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## Adoption of Orphaned Children on the Rise in Odisha

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Odisha has seen a consistent rise in the adoption of orphaned and abandoned children, attributed to increased public awareness and streamlined legal processes. As confirmed by the Central Adoption Resource Authority (CARA), the statutory body responsible for monitoring and regulating adoptions in India, there has been measurable growth in both in-state and inter-state adoption cases. Notably, the number of girls adopted has outpaced boys, according to CARA figures.

These figures came to light during a recent meeting of the State-Level Child Protection and Welfare Monitoring and Review Committee. The committee, led by Chief Secretary Manoj Ahuja, reviewed institutional and non-institutional support systems and urged greater inter-departmental cooperation to safeguard vulnerable children. Currently, the state supports its child welfare mission through 160 children's homes, 33 specialized adoption agencies, and over 200 Child Care Institutions (CCIs). Additional infrastructure includes 30 District Child Protection Units (DCPUs), 31 Child Welfare Committees (CWCs), and 34 Juvenile Justice Boards (JJBs).

Monisha Banerjee, Director of the Department of Women and Child Development, shared that 98% of the 8,150 children in institutional care have been registered with Aadhaar, the national identification system. In terms of educational and professional development, 672 children are pursuing vocational training, while over 8,000 individuals have completed job-oriented programs. Of these, 211 have secured employment and 79 have opted for self-employment. With 211 gaining employment and 79 opting for self-employment, according to officials.

Beyond adoption, Odisha continues to implement holistic welfare strategies. The Ashirbad Yojana, a state-backed scheme for children leaving institutional care, provides marriage and financial assistance. The state also runs Child Help Units, and has integrated emergency contact systems including Child Helpline 1098, Women Helpline 181, and Emergency Response number 112. These helplines ensure timely assistance for children in distress.

Further advancements include the operationalization of the Amari Shishu Portal, which digitally updates and maintains child protection data, and periodic orphan surveys under the Yashoda Scheme. With over 51,000 children already benefiting from Ashirbad Yojana, Officials highlighted Odisha's multi-agency approach as a comprehensive model for child welfare delivery.”

Additional Chief Secretary and Development Commissioner Anu Garg has instructed senior officials to include inspections of child care centers during their district visits, emphasizing the importance of continued oversight. Through combined efforts, Odisha appears committed to securing a brighter, safer future for its most vulnerable young citizens.