

Interpol's ICSE Initiative On Child Sex Abuse, Now Joined By The CBI

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India's Central Bureau of Investigation has joined Interpol's International Child Sexual Exploitation (ICSE) initiative that will allow it to collaborate with investigators in other countries for detecting child sexual abuse online.



[ref: Madhyamam]

About the ICSE Database

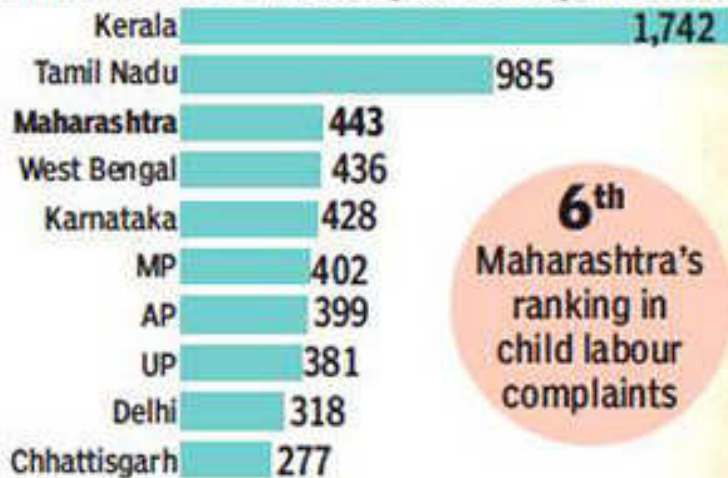
- The ICSE database uses video and image comparison to **analyse Child Sex Exploitation Material (CSEM) and make connections between victims, abusers and places.**
 - As of July 2022, over 30,000 victims of child abuse and over 13,000 criminals have been identified by Interpol using this database and software.
- By analysing the digital, visual and audio content of photographs and videos, **victim identification experts can retrieve clues**, identify any overlap in cases and combine their efforts to locate victims of child sexual abuse.
- **India is the 68th country to have access** to this database and software.

CSEM Data: India

- India reported over 24 lakh instances of online child sexual abuse from 2017 to 2020.
 - **80% of victims are girls below the age of 14 years.**
- More than 60% of unidentified victims were prepubescent, including infants and toddlers.
 - Around **65% of unidentified victims were girls** but **severe abuse images were more likely to have boys.**

73% OF ABUSERS KNOWN PERSONS: DATA

Child sexual abuse complaints: Top 10 states



6th
Maharashtra's
ranking in
child labour
complaints

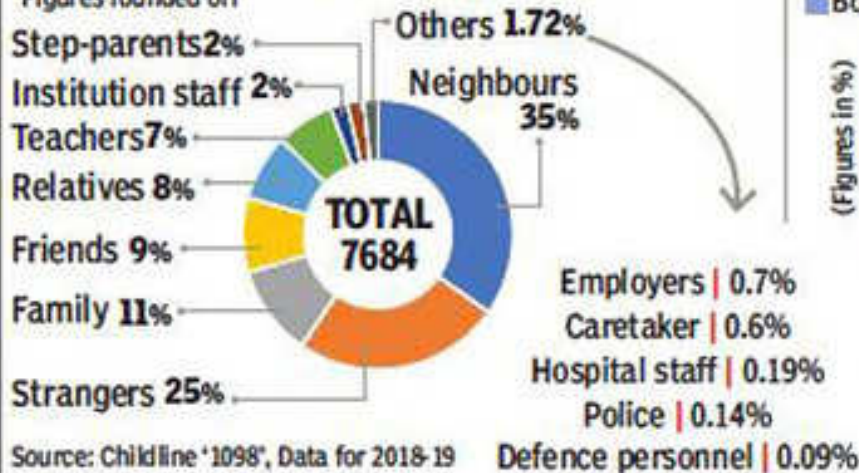


Child labour complaints: Top 10 states

Karnataka	4,549
Telangana	3,661
Rajasthan	3,622
MP	3,420
TN	3,412
Maha	2,897
AP	2,334
UP	2,299
Delhi	1,555
Odisha	1,545

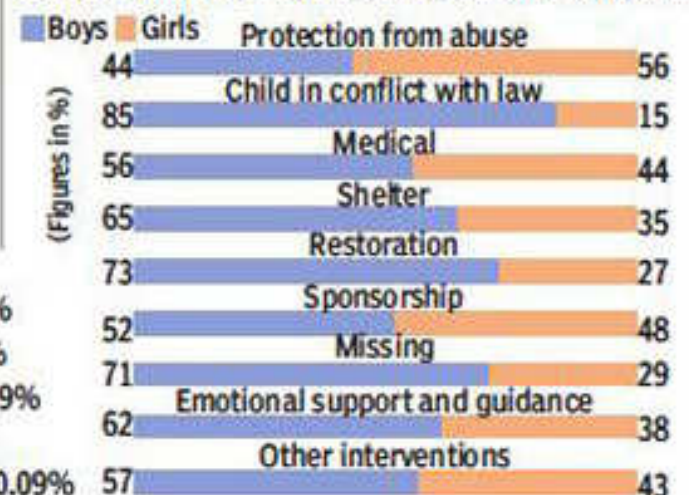
Category of abusers (All-India figures)

Figures rounded off



Source: Childline '1098', Data for 2018-19

Gender distribution for interventions made



[ref: Times of India]

Key Reasons for Child Abuse

- The **exploitation of children in Commercial or household work** refers to child labour. This exploitation sometimes leads to sexual harassment.
- Most of the cases of sexual abuse come from **poor families** where it is a trend to sell the child to fulfil their daily needs.
- Uneducated children are more prone to abuse and become **more vulnerable** as they are beyond the protective reach of school and support services.
- Children living with a **poor mental condition, learning disability or physical disability** are more likely to report childhood sexual abuse as compared to others.

Prevention Measures by India

- In 2019, the CBI set up a **special unit called the 'Online Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation Prevention/Investigation (OCSAE)'**.

- It **tracks and monitors posting, circulation and downloads** of CSEM online.
- It started a **country-wide operation against the alleged peddlers** of online CSEM in India in 2021.
- Back in 2020, the cyber wing of the Maharashtra Police had **acquired software from Interpol to track child sex abuse** captured on video and in photos.
- In 2019, the National Centre for Missing and Exploited Children, a US-based non-profit organisation, started **sharing tip-offs about child sex abuse with Indian agencies**.
 - Received by the National Crime Records Bureau, this **information was passed on to the states where the incidents took place**, to boost the detection of those sharing such content.

Recommendations To Prevent Child Abuse

- Efforts should be made by the governments to **strengthen the economic conditions of the families** and of the country as poverty is seen as one of the major causes of child abuse.
- **Sexual Education should be made mandatory in schools** and curriculums should include such programmes in the primary sections as well.
- **Institutions such as the NCPCR should improve their reach** and work towards ground level implementation of policies.
- The **laws against child labour are not properly implemented**.
 - Child labour and child beggary is highly prevalent in India across states.
 - **Laws for developing educational institutions and for abolishing child labour** should be strengthened and effectively executed.
- **Grievance redressal systems should be installed in schools and colleges** such as suggestions and complaints boxes for the speedy solution to the issues of children.
- **Students clubs should be developed by the government across private and governmental schools** to spread awareness against child abuse, about the policies of the government and the POCSO Act 2012.
- **Police and administrative bodies should be easily accessible to children** and should develop mechanisms to conduct workshops for children at the local levels.

The POSCO Act, 2012

- The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act is a comprehensive act that came into force in **November 2012**.
 - The **Ministry of Women and Child Development** introduced the act.
- This act **addresses heinous crimes and protects a child from sexual assault, sexual harassment and pornography**.
- It **lays down the punishment for exposing children** to any kind of sexual offence.

Key Features of the POSCO Act

- The Act **defines the various types of offences**, touch-based, non-touch, penetrative, pornographic crimes etc., in detail and doesn't leave any kind of offence.
- The act also **defines a person under the age of 14 as a child**.
- The act also has a **feature to give compensation** to the victim.
- **Only the POCSO Court has the jurisdiction** to deal with the matter related to the act.

- The **INNOCENT TILL PROVEN GUILTY principle does not apply** in the matter related to the POCSO Act, 2012.
 - Once a complaint gets filed in this case, it gets presumed that he had the intention to commit a sexual act.
- There is a **child-friendly procedure**.
- If a child goes through abuse at home, he will get **relocated by the Child Welfare Commission for care and protection**.

Note: To know more about POCSO Act, refer to IAS Topper's previous editorial: <https://www.iastoppers.com/articles/editorial-notes-25th-may-2021>