

# Between the Lines–

## An Analysis of Media Reportage on Child Sexual Abuse



*arpan* 

Towards Freedom from  
Child Sexual Abuse





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## A. Preface

Arpan began its journey in the year 2006. Those were years of negligible articulation on the phenomenon of child sexual abuse. To grapple with the silence, in those initial years, we started holding on to any available information. Newspapers were one of those few spaces in the public domain where child sexual abuse cases got featured. This interested us. We started documenting the cases over the years. This helped us to connect with the larger society, for most of whom newspaper reports were the only source to believe child sexual abuse happens 'out there'. It also made us realize the power that the news media holds in creating public opinion around an issue.

However, what we encountered as an organization, supporting clients in their healing, doing programmes on prevention we could hardly see those faces and realities getting reflected in the newspapers. This made us pause and think – are we addressing the same reality or is there a mismatch? Is child sexual abuse a common occurrence in homes irrespective of sex, as we see in our interactions with thousands of children and adult survivors or does it largely happen to girls as showcased in newspapers. Does sexual abuse happen only at night in a desolated place with a stranger as an offender?

Or does it happen in the 'sacred' space of the family by an adult entrusted with the child's care and protection? These and other similar questions started bothering us.

Do the newspapers cover only a certain facet of child sexual abuse and ignore others? Do the leading newspapers devote proportionate weightage to news on child sexual abuse from metros and smaller towns and cities? Why are newspapers flooded with graphic details of a 'case' when a particular incident has happened rather than a continuous thematic reporting on prevention and rehabilitation?

In order to find answers to these questions, we started analyzing the data that we have documented from 2007 till 2011. Our effort has been to examine news coverage generated during those 5 years, compare it with established findings on child sexual abuse, understand the trend of coverage and offer recommendations on inclusive reporting based on our observations.

We hope this report will throw some light on the pattern of reportage of child sexual abuse in newspapers and will become an efficient tool for advocating the cause further. ✱



## B. Background

Most people are not keen to talk about Child Sexual Abuse. Yet millions of children are sexually abused each year in India itself. Child Sexual Abuse (hereafter, to be referred to as CSA) is a startling everyday reality for as many as half of the country's children, according to the National Study on Child Sexual Abuse conducted by the Ministry of Women and Child Development (Child Sexual Abuse Report 2007). It is a long-hidden issue that India is finally beginning to wrestle with. This is in congruence with the international environment of evolving discourses on human rights, law and public health, all of which are making a concentrated effort to make child maltreatment, in general, and CSA, in particular, visible. It becomes an important arena to deal with since Child Sexual Abuse is not only the violation of child's body but the trust implicit in care giving relationship. CSA brings in psychological trauma from childhood which may disturb a person in her/his everyday experience of both herself/himself and others and restrict her/his possible thoughts, actions, and feelings if not supported and healed at the appropriate time. This nuanced, multifaceted issue, thus, has to be brought in the forefront as it operates via a complex matrix of behavioral, emotional, social and cognitive factors.

In this endeavor, the media has a huge role to play since it has huge potential in placing the problem of Child Sexual Abuse in the minds of the public and on the political agenda "through ongoing news and features reporting on specific cases, research and intervention initiatives" (Gough 1996). The media, at large, have always played a major role in defining what is "normal" and what is "deviant" in society, thus contributing to defining the concept of what it is, and what it is not. "In social and cultural matters, the various media provide the main platforms of debate, and their choices of subjects, participants and opinions shape the agenda and much of its content" (Maley, 2000: 37). As such, media representations become the primary source of information on social problems for many people, including policy makers.

This becomes all the more true in the Indian context where research on Child Sexual Abuse is any way limited. Leaving aside the National Study on Child Sexual Abuse (2007) there is no large scale pan Indian study which depicts the incidence and prevalence of CSA or the pathways it takes. The other existing studies (RAHI (1997), Sakshi (1997), Samvada (1996)) are all community based small scale studies which provide an in-depth qualitative trajectory of Child Sexual Abuse and its impact on specific groups. But because of their small local sample, to arrive at a pan Indian discussion from these studies is not feasible as it might lead to overgeneralization.

Given this context, news coverage of Child Sexual Abuse becomes an important indicator to understand the trend about the reporting of sexual abuse at the national level and how news media characterize CSA and, hence, build public opinion around it.

**Child Sexual Abuse is not only the violation of child's body but the trust implicit in care giving relationship.**

In this study, we propose to understand the trend of media reporting on Child Sexual Abuse and whether the media reports can be taken as an indicator of the actual prevalence of CSA. We will also make an attempt to gauge what kind of public opinion is created around Child Sexual Abuse. The specific objectives of the study are:

- ❑ To assess the **trend of media** reporting on Child Sexual Abuse
- ❑ To understand the **model of CSA** emerging through this reporting
- ❑ To gauge whether the trend is **reflective of the actual magnitude** of CSA

In order to do so we will seek answers for the following question:

- ❑ How is the issue of Child Sexual Abuse covered in general?
- ❑ Is it routinely covered?
- ❑ Does the news reflect the prevailing patterns of Child Sexual Abuse?
- ❑ Is preventing Child Sexual Abuse discussed?

These are some of the questions that the study will focus on and seek answers for. Before we delve into the media portrayal of Child Sexual Abuse, which is the focus of the present study, we will discuss briefly the 'Role of Media' and 'Child Sexual Abuse' through the lens of the existing studies. ★

## c. Literature Review

### c.1 Understanding the role of Media

The “complexity” of the media makes one definition difficult to arrive at but O’Shaughnessy (1999) proposes the following as a starting point: “The media are technologically developed and economically profitable forms of human communication, held either in public or private ownership, which can transmit information and entertainment across time and space to large groups of people”. Stories of offense and delinquent behavior capture a significant part of news reporting. Grabosky and Wilson (1989) suggest that issues of crime and criminal justice attract so much attention because such reporting is full of “drama, involves life and property, and the frightening power to deprive a person of liberty”. Hence for some, crime news always becomes the “prime news” (McGregor 1993) because it has the potential to become “newsworthy”. Some researchers have, however, suggested that in the recent years, media coverage of crime has declined (see, for example, Grabosky and Wilson 1989). CSA incidents, as part of coverage of crime news, attract further consideration because when a child is the victim of a crime, the story automatically becomes more newsworthy because children are not as likely as young adults to be victimized, and the emotional reaction leads to more interest for news.

In this quest for crime reporting, the media has a potential to have both positive and negative consequences. Significantly, the media through sustained reporting on a crime and creating a public opinion on the same have appeared, at times, to have more influence on child protection policy and practice than professionals working in the field — a phenomenon described as “legislation by tabloid”. There is no doubt that media coverage is vital if public concern for children are to be drawn on the political agenda, and if child protection services have to be made responsible.

At the same time, the qualities of urgency and spectacle required of news stories inevitably slant the selection of stories towards more

sensational. However, by continuously reporting only the most atrocious or vicious crimes and neglecting commonly happening chronic deviances, the media often upholds a skewed view of crime. Analysis by McDevitt (1996, 1998) of media coverage of abuse in US and Ireland demonstrates a clear preference for “extreme” cases. This calls for attention because, for people who have little direct personal knowledge, the image portrayed (Ayre 2001) by the media becomes the image on the issue. The media report ‘tends to report rare hazards rather than common place events’ and dramatizes such extreme adversities. It also brings in negative consequences as crimes rates and crimes are believed to be lower and rarer than they actually are, giving the readers a skewed picture of the problem. Thus, it is quite clear through this brief review of existing literature that media reporting does exert an influence in forming public opinion though many journalists propose that they merely reflect society’s views. Hence, it can be said that media in general, and journalists in particular, are agents of social control; they are “a kind of deviance defining elite” who articulate the “proper bounds to behavior” in our society (Ericson et al. 1987).

**[ The media has a potential to have both positive and negative consequences ]**

In this context, the present study will explore media portrayal of Child Sexual Abuse in India, although this examination is confined largely to the print media i.e., newspapers. ★

**c.2 Understanding Child Sexual Abuse**  
**c.2.1 Definition of Child Sexual Abuse**

Theoretical research studies, clinical studies and community based studies in the field of CSA, to this date, have not been able to give a consistent definition of the concept and its incidence and prevalence. According to Goddard, “Every development in knowledge of the problem of child abuse has been accompanied by disagreements about definitions to be used, the incidence of the problem, theoretical approaches to causation, the perpetrators of abuse, the effects on victims, efficient approaches to practice, the adequacy of child protection policies, and the appropriateness of methodologies chosen to ascertain the ‘truth’ about all of the above (1994).” Given the context and the methodological issues around, it is difficult to arrive at a consensual definition of Child Sexual Abuse.

World Health Organization (2006) defines Child Sexual Abuse as the “involvement of a child in sexual activity that he or she does not fully comprehend, is unable to give informed consent to, or for which the child is not developmentally prepared and cannot give consent, or that violate the laws or social taboos of society. Child Sexual Abuse is evidenced by this activity between a child and an adult or another child who by age or development is in a relationship of responsibility, trust or power, the activity being intended to gratify or satisfy the needs of the other person.” Based on this, the National Study on Child Abuse in India further simplifies the definition as “inappropriate sexual behavior with a child... committed by a person responsible for the care of a child (for example a baby-sitter, a parent, or a daycare provider), or related to the child” (2007). As such it differentiates between sexual assault and sexual abuse on the basis of whether the offender is a stranger or a known/familiar person entrusted with the care and responsibility of the child.

**c.2.1a working definition of csa**

Drawing from both these definition/s, the present study, and Arpan as an organization, has evolved the following as the working definition

of Child Sexual Abuse. Child Sexual Abuse is defined as “any act using a child for the sexual gratification of the more powerful person”. The age of the child has been considered to be below 18 years as per the Juvenile Justice Act, 2000. The working definition further spells out the range of behavior that is considered in the spectrum of CSA in the purview of the present study. The working definition differentiates between contact and non contact sexual abuse.

**Contact Sexual Abuse** is the touching of the private body parts of the child or the child being forced to touch the private body parts of the abuser. Contact sexual abuse can be further divided into two types: Penetrative and Non Penetrative. Penetrative Sexual Abuse includes penile, digital and object penetration of the vagina, mouth or anus; and Non Penetrative Sexual Abuse includes fondling of private body parts of the child, sexual kissing or the child being made to touch the private body parts of the abuser (Finklehor, 1994). Based on this definition and the definition used in the National Study on Child Abuse (2007) in India, the working definition formulates contact sexual abuse as including (a) Penetration of anus, vagina, oral sex, (b) Fondling child’s private body parts, (c) Making the child fondle private parts and (d) Forcible kissing. **Non Contact Sexual Abuse** comprises (a) Making the child exhibit private body parts, (b) Exhibiting private body parts to a child, (c) Photographing child in the nude, (d) Making the child view pornographic material, and (e) Using sexually explicit talk and sexually abusive language with the child.

This working definition along with its bifurcation

between contact and non contact abuse aims to capture the entire gamut of child sexual without differentiating between sexual exploitation, sexual assault and sexual violence. However, to be able to better focus on the media reportage of cases of Child Sexual Abuse, the scope of the study has been limited to exclude cases

**Child Sexual Abuse is defined as ‘any act using a child for the sexual gratification of the more powerful person’.**



of trafficking and procurement of minors for the buying and selling for prostitution. Usually, media reportage on the issue of trafficking lacks the sustained interest or dedicated effort required to maintain consistency in data in such sensitive fields. For this reason, it is difficult to include instances of trafficking in an analysis based mainly on media reportage. Additionally, although the two issues largely overlap, tracking belongs to a very specific axis of exploitation and needs to be recognized as an issue in itself with its own set of complications and nuances and combining both the issues would not do justice to either.

### c.2.1b prevalence and incidence

There are no central databases and monitoring

systems that bring together available statistics relating to Child Sexual Abuse in the Indian context. Nonetheless, police records and data collected from other public agencies, service providers, academic surveys and research by non-governmental organizations consistently show that children are sexually abused. It is, however, necessary to be cautious when assessing and comparing existing data, as definitions for “child” and “Child Sexual Abuse” and the representative sample vary.

In the Indian context, the only source of primary data is the National Crime Records Bureau, India (NCRBI). NCRBI however does not maintain a separate classification of offences against children. Generally, the offences committed against children or the crimes in which children are the victims are considered as Crime against Children. It follows Indian Penal Code and the various Protective and Preventive ‘Special and Local Laws’ which specifically mention the offences wherein children are victims. As there is no particular IPC or ‘Special and Local Law’ which addresses CSA per se, there is no way to derive comprehensive data about Child Sexual Abuse reportage. Hence, we have considered data on rape of children which is a direct

indicator of one of the heinous forms of CSA. There is lack of clarity as to whether NCRBI has considered the age of the child as below 18 years as per Juvenile Justice Act, 2000 or the age of child as per the definition given in the concerned Acts i.e., Section 376 of Indian Penal Code which is below 16 years of age. The recent NCRBI (2010) report states that a total of 5,484 cases of child rape were reported in the country during 2010 as compared to 5,368 in 2009 accounting for an increase of 2.2% during the year. Madhya Pradesh has reported the highest number of cases (1,182) followed by Maharashtra (747). These two States taken together accounted for 35.2% of the total child rape cases reported in the country. Although this data is useful, it constitutes a miniscule of the total crimes/violence committed against children because it does not encompass the entire gamut of Child Sexual Abuse.

**Police records and data collected from other public agencies, service providers, academic surveys and research by non-governmental organizations consistently show that children are sexually abused.**

Another important document for understanding Child Sexual Abuse is the National Study on Child Abuse which was conducted in 2007. This study, which is the largest of its kind, covered 13 states with a sample size of 12,447 children, 2,324 young adults and 2,449 stakeholders. The National Study reported the following:

- ❑ 53.22% children reported having faced one or more forms of sexual abuse.
- ❑ Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar and Delhi reported the highest percentage of sexual abuse among both boys and girls.
- ❑ 21.90% child respondents reported facing severe forms of sexual abuse and 50.76% other forms of sexual abuse.
- ❑ Out of the child respondents, 5.69% reported being sexually assaulted.

Research by NGOs also becomes another source for assimilating data on CSA:

- ❑ A study by RAHI, a NGO based in New Delhi in four cities (New Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai and Goa ) found that 76% of respondents were sexually abused as children (RAHI Study, 1997)
- ❑ A study by Sakshi, Delhi based NGO, found that 63% of girls were abused as children by family members (Sakshi Study, 1997)
- ❑ A study by Samvada, Bangalore based NGO, claims that 47 % of respondents were sexually abused as children (Samvada Study, 1996)

There is definitely dearth of information on prevalence and incidence of CSA in the Indian context. Nonetheless, it clearly emerges that CSA does occur and it does not occur as a sporadic incident but it is a reality that touches at least 40%-50% of children’s life in India. ✱



## D. Research Methodology

### D.1 Selecting the Sample

To understand the coverage of Child Sexual Abuse, the study bases itself on the articles on CSA reported for the period of 2007 to 2011 in the four leading newspapers in Mumbai. Newspaper has been used as the source for data collection since newspapers characteristically set the agenda for other media, including visual and digital media. The newspapers which were included in the study are the following: Times of India, Mumbai Mirror, Hindustan Times and DNA. The rationale for choosing these newspapers was that these newspapers are the most prominent newspaper and have the maximum coverage within Mumbai (Indian Readership Survey, Times of India dated 23.12.2011 and DNA dated 6.03.12)

**The newspapers which were included in the study are the following: Times of India, Mumbai Mirror, Hindustan Times and DNA.**

<sup>1</sup> As an additional reference, the study has also used the data accumulated through Arpan's intervention and outreach work. For this purpose, all the cases of abuse that have reached Arpan through its preventive and therapeutic services have been taken. To maintain the uniformity of the report, cases of peer exploration, bullying and inappropriate behavior have been excluded and focus has been put solely on cases of child sexual abuse. Each disclosure of abuse by a child survivor is handled by skilled and qualified trainers and counselors through a series of interactions. The histories of abuse are carefully documented through both quantitative and qualitative methods. Thus, the sustainable ways in which disclosures are handled and recorded within the organization add to the reliability of the Arpan case data that have been used in this report. However, since counselling ethics prohibit therapists from unnecessary probing and intruding, the data acquired is limited to the children's disclosure alone.

<sup>2</sup> Currently known as "Statistical Product and Service Solutions", SPSS is a research tool for statistical analysis

The time period for 2007 to 2011 was chosen so that the study is based on a significant current time period. A five years span of news coverage was chosen in order to project reliable trends. This will also ensure that the findings on the general coverage do not get influenced by bulk coverage at a particular point in time relating to a particular case. This is important because the aim is to see how Child Sexual Abuse is routinely covered.<sup>1</sup>

### D.2 Coding the sample

All news articles pertaining to CSA have been documented in the SPSS <sup>2</sup> after an extensive list of variables have been worked out. At the initial level several variables beyond those which have been used for this study were developed. However, owing to limitations of the newspaper reports and lack of standardization across the newspaper reports, finally the variables were narrowed down to 32 quantitative (numeric) and 11 qualitative (string) variables. While entering and processing the data thereafter, it

was realized that due to the multiple values of some of the variables, they were not applicable to available data for e.g. inconsistency in reporting on time of abuse, caste and disability status of the victim etc. It was also difficult to obtain graphical data as analysis generated trends which were statistically insignificant. Hence, the final analysis has been done based on data which can be measured and displayed graphically.

### D.3 Limitations of the study

- ❑ The study exclusively focuses on media reporting as the attempt is not to arrive at prevalence and incidence of CSA as it is common knowledge that a minimal no. of cases of CSA come out in the open and there is gross under-reporting.
- ❑ The study solely focuses on Mumbai edition of national newspapers for e.g. Times of India, Hindustan Times, DNA and Mumbai based newspapers like Mumbai Mirror. Hence the coverage of news on child sexual is biased towards local coverage.
- ❑ Being solely dependent on newspaper coverage, some of the variables could not be considered for data analysis and were dropped as the percentage of data not available was as high as 85%.
- ❑ Due to methodological issues around definition of what constitutes sexual abuse, the population in which research is conducted, the time period for which the data is considered (how many children were abused in a single year/data based on a lifetime such as what percentage of all children were ever abused) it is difficult to compare the data set in order to arrive at a conclusion. Differences in the reported rates of sexual abuse vary by types of screening questions asked, the research methodology and cultural context as well as research contexts. ★

## E. Findings

### E.1 The general format of reporting of CSA in newspapers

□ The newspaper coverage of Child Sexual Abuse is concentrated on reporting cases from Mumbai with an average of 51.1 % cases from Mumbai being reported. This is understandable given the fact that only the Mumbai edition of the newspapers have been reviewed, which would mostly concentrate on local stories. However, what is surprising is that the coverage for the rest of Maharashtra has been minuscule accounting to only 4.62% of all news coverage on CSA. In contrast, the news from the other major cities in the country has been quite well represented accounting for 44.26% cases which is just 6.84% less than the coverage of cases from Mumbai. This points to a trend where issues of cosmopolitan/metropolitan cities get greater prominence over occurrences in smaller cities, towns and villages. The reporting of Child Sexual Abuse cases or generic articles pertaining to prevention and rehabilitation mostly occurs only in one newspaper (69.5% cases). When reported in more than one newspaper, 22.72% of cases the data has been consistent while

victim, location of crime and photographs of the same. In order to validate this observation we will briefly discuss a couple of cases in which details were revealed:

- ★ South Bombay Tantrik Case dated 30.11.2010: The location of residence, complete description except name of siblings, name of the tantric and his relation to siblings' mother and aunt.
- ★ Manav Mandir Case dated 5.10.2011: The name of the school, the grade the child is in, designation of the abuser, the locality of the school, the child's residence and the photograph of the school.
- ★ Navi Mumbai Kalamoli Rape Case dated 24.6.2010: The name of the school, the tutor and the grade of the student.
- ★ Ramchandra Nadar Case dated 20.6.2010: The name of the private tutor including location of residence, his profession, family background; victim's family background including location of residence and child's learning disability namely dyslexia.

[ In 10.5 % of all the cases either the victim, the abuser or both is identified through the reporting of the newspapers as the newspapers tend to report minute details like the name of the school, grade the child is in, address of the victim, location of crime and photographs of the same. ]

in 7.8% cases the data shows inconsistency regarding the nature of incident (whether it is rape or molestation), age of the victim (whether he/she is minor), age of the abuser (whether he is a minor) and others.

□ In almost 90% cases, the reporting has been of contemporary cases i.e., where the reporting has immediately succeeded the incident of Child Sexual Abuse. However, in almost 10% cases the report has been delayed i.e., the reporting has featured after a week or more..

□ In 10.5 % of all the cases either the victim, the abuser or both is identified through the reporting of the newspapers as the newspapers tend to report minute details like the name of the school, grade the child is in, address of the

★ Film star's Daughter's Case dated 12.5.2009: All details splashed continuously including the name of the film star, details of the victim and the abuser.

★ Mira Road Incest Case dated 21.3.09: Name of the father and his astrologer friend who committed the abuse and location of residence.

Though the press is prohibited from reporting certain details, specifically the names of child victims, offenders and witnesses or any other details that have the probability of revealing the victim's identity; this is not followed strictly in all cases. The restriction on publication of identifying details of Child Sexual Abuse victims exist

in order to protect the victims' identity and as this might discourage other victims to come forward and report. However, the reason generally cited by the media for the inclusion of crime details and personal information (either positive or negative) about the victim or offender is that it makes the story newsworthy.

## E.2 The kind of cases covered

In the review period of five years, 1,711 newspaper articles have generally touched upon the issue of Child Sexual Abuse. Of these, 1,255 articles particularly pertain to cases of CSA that have occurred; and among these 1,255 articles featuring in the newspaper, 42 articles have been about tracked cases i.e., a case has been followed up beyond a month. This projects that on an average every year 242.2 articles were reported on the basis of a case which took place. This data points towards consistent reporting on CSA. However, if we compare the data even with the data of rape of children available through NCRBI (2010) then it is clear that newspapers report only a fractional proportion of cases which get registered with the police.

In 455 articles featuring on CSA, the focus is not on responding to the dynamics of a particular case which has happened but more towards discussion on the generic issue. Articles which did not feature as an aftermath of a contemporary case, thus, are quite less and accounts for only 26.6% of all cases reported. This clearly points out that reporting on CSA is more episodic in nature than thematic and, hence, often does not address the broader social context and dynamics of the issue. This episodic nature of reporting based on isolated cases of CSA might hinder the process of creating a public opinion around the issue of Child Sexual Abuse since such news articles end up furnishing the graphic details of the case and little focus is on preventive or rehabilitative aspects.

**A disproportionate focus on criminal justice would mean overlooking other significant components of preventive and rehabilitative aspects of CSA.**

This is further reinforced by that fact that even among these 455 articles which address CSA as a thematic issue, a significant proportion (59.02%) addresses verdicts of court cases and legislative developments and analysis. There is a significant focus on rape laws in this news coverage leading to sidelining of other forms of CSA in absence of laws pertaining to CSA per se. Some of the headlines in this arena have been "Penetration Must for Rape Conviction: Bombay HC", "Sex with Girl Above 16 Does Not Make it Consensual, Rules Bombay HC", "Supreme Court Rules, No Corroboration Required in Rape Cases", "Need Stringent Law for Cases of Child Sexual Abuse", "No More Two Finger Test in Rape Case" and "Medical evidence not always must to prove rape: HC". No doubt considerable hope can be generated through news reports of criminal justice system handling a fair trial and convicting the offender or giving verdicts and creating landmark judgments. However, a disproportionate focus on criminal justice would mean overlooking other significant components of preventive and rehabilitative aspects of CSA. Over the five years the data projects that only 7.64% of articles are devoted to rehabilitation and emerging policy decision around CSA. Prevalence (statistics from various local and international studies), prevention (strategies to reduce occurrence of CSA), therapeutic/healing intervention and protocols of response from



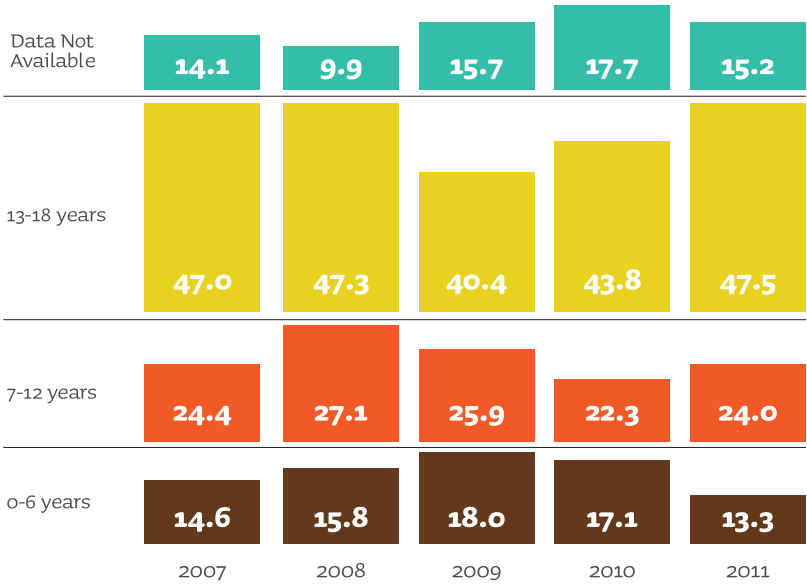
the civil society (Public health system, Police system and NGOs) and cyber sexual abuse taken together amount to only 29.94% of articles featuring thematic reporting. Among these articles, the maximum coverage is on statistics of CSA and the minimum has been on strategies to reduce occurrence and therapeutic/healing aspects of CSA.

Since power dynamics play such a huge role in sexual violence against children, to reduce incidences of Child Sexual Abuse, it is essential to acknowledge and deconstruct these power hierarchies. For this reason, prevention and healing are two critical approaches to deal with CSA in a holistic way. It is as much important to create awareness on this issue, equip children and adults with knowledge, skills and attitude; as it is to provide appropriate healing support to children and adult survivors who have undergone abuse and their families in order to reduce the probability of re-victimization and/ repeated instances of abuse. It is also important to appreciate the complexity of the immediate situations of survivors of CSA and their relationships/attachments with their abusers. We often find that the media frequently employs sensational methods of reportage such as naming and shaming the perpetrators or calling for death penalty for abusers instead of trying a more nuanced approach and focusing on the larger issue of CSA.

E.2 Emerging Characteristics of Child Sexual Abuse

E.2.1 profile of the victim

There is no uniform profile of children who are victims of Child Sexual Abuse. Children are inherently vulnerable and susceptible to CSA because of children’s natural gift of love and need for affection, dependence on adults to meet their basic survival needs, lack of vocabulary and lack of context for sex or role models other than the family. The focus of the newspaper reporting has been towards primarily two parameters concerning the profile of the victim i.e., age and sex.



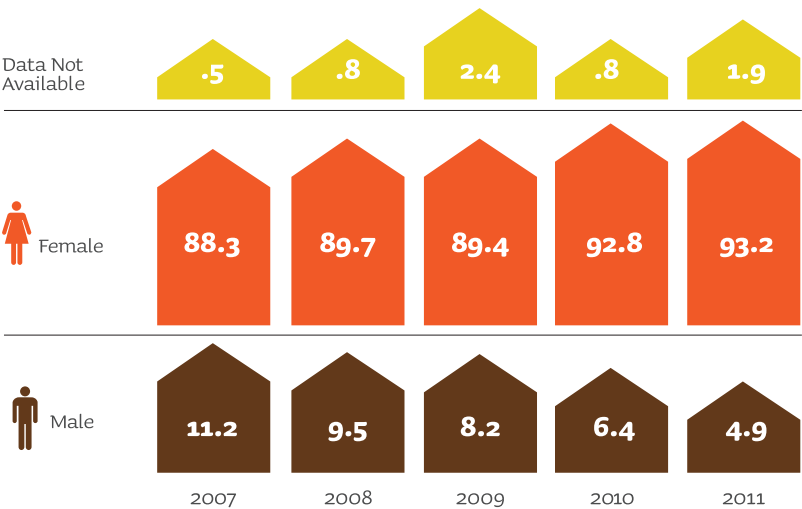
Graph I: Age of Victim

E.3.I.a age of victim

Over the five years the data (Graph I) consistently projects that the children aged between 13-18 years are more vulnerable to Child Sexual Abuse with more than 40% children being in this age group, among which the data exceeds 47% for three years. The age group between 7- 12 years also shows a range of 22.3% to 27.1% followed by the younger children (0-6 years) which accounts for 13.3% to 18% of all children abused. This data is in accordance with data published by the National Study of CSA, India, 2007 which also quotes the maximum number of sexually abused children to be in the bracket of 12-15 years of age. Even most studies internationally claim that reported victims of CSA range between 9-12 years of age (Kohn 1987). This data reflects that children who are adolescents are more at risk. However, the critical point here is to pay attention to the word ‘reported’. This is because the data does not necessarily mean that children below six years are less vulnerable.

For younger children, lack of vocabulary and their greater dependence on adults make it difficult for bringing cases of CSA in the open.

It claims that reporting of cases is more in the adolescent age group of children who have better channels of communication. For younger children, lack of vocabulary and their greater dependence on adults make it difficult for bringing cases of CSA in the open. The importance of having proper channels of communication for younger children is reflected in the data accumulated by Arpan. Arpan’s case data sees a percentage as high as 80% (in the year 2011) and the highest average percentage of 56.11% of victims in the age group 7-12 years. Arpan’s direct outreach with this particular age group has given the space to child survivors of younger age groups to talk openly about their histories of abuse. Having said that, it is also important to pinpoint that, for adolescents, the probable list of abusers does not restrict itself to family members, neighbors, strangers and school staff but also expand further to include partners. This association will become clear later in the study through the cross tabulation of age and relationship of abuser (Graph VII).



Graph II: Sex of Victim

### E.3.1.b sex of victims

The Graph II based on the newspaper reported cases for the sex of victims depicts consistently that percentage of girls being abused is considerably higher than the boys abused in this period. On an average, 90.68 % of girls have been abused compared to boys- for whom the average is 8.04%. The maximum percentage of abused girls in these five years has been 93.2% in 2011 and the minimum has been 88.3 % in 2007. It also depicts that the percentage of girls being abused is showing a steady increase over the years with a statistically insignificant decrease (.3%) in 2009. On the contrary, the percentage of abused boys shows a steady decline from 11.2 % in 2007 to 4.9% in 2011. It is difficult to pinpoint whether this reporting pattern is reflecting the reality or not as there is no consistent parameter to compare it with. Established research studies project prevalence estimates varying from 4%-76% because of differences in the definitions used and populations studied. Finkelhor (1994) reviewed retrospective prevalence surveys that were conducted with adults and concluded that at least 20% to 25% of women and between 5% and 15% of men experience some form of contact Child Sexual Abuse. Many studies on sexual abuse in countries across the world find similar percentages (Fanslow et al 2007, Johnson 2004) and states that prevalence rates of women with a history of CSA are estimated to be one in three to four females vis-à-vis one in six to eight males having been sexually abused. A review of epidemiological surveys from 21 countries, mainly high- and middle- income countries, found that at least 7% of females (ranging up to 36%) and 3% of males (ranging up to 29%) reported sexual victimization during their childhood. In the Indian context, a study on CSA among school going children in Chennai carried out by Save the Children and Tulir in 2006 found out 48% of boys and 39% of the girls faced sexual abuse. The National Study on CSA, India claims that among the children who experienced sexual abuse, 52.94% were boys and 47.06% girls. In fact 9 out of 13 States reported higher percentage of sexual abuse among boys as compared to girls.





9 out of 13 States reported higher percentage of sexual abuse among boys as compared to girls

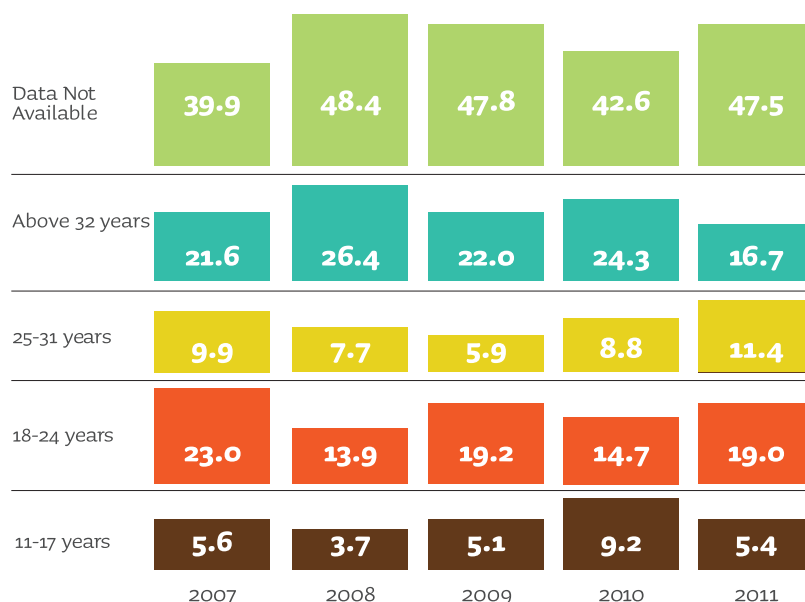
These statistics from different studies project varied proportion of boys being abused. It becomes clear however that newspaper reported cases of 8.04% of boys being abused as compared to 90.68% girls is considerably low than the actual number of boys being sexually abused. This is because of fewer cases of sexual abuse of boys coming out in the open. This is not surprising as sexual abuse of boys is often underreported, under-recognized, and under-treated. Underreporting is a result of many issues: boys are less likely than girls to report sexual abuse because of fear, the social stigma against homosexual behavior, the desire to appear self-reliant and the concern for loss of independence. Boys are socialized in a normative framework which does not allow them to talk about their victimization or any painful experiences. Moreover, what further hinders the process of identifying sexual behavior as abuse in case of boys is that they often feel societal pressure to be proud of early, even if unwanted, sexual activity. Thus, the myth about the 'masculine ideal' who is always in control and can never be a victim and the myth about appropriateness and supposed harmlessness of sexual behaviour between adults (especially females) and young boys creates an environment where there is hardly any acceptance and support structure for boys to disclose sexual abuse. Since the data for Arpan has been collated through the counseling sessions, there has been space to have conversations with the children and help them reject such harmful societal myths. Thus, in Arpan's data, a more realistic representation of abuse against boys can be seen. In the year 2010, the percentage of male survivors is actually more than that of female survivors (55.13% as opposed to 44.87%). On an average, the Arpan data shows a 41.21% of male survivors as opposed to 58.79% of female survivors. This data challenges and brings to light the rather skewed portrayal of child victims in media reportage.

### E.2.2 profile of the abuser

Individuals who sexually offend children are an extremely diverse group, and it is not possible to arrive at the profile of the "typical" child molester. Sexual abusers of children come from different age groups, gender identities and socio-economic backgrounds. They also differ in terms of their choice of victim, their criminal backgrounds, their sexual arousal patterns, their social functioning, and their risk of re-offending (Grubin, 1998). The newspaper reporting focuses mostly on the age and sex of the abuser. However, the unavailability of data is quite high in the former with an average of 45.2% whereas it is negligible in the latter (46%).

### E.3.II.a age of abuser

The data on the age of the abuser (Graph III) is available only in cases of 54.8% of all newspaper reported cases. The finding that almost half of the articles do not specify the age of the offender is also a pointer of the ambiguous language and incomplete information furnished in news coverage of Child Sexual Abuse. The available data consistently highlights that abusers significantly fall in the age of 32 and above and account for 22.2% of all abusers (ranging to 26.4%) whose ages have been mentioned. This is followed by the abusers in the age range of 18 – 24 which is 18% on an average for the five years (ranging to 23 %). The abusers between 11-17 years account for 5.8% and between 25-31 years account for 8.7% of all abusers. The data if considered against the data that is available i.e., 54.2% it shows that in more than 40% of cases the abusers have been above 32 years and in 33.2 % cases the abuser has been in the age range between 18-24. These two groups account for almost 73.2% of all abusers whose age has been reported in the newspaper article.



**Graph III: Age of Abuser**

This data identifies two peaks of sexual abusing – one around age 18 and one around age 30 and thus categorizes two distinct populations, rather than one single group of abusers. This is in congruence with existing literature in the arena of criminological literature which states that abusers in general may be differentiated into two groups: life-course persistent and adolescent-limited offenders (Moffitt, 1993).

The life-course persistent offenders begin their offending behavior in early childhood and do not show the age-related maturation. On the other hand, adolescent-limited offenders begin and end their offending behavior in adolescence, do not offend as frequently or severely and do not exhibit significant lifestyle dysfunction.

**This data identifies two peaks of sexual abusing – one around age 18 and one around age 30 and thus categorizes two distinct populations, rather than one single group of abusers**

As far as the data on age range which evolved from the reported cases of CSA is concerned it shows that the concentration of abusers is more in the higher age bracket. In case of sexual abuse, the established research is not clear about the

‘typical’ age at which sexual abusing begins and what is a typical profile of an abuser. The studies that examine the question of age at first offending tend to have small sample sizes, so none can be considered as methodologically more sound than others. However, on average sexual abusers are substantially older than individuals with general criminal behavior. The latter which is well-established finding in criminology suggests that most crimes are committed by youths aged 16 to 18 years (with violent offenders being slightly older), and the rate of offending decreases gradually with age (Gottfredson and Hirschi, 1990). In a meta-analysis of ten studies from Canada, the United States and England and Wales, with a combined sample of 4,673 adult male sex offenders released from prison or community sentences, offenders were divided into those who sexually victimized women (1,133 rapists), those who victimized unrelated children (1,411 extra-familial child molesters) and those whose victims were related children (1,207 incest offenders). The rapists tend to be younger (average age 32.1 years) than the extra-familial child molesters (average age 37.1 years) and the incest offenders (average age 38.9 years) (Hanson, 2001, p.8). Some studies of adult sex offenders find that they report initial offending behaviour quite late – usually in their 30s. However, other studies find that adolescents account for a large proportion of all sexual offences. The newspaper reported findings also follow similar trend.

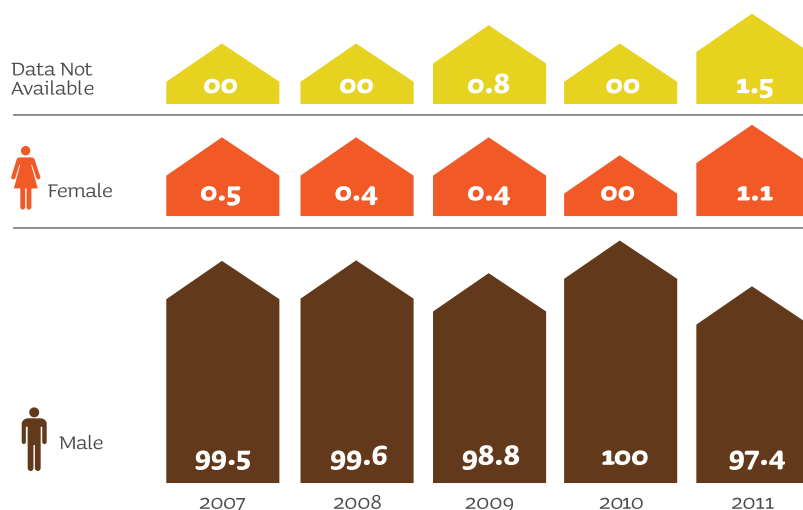
### E.3.II.b sex of abuser

The cases that the newspaper reported over the five years show that in 99.06% of cases the abusers have been male. It is only in .46% cases that

women have been mentioned as an abuser or an accomplice. It cannot be ascertained with certainty whether this data truly reflects a relative under-occurrence or if female sex

offending is simply under-recognized and under-represented. It seems that both can be true. In relation to sex segregated data on crime in general we find that males dominate and are responsible for a significantly





**Graph IV: Sex of Abuser**

greater proportion of crimes. This can be true about sexual abuse as well. On the other hand, it is understandable that sexual abuse perpetrated by females is likely to be under-identified for several reasons, including societal and cultural stereotypes, unique dynamics that impact victims' disclosures of these offenses, and professional biases.

**Sexual abuse perpetrated by females is likely to be under-identified for several reasons.**

Arpan's data shows the rate of women abusers to be as high as 10.53% (in the year 2008) and 4.51% on an average. While this is still a very small proportion, it is relatively significant when compared to the statistics depicted in the media. Summarizing data from several surveys, it is concluded that girls are abused by women 5% of the time and boys are abused by women 20% of the time (Bass and Davis, 1988). Recent interest in female perpetrated sexual abuse shows three patterns: romanticized fantasy—teacher-lover “seduction” or “affair”, co-abuser with male partner (coerced at least initially) and predisposed so acting alone (Davin et al 1999).

### E.3.III. the categories/types of child sexual abuse

Sexual abuse can be physical, verbal or emotional (Kaime-Atterhog, 1998) and includes both contact and non contact abuse. There is no watertight compartmentalization between contact and non contact abuse as often in a continuum of sexual abuse, the abuse starts with unwanted attention and touching and gradually leads to penetrative sex. Over the 5 years the cases of Child Sexual Abuse that was reported were primarily those which involved contact sexual abuse. This amounts to 97.48% of all cases reported in newspaper. Sexual Abuse involving non contact means are hardly visible in the media reporting. On an average non contact sexual abuse has been reported only in 1.16 % of all reported cases with 2007 reporting none and 2.3% reported in 2011.

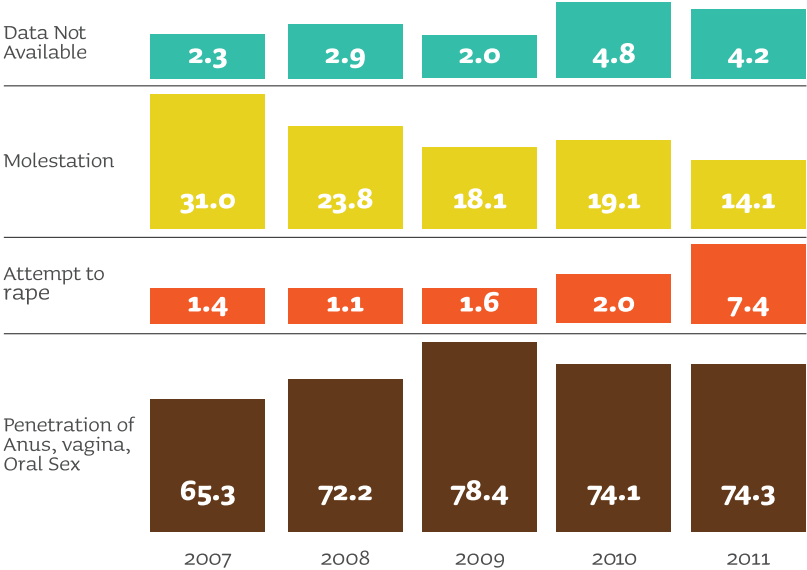
The reasons for insignificant reporting of non contact Child Sexual Abuse stems from following reasons: it is difficult to track non contact abuse as it does not have any physical manifestation; often parents and caregivers do not even consider this to be abuse or having any impact on the child. At the level of the media, non contact sexual abuse is often not treated as newsworthy and hence it becomes invisible. However, contrary to this belief, experiencing non contact sexual abuse can have negative consequences for the child as this gives out age inappropriate sexually explicit messages which shapes the child's thoughts, feelings and action. Arpan's data shows a significant number of 48 out of a total of 219 cases (21.91%) to be those of non contact abuse. Such forms of abuse include exposing one's own private body parts to a child, forcing the child to expose his/her private body parts, showing the child pornography or other kinds of sexually explicit images, using abusive language around the child, masturbating in front of the child etc.

72.86 % of all cases of contact abuse are cases involving penetrative abuse with the minimum and maximum being 65.3% and 78.4% respectively (Graph V). 21.22% account for cases of



There is no watertight compartmentalization between contact and non contact abuse as often in a continuum of sexual abuse, the abuse starts with unwanted attention and touching and gradually leads to penetrative sex.

molestation. The high percentage of penetrative sexual abuse is shocking but at the same time it is important to place this data in perspective. There is high probability that penetrative CSA constitute a significant proportion of newspaper coverage on contact CSA because of the following reasons: less chances of keeping it hidden, greater chance of physical manifestation and need of medical assistance, higher chance of FIR being filed etc. However, most importantly, penetrative sexual assaults make for more newsworthy cases since the social constructs around virginity add to the sensationalism of the case. In fact, the Arpan case data shows a whopping average of 52.51% of the cases to be those of non penetrative sexual assault as opposed to an average of 13.29% cases of penetrative assault, showing that a large group of children are indeed vulnerable to non penetrative sexual abuse.



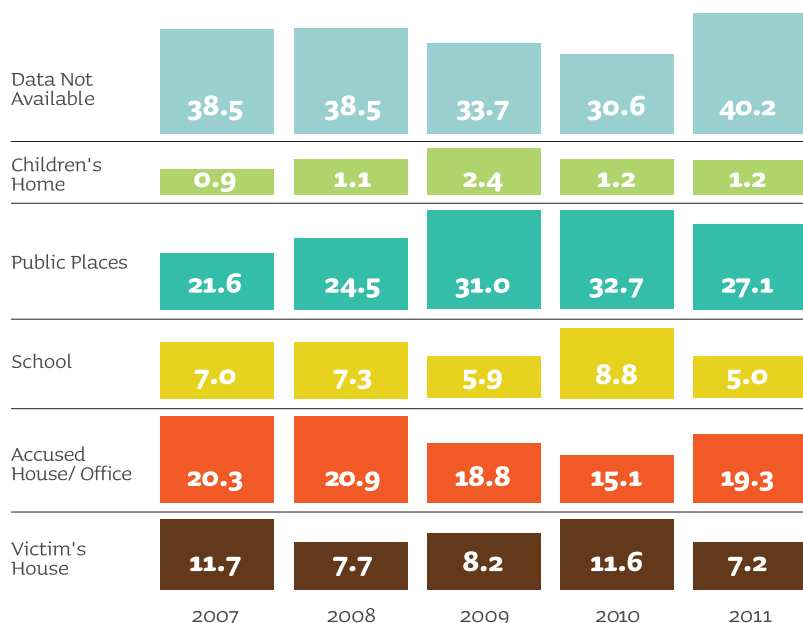
Graph V: Types of contact sexual abuse

### E.3.IV. place/s where child sexual abuse occurred

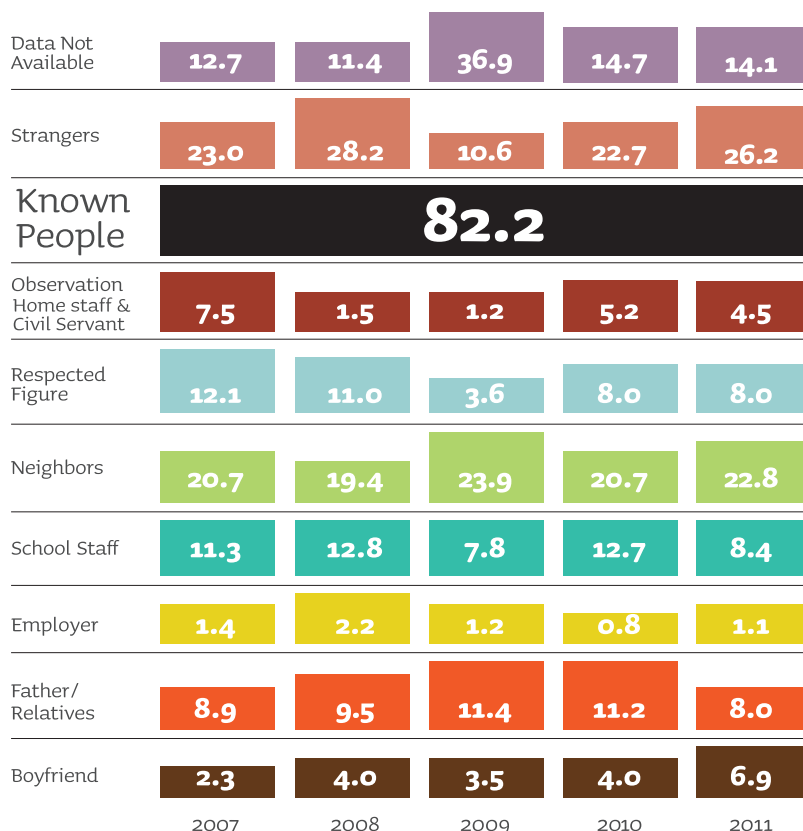
Child Sexual Abuse can occur anywhere. It can occur in the home, which is treated as the sacred haven, or in places where the child regularly visits, like schools, whether it be private or public. It might also happen in the home and office premises of the accused as well as in public places.

The data on the place of the crime is not mentioned in 36.3% (ranging to 40.2 %) of all cases of CSA. This again indicates incomplete reporting on CSA cases and lack of furnishing of relevant information. The available data (Graph VI) clearly points out that the place of abuse is spread over all categories considered. An initial glimpse into the data might reinforce the myth of ‘stranger danger’ as we find that in 27.4% cases CSA has occurred in the public place. However, a concentrated look into the data challenges this prescription. If the data for all places which are familiar to victim is culled out including, victim’s house, house/ office of the accused, school and children’s home; then in 36.4% cases sexual abuse has happened in these places of familiarity taken together. Among these, 18.9% (ranging to 20.9 %) cases the abuse has taken place in the abuser’s home/office and 9.3% (ranging to 11.7 %) in victim’s house. Arpan’s data reaffirms this pattern and shows the highest number of cases, a total of 27.4%, to have occurred in the victim’s own home and a high percentage of 56.6% for the cumulative of all private, known spaces for the child (school, home, institution, tuition and neighbourhood). Added to





**Graph VI: Places where Child Sexual Abuse Occurred**



**Graph VII: Abuser's Relationship with the Victim**

this, the reason behind greater reportage of cases where public places have been the place of crime is because these are cases of CSA in the open and are easily tapped and reported rather than cases which happen behind the closed doors and are buried.

### E.3.V. abuser's relationship with the victim

The relationship between the abuser and the victim (Graph VII) is varied and spans over a wide range of people including father, relative, employer, school staff, neighbors, observational home staff and strangers.

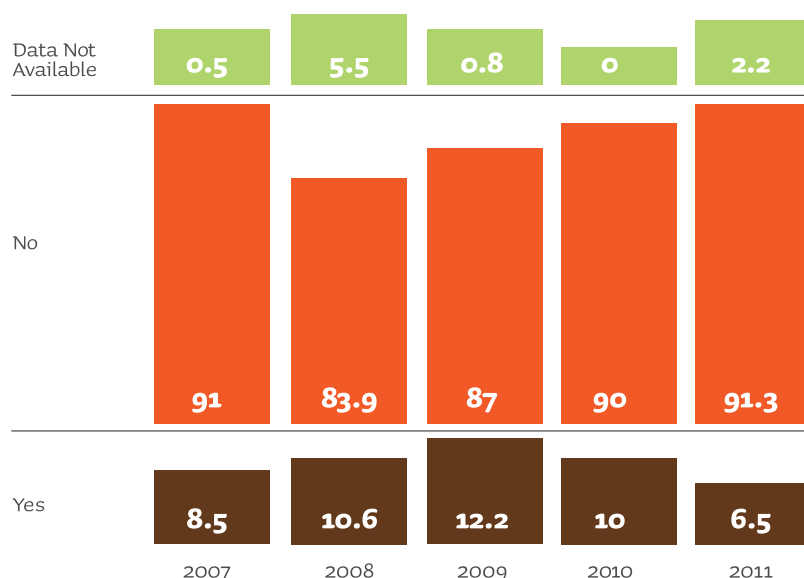
This range of people, who the child is familiar with, accounts for almost 60% of all abusers mentioned in the newspaper reporting. Arpan's data shows that a substantial number of abusers, nearly 82.2% of all abusers, are known to the victim, either as family or otherwise. The strangers, on the other hand account for 22.1% of all sexual abuse cases mentioned and reported in the media and 11.4% of the Arpan case data. These data are a glaring reminder that in an overwhelming majority of cases on Child Sexual Abuse, the victims know the accused. This claim is in congruence with various international and national studies which show similar findings. Finkelhor (1994) summarized nineteen adult retrospective surveys conducted in the United States and Canada from 1980 to 1994 and indicated that from 70% to 90% of offenders were either family members or acquaintances. The National Study on Child Abuse, 2007 also concluded that 50% abuses are persons known to the child or in a position of trust and responsibility. In order to understand the relationship between the abuser and the victim we will probe further into the incest cases reported in the newspaper.

[ A substantial number of abusers, nearly 82.2%, are known to the victim, either as family or otherwise. ]

### E.3.V.a cases of incest

Incest has been singled out as a distinct category of Child Sexual Abuse as this is an invasion of child's sexual boundaries by the very person(s) entrusted with his/her care (Blume, 2004). Incest in the context of CSA is a form of sexual abuse perpetrated by someone in the child's family environment and with whom the child is in a emotional relationship. This includes parents, siblings, step parents, grandparents, uncles and aunts. Incest abuser may be anyone within the family system, but typically they are adults or older children with authority or power over the child. Incest, like other forms of sexual abuse, is about control and occurs within a cultural context. As such, there is evidence that the likelihood of serious long-term impact is greater for incest victims than for victims of sexual abuse in general. This is not to say that all incest victims are seriously damaged or that abuse by non-family members is not damaging; it simply reflects that factors increasing the impact of the sexual are present to a greater degree in most incest case.

There is evidence that the likelihood of serious long-term impact is greater for incest victims than for victims of sexual abuse in general.

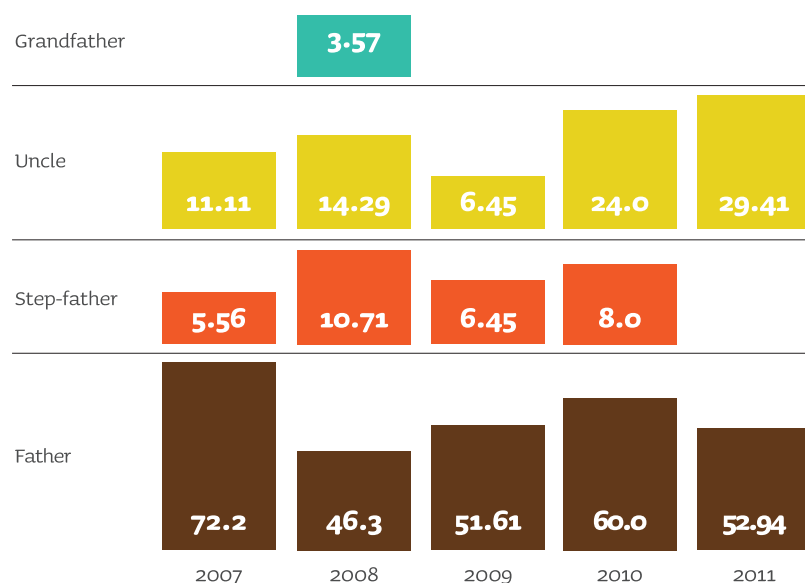


Graph VIII: Cases of Incest

In the media reported cases over five years, the reporting on incest has been insignificant. Over the years, the maximum reporting of incest has been 12.2 % in 2009 and the minimum has been 6.5% in 2011 with an average of 9.56 %. This data reflects that on an average only 10 % of all reported cases are cases of incest. However, before assuming that this data is reflective of the prevalence of incest in India there is a need to pay a cursory glance into the existing research and the social context which might hinder reporting on incest cases. 26.03% of Arpan's documented data are cases of incest with the year 2011 having the highest percentage of 29.8%. According to international studies, intra-family perpetrators constitute from one-third to one-half of all perpetrators against girls and only about one-tenth to one-fifth of all perpetrators against boys (Finkelhor, 1994). It is interesting that the National Study also concludes that 53.18% of children not going to school and living in the family environment also face sexual abuse. Several factors can contribute to the underestimation and underreporting of the phenomenon of incest in newspapers: societal denial of the possibility that family members can sexually exploit children, cultural images of family as a sacrosanct place, resistance to accept the dysfunctionality of the family and the resulting stigmatization.

It will also be interesting to further look into the newspaper data on incest in order to understand percentages of cross generational (Graph IX) and age mate (Graph X) sexual abuse excluding relatives (newspaper reporting does not specify whether it is cross generational or age mate sexual abuse).

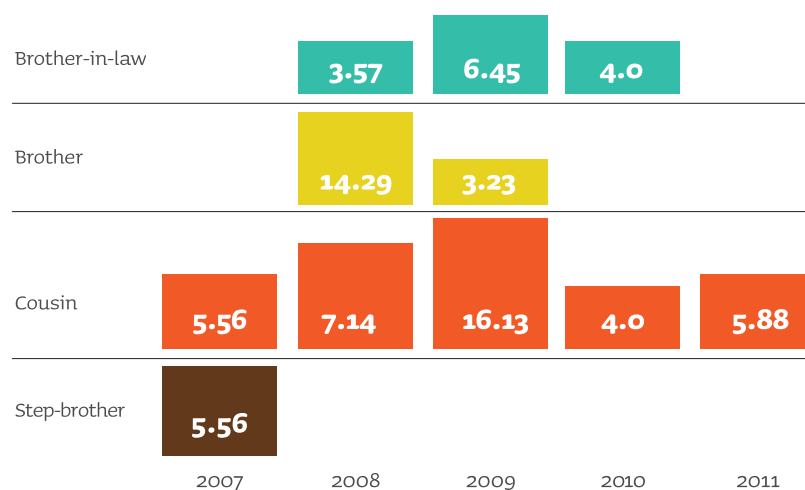




**Graph IX: Cross generational Sexual Abuse**

It is shocking that the newspaper data over five years shows that father – child incest accounts for overwhelming majority of all cases of incest with a staggering 56.63% (Graph IX). If the data of father (56.63%) and step father (7.43%) is clubbed together then 64.06% of all cases of incest accounts to father- child incest. The abuse by uncles comes next to father- child incest and it amounts to 17.05% of all cases of incest. Cross generational sexual abuse including grandfather (0.71%), father (56.63%), stepfather (7.43%) and uncle (17.05%) according to the newspaper reported cases of incest amounts to 81.82% of all reported cases of incest. This reporting of incest cases involving father-child might reflect the most hidden reality of Indian homes. But at the same time, father-child incest might be over represented in the newspaper reporting because of its shocking, sensational content which makes it newsworthy.

Although, Arpan case data also shows father/ step father to be the most common perpetrator (36.84%), one also finds 3.5% of the incest cases being perpetrated by the mother. Aside from this, in 1.75% of the incest cases, the perpetrator was found to be the grandmother of the victim.

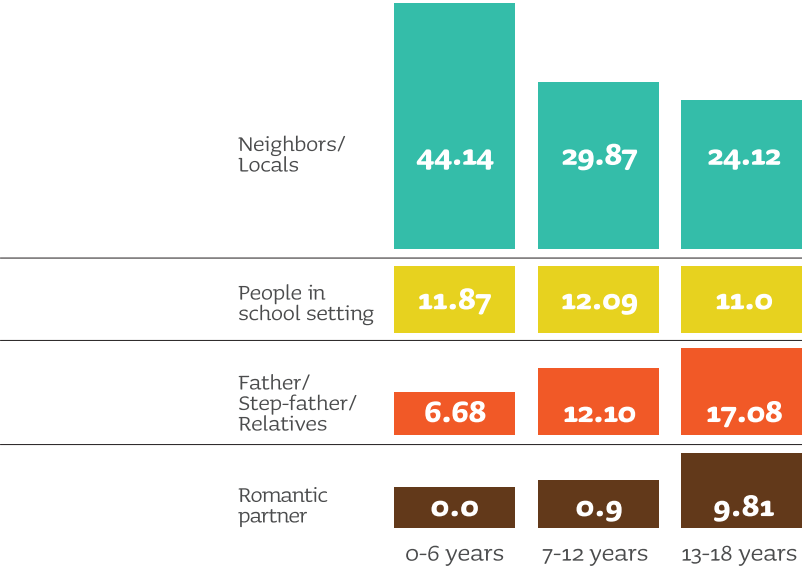


**Graph X: Age mate sexual abuse**

In comparison, age mate sexual abuse (Graph X) including cousins (7.74%), brother (3.5%), step-brother (1.11), brother-in-law (2.8%) accounts for 15.15% of all cases of reported incest. When compared with existing data from the National study and study by RAHI on incest survivors, this data stands out because both existing studies reported high percentage of sexual abuse by maternal/paternal uncles and male cousins. However, Arpan case data also documents 3.5% of incest cases where the perpetrator is a sister or a female cousin.

#### **E.3.V.b cross tabulation of age and relationship of the abuser**

Cross tabulation of the data on age of victim (Graph I) and relationship of the abuser (Graph VII) (excluding stranger) projected through the Graph (XI) below will further help in understanding



Graph XI: Age of victim and relationship of abuser

the pattern of vulnerability of children to varied abusers depending on their age range.

The data (Graph XI) clearly points out that children in the 0-6 years of age are most vulnerable to people in neighbourhood and locality (44.14%), followed by people in the school setting (11.87%) and relatives including fathers and step-father (6.68%). School age children are most vulnerable to non-family members in the neighborhood (29.87%), almost equally to relatives including fathers/stepfathers (12.10%) and people in the school setting (12.09%) and marginally from partners (0.9%). Adolescent children are most

this, the preschool children (0-6 years) are usually surrounded by parents and family members and, hence, they are more vulnerable to this same set of people. Arpan’s case data shows the percentage of perpetrators, familial or otherwise, known to the children of ages 0 to 11 to be as high as 60.7% (2011-12).

On the other hand, school-going children are more vulnerable to non family members because during this age their social system is expanding and they are interacting with outsiders without constant supervision; adolescent children (13-18 years) are most at risk from their partners because of the importance of peers of this age, especially in cases of date-rape and sexual harassment. In the present analysis of media reporting, what materializes is that children across all age groups are vulnerable to neighbors and locals, including very young children who are most vulnerable to this set of people. Extrapolating from the known evidence of the Indian social structure of having a lot of dependence on neighbors and treating them as extended families justifies the increased vulnerability of children to this set of people. It also clearly shows that parents often entrust care-giving roles to neighbors which heighten younger children’s vulnerability to these set of people. According to the Arpan case data, about 63% of the known abusers are non-family members in an entrusted position of taking care of/protecting the child such as neighbors, teachers, domestic helps, watchmen etc. The data also upholds that children

[ The children in the age group of 13-18 years also become vulnerable to partners because of transitional period of adolescence accompanied by social as well as developmental changes including a variety of physical, cognitive, emotional and behavioral changes” ]

at risk from neighbours and locals (24.12%), followed by relatives including fathers/stepfathers (17.08%), people in school setting (11%) and lastly from partners (9.81%). This finding is in contrast with the common knowledge at the international level, based on the development of children and understanding offenders’ psyche. According to

of all categories are almost equally vulnerable to people in the school setting.

This directs attention towards both lowering of age brackets at which children start attending school and the overall unsafe environment of school settings. In case of the abuser



being a relative or father/step father the data shows all three categories of children to be vulnerable. However, it projects that vulnerability of children increases with increasing age of children and children in the range of 13-18 years are more vulnerable. However, it is also important to contextualize this data as reported cases of CSA from very young children are often limited given their lack of vocabulary to express, over dependence on caregivers and lack of awareness to label it as “abuse”. In addition, the children in the age group of 13-18 years also becomes vulnerable to partners because of transitional period of adolescence accompanied by social as well as developmental changes including a variety of physical, cognitive, emotional and behavioral changes. The broader peer culture and community understanding also becomes instrumental in deciding the avenues for expressing their developing sexuality and shaping the understanding of coercive sexual experiences, given that adolescents, especially girls, have limited power to negotiate in case of cross-generational and transactional sexual encounters.

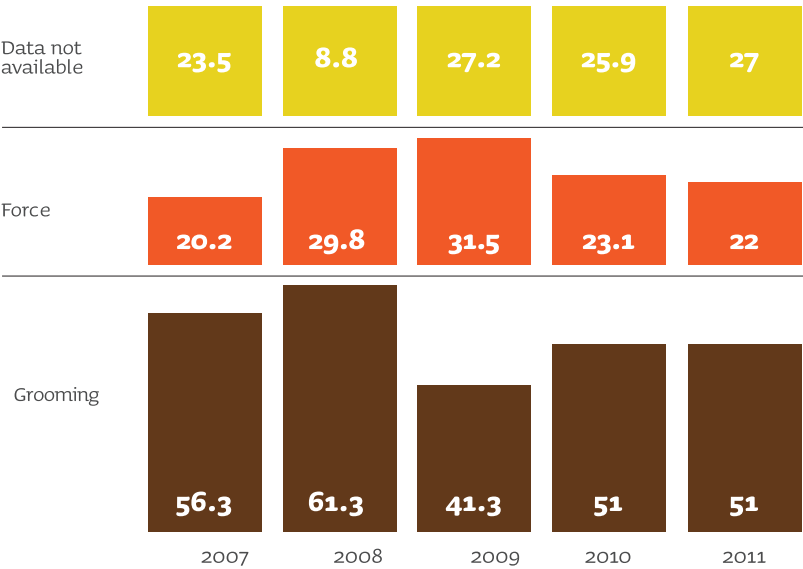
E.3. VI role of grooming in csa

Grooming as a concept has multiple connotation which refers to personal grooming, mutual grooming or social grooming. Whereas Personal grooming refers to giving “a neat and tidy appearance” to oneself (<http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/groom>, accessed on 22nd November 2011); social grooming or mutual grooming in human on the other hand refers to the “process by which human beings fulfill one of their basic instincts, such as socializing, cooperating and learning from each other”(Wikipedia, 2011). In the context of Child Sexual Abuse, it is this process of social grooming which is used for a particular purpose or activity. To clarify further, grooming in the purview of CSA “is the process by which an offender draws a victim into a sexual relationship and maintains that relationship in secrecy” (Welner, 2006). Grooming usually begins with subtle behavior that may not initially appear to be inappropriate, such as paying a lot of attention

Grooming usually begins with subtle behavior that may not initially appear to be inappropriate, such as paying a lot of attention to the child and being overly affectionate.

to the child and being overly affectionate. The six stages involved in the process of grooming are: targeting the victim and accessing the child’s vulnerabilities, gaining the child’s trust, meeting the child’s need (emotional, material, economic, academic etc.), isolating the child, sexualizing the relationship by desensitizing the child to touch (by going to swimming, taking picture, tickling the child) and maintaining control through secrecy and blaming the child. Although not all cases of Child Sexual Abuse involve grooming, it is a common process employed by abusers (Protect the Children, 2011).

It becomes clear that while in 25.32% of cases force was used to captivate the child; in 44.78% cases grooming was used (Graph XII). This data reinforces Child Sexual Abuse is not an accident but it is a planned process. Though there is a dearth of research on grooming and CSA, a study in 2011, in UK, found that a significant proportion of sexual



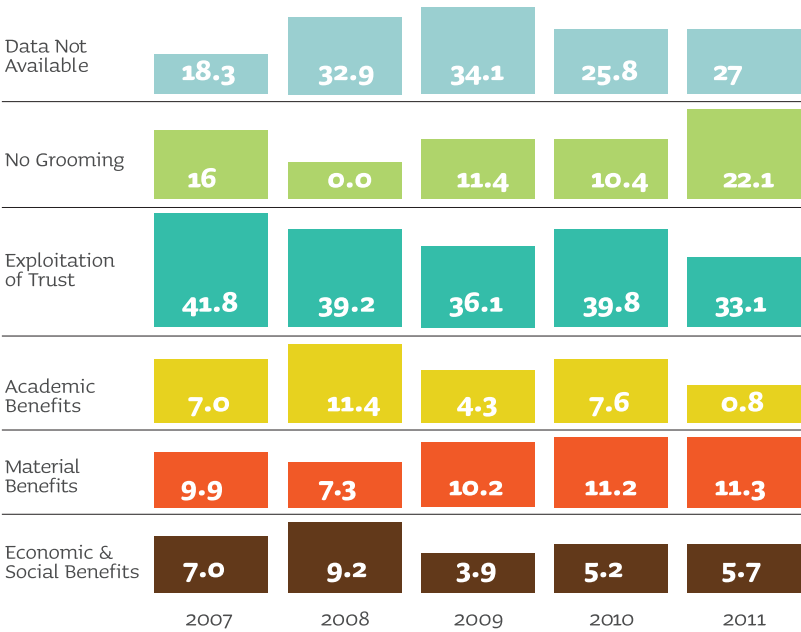
Graph XII: Role of grooming vis-à-vis force



offences that occurred not only in the victim’s known terrain but also in public places, involved grooming (CEOP, 2011). This has led to the growing phenomenon known as ‘localised grooming’ or ‘street grooming’ which refers to children being “groomed and sexually exploited by an offender, having initially met in a location outside their home. This location is usually in public, such as a park, cinema, on the street or at a friend’s house. Offenders often...establish a relationship with a child or children before sexually exploiting them” (CEOP, 2011.)

In the documentation of the cases from 2007 to 2011 in the media, it is clear the in 60.4% of cases grooming has been used vis-à-vis 11.98% of cases where children have not been groomed and prepared by the abuser (Graph XII). If the percentage of the data which was not reported in the newspaper regarding grooming/no grooming taking place is left out; in a significant proportion of cases, 60.04% children (vis-à-vis no grooming) and 44.78% (vis-à-vis force) children undergo grooming. The percentage of children being groomed previous to abuse is high because grooming ensures the following: child will not disclose, the offender will not be detected, child will be a cooperative participant, chances of reoffending the child will be high and child will not be believed easily by family (Kids in the Know, 2011).

Among all the children who have been groomed whether through economic and material benefit, social benefit, academic benefits and exploitation of trust it is the last which is considerably high for all the 5 years ranging from 33.1% to 41.8% and the average being 38% (Graph XIII). Another significant pathway (ranging from 7.3% to 11.3 %) through which grooming has occurred is by providing children with material benefits which comprised of toys, chocolates, electronic gadgets etc. Data shows that 4.3% to 7.6 % children were abused in the pretext of offering them academic benefits like more marks, notes or special coaching. Last but not the least, children are also



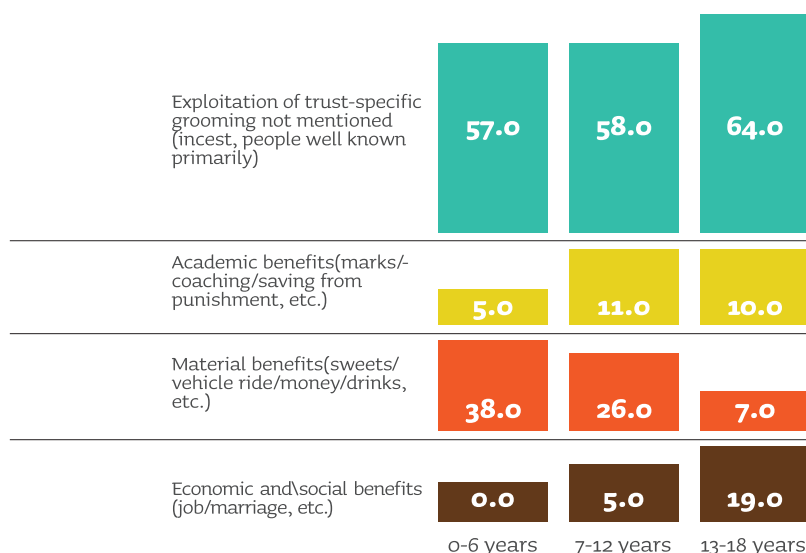
Graph XIII: Different Modalities of Grooming

groomed and ensnared (ranging from 3.9 % to 9.2 %) with false hope of marrying and offering job opportunities. The children mostly submit to the process of grooming (economic and material benefit, social benefit, academic benefits and exploitation of trust) as they and often their non offending family members or caregivers do not recognize they are being manipulated nor do they relate the process of grooming to the abuse.

D.3.VI. a cross tabulation of age and modality of grooming

A cross tabulation of age and modality of grooming represented through the following Graphs (Graph XII – XIV) show interesting findings regarding abusers’ victim selection and manipulation.

Abusers are prudent in selecting their victims and are very systematic in grooming and manipulating them into submission. The selection of victim is not only determined by the sexual attraction to a particular child but also on the assessment on whether the abuser will be able to control him/ her. It becomes evident that exploitation of trust is most commonly used pathway to groom children across age brackets (0-6 years, 7-12 years, and 13-18 years) (Graph XII – XIV). Exploitation of trust is highest for the older children (64%) and it is



**Graph XIV: Modality of grooming**

has been used most with the older children (13-18 years) (19%) followed by children in the age bracket (7-12 years) which accounts for 5%. If we leave aside exploitation of trust which is considerably higher for all age groups grooming children through material benefits like toys, food and motorcycle ride etc. is high for the younger groups of children and grooming children through promise of marriage and job is high for older group of children.

This clearly indicates that the abusers are in most cases gifted manipulators and are good at finding vulnerability in a child's personality or life circumstances.

**The selection of victim is not only determined by the sexual attraction to a particular child but also on the assessment on whether the abuser will be able to control him/her.**

almost similar in both the younger age groups of children (0-6 years and 7-12 years) with 57% and 58% respectively. This avenue for grooming is overwhelmingly high because most abusers maneuver child's natural trust and vulnerability and take advantage of children's need for love and care.

In contrast, material benefit as a conduit for grooming is more visible in case of both the younger groups of children of 0-6 years and 7-12 years of age with 38% and 26% respectively. The material benefit as a mechanism to groom older group of children (13-18 years) has been used only for 7% of cases. Academic benefits as a mechanism to groom children cuts across all groups of children with it being higher for children in the 7-12 years (11%) and 13-18 years age groups (10%) and comparatively lesser for younger children (5%). Providing the children with economic and social benefits (job opportunities and marriage proposals) as a mechanism to groom

### **E.3.VII. victims' condition and responses received post abuse**

The data for post abuse situation is limited. Given that follow up coverage have only happened for 4.72% of all cases reported it becomes difficult to cull out any trend from this data set as this will lead to overgeneralization. However, to lose on the data that emerges from this will also limit the study and will present skewed picture of media reportage of CSA. In order to handle this crossroad the present study will state the findings but will refrain from drawing conclusions.

Among 13.5% of cases where media reports covered victims' condition post abuse, in 10% of the cases the victim has been murdered. This is considerably high both in comparison of reported cases of post sexual abuse condition of the victim, which anyway is miniscule, and other condition of victim reported in this category namely suicide by victim (1.6%), attempt to murder (1.5%) and attempt to suicide (1%). The out of the ordinary nature of sexual abuse



cases followed by murder and the visibility of it influence the news selection process and make it pertinent for it being reported in the newspaper which is looking for a trigger in a case.

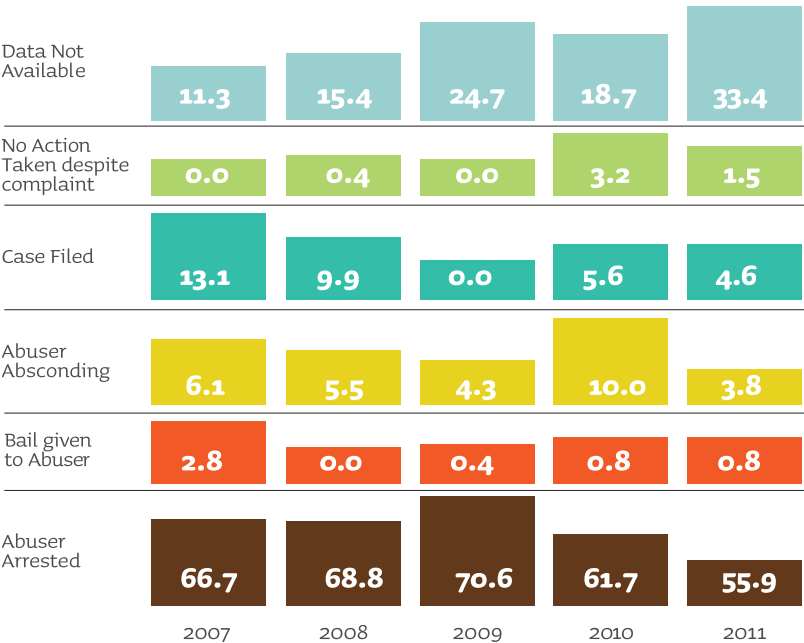
**E.3.VII.a response from the police**

In comparison to availability of data for all categories for post abuse situation, maximum data is obtainable for the response from the police. For e.g. in case of medical assistance received by the victim the coverage has been limited with an average of 23.8% and the range varying between 4.8% (2010) to 35.7% (2007). In all probability, a higher percentage of reporting has happened on responses from the police because for this data the dependence is lesser on cases to be followed up since most cases are reported in the first place because they have entered the judicial system.

This also gets reflected through the data (Graph XV itself as cases reported in the newspaper which has been filed, abuser arrested, abuser given bail and abuser absconding and no action taken

despite complaint i.e., all cases which has come in contact with the judicial system over the five years accounts for 79.3% of all cases reported. Most of the cases in which FIR have been filed; it has been filed by the victim and victims’ family (46.38%). It is only in 16.34% of cases, that FIR has been filed by other relatives, NGO professionals and teachers.

Among all the cases reported, the abuser has been arrested in 64.74% of the cases, which is a considerably high percentage. This data in isolation does provide a positive picture of legal system’s response towards Child Sexual Abuse. However, it is important to contextualize this data in the realm of CSA as a significant proportion of the cases do not get reported or do not even come up in the open. Given the cultural and legal context it becomes more likely to deduce that media reports cases mostly when the case has entered the judicial process. As such, the cases reported in newspaper might be losing out on significant amount of cases where there is no connect with the legal mechanism.\*



**Graph XV: Response from Police**

## Conclusion

The analysis on news coverage of Child Sexual Abuse for five years has helped emerge certain clear indicators of how Child Sexual Abuse features in the newspaper. Firstly, it can be said that newspaper reporting on Child Sexual Abuse has mostly been triggered by an incident of Child Sexual Abuse with an average reporting per year being on the range of 200-250 amounting to 1,255 cases in five years. While this reporting pattern speaks about the visibility CSA on a consistent basis; these reports focus on isolated episodes of Child Sexual Abuse rather than on the issue of CSA per se and as such provide a fragmented view on the issue. The fact that prevention and healing aspect of CSA remain completely sidelined create a depiction of CSA more as a solitary crime news rather than a social issue to be addressed. This is because a fundamental step toward dealing with Child Sexual Abuse is putting prevention on the public agenda. Thus, it is important that news coverage address responses to Child Sexual Abuse and initiate dialogue on prevention or interventions in their coverage as media has the potential to initiate and influence both individual stakeholders as well the social structure at the systemic level.

A majority of the cases feature in the newspaper through the lens of the criminal justice system e.g., when FIR has been filed, some milestone has been achieved with the court system (trial and verdict of the accused) etc. As, Child Sexual Abuse stories are represented in the news media primarily as crime stories; the reporting also followed the standard formula for this genre: discovery of crime, arrest and charge, trial, conviction and sentence. Having said that it is clear such reporting will demonstrate a clear preference for cases of CSA with grave manifestations rather than the chronic forms of it happening daily in less high-profile settings.

This calls for attention because people who have little direct personal knowledge, the image portrayed (Ayre 2001) by the media becomes the image on the issue. While such extreme adversities have the potential to catch public attention but it is not enough to create a sustained public opinion on the issue as this fervor phases out fast.

These reports focus on isolated episodes of Child Sexual Abuse rather than on the issue of CSA per se and as such provide a fragmented view on the issue.

Even in case of reporting on CSA, the information provided is not always precise and complete. While in limited cases, the focus is on information which can reveal identity of the children there is dearth of essential information in most cases hindering an understanding of the characteristics of Child Sexual Abuse. The characteristics of Child Sexual Abuse that emerge through media reported cases, though, at times correspond to the existing studies; but, at other times, it projects a complete contrary picture. In order to deduce how closely newspaper reported cases match the Indian reality, systematic research on CSA needs to be initiated.

### F.1 Suggestions for inclusive reporting on CSA

There are inevitable challenges in reporting on Child Sexual Abuse. The topic is inherently difficult to discuss, as most of it remains hidden from view. However, given the potential of media in creating awareness and public opinion on the issue an inclusive reporting becomes prerequisite. Suggestions for inclusive reporting include:

- ❑ Address Child Sexual Abuse in a thematic way by focusing on prevention and intervention aspects rather than on episodic reporting of isolated cases. Provide visibility to the issue through debates and discussion in editorials and opinion writing/s.
- ❑ Use unambiguous language and provide necessary information so as to minimize misinterpretation while ensuring the privacy of the victim. Using the right language is often a challenge as the right balance has to be struck between providing complete information so that readers understand the gravity of the problem and avoid sensational reporting.
- ❑ Initiate reporting beyond a criminal justice lens and focus on the backdrop in which Child Sexual Abuse occurs. Discussion about the context of CSA and specifics regarding the policies and programmes that need to be initiated, supported and sustained in order to tackle CSA will provide a broader view on the issue. It will also create an environment that promotes prevention and safeguards victims and their families. Solutions-focused stories are instrumental in drawing support for collective action.
- ❑ Sustain the reporting on the issue beyond the news cycle of a particular incident by representing varied view, studies and talking about community events around it.
- ❑ Work in close association with prevention advocates as they can bring information and insight to the story by being the spokesperson for the survivors and providing resources on prevention including personal safety.



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Arpan is a registered organisation based in Mumbai with an aim to prevent the occurrence of Child Sexual Abuse and heal those who have been affected by it. Since the year 2006, Arpan has carefully recorded and documented incidents of Child Sexual Abuse as reported in some of the leading newspapers of Mumbai. This study is an analysis of the trends and patterns found in such newspaper reports between the years of 2007 and 2011.

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