



What are the key priorities facing child protection system reform in 2023 in the country?

- The Indian Government has promulgated several landmark laws in favour of children, the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act 2015, The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act 2012, the Commissions for Protection of Child Rights Act, 2005, the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006 and the Right to Education Act 2009.
- For a number of years, India has been advocating for a transition from institutionalisation to the deinstitutionalisation of children in need of care and protection. Mission Vatsalya (2022), the New Adoption Guidelines 2016 and Regulations 2017, the Model Guidelines for Foster Care 2016 and more recently, guidelines for 'After care' which outline standards and support for children who leave care, all reflect a promising commitment to family care.
- India passed the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act in 2016 which prioritises the right of persons with disabilities to live in the community. Section 9 of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act 2016 specifically emphasises the rights of children with disabilities to remain with their families:
 - a) No child with disability shall be separated from his or her parents on the ground of disability except on an order of a competent court, if required, in the best interest of the child.
 - b) Where the parents are unable to take care of a child with a disability, the competent court shall place such child with his or her near relations, and, failing that, within the community in a family setting or, in exceptional cases, in shelter home run by the appropriate Government or non-governmental organisation, as may be required ¹



¹<https://www.indiacode.nic.in/handle/123456789/19406>].

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Country Factsheet 2023

India

India has a child population (0-14 years) of 358,634,249.² Government sources in 2018.³ It has been reported that there were about 370,000 (379,191)⁴ children in more than 9,500 CCIs in India.⁵ However, there was a significant move in 2020 to 'restore' children to their families following the Supreme Court order in April 2020 in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. UNICEF reported that nearly 64% children living in institutions - 145,788 out of 227,518 children were restored to their families.⁶ Since the COVID-19 pandemic there have been some updated reports on the number of children in institutions but these figures have yet to be consolidated.

Data collated by the Central Adoption Resource Authority, under the Ministry of Women and Child Development, show that of the 4,009 adoptions in 2023/4 449 were inter country adoptions. There are currently 34239 prospective adoptive parents registered and 2169 children available for adoption.

² <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.0014.TO?locations=IN>

³ [CIF Report 1.pdf \(wcd.nic.in\)](https://wcd.nic.in/CIF_Report_1.pdf)

⁴ Supplement to: Desmond C, Watt K, Saha A, Huang J, Lu C. Prevalence and number of children living in institutional care: global, regional, and country estimates. *Lancet Child Adolesc Health*. 2020 May;4(5):370-377. doi: 10.1016/S2352-4642(20)30022-5. Epub 2020 Mar 6. PMID: 32151317. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/32151317/>

Data source: Every child's right to family life: an introduction to family strengthening and alternative care in India, <https://iacn.in/images/resources/e77b13fd8259d0e4603da401011a40b8.pdf>

⁵ <https://wcd.nic.in/node/2190742>

⁶ <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/nearly-64-children-in-ccis-restored-to-families-since-sc-order-in-april/articleshow/79584157.cms>

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Country Factsheet 2023

India

What has been the biggest change in the country, in terms of child protection system reform?

The Indian Government launched Mission Vatsalya in 2022. Mission Vatsalya is a centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS) of the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD). It was set up for the welfare and rehabilitation of children in difficult circumstances. The Vatsalya scheme replaced the Child Protection Services (CPS) Scheme in 2009-10 that prioritises family care and community empowerment to respond to child protection issues. This provides a significant opportunity to support states to prioritise family care and strengthen community gatekeeping and safeguarding mechanisms and services.

"I am not being able to go out. Not able to meet with friends either. Feel scared to go out of home. Wear mask. Washing hands once in a while. Father and older brother work as labour but their work isn't available now. No income. They are scolding me a lot. Not being able to invite my elder sister and brother-in-law to visit the village."

Girl, 11–14, India⁷



"Good alternative care is what makes you feel secure, safe and sound. Not worried about what's to happen to you in the next moment."

Young woman, 18–25, India



⁷ https://familyforeverychild.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/dgd_survey_report_web_en-2.pdf



Latest developments

1. In 2022, in collaboration with UNICEF and India Alternative Care Network (IACN), we (HHC) helped develop and launch a 'Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)' document for India on 'Care Reform' – providing key information, guidance and addressing. This has become a useful and well-used tool across the sector that acts as a reference point for language, practice and understanding of family and alternative care.
2. Examples of good practices and innovations in care reform, alternative care and gatekeeping, are being captured and documented through the India Alternative Care Network (IACN) newsletter and journals.
3. Many states are prioritising care reform and alternative care as a state strategy - e.g. Odisha, with support from HHC and CSO's, has 10 districts with care reform strategies to deinstitutionalise and develop community and alternative care services and to reduce the number of children in institutions.
4. The transition of CCI's towards non-residential services is being piloted by Changing The Way We Care (CTWWC), through CRS, which will provide a template and learning on how CCI's can adopt and implement the guidelines in an Indian context and support CCI's moving away from residential care.
5. The NEEV Collective in Maharashtra, is building on the existing learnings and practices in the sector to spearhead the movement to prevent separation from family and subsequent institutionalization of children. The Collective spearheading the movement to shift care reform priorities to prevent separation from family and subsequent institutionalization of children addressing systems that can help families and communities care for their children and also those that can help prevent and protect children from harm.
6. With support from USAID 'Protection and Care for Children in Adversity: A U.S. Government Strategy for Children to Thrive (2024-2029)', a new 5 year project was launched in 2023, 'Children and Families Together, India' CAFT-India. CAFT-India champions sustainable and inclusive child-care reform models which can be scaled-up across the country, bringing together both experts in disability inclusion (Keystone Human Services), care reform (Hope and Homes for Children) and system strengthening and implementation (CINI).



Acceleration of national reform :

- Development of State care reform plans - States to develop a district-level care reform plan. Mission Vatsalya provides an opportunity to prioritise family care and deinstitutionalisation.
- Increase efforts to strengthen '**collective will**' for care reform specifically targeting the judiciary and a multi-sectoral approach to promote family care - the goal is to reaching a stage where India is developing and implementing a national care reform strategy, influenced by the demonstrated results by the state level care reform work.

Strengthen and scale up care reform demonstration:

- Strengthening district child protection functions - developing state and national plans to mainstream and roll-out common tools, good practices, training and approaches of the best performing district government child protection functions (CWC's, CPC's and DCPU's) across the country (starting in selected states)
- District services development plan - mapping (using vulnerability mapping tools) of vulnerabilities and challenges in each district, mapping of services in the district, identifying gaps in services delivery based on the needs of the specific districts and development of district plans to develop necessary services in collaboration with CSO's.
- Social workforce development - increasing the resources, number of people and quality of the social workforce, both government and non-government, to have a resilient, well trained and committed social workforce working in collaboration with government to undertake reintegration, follow-up, implement alternative care and community support / prevention of separation.
- Developing funding strategies - identifying funding streams and opportunities to redirect existing and new funding (both government and non-governmental) towards care reform efforts in India. There is a particular opportunity to engage with the private sector and granting foundations to redirect their funding towards family care and community service development,

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About our country factsheet

This country factsheet provides an overview of the work of Hope and Homes for Children in Ukraine. It is intended to inform policymakers, donors, and the wider public about the scope of child protection system reform in each country, highlighting efforts to transition from institutions (orphanages) to family- and community-based alternatives.

Each country snapshot outlines both the strengths and weaknesses of current policies and actions within the child protection system. It provides a summary of publicly available data that we have been able to source, alongside our expert analysis of this information as it pertains to overall child protection reform. We also offer key recommendations for future interventions to drive continued improvement.

These insights are based on over 30 years of experience from Hope and Homes for Children. While significant progress in child protection reform is possible, challenges remain, especially in gathering comprehensive data and aligning definitions. Where applicable, definitions and programmes discussed are based on local legal and policy frameworks. For this reason, they are not readily comparable to country factsheets, produced by us for another country or jurisdiction.

Data disclaimer

The data is primarily sourced from official state sources. The situation with children in alternative care is dynamic, and changes may not necessarily be captured in present data set. All reasonable efforts have been made to ensure the accuracy of the data presented herein compiled. However, Hope and Homes for Children provides this data as the guidance only and cannot guarantee its accuracy, timeliness, or completeness. Nor can we be held responsible for its use.

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An NGO in participatory status with the Council of Europe as of 2021.

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