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Institutionalised Children
Explorations and Beyond



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Aims and Scope

Institutionalised Children Explorations and Beyond is an international, multi-disciplinary, peer-reviewed academic journal on Alternative Care for out-of-home-care (OHC) children and young persons, focused on the South Asia region. The journal documents original research papers, good models of care practices, comprehensive desk review papers, editorial and foreword, expert opinions, interviews, and book and movie reviews. Along with addressing issues that can influence policy reforms, decision-making and improve practices and standards of care, the content of the journal aspires to strengthen research, knowledge and practices currently prevalent in the region.

In essence, *Institutionalised Children Explorations and Beyond* sees itself as a forum for studies, discussions, debates and research on issues that would lead to better practices of care, improve mental health, and encourage the integration of OHC children and young persons, including the differently-abled, into the mainstream and thus to their inclusion in civil society. The journal will be of interest to board members, managers, caregivers, psychologists, counsellors, psychiatrists, volunteers, and social workers, in governmental and NGO organisations, as also to policy-makers, and university faculty who are interested in the care and study of children in institutions, as well as in other alternative forms of care. Students in social work, psychology, law and other related disciplines across the South Asian countries, as well as other mental health professionals interested in these studies, will find the journal useful. The scope includes encouraging studies on these issues by universities and hospitals, together with clinics, young professionals and those in the field of caregiving, especially in the non-governmental not-for-profit-sector. The belief is that such education, and sharing of knowledge and experiences would lead to more dynamic prevention as well as rehabilitation models.

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Editorial

Institutionalised Children Explorations
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The March 2021 issue of this journal is a special edition issue, dedicated to the COVID-19 pandemic, which having engulfed the whole world has now held it in its grip for over a year. Beginning in 2020 and continuing into 2021, dread, fear, anxiety, and despair have marked much of our functioning all around the world. This deadly and lethal virus has invaded our lives and our minds. With over a million dead around the world, the picture is grim and uncertain. Though medical advancements now provide us greater detail about its origin, mutations and possible treatment protocols, and now even a vaccine, its sinister presence continues to be felt worldwide. In the midst of all this, our dedication to those who are most disadvantaged does not wane. It is with a deep sense of gratitude to my editorial team and to my contributors that I present the selections of papers in this issue. I hope that you will find this selection of original papers to be informative and helpful in understanding the pressing concerns of institutionalised children and those most in need of care and protection, who can fall out of the safety net of the family.

In my introductory foreword, I raise the question of the sociopolitical and mental health ramifications of this pandemic. Never has our reliance on each other in this global world been greater and yet so complicated. With divisions of power and limited resources, the social impact of this pandemic is felt in innumerable ways. How it will affect and transform the nature of care and management for institutionalised children is the primary thrust of this issue. Despite the egalitarian nature of this disease, ‘its impact can be mitigated by social spaces and the bodies that inhabit them’ (Shome, 2021). In my foreword, I refer to the Spanish Flu, which devastated the world (and especially America) almost a hundred years ago. It is a reminder of how history often repeats itself and how one’s trajectory of life can shift so rapidly and sometimes quite tragically. Reflecting on our past informs us of how to move forward. Much has changed since the Spanish flu, most of all how we think of orphaned children and those in need of care and protection. With a world in shock, waiting anxiously for the distribution of effective vaccines, the question of who gets it first is an increasing occurrence in one’s mind. What warring factions will ensue and who will prevail will gradually unfold on the battleground of the world stage.

In keeping with our customary format, we begin with an interview with Ms. Meenakshi Ganguly by Dr Gurneet Kalra. Ms Ganguly is the South Asia Director at Human Rights Watch and a strong proponent of policies that protect the rights

of marginalised individuals in our communities. As a widely recognised journalist, Ms. Ganguly brings a depth of knowledge and expertise that highlights the role of activists of child rights across the South Asian region. Addressing this issue particularly during the time of COVID-19, Ms Ganguly states and I quote:

Worldwide, the COVID-19 pandemic has exposed structural social and economic inequalities in social protection.

More than 1.5 billion students—many of them situated in South Asia—ended up out of school. UNESCO estimates 5.9 million students as “at risk of not returning to school” in South and West Asia. The economic impact of lockdowns has already led to job and income loss. In India, we saw migrant workers making their way back to their villages with their children, unable to pay rent or purchase food. Economic insecurity is likely to increase rates of child labor, sexual exploitation, teenage pregnancy, children dropping out of school, and child marriage, leaving children vulnerable to exploitation and abuse.

The work of child activists like Ms Ganguly is quintessential during this crisis as it protects the rights of children who would otherwise be forgotten in the struggle to obtain scarce resources.

For the research section of the journal, we are pleased to present a variety of papers that explore increasing concerns regarding mental health, caretaker perceptions, the plight of care leavers, and the impact on current trends for adoption and foster care. Our introductory article in this section is a paper by Martin Punaks, whose work in the field is well known. In his paper, Punaks explores how crisis situations impact the general functioning of critical elements of care in institutions. He also brings essential themes of emergency management by a comparative analysis of orphan trafficking and child protection during the 2015 earthquake in Nepal and the current COVID-19 situation. Punaks considers the role of disaster preparedness as crucial to emergency care while recognising that global disasters are quite different from regional tragedies. The global nature of the COVID-19 situation draws greater attention to a world collaborative effort as we learn from each other and draw from protocols of care implemented in other countries. Perhaps this is a reminder that when we face a common enemy, we come together in ways that strengthen family ties as well as prevention programmes in general.

Rajendra Madegowda’s paper on self-cutting in adolescents continues to explore the theme of growing mental health concerns during and post COVID-19. Madegowda investigates the relationship between caretaker perceptions and institutionalised adolescents who were at high risk for this behaviour and found nine major themes that could help in decreasing these mental health concerns. These include strengthening skills in caretakers, helping with self-reflection, increasing empathy, and identifying vulnerability factors in families. Early intervention programmes to avert such behaviours are recommended.

Continuing to broaden this discussion is a paper by Rika Swanzen. Using a case study from a Child and Youth care Centre in Mogale City, the paper provides insightful analysis and reflection on the impact of a 177-day lockdown on children

and caretakers in a facility. Global concerns for caretaker mental health needs are recognised and thoughtful recommendations for preventing caregiver burnout as well as meeting the needs of the children are identified.

Continuing this line of inquiry, we are pleased to present a paper by Sudeshna Roy. In this paper, the dynamics of institutional care of the out-of-home care children, adolescents, and children are explored. Major themes related to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and institutional care of children are identified. The author's findings reiterate the growing belief that financial, health and nutrition, social justice, education and safety issues as well as administrative, management, and rehabilitative concerns are essential to the integration of these children in the community. Once again, the need to establish an emergency preparedness and the current lack of it is highlighted.

Ratna Verma examines the challenges to both foster care and adoption during this crisis. In her paper, she identifies the declining number of adoptions in India and suggests that this could in part be due to low social acceptance as well as unawareness of the adoption process.

The paper by Rajeev and Purnima Jindal highlights the impact of the pandemic on care leavers which threatened both short- and long-term livelihoods and well-being of millions of youths around the globe. This article explores the learnings and experiences of care leavers while underlining the short- and long-term interventions as a response of SOS Villages to the COVID-19 pandemic for supporting young people and care leavers in SOS family-like care.

The description of the Snehagram Model by Sahen Gupta and his co-authors used in working with adolescents diagnosed with HIV/AIDS is an excellent example of an applied psychosocial intervention with young adults. By adopting a multi-component structure and integrating aspects of educational support, psychological interventions, and research, this paper strengthens the need for reintegration and functioning in society. It offers suggestions for both experiential learning and professional development.

For our international contribution, we are delighted to include a paper by Philip Mendes whose work in this field is well known. In this paper, Mendes presents findings from the evaluations of two support programmes in the state of Victoria, Australia where a relationship-based model was introduced to care leavers during a time of transition. Both models were seen as being effective in facilitating positive outcomes in a range of areas. According to Mendes, these relationship-based programmes based on trust and continuity are crucial during COVID-19 in order to prevent social isolation and provide social and emotional stability.

In our opinion piece, Ankit Keshri speaks to the growing need for childcare practitioners to address the emotional needs of the increasing number of children who will be institutionalised during the COVID-19 crisis. Keshri recognises that there will be long-term damage to the psychological and well-being of children and stresses and there is the need for strong family-based programmes to address this situation in South Asia.

We conclude with a movie and book review. Our movie editor, Lakshmi Madhavan shares a descriptive, moving, and thoughtful account of the movie *Hunt for the Wilderpeople*. Directed by Taika Waititi and set in the indescribable

beauty of New Zealand's wilderness, the movie explores the life of a young boy who as an orphan is no stranger to the revolving foster care system and child welfare services. However, upon receiving care and love from a foster mother, he begins to blossom and finds his roots in the strength of a family. The movie also examines the role of mourning and grief when there is an untimely death. Our young protagonist now once again a ward of the state has to navigate his way through a myriad of obstacles and in doing so displays a unique combination of strength, resiliency, and courage.

For our book review, we went beyond our customary boundaries to present a thoughtful account of Palestinian children who face and must endure the loss of their families during the endless war and hostilities that confront them in their daily lives. Reviewed by Mustafa Qossoqsi, Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian's book titled *Incarcerated childhood and the politics of Unchilding* features the story of Mahmoud, a young Palestinian boy who exercises his right to play in a dark and formidable world. Making his way through the onslaught of aggressive Israeli security personnel positioned in Occupied East Jerusalem, Mahmoud's story resonates with those of others who in captivity assert strongly that their life matters, as does the life of his parents. Qossoqsi eloquently captures the politics of survival and play, with moving insight, timely reflection, and thoughtful reference to moments when young Mahmoud springs to life in our imagination. It is a reminder of the dislocating impact of war on the lives of children, of an individual's resolve to live, and the right of each and every child to claim what has been lost, especially their right to be a child in a family.

Monisha C. Nayar-Akhtar, PhD

Editor-in-Chief

The Pandemic COVID-19: The Year 2020 Revisited

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Diwali is the beginning of a New Year for many who live in the Northern part of India. Its celebration in 2020 (14 November) was marked with a feeling of dread and excitement, for many who honour this ancient Hindu tradition. As a festival that commemorates the victory of good over evil, it is a Hindu ritual that is celebrated with the lighting of *diyas* (small clay containers with wicks), a display of fireworks, along with the distribution of sweets. However, this year, the celebrations were scaled back as people struggled under the debilitating blows dealt by the raging coronavirus pandemic that spared no one and granted a little reprieve, except for the extremely fortunate. Never has a feeling of suffering resonated so profoundly with people all around the world.

In the USA, a landslide victory for Mr. Joe Biden, to become the 46th President of the USA, conveyed hope and excitement. It revealed the resiliency of the oldest democracy in the world though it was not without controversy and contentious ongoing debates. In the midst of this hope, however, there was also a feeling of dread and despair. The staggering and climbing numbers of COVID-19 cases in America spoke to the lack of widespread dissemination of information regarding the trajectory of the disease and its possible fatal and long-term outcomes. A failure to act swiftly and prudently (by implementing social distancing and mandating the use of masks in the earlier months) had resulted in significant increases in the number of infected cases as well as related deaths. America is now ranked as the country with the highest number of cases (over 10 million) and deaths (close to 250,000), followed by India where the number of COVID-19 cases and deaths had also increased at an alarming rate. Needless to say, the dire situation brought forth by the COVID-19 has not only impacted India but also other countries in the SAARC region. With over 440,000 cases in Bangladesh, over 365,000 cases in, Pakistan and over 215,000 cases in Nepal, India is at a record high with over 8.9 million cases and is ranked as the second country with the highest number of cases.

Though both the countries—America and India had implemented lockdowns to ward off the spread of the virus, it was not without considerable misgivings with concerns for the economic and sociopolitical challenge. Raka Shome, in her paper on this subject, ‘The Long and Deadly Road: The Pandemic and Indian Migrants’ (Shome, 2020) writes:

The COVID 19 pandemic has functioned as a window to some of the world's most precarious conditions that typically remain hidden from our eyes. In particular, it has called attention to the crisis of migration, the dispossessions accompanying migration, including internal migrations within nations, especially in the Global South. And most painfully it has revealed terrible economic divides in the world such that the very solutions offered for containing and managing the virus—social distancing, hand washing, masking, and sheltering “in place” or “at home”—actually eludes swaths of populations whose perilous lives cannot meet or be saved by those dictates.

Shome states that while the COVID-19 is ‘egalitarian’, that is, it does not care about who you are, or who it attacks, it is also social. According to Shome, the social spaces, and the bodies that inhabit the social spaces, bear an unequal relation with each other.

In America, the disproportionately large numbers of Black Americans affected by this disease speak to this disparity of social spaces and the bodies that inhabit them. Additionally, many struggled with the lack of a coherent message and protocol to cope with this disease. With the elderly more at risk to contract and die from this disease, and hospital beds now at capacity and beyond, the disproportionate access to care and recovery became more evident. With varying levels of lockdown, mask coverings, and social distancing in place, the country was reeling under its impact, feeling lost in its struggle to survive with predictions of over 500,000 dead by the end of 2020. Never has a country of this size and wealth felt so defeated and so lost in its war with an unseen enemy.

For many in the SAARC region, this had a crippling impact on the care and management of the increasingly virulent disease. From large swathes of people living in poverty to lack of knowledge and a disbelief in something they could not see, to growing economic concerns and the debilitating impact on society as jobs were lost and people forced to return to their villages and homes, the disease with its devastating impact had a profound impact. Reports of ‘forced migration’ (in India) as workers returned to their villages in India where they were then doused with chlorine hypothesised to kill the virus is a reminder of how fear and lack of education can lead to inhumane strategies and remedies for survival. In large and densely populated metropolitan cities like New Delhi, the picture was compounded by overwhelming demands on families to take care of their loved ones at home, including the elderly and their young children. Never had a system experienced such strain as families struggled to meet their work demands, economic needs, in addition to providing educational structures for their children at home, while also managing their households, with their domestic chores and their personal physical and mental health needs.

There is a saying that ‘history repeats itself’. Indeed, in the case of this pandemic, it would appear to be so. Approximately 100 years ago, a deadly virus attacking the immune system of young adults struck the Western continent. Within a short period of time, and usually occurring in soldiers who lived in close quarters, the flu symptoms spread rapidly, leading to death. With reports of over 50 million people dying all around the world, its impact on the elderly and the young were considerable. Laura Spinney, a journalist investigating the impact of this virus found evidence (World Economic Forum) that some countries created

workhouses and moved their senior citizens into these quarters. With their caretakers dying by the millions, the infirm and abandoned found their socio-economic status substantially reduced, and the likelihood of being poor rose significantly, especially in infected people and their offspring. In 1976, Alfred Crosby, who studied the long-term impact of this virus, published his findings in *Epidemic and Peace*, 1918. This book was reissued in 1989 under the title *America's Forgotten Pandemic: The Influenza of 1918*. It paved the way for further international research on this subject. Crosby's (1989) book highlighted how the conversation about the pandemic quickly disappeared soon after it was over, leading to a collective silence. There was little research on the disease itself for several decades.

Not surprisingly, the area of mental health was largely ignored in the research that eventually emerged on this pandemic. Sverre-Erik Mamelund (as reported in the *Psychiatric Times* review), a historical demographer, was one of the few researchers to investigate this subject. His findings in looking at asylum hospitalisations in Norway, from 1872 to 1929, revealed that Spanish flu survivors often reported sleep disturbances, depression, mental distraction, dizziness, and difficulties coping at work. Furthermore, influenza death rates in the USA during the years from 1918 to 1920 increased significantly and were positively related to suicide. The pandemic also took a toll on the emotional resilience of the population at large with chronic states of helplessness and anxiousness reported as people lost loved ones, from children to parents. For many, the experience of loss left them with a feeling of guilt, anger, confusion, and abandonment. This impacted the surviving health professionals as well, and many reported feeling a sense of frustration and grief for many years.

In an opinion piece authored by Ashley Y. Shaw, Joseph K. Yun, and Nisarg A. Patel, similar sentiments regarding the COVID-19 pandemic are echoed. In their article published in *The Washington Post* (Shaw et al., 2020), they highlight the new trauma that emergency departments were facing nationwide. These authors note the following:

Children left alone during the COVID-19, find themselves orphaned as family members die from this deadly disease. Families exposed to the novel coronavirus experience additional challenges at hospitals, where health-care workers must separate parents from children because both are at risk for contagion. Children usually experience milder symptoms than adults, but they are not, as initial reports suggested, unspared by the virus. Some 40 percent of U.S. hospitals have specialized in-patient pediatric wards, where children might be treated for their own symptoms (usually fevers or mild coughing) or wait, alone, because their loved ones have been admitted. The toll of family separation is clear. Younger children are placed in single rooms in the emergency department bay for hours while health-care workers like us try to distract them with toys or cajole them to stay inside. Often, older children stand against the walls, not saying much, their faces and posture betraying anxiety about their loved ones. Hospital protocols crafted to minimize contamination prohibit children from visiting COVID-19 patients even if the children have been admitted. At best, their hellos—and possibly goodbyes—are communicated through video. When working around children who are isolated but might not be infected, it is hard not to worry that we are seeing the first of the COVID-19 orphans.

Like any disease, the psychological impact of the COVID-19 on patients and their relatives is almost certain to be severe. Family separation and hospital isolation policies lead to varying degrees of depression and anxiety in children in addition to their immature neurological pathways that are susceptible to trauma. The long-term behavioural and psychological consequences of this trauma are currently unknown and will unfold in the years to come. Providing family-centered care, while imperative, seems virtually impossible. Sometimes, these tales of sorrow, despair, anxiety, and depression find their way to the virtual doors of local therapists and institutions that, in turn, struggle to provide solace, guidance, and therapeutic services, while coping with personal tragedies of their own.

As we attempt to address and examine several issues related to the care and management of these children, especially in the SAARC region, several questions for consideration and thoughtful discussion do arise. These are just some that come to mind as I ponder on the fate and outcome of this deadly disease and its long-term impact on institutionalised children and those in need of care and protection in the communities:

1. What will be the impact of limited economic resources and loss of jobs as well as the loss of adult lives on the number of children who are either abandoned or left to fend for themselves?
2. How will policies of family strengthening and de-institutionalisation, both programmes currently in the process of being reviewed, promoted and rigorously implemented in the SAARC region, be impacted as families are forced to restrict access and maintain social distance in their communities? Will such constraints derail this programme and/or force authorities to seek more large-scale venues for addressing the growing needs of institutionalised children and those who may be entering the system for the first time?
3. How do caretakers across the different disciplines (social workers, psychologists, mentor mothers/fathers, caretakers) address the growing mental health, social and educational needs of children in institutional care who are now confined to their homes?
4. How does enforcement of mandated rules for social distancing and masking work in institutional settings where children now gather for twenty-four years, without any respite when attending school, or being cared for by others such as volunteers outside the institutional walls? Will increasing levels of anxiety and depression tax existing structures and result in behavioural problems and other trauma-related symptoms?
5. A growing concern for the burnout rates that exist among caretakers in these institutions warrant understanding and investigating their mental health concerns as well. How do these individuals who often leave children behind in their villages cope with their anxiety and worry about their loved ones who they cannot have any access to under the current travel restrictions?

6. What is the long-term impact on the cognitive, social, and emotional development of these children impacted by this virus in one form or the other?
7. If we consider the trauma related to the loss of loved ones and caretakers, how do we train our mental health staff and prepare to receive growing groups of children of all ages that need care and protection?
8. How will limited resources be allocated with respect to care and provision of services? How do we ensure a just and safe system of delivery?

Suffice it to say that we know little about such matters, and it will undoubtedly dominate the research and investigatory platform for years. But unlike the pandemic of 1918, rapid advancements in medical technology and vaccine research have led to global collaborative efforts to seek to find solutions in the treatment and management of this disease. Today, we know a great deal more about how to manage the disease although the outcome remains grim for many. The long-term impact on the respiratory and cardiac systems remains unclear, and reports of its deadly attack on the nervous system continue to escalate. Nevertheless, news of an effective vaccine (from several pharmaceutical companies) brings hope for the year with a promise of a new life and new beginnings.

However, as countries position themselves to receive this vaccine, one cannot help but wonder about the global powers at play as they position themselves to benefit from these advances. While one cannot with any degree of certainty determine their underlying motives, one can only surmise that economic greed by knowledge of limited resources and the sheer numbers of people needing care serve as indicators that guide the distribution and allocation of resources. Where countries in the SAARC region and especially institutionalised children and those in need of care and protection fall in this estimation is unclear. One can only hope that they will not be forgotten.

In conclusion, I end with the following quote from *The Washington Post* article:

Ultimately, a vaccine will keep the novel coronavirus at bay. But the traumas inflicted by COVID-19 will remain and most likely resurface. We cannot completely shield children from the consequences of this pandemic but acknowledging its effects on their well-being and taking other meaningful actions might lessen their scars.

This article was sent out for publication in November 2020. (All figures are with respect to the situation till November.)

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A Brief Report on The First International Care Leavers Convention 2020

Originally planned to be held in person as a first-ever conference on and with Care Leavers in March 2020, the first-ever International Care Leavers¹ Convention was held, virtually for three days, from 23 to 25 November 2020.

The convention was held under the aegis of the Organising Committee, comprising Udayan Care, India; SOS Children's Villages International; The University of Hildesheim in Germany and Kinderperspectief Netherlands, along with four Care Leavers networks, namely, CLAN India, GNG Sri Lanka, Zimbabwe Care Leavers Network and the Latin America Care Leavers Network.

It all started with four convention pre-events (The need for Networking, Role of Video in Finding Voice, Contribution of Research on Care Leaving and, the last one, a contest of Poster Presentation on Research and Practices on Aftercare), to initiate the conversation and bring the participants together. The convention saw more than 2,200 participants from over 83 countries from six continents, which ensured, as one of our speakers said, 'The beginning of a global social movement'. Care Leavers from many countries joined practitioners, researchers and civil society organisations to make it an overwhelming virtual convention.

The main three-day convention welcomed discussions by distinguished speakers, practitioners, researchers, policy makers and, above all, Care Leavers themselves, from different parts of the world, to share their perspectives and experiences on care leaving, in keeping with the foundational theme for the convention, 'Together. Towards Empowerment', facilitating the inclusivity and significance of all stakeholders.

Major takeaways were presented by a group of Care Leavers and include the formation of a Global Network of Care Leavers that will drive the Second International Care Leavers Convention in 2022. In the words of one of the technical partners, the convention provided 'unprecedented exposure and opportunity to start the dialogue between Care Leavers from all over the world, and gave them a chance to amplify their voices'. This unstoppable global journey has just begun and needs a collaborative joining of hands by all to sustain its momentum.

The convention finale, held on Friday, 11 December, summarised key takeaways of 'care conversations' and catalogued concrete commitments from

policy makers who will employ these data to advocate lasting, transnational change. Some of the key takeaways highlighted the following:

- It is crucial that the caregivers in childcare institutions or foster cares be capable of understanding, accepting and nourishing the children in care. The heart family is as essential as the blood family.
- Children and youth do want to be better prepared for leaving care. Accessibility to information, education, employment and other services is as essential as access to the digital world.
- More participatory research can be useful to assess their strengths, resilience and challenges.
- Free and quality access to mental health services for Care Leavers should be made mandatory.
- 25 should be the new 18 (soft landing from planet youth care on planet earth).
- ‘Self-story’ and ‘Story of Care Leavers’ could potentially aid in ‘healing’ as well as ‘Care Leaver’s integration’ into the outside world. Peer-to-peer, local and national support groups for Care Leavers also need to be promoted and supported by all stakeholders.
- Care Leavers must be included in decision-/policy-making processes as they would know the situation better due to their living experience as a Care Leavers. They should also be led to have a seat at the table at national and international fora such as the United Nations, which is responsible for making essential decisions that may affect a Care Leaver’s life.

As a way forward, for extending support and advocacy for Care Leavers, a resource website, www.careleaverscommunity.org, has been launched to further aid the Aftercare community outreach and strengthening their networks. The Global Care Leavers Network is all set to plan and deliver the second convention in 2022.²

Notes

1. ‘Care Leavers’ are young adults, who exit residential care or foster care on turning a certain age of adulthood, which is mostly 18 years and have minimal support for their financial, social and emotional stability and independent living.
2. For more news on the event, please refer to:
 - a. “<http://www.education.ox.ac.uk/indias-first-ever-international-care-leavers-convention/>”India’s first ever International Care Leavers Convention (ox.ac.uk)
 - b. “<https://www.theweek.in/wire-updates/business/2020/12/17/pwr29-udayan-care.html>”
 - c. “<http://everythingexperiential.businessworld.in/article/International-Care-Leavers-Conference-to-create-global-advocacy/18-11-2020-343901/>”
 - d. “<https://www.newindianexpress.com/cities/delhi/2020/nov/23/for-better-aftercare-of-care-leavers-2226917.html>”

- **Youth leaving care are the most vulnerable youths in the society**

<https://www.freepressjournal.in/mumbai/lockdown-impact-care-leavers-lose-jobs-look-for-shelter-and-support>)

As children, these youth were either orphaned, abandoned or from broken families. They have nowhere to go once they are out of child care institutions. They have to start their lives from scratch at 18 years. They have lived their entire lives in an institution. Now, suddenly, at 18, they are expected to fend for themselves. Some have faced adversities at an early age, while others have witnessed assault, so they need a lot of psychological, emotional and social support.

Lockdown impact: Care Leavers lose jobs, seek shelter and support.

- **NCPCR decision to send children in care centers**

<https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/ncPCR-decision-to-send-children-in-care-centres-back-to-their-families-draws-supreme-court-ire/storygu4hfUlcuOPir8TovL6h5I.html>)

NCPCR's decision to send children in care centers back to their families came under scrutiny as it makes the children more vulnerable and at risk of exploitation. The pandemic has rendered children even more vulnerable, as it appears that cases of domestic abuse, child labour and child marriages are increasing, and increasing poverty has led to a substantial increase in the number of children in need of care and protection.

- **Cases of child labour have spiked since the lockdown caused by the pandemic**

http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/76916365.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst)

Undoubtedly, there has been an increase in the number of calls received pertaining to child labour during the lockdown months. There have also been cases in which parents have asked their children to work as they couldn't earn anything.

- **Policy brief: A disability-inclusive response to COVID-19**

https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/wp-content/uploads/sites/15/2020/05/sg_policy_brief_on_persons_with_disabilities_final.pdf

The global crisis of COVID-19 has deepened the pre-existing inequalities, thus exposing the extent of exclusion and highlighting that work on disability inclusion is imperative. This policy brief highlights the impact of COVID19 on persons with disabilities and in doing so, outlines key actions and recommendations to make the response and recovery inclusive of persons with disabilities.

- **Focus on addressing the impacts of COVID-19 on children and families as part of recovery efforts**

<https://bettercarenetwork.org/sites/default/files/2020-11/2020-Eurochild-Semester-Report.pdf>

This report reflects on the effects of the coronavirus pandemic on children. It compiles information gathered from 25 countries across Europe, and provides recommendations for improving public policies in the short and long-term to support better outcomes for children and families. Out of 25 country profiles, 20 also looked at the situation of children in alternative care, including the increased risk of placement in alternative care due to financial pressures and domestic violence faced by families in light of the pandemic, as well as the impacts of COVID-19 on children in out-of-home care.

- **Averting a lost COVID generation**

<https://bettercarenetwork.org/sites/default/files/2021-01/Averting-a-lost-covid-generation-world-childrens-day-data-and-advocacy-brief-2020.PDF>

UNICEF developed a six-point plan to respond, recover and reimagine a post-pandemic world for every child. It urges governments to adopt this comprehensive package of support to protect our children now and to help reimagine a better future. Without urgent action, we risk an irreversible decline in progress on child rights and towards the Sustainable Development Goals.

- **Shifts in education system: COVID impact**

<https://reliefweb.int/report/world/urgent-call-equal-digital-citizenship-and-cyber-security-girls-asia>

After the school closures, the world witnessed shifts in the education system from a traditional classroom to digital learning facilities, and there is still a lingering huge gap faced by many students, particularly girls due to limited access to technology and digital tools. A study revealed that women and girls are 26% less likely to own a mobile phone than men and boys.

- **How Delhi-based Udayan Care helped over 30,000 children and women through its initiatives (yourstory.com)**

https://yourstory.com/socialstory/2020/12/delhi-based-udayan-care-children-women-upskilling?utm_pageloadtype=scroll

Combating these hurdles, Udayan Shalini Fellowship Programme of Udayan Care distributed 155 smartphones across the 21 chapters of India, to enable them in learning, staying in school and staying connected. USF has been building phenomenal trajectories for accelerating women's empowerment for almost two decades. The core idea is to help women from underserved communities in negotiating their challenges, providing hand-holding and enhancing their capacities.

Upcoming Events

Institutionalised Children Explorations
and Beyond
8(1) 151–153, 2021

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3rd International Young Carers Conference: 'Identify, Support, Listen to Young Carers'

Website: <https://eurocarers.org/2020-iycc/registration/>

Date of Event: 3–6 May 2021

Location: Online

The 3rd International Young Carers Conference will be rooted in the principles of **co-design**: no meaningful discussion about young carers can take place without young carers' active engagement. One of the main results of these efforts consisted in the creation of a **Eurocarers Young Carers Working Group**, which is now part of Eurocarers core structure. Back at the time of its formation, the group brought together 17 members from 9 states. Today, the group has doubled in size to include 30 young carers, young adult carers or former young carers from 11 countries. The mission of this **community of experts by experience** is to inform Eurocarers' work and to advocate for policies and practices that enable young carers to pursue their goals in life.

ISPCAN Milan 2021 Hybrid Congress

Website: <https://www.ispcan.org/milan2021/>

Date of Event: 7–11th June 2021

Location: Online

Given the state of the world with the growing pandemic, now more than ever we must protect children from harm and abuse. It is critical to children's welfare that we be more strategic with our interventions and our resources. To address the issues of child protection and child rights, ISPCAN Milan 2021 Hybrid Congress will be taking place in June.

Leaning into Culturally-grounded Anti-bias Child Assessment, by Iheoma Iruka

Website: <https://register.gotowebinar.com/register/4622424261108590091>

Date of Event: 5 April 2021

Location: Online

Early Childhood Investigations, a webinar series produced by Engagement Strategies, LLC. This webinar is sponsored by COR Advantage Evidence exists about the importance and impact of early care and education for children's school readiness and academic and school success. Child assessment plays a critical role in supporting children's school readiness by providing early childhood educators with important information about children's assets, growth and potential, as well as areas needing strengthening. For assessment to meet the standards of developmentally appropriate practice, it must be authentic and strengths-based. That is, children should be assessed in the context of their daily routines and activities as they engage with familiar materials through an asset frame. Unfortunately, there is evidence that children of colour, especially black children, are often assessed as less cognitively, linguistically and socially astute than their peers. There is a need to transform child assessments as an equity tool to support children in a racially-affirming and holistic way. This means interrogating the content, purpose and goals of the assessments, and the role of adults' biases, behaviours and the learning environment.

International Conference on Children's Health and Risk Factors (ICCHRF 2021)

Website: [https://waset.org/](https://waset.org/childrens-health-and-risk-factors-conference-in-june-2021-in-copenhagen)

[childrens-health-and-risk-factors-conference-in-june-2021-in-copenhagen](https://waset.org/childrens-health-and-risk-factors-conference-in-june-2021-in-copenhagen)

Date of Event: 10–11 June 2021

Location: Copenhagen, Denmark

International Conference on Children's Health and Risk Factors aims to bring together leading academic scientists, researchers and research scholars to exchange and share their experiences and research results on all aspects of children's health and risk factors. It also provides a premier interdisciplinary platform for researchers, practitioners and educators to present and discuss the most recent innovations, trends and concerns as well as practical challenges encountered and solutions adopted in the fields of children's health and risk factors.

Digital Inclusion 2021: Creating Accessible and Inclusive Digital Services

Website: [https://www.governmentevents.co.uk/event/](https://www.governmentevents.co.uk/event/digital-inclusion-2021-creating-accessible-and-inclusive-digital-services/)

[digital-inclusion-2021-creating-accessible-and-inclusive-digital-services/](https://www.governmentevents.co.uk/event/digital-inclusion-2021-creating-accessible-and-inclusive-digital-services/)

Date of Event: 20 April 2021

Location: Online

Public sector services are increasingly moving online, accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, with 'digital by default' providing a cost-effective and accessible

service for many. However, for members of the public with no or few digital skills, who are often more disadvantaged and vulnerable than the rest of the population, the digitisation of public services threatens to leave them behind. Digital inclusion initiatives, from service design, digital champions and targeted digital upskilling, can empower people to access economic, social and financial benefits that are only available through digital literacy. Join Digital Inclusion 2021: Creating Accessible and Inclusive Digital Services to hear the latest updates on digital inclusion funding, policy and practice from leading decision makers. Engage with a series of best practice case studies from across the UK, showcasing effective digital inclusion strategies and projects in a range of settings, equipping you with the tools to assess and improve your digital services and inclusion initiatives.

CWLA 2021 Virtual Conference, Lessons Learned from 2020: Reaching New Heights for Children and Families

Website: <https://www.cwla.org/conferences/>

Date of Event: 4–6 May 2021

Location: Online

Explore the numerous service enhancements and innovations that have been developed by child welfare and other allied fields in response to COVID-19, discussing the successful strategies and approaches that can be integrated into our service work moving forward, and identifying the practice, policy and funding changes that may be required to help organisations implement and adapt.