

**HOPE
AND
HOMES
FOR
CHILDREN**



Forget Me Not

Country Factsheet 2023

NEPAL





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

- ♥ Nepal is the poorest country in South Asia and ranks as the 17th poorest globally.¹ Despite 40% of the population being under the age of 18, investment in child protection has been minimal.² Social protection benefits and services are still a privilege, with only about one-third of the population having access to any form of social protection. Income support reaches just 13.7% of children, and only 17.7% of the population is enrolled in a social health protection scheme.^{3 4}
- ♥ The institutionalisation of children in need of care and protection has been a significant issue in Nepal since the 1990s. This problem emerged with the growth of the NGO sector following the end of absolute monarchy and the introduction of multiparty democracy. The lack of a state child protection or welfare system further exacerbated the situation. Most Childcare homes (CCHs) in Nepal are privately operated, with 90% of them relying solely on international funding. These homes are predominantly located in the country's major urban and tourist areas.⁵
- ♥ A significant number of children in CCHs have been trafficked from remote rural areas to urban centres, as families are often persuaded to make this decision due to the lack of access to quality education in those remote regions. Many stories have emerged regarding children "being constructed as false or "paper" orphans and trafficked to orphanages in order to take advantage of the orphanage tourism business where westerners pay to volunteer with orphans." (van Doore, 2016, International Journal of Children's Rights 2016).⁶
- ♥ Since 2015, Nepal has been undergoing political and administrative devolution, with 753 local authorities gradually taking responsibility for delivering primary health, education, and protection services. However, the experience, knowledge, and resources available for child protection vary significantly across regions and local areas. There is an urgent and recognised need for substantial support to help local bodies fulfil their statutory duties, particularly in the area of child protection.
- ♥ Persistent challenges include child marriage, child labour, and widespread violence against children, which often goes unreported to the police. The government- paid social welfare workforce is grossly insufficient, and a significant number of children living in residential care institutions could be better cared for in a family setting.

¹ <https://www.usaid.gov/nepal/economic-growth-and-trade>

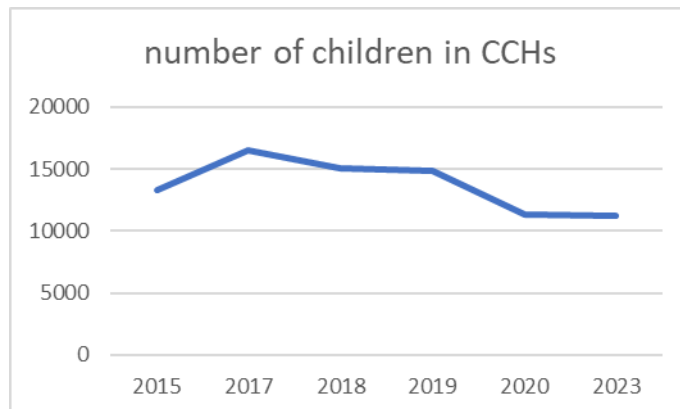
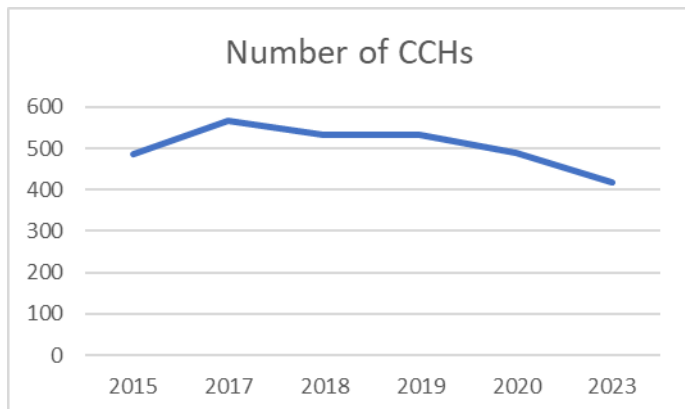
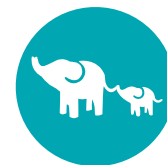
² <https://www.unicef.org/nepal/children-nepal>

³ <https://www.ilo.org/publications/extending-social-protection-all-nepal-analysis-protection-gaps>

⁴ <https://www.ilo.org/resource/news/new-report-state-social-protection-nepal#:~:text=In%20line%20with%20international%20standards,to%20any%20social%20protection%20provisions.>

⁵ https://static.showit.co/file/PXvG7TsyRsyjF8RNBDoi7A/145396/orphanages_policy_brief_nepal.pdf

⁶ Van Doore, K.E., 2016. Paper orphans: Exploring child trafficking for the purpose of orphanages. *The International Journal of Children's Rights*, 24(2), pp.378-407. https://brill.com/view/journals/chil/24/2/article-p378_7.xml



Data sources: State of Children in Nepal and Status report book, Government of Nepal. ^{7 8 9 10 11 12}

* Note these are only registered CCHs and there is no data on unregistered CCHs – anecdotal evidence suggests an increased in the number of unregistered institutions in response to more stringent monitoring and more stringent requirements.

“Under false promises of education and work opportunities... parents give their children to brokers who take them to frequently unregistered children’s homes and force the children to pretend to be orphans to garner donations from tourists and volunteers. Approximately one-third of registered orphanages do not meet the government’s minimum standards.”

U.S. Department of State –
2024 Trafficking in Persons Report: Nepal

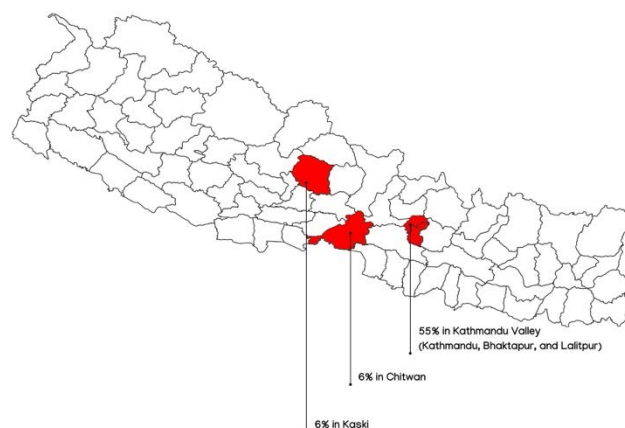


Figure 1: Out of 418 registered CCHs, 67% are located in popular tourist destinations - the majority of children residing in these institutions are brought from other districts.

⁷ <https://bettercarenetwork.org/sites/default/files/2020-11/state%20of%20the%20child%20care%20home.pdf>

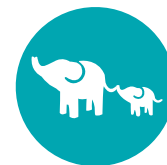
⁸ <https://www.ncrc.gov.np/uploads/topics/16439516095948.pdf>

⁹ <https://bettercarenetwork.org/sites/default/files/2020-11/1588671135status%20report%20ENGLISH.pdf>

¹⁰ <https://www.ncrc.gov.np/uploads/topics/16439519229450.pdf>

¹¹ <https://www.ncrc.gov.np/uploads/topics/16439517325633.pdf>

¹² <https://www.ncrc.gov.np/uploads/topics/17066794643069.pdf>



Significant investment is still needed to support the 753 local authorities nationwide in realising the progressive vision of the Act. As of July 2024, only 390 local authorities have appointed a Child Welfare Authority (CWA), and just 372 have established Child Rights Committees. These are crucial statutory requirements for effective local child protection leadership and decision-making.

Community-based alternative care provisions are currently very limited, and there is an urgent need to develop clear guidelines for local authorities to implement such care. It is anticipated that new integrated guidelines for alternative care being developed by the NCRC will address these issues.

It is important to underline that in spite of all the changes to law and policy it remains often easier to place a child in institution than to identify or secure an alternative care placement (where living with biological or extended family is not an option).

**We are the STORY, WE are the TRUTH
and We are the evidence in ourselves to
change the policy.**

Birendra Shahi, co-founder of Shine Together

Institutionalization ALWAYS has a negative impact on long-term mental health and wellbeing. This not only applies to childcare homes but also to boarding schools, educational hostels, and religious institutions which are often not regulated by governments.

BICON 2023 Declaration¹³

Since 2020, a vibrant movement of young people with care experience has emerged and grown, becoming increasingly involved in the dialogue on care reform. Notably, SHINE Together – Care Experience Network Nepal has been at the forefront, advocating against the harms of institutionalisation and emphasising the importance of including care-experienced individuals in reform discussions. This effort recently reached a milestone with SHINE Together co-hosting the BICON Asian regional conference in Kathmandu in September 2023. In 2024, the National Youth Council furthered this progress by establishing the Care Leavers Association Nepal.

¹³ In September 2023, the 5th BICON on Alternative Care for Children in Asia was held in Kathmandu with over 53 speakers and 300 participants, including over 50 young

people with care experience from across Asia.
<https://www.hopeandhomes.org/content/uploads/2024/02/Final-5th-BICON-Report-2023.pdf>



The biggest positive change in the country over the last 12 months

For the first time, the 16th Periodic Plan (2024/25 to 2028/29) of the National Planning Commission explicitly includes provisions related to care reform.

These include:

- ♥ Establishment of a system in the concerned local level for arranging appropriate alternative care for children who are guardian less, abandoned, children without parents, and children in need of special protection.
- ♥ Discourage residential protection in children's homes by implementation of the arrangement of institutional care as the last option.¹⁴

National Planning Commission, 16th Periodic Plan – 8.5 (6), Unofficial Translation

The biggest negative change in the country over the last 12 months

The Children's Act (2018) and Children's Regulations (2022) have listed family-based care organisations as part of the alternative care framework as a third priority after kinship care and foster care.

In 2024, a working group formed by the NCRC has started to draft guidelines for family-like care. Despite the language these models remain institutional. There is significant risk that this terminology will blur the line between institutional and community-based family care, encouraging the continued use of institutional care by large-scale service providers.

¹⁴ https://npc.gov.np/en/category/periodic_plans



What are the other headlines or issues that you are working on in terms of child protection system reform?

HHC and FMN, together with their local partner THIS, have been implementing a pilot foster care initiative in partnership with two local authorities in Chitwan district. This initiative has been supporting local authorities to identify, train and accredit foster families to ensure that community-based alternative care is available for emergency, short-term and long-term scenarios.

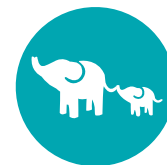
This pilot is also generating increased awareness of legal and practical constraints to delivery of alternative care services, including contradictions between the legal acts, regulations and federal guidelines. In addition, in many areas a lack of understanding of new children's legislation and/or sensitivity to child rights among local judiciaries have been a barrier to implementation.

These issues have been shared with federal authorities, through a project advisory committee which includes representatives from federal, provincial and local government agencies as well as civil society and those with lived experienced.

Latest Developments (e.g. Laws, Policy, Moratoria)

- ♥ Children's Act 2018
- ♥ Children's Regulations 2022
- ♥ 16th Periodic Plan – National Planning Commission
- ♥ National Plan of Action for Children – currently being drafted by NCRC.

Integrated Guidelines for Alternative Care – currently being drafted by NCRC



What is the main thing you want the government or international donors to know about in 2023?

In February 2024, Hope and Homes organised a 'Roadmap Workshop' with the Alternative Care Working Group for Child Protection and Care Transformation (ACWG)—an informal network of 12 Nepali NGOs advocating for care reform—and representatives from the leadership and management of the National Child Rights Council.

The workshop was held while the NCRC developed a National Plan of Action for Children and integrated guidelines for child protection and alternative care. During this period, the ACWG identified 21 recommendations, which were subsequently submitted to the NCRC.

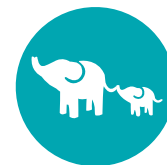
1. Ensure the meaningful and inclusive participation of children and young people with care experience, as well as those who are visually impaired, disabled, Indigenous, Dalits, sexual and gender minorities, and marginalised, in the policy-making process and the development of the national action plan for children and youth.

2. Develop and implement an effective Child Protection Information Management System by deploying skilled staff at every local level.
3. In accordance with Article 49 of the Acts Relating to Children, 2018, prioritise Family and community-based Alternative Care options (such as kinship, foster family, and independent supervised living) to best serve the best interests of children in need of special protection. Institutional alternatives (including family-like care, childcare homes, and orphanages) should be considered only when necessary. Lobby for government budget allocations to support and promote this approach.

Tomorrow If I start a family, I want my children to grow up in a healthy environment, not whose childhood is taken away where they will spend their entire life healing and rebuilding their identity and relationships. I want my government, my state, and my country to provide such a strong child protection system to emphasize alternative care if that is the need.

Dikshya Thapa, co-founder of Shine Together



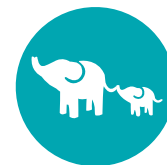


4. Ensure that kinship and foster care are mandatory alternatives for children, particularly because those under the age of 3 are in a critical stage of physical, mental, emotional, and intellectual development.
5. Establish, implement, and strengthen the child protection system, ensuring the mandatory appointment of a Child Welfare Officer at every local level.
6. Establish and operate a Child Fund, along with necessary work plans, at every local level in accordance with Article 63 of the Acts Relating to Children, 2018.
7. Official listing of social workers/facilitators and counsellors at every local level for case management.
8. Mandate the enlistment of foster carers for children in need of special protection and allocate a budget to effectively implement the concept of foster family as part of family and community-based alternative care.
9. To protect children in need of special protection within their own communities, Child Welfare Officers should be granted full authority to streamline the legal process for certifying foster families and emergency and temporary placements, with oversight and accountability from the local Child Rights Committee.
10. The state must provide necessary support for the upbringing, protection, health, and education of children needing special care and protection.

We were taught to erase our culture, our background, we were Hindu, Buddhist, Christian... on Sunday to Church, on Monday, Thursday to another religion, because they gave us a donation.

*Sushil Babu Chhetri, filmmaker & photographer
and care-experienced activist*





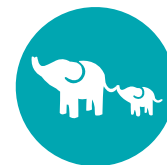
11. Ensure effective monitoring of children's homes and enforce legal compliance for those operating illegally or below established standards. Encourage children's homes to transition voluntarily, reintegrate children into families, and repurpose existing facilities as needed.
12. Research and study on institutional care reform in Nepal.
13. Promote ethical and child-safe tourism in Nepal while strongly discouraging orphanage voluntourism under tourist visas. Implement mandatory background checks, criminal records checks, reviews of prior work experience and skills, and required qualifications for any working with children. Ensure final approval from the Local Child Welfare Authority for volunteer recruitment in the case where it is essential.
14. Map all registered and unregistered children's homes to support deinstitutionalisation as part of a national movement or campaign.
15. Establish a National Care Reform Working Group to develop integrated directives, standards, and guidelines for alternative care. Additionally, create a National Strategic Plan with budgetary commitments from both government and private sectors to support care reform.
16. Prioritise community awareness, family strengthening programs, and enhanced safeguarding at the community level in both source (Karnali and Sudur Paschim Provinces) and destination districts (Bagmati and Gandaki Provinces) to prevent unnecessary family separation of children.
17. Develop a school curriculum that includes education on the psychological harms of unnecessary family separation, family reintegration, reunification, repatriation, and community-based alternative care options for children in need of special protection.
18. Map service providers based on the assessed needs of children to ensure effective referral mechanisms.





19. Reduce the duration of a child's stay in organisations promoting family-based care to minimise the negative impacts similar to institutional care.
20. Require all local levels to allocate mandatory budgets for education, food and nutrition, medical services, vocational training, and other opportunities for care-experienced children and youth reintegrated into family, kinship, and foster care.
21. Establish Province Child Rights Councils under the governance of the National Child Rights Council, ensuring they have the necessary programs, workforce, and budget management. Both the National and Province Child Rights Councils should regulate and monitor temporary transitional care services and children's homes operated at the local level.





About our country factsheet

This country factsheet provides an overview of the work of Hope and Homes for Children in Nepal. 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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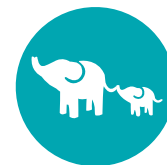
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Hope and Homes for Children is on the Transparency Register of the European Union,
Identification number in the register: 035163533684-92

Organisation in special consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council since 2019.

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

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About Hope and Homes for Children

Around 5.4 million children across the world are currently separated from their families. They've been placed in orphanages, even though over 80% of them are not orphans.

These children are being exposed to abuse, trafficking, and physical and psychological trauma that can last a lifetime.

So we close orphanages, support care reform and overhaul child protection services - reuniting families, keeping them together and creating new ones.

We work to get children **Back to Family**, so they can grow up in safe, loving homes - where they belong.

BACK TO
FAMILY 

** Names changed to protect identities*

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