

Changing the Way We Care in India

Child Care Reform in India

India has the largest number of children living in residential care in the world. In total, over 9,500 Child Care Institutions (CCIs), also known as orphanages, house nearly 400,000 children.¹ India has ratified the [UN Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) and is a signatory to UN Guidelines on Alternative Care and yet, between 80–90% of children have a living parent. Recently, there has been growing momentum in India to promote family-based care in the country. Poverty, absence of support systems and the perception that a CCI will provide children with access to care, protection and development all are factors that push children into a CCI.

Changing the Way We Care in India is working towards change.

Changing the Way We CareSM (CTWWC) is focused on preventing the separation of children from their families and ending institutionalization, using a family strengthening approach. CTWWC works in five demonstration countries and 3 regions, and aims to effect global change in partnership with others.

¹ <https://wcd.nic.in/node/2190742>

Over the next 5 years, CTWWC India aspires to:

- 1. Strengthen government systems**, especially for Child Protection. Informed by existing programming in one district, CTWWC will scale its approach to 9 other districts in Odisha, in collaboration with UNICEF and a local partner.
- 2. Mobilize Church action** to strengthen families and support a meaningful alternative to residential care. Church institutions have traditionally accounted for nearly 40% of centers in many states. CTWWC will build on work begun with Church leaders in Tamil Nadu.
- 3. Advocate for policy change.** CTWWC will focus on generating evidence-based approaches and, alongside UNICEF and the India Alternative Care Network (IACN), convening stakeholders to galvanize support for reform.

In this way, CTWWC India aspires to prevent 500,000 children from entering institutional care and to reintegrate 200,000 children in safe, nurturing families by 2027. The work on policies and systems will indirectly benefit 2 million children.

In 2022, CTWWC in India will continue to:

- (1) establish and strengthen community groups to take action on child protection risks in their villages;
- (2) spread awareness on the harmful impact of child separation and institutionalization;
- (3) support local authorities and partners in developing individualized child protection plans;
- (4) and promote family strengthening of at-risk families.

Impact of COVID-19

Nearly 200,000 children in India lost at least one caregiver to COVID-19, rendering them vulnerable to family separation and long-term institutionalization. In response to this effect of the pandemic, CTWWC began to virtually monitor children who needed to be integrated or reintegrated into families. Despite limited resources and in-person staff, CTWWC provided this monitoring to keep track of vulnerable children along with food and cash assistance.

ANJALI'S STORY



12-year-old Anjali* was separated from her family at the age of five and lived in three different orphanages until late 2018. Anjali lost her father before she was born, and her mother was encouraged to send her to an orphanage by her family. When CTWWC was launched in Odisha, they met Anjali and learned about her willingness to return to her village. CTWWC partners provided case management support to Anjali and her family to begin the transition process, working with the orphanage for her reunification.

*Name has been changed to protect the safety of the child.

CTWWC INDIA BY THE NUMBERS



3 round tables of experts have been convened to discuss best practices in working with vulnerable, abandoned, orphaned and at-risk children.



11 children have been reunified with their families with ongoing case management.



46 social service workers have been trained on concepts of alternative care, child abuse and exploitation, case management, de-institutionalization, and barefoot counseling.



208 child protection committee members have been trained on making decisions in the best interest of the child.



715 at-risk families are now eligible to receive access available government services.



767 parents have been trained on good parenting skills and COVID-19-safe behavior.



1398 parents have been educated on the negative impacts of institutionalization.



2400 children are being virtually monitored to ensure that there is no family separation or institutionalization of these children.