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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 September 2021 issue of this journal sees our community of professionals still in the grip of the COVID-19 pandemic. Since our last issue, the SAARC region and particularly India, the home base of this journal, has seen dramatic increase in COVID cases, with a concomitant increase in mortality. Fear, anxieties and a pervasive sense of dread and death is always present and occupies all our minds frequently. Despite this, our efforts to publish and put out a journal issue in a timely manner continues, and I owe a debt of gratitude to the members of the editorial board who have worked tirelessly, to make this happen. The compilation of papers in this issue covers not only concerns regarding the ongoing pandemic but also issues related to the ongoing management of institutionalised children and those most in need of care and protection.

The interview with Amanda Bissex, regional advisor for child protection for the UNICEF regional office for South Asia, was conducted by Dr Gurmeet Kalra. With over 18 years of experience, Ms Bissex is uniquely qualified to illuminate on our ongoing discussion of alternative care and child protection in the post-COVID age. A strong advocate for family strengthening, regional cooperation and sharing of lessons learned along with good practices, Ms Bissex recognises the long-term social and economic consequences of the pandemic and suggests some actions that governments and partners can take to mitigate this impact.

Our research section begins with a paper by Srishti Kapoor on the underlying dynamics of runaway children. Recognising that these children make up for a significant number of institutionalised children, the author focuses on both peer and parental attachment styles to account for the disparities and suggests that specific models of rehabilitation could target peer attachment to enhance emotional regulation.

This is followed by a paper by Garima Sharma who examines within the context of identity and gender, the transition of young adults from institutionalised setting to adulthood. This qualitative study using interview questions are consistent with other studies, that find that youth leaving the child-care institutions are at higher risks of having negative adult outcomes in life. Ms Sharma's focus on the factors that enhance or detract from this transition suggest various factors that can be considered, that would enhance this inevitable transition.

The next paper by Ratna Saxena examines the various policies, laws and schemes that support two different forms of alternative care, namely, foster care and adoption. The paper explores several factors that persist in many institutions

that impede the social and emotional development of many of its inhabitants. Suggestions for how these can be improved and/or implemented are presented as communities increasingly move towards alternative care settings.

In a paper on child trafficking, Raji Debnath examines how one programme in Mumbai deals with this issue. Implemented in 2007 under the auspices of Save the Children India, the Centre Sahas Kendra has grown significantly. As a state-run programme, the centre aims to address the trauma of those minors through therapy and re-entry programmes. They work to improve their chances of reintegrating into society as empowered and independent citizens. The paper presents several stories of change and highlights the role of partnering with the state machinery and engaging with the staff.

In her paper on the success of Childline, Lila Bora examines the role of increasing awareness and empowering children to make calls in times of crisis. Collaboration with society is emphasised with the aim of protecting and advocating for the children. The author emphasises the significant role that Childline can play in protecting children who are in crisis and keep them from becoming invisible through their mobility and lack of trust of authority.

For our final paper in the research section, we are pleased to share a study conducted by Udayan Care. This paper examines the significance of caring for the Carers during the pandemic. By collecting data from several South Asian countries and conducting a systematic analysis of the responses, the authors provide approach-centred strategies for improving the well-being of caregivers. The mental and physical health of caregivers is directly correlated to the care that children in institutional setting receive. During the pandemic, their role has become even more critical, and the authors suggest that by addressing their concerns at ground level, can only enhance and promote the well-being of the children in their care.

Authored by Mr Subhadeep, our good model paper by conducting a thorough and systematic analysis of the implementation of the Alternative Care Guidelines, the researcher maps out the implementation bottlenecks as well as barriers (systemic, structural and operational) that prevent the smooth delivery and implementation of care. Furthermore, the author examines the causal linkage between implementation of alternative care guidelines and dependency on institutional care. He suggests that the failure of adequate alternative care guidelines and their implementation prevents the process of de-institutionalisation, a key objective and goal for the population under consideration.

The status of Ethiopia in this regard is not different. Existing policy frameworks concerning children have failed to address the needs of Ethiopian Care Leavers despite the existence of over five million orphan and vulnerable children in the country most of whom are placed in institutional childcare centres. This article presents the case for an independent care leaving policy in Ethiopia to address the multifaceted needs of children in care and improve the care leaving service in the country. Thus, the study sheds light on the state of care leaving policy in the

world, and lessons for Ethiopia to support Ethiopia's attempt to serve the most vulnerable children—children in care by developing its own care leaving policy.

Our opinion piece by Edouard Georges from Africa emphasises the importance of strengthening the Leadership of Care Leavers and their integration in decision making bodies which is a key for the social and economic development of communities in Africa.

In our movie section, Lakshmi Madhavan provides an interesting account of the movie 'My Life as a Courgette'. The movie directed by Claude Barras is a French stop-motion animation with a complex narrative of abuse, grief and friendship during childhood. The central character finds himself in a childcare institution upon losing both his parents. However, his entry into this institution is not without problems. The movie depicts the day-to-day interactions that many children experience when they first enter an alternative care setting. Often, the love and concern expressed as a single adult is enough to weather the inevitable disappointments of such transitions.

In the choice of the book, *Stringing Rosaries: The History, the Unforgivable, and the Healing of Northern Plains American Indian Boarding School Survivors* by Denise Kajmodiere, Lara Sheehi highlights the complex scenarios that sometimes accompany the lives of those who enter orphanages and boarding school. In the book, the author examines in painful detail the discovery of several indigenous children who died in boarding schools and whose bodies were not discovered till 2021. The bodies discovered in the Dakotas and Minnesota presents the struggle that indigenous people in the United States and Canada experienced and continue to experience in their lives, especially when forcibly removed from their homes in an attempt to integrate and assimilate them into what was considered a settler society. A must read for those who value the significance of maintaining the culture and heritage of anyone removed from their homes and placed in alternative settings.

Monisha Nayar-Akhtar
Editor-in-Chief

Brief Communications

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- Children around the world face the devastating effects of COVID-19, and it has been particularly detrimental for the children residing in zones of conflict. ‘Terror groups take advantage of the fact that children are the most susceptible to manipulation. School closures due to the pandemic have provided an even greater opportunity to these terrorist groups to target children, including through online avenues, for radicalisation and indoctrination in violent extremist ideologies’, said Harsh V Shringla, India’s Foreign Secretary. (*Covid has increased recruitment of children by terror groups, says Foreign Secretary Shringla at UNSC*. <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/foreign-secretary-shringla-covid-recruitment-children-terror-groups-uns-1820550-2021-06-29>)
- Pandemic-related deaths have taken a huge toll on India as the second wave of COVID-19 has left the nation incapacitated to a certain degree. With higher mortality rates among adults, children may often land in a situation where they are directly sent away to other families or trafficked. ‘Not all children who lose parents to Covid-19 are automatically orphans. Many of such children have relatives and extended families who will come forward to take care of such children. Such relatives and the general public however need to be made aware of law and legal processes which they need to follow’, as pointed out by Anant Kumar Asthana, Child Rights Lawyer. (*Beware of traffickers: Social media posts seeking adoption for ‘Covidorphans’ raise concern*. <https://theprint.in/india/beware-of-traffickers-social-media-posts-seeking-adoption-for-covid-orphans-raise-concern/658695/>)
- A total of 196 state parties will be congregating for the convention on the Rights of the Child to observe the day of general discussion (DGD) in order to address the most pressing issues concerning children’s rights in today’s time. According to The Committee on the Rights of the Child ‘The overall purpose of the day of general discussion is to examine broadly the current situation regarding alternative care in its complexity, identify and discuss particular areas of concern with regard to the unnecessary separation of children from their families and appropriate ways to respond to family and child separation in cases where it is unavoidable’. (*Day of General Discussion: ‘Children’s Rights and Alternative Care’*. <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/CRC/Pages/Discussion2020.aspx#:~:text=The%20overall%20purpose%20of%20the,respond%20to%20family%20and%20child>)

- Children living in regions of ongoing conflict often are exposed to various forms of atrocities. United Nations (UN) High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) spokesperson, Babar Baloch said that ‘an estimated 270,000 Afghans have been newly displaced inside the country since January 2021, primarily due to insecurity and violence, bringing the total uprooted population to over 3.5 million’. (*UNHCR warns of humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan*. <https://daijiworld.com/news/newsDisplay?newsID=853443>)
- The second wave of COVID-19 cases in Nepal puts children at even greater risk of child labour in the wake of new lockdowns and rising illness and death rates among caregivers. Many children feel they have no choice but to work to help their families survive, but a rise in child labour is not an inevitable consequence of the pandemic. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/05/26/nepal-covid-19-pandemic-fueling-child-labor>
- Support packages and aids for care leavers have been initiated by various stakeholders who took into account the multifaceted difficulties faced by children who leave care after turning 18. And, according to Dr Patrick McGarty on the Kerry campus ‘while a range of policy interventions have eradicated elements of educational disadvantage, research has consistently highlighted that young people with “care-experience” have lower educational attainment and progress through education at lower rates than many other socio-economically disadvantaged students’. This statement was announced after The Munster Technological University launched a new scheme to provide tailored support packages for its students who grew up in state care. (*MTU support scheme for people who grew up in care an Irish first*. <https://www.independent.ie/regionals/kerryman/news/mtu-support-scheme-for-people-who-grew-up-in-care-an-irish-first-40517137.html>)
- The Lancet Global Minimum estimates show that about 1,042,000 children became orphans as a result of COVID-19 related deaths until April 2021. Acceleration of access to vaccine delivery for all would be the primary focus and key to prevent further adverse consequences such as poverty, abuse and institutionalisation. Economic and psychological support to the affected families have become the need of the hour in order to avoid and prevent institutionalisation of the affected children. ([https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(21\)01253-8/fulltext%20](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(21)01253-8/fulltext%20)) ([https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(21\)01253-8/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(21)01253-8/fulltext))
- A full 23 million children missed out on basic childhood vaccines in 2020, as routine health services were hit worldwide by restrictions aimed at controlling COVID-19, and many parents shunned the clinics that were open for fear of exposure to the virus. The UN warned that a ‘perfect storm’ was brewing, with a raging pandemic disrupting access to routine vaccinations, leaving millions of children at risk from measles and other deadly diseases. (*UN warns of ‘perfect storm’ as childhood vaccination plummets*. <https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20210714-un-warns-of-perfect-storm-as-childhood-vaccination-plummets>)

- The voiceless plights of the children who have succumbed to the Rohingya Crisis continue to go unheard. Hassan Noor, Asia Regional Director at Save the Children, commented ‘With the magnitude of atrocities they have faced, Rohingya children are among the most persecuted in the world—failed by both their own countries and those they have fled to. Unjustly denied citizenship in Myanmar, they face discrimination and exclusion wherever they go. They are denied their most basic rights—the chance to go to school, to feel safe in their own homes and to live free from discrimination and prejudice’. (*No safe haven: The plight of Rohingya children across Asia*. <https://reliefweb.int/report/bangladesh/no-safe-haven-plight-rohingya-children-across-asia>)
- The Ministry of Women and Child Welfare, India, proposed its Trafficking in Persons (Prevention, Care and Rehabilitation) Bill, 2021, in July 2021. It aims to increase the scope of the nature of offenses of trafficking as well as the kind of victims of these offenses, with stringent penalties and cases like forced child labour will also be covered under this law. Several concerns and recommendations by like-minded groups have been submitted to the Ministry, raising concerns around several aspects. Among various concerns, as opposed to consider institutionalisation as the last resort for children, this bill insists on rescue and rehabilitation through institutionalisation. Basic needs of education and vocational training are rendered meaningless, as it does not provide any alternatives for community-based or family-based rehabilitation. It also requires setting up of protection homes and rehabilitation homes for rescued children but does not define and differentiate between a protection home and a rehabilitation home with their clear objectives. This proposed mechanism for inspection in the Bill also results in a conflict with the inspection mechanisms under The Juvenile Justice Act, 2015. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/draft-anti-trafficking-bill-proposes-crackdown-on-organised-crime-syndicates-severe-punishment-for-aggravated-offences/articleshow/84113874.cms>

Upcoming Events

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2021 Annual Meeting for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action: Preventing Harm to Children

Website: <https://alliancecpha.org/en/annualmeeting2021>

Organiser: The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action (the Alliance)

Date of Event: 4–8 October 2021

Location: Virtual

The annual meeting is an opportunity for humanitarian actors to come together and exchange knowledge and experience, while networking with other agencies, academics, policymakers and donors. The annual meeting represents a forum where important themes can be discussed and ways forward can be developed. This year's theme, Preventing Harm to Children, was selected to explore the lessons learnt, promising practices and innovative approaches to preventing harm to children in humanitarian contexts. The meeting will focus in particular on primary prevention approaches that address risk and protective factors that negatively impact children in humanitarian settings.

International Conference on Early Childhood Education and Care

Website: <https://waset.org/early-childhood-education-and-care-conference-in-october-2021-in-new-york>

Organiser: The International Research Conference

Date of Event: 7–8 October 2021

Location: Virtual

The event aims to bring together leading academic scientists, researchers and research scholars to exchange and share their experiences and research results on all aspects of Early Childhood Education and Care. 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 Early Childhood Education and Care.

BICON 2021

Website: <https://changemakersforchildren.community/bicon/>

Organiser: Changemakers for Children

Date of Event: 8–9 December 2021

Location: Virtual

Since 2014, the Biennial Conference on Alternative Care for Children in Asia (BICON) has been a major conference focussed on the rights of children and young people without parental care (CWPC). Previously hosted by Udayan Care, BICONS are conceived as a regional advocacy platform to bring stakeholders working on child and youth care together for sharing, learning and connecting. The BICON 2021 will be an important event for stakeholders to work together to drive care reform in the region and to contribute to global conversations on this important topic.

31st Annual Children Come First Conference

Website: <https://www.ccfconference.org>

Organiser: Wisconsin Family Ties and Mental Alliance

Date of Event: 15–16 November 2021

Location: Kalahari Resort & Convention Center Wisconsin Dells, Wisconsin

The conference aims to bring together hundreds of professionals, educators and families along with national experts in the field of children's mental health in order to learn about strategies and practices to apply in our daily life. And, to connect in person with leading professionals and resources that can be of use in an organisational, community and at home level.

International Conference on Quality of Care and the Importance of Person-centred Primary Care

Website: <https://waset.org/quality-of-care-and-the-importance-of-person-centered-primary-care-conference-in-february-2022-in-sydney>

Organiser: The International Research Conference

Date of Event: 25–26 February 2022

Location: TBC

International Conference on Quality of Care and the Importance of Person-Centred Primary Care aims to bring together leading academic scientists, researchers and research scholars to exchange and share their experiences and research results on all aspects of Quality of Care and the Importance of Person-centred Primary Care. 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 Quality of Care and the Importance of Person-centred Primary Care.

When life snatches a home, parents, siblings, from a child, at Udayan Care we make sure it doesn't take away their smile and hope.

Since its inception in 1994, Udayan Care have been transforming lives by means of various programs, with a cross cutting theme of providing family strengthening and family re-integration. Ranging from providing a family like environment in our Udayan Ghars, for 'children without parental care' to strengthening innumerable families of marginalized communities, by creating higher education, vocational trainings and livelihood opportunities for them, through other programmes.

Seeing a dearth of research practices in south Asia, 'Institutionalised Children Explorations and Beyond' (ICB) was

launched by Udayan Care in 2014 to create a platform for consistent sharing of information, dialogue and research, by bringing together practitioners, academicians, functionaries on this platform.

Wish to partner with us in this journey of transforming lives?

Kindly visit us at: www.udayancare.org

