursuits of her own and you will see evidence of that later on in this issue. Ms. Madhavan is a mental health professional, who has completed her MSC in Clinical Psychology from Bangor University and has over four years of experience in psychosocial counselling, training and development.

The issue begins with a foreword in which the problem of CSA in institutional settings is examined. While the long term emotional impact of CSA is acknowledged, I also draw from psychoanalytic theory, especially from its formulation of infantile sexuality, to highlight the complex nature of this issue. A child's developmental trajectory must be taken into account when planning policy and interventions. The scarcity of this in the literature is notable. While there is growing and justifiable concern for the child's mental health especially during the investigative phase and follow-up, factors to prevent such abuse have rarely been identified. Perhaps the dearth of such information will provide impetus for future research in this area.

Following our well established standard format, we have an interview of Dr. Asha Bajpai, conducted by our very own Leena Prasad. Dr. Bajpai is a Professor of Law and the Founder, Dean of School of Law at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences in Mumbai. The interview, which has been divided into four sections, establishes her expertise, range of experience in policy, and dedication to this issue. Her candid remarks and openness to address the questions will not disappoint anyone, who seeks a champion for this cause. Ms. Prasad is to be congratulated for her skill in conducting this interview and for the richness of the communication.

The research section continues with a series of original papers on this topic. We begin with a paper by Adrian Phillips and colleagues, in which the authors document the different types of CSA in institutional settings. The paper examines policies that ensure the safety of a child within such settings. Their exploration of the incidence and type of abuse that is present is a wake up call for all in charge to pay heed to the role that adults-in charge play in such situations.

Syed Aatif examines this issue further by exploring the role of exploitation in institutional settings. In his paper, he identifies the growing use of internet (social media) to

market and share on a vast scale of pornographic material involving children. While many deplore the use of children in such sales, it continues to be on the rise especially as offenders and perpetrators of this crime find ways around policy and legal jurisdictions, and profit on so many levels from these nefarious practices. This paper is an essential read for anyone who is interested in monitoring cyberspace and the use of this space for the exploitation of children. Dr. Pradeep Nair broadens the scope of this line of inquiry and examines the coverage, representation and advocacy in the media on this issue especially with respect to its positive use. By increasing awareness and initiating a dialogue to promote prevention of CSA, and by building collective responsibilities for public safety of children, he feels that it can indeed make a difference in both prevention and treatment.

In keeping with the theme of prevention, and looking towards rehabilitation and rescue, Dr. Manjeer Mukherjee identifies a process of psychotherapeutic interventions, conducted with institutionalized adolescents over five years. This longitudinal study identifies the positives as well as some of the stumbling blocks in the project. Dr. Bhuvbaneswari's paper on CSA is a documentation of the prevalence of this problem in society and a stark reminder that this growing social problem, which impacts the most vulnerable members of our society, especially those placed in alternative care settings, must continue in earnest. This theme of prevention and documentation of prevalence is reiterated by Nayomi Wichramarante and colleague from their work in alternative care settings in Sri Lanka. Their goal to implement models of care for this population is based on intentional and well thought out best practices and the present reforms that can be structured in different cultural settings.

Representing their work in SOS Children's Village, Shubha Murthi, Rajeev Kumar and Indrajit Bose, present a paper that identifies an approach to preventing CSA in alternative care settings. By identifying and assessing the initial problem, they go on to provide a model that is guided by four major parameters: awareness, prevention, reporting and responding. Their model in practice is designed to ensure effective deterrence.

For our International Perspective section, we found a plethora of articles that were informative and stellar in their contributions. Recognizing that we could not print all the articles, Lakshmi Madhavan provides a summary of a few chosen articles and sheds some perspective on the issues that were of concern. She reviews a) a paper in the context of Dutch Out-of-Home care, b) a paper outlining the Australian Royal Commission's landmark investigation in such cases and c) a methodological study examining the psychosocial needs of youth. In bringing these papers together, she demonstrates her grasp of the CSA concerns and synthesizes relevant information for the reader.

Shubhangi Shinde provides an interesting opinion piece advocating for the use of terms ‘safe touch’ and ‘unsafe touch’ instead of ‘good touch’ and ‘bad touch’. Shinde identifies the use of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ as generating meanings that can be damaging to the family and to the child in their individual growth, especially when a child has been abused. This terminology with connotations for creating shame and guilt should be avoided and replaced with terminology that allows a child to heal. Ms. Shinde has worked extensively in this field of safety and her opinion piece reflects her thoughtful understanding of this topic.

In her debut as the movie editor, Maninder Kaur’s choice of the movie ‘The Unloved’ is noteworthy. Released in 2009, this British movie tells the story of a young girl, who struggles to find a home for herself amidst the abuse that she encounters. Ms. Kaur follows the movie’s plot and gives us a poignant glimpse of a young girl’s struggle to find love in an unlovable world. We conclude this section of the journal with a review of the book ‘Damaged’ by Dr. Kakul Hai. Written by Chris Wild, it is his own story, the story of a young boy, who finds himself placed in care-homes from the time he was eleven years old. The author grows up in these care-homes which are fraught with sexual and physical abuse. As an adult, he returns to these homes as a care worker. The story perhaps resonates with the personal journeys of many care workers who provide care for other disadvantaged children, often carrying enormous traumatic baggage of their own. Dr. Hai does the book justice and highlights the imperative need to attend to the mental health of those who take care of children in need of care and protection.

To end on a promising note, ICEB’s upcoming issues for September 2019 and March 2020 will be Special Edition issues. The upcoming issue is on ‘Caregivers’, one dedicated to the phenomenal caregivers and the tremendous role they play in Alternative care, the impact of the work they do, and the often unacknowledged need to ensure caregivers’ well-being, which directly informs the quality of the support extended by them. The March 2020 issue is on ‘Deinstitutionalisation: Policies, Strategies, Practices and Implications for South Asia’, a topic of much debate and discussion as several countries across the world have begun to gradually revisit their Alternative Care systems by withdrawing from institutional care and re-integrating children back to families and communities. This issue also coincides with the Fourth Biennial International Conference (BICON), to identify challenges related to shift away from institutional care to deinstitutionalisation in South Asia, keeping in mind the best interest of children.

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