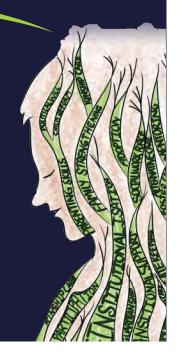
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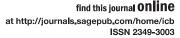
Deinstitutionalisation: Policies, Strategies, Practices and Implications for South Asia

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 care giving, 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 and Beyond 7(1) 7–11, 2020 © 2020 Udayan Care and SAGE Publications India Pvt Ltd Reprints and permissions: in.sagepub.com/journals-permissions-india DOI: 10.1177/23493003 19898780 journals.sagepub.com/home/icb



For the year 2020, we chose to devote both volumes to the issue of deinstitutionalisation in the SAARC region. Deinstitutionalisation as a programme ensures that 'children without parental care' are not placed in institutions, unless in contexts of utter necessity; it also facilitates removing children from institutional settings and placing them within family-based or family-like environments. This programme has gained momentum internationally and will also be the central theme for our next BICON being held in Kathmandu, Nepal, in September 2020. Udayan Care initiated the 'Biennial Conferences on Alternative Care' (BICONs) focused on South Asia in 2014, as an endeavour that unites representatives from countries in southern Asia, concerned with the domain of child rights, child protection and mental health. The past conferences, held in 2014, 2016 and 2018, have focused on issues of mental health, care and protection of children without parental care, and those who are at the risk of being so, and have always garnered huge success and appreciation.

Hope and Homes for Children (HHC), one of the lead partners at the third BICON, is a British registered charity working alongside governments and civil society organisations in over 30 countries, to dismantle orphanage-based care systems. Their transformation model is driving reform and laying the foundations for long-lasting change. Strengthening the partnership and keeping in mind the expertise of HHC internationally in bringing about global reforms in the alternative care space, we invited them to serve as guest editor for the March 2020 issue. We are delighted to present this volume as a culmination of their thoughtful efforts and representing their dedication to this programme worldwide.

Deinstitutionalisation, as a philosophy and a process is complex, as also seen in its application with diverse groups and international settings. Our September 2020 issue will therefore continue to examine this issue for the SAARC region.

I am pleased to announce that the journal is now being represented by SAGE Publications. They will serve as our major distributing house and will guide us to take the journal to its next level. Our editorial board continues to grow, and we are delighted that Dr Lara Sheehi, assistant professor of Clinical Psychology at George Washington University, has joined us as the book editor and has made her debut contribution in this special issue.

This issue begins with a foreword by Dr Delia Pop, who is the director of Programmes and Global Advocacy at HHC. Dr Pop has a commitment to global advocacy for deinstitutionalisation, having been earlier intimately connected in Romania with Child Protection Authority Services as well as serving as the

director of Alternative Residential Services. A fellow of the RSA, the president of the Executive Committee of Child Rights Connect, as well as other high-level child focused working groups in the USA and Europe, Delia is a strong advocate on behalf of children in institutional care, with a particular interest in ensuring that children with disabilities are enabled to realise their potential and rights. She is no stranger to the SAARC region, having been a keynote speaker at our third BICON held in Delhi NCR—Noida, India, in March 2018. Dr Pop's foreword is a straightforward account of the imperative need for the expansion of deinstitutionalisation programmes worldwide. Her considerable knowledge in this field is augmented with a drive that is unparalleled in getting things done. She will be a key participant in our next BICON in September 2020, in Nepal, and her foreword provides an insight to her guiding principles regarding the implementation of deinstitutionalisation programmes.

Tessa Boudrie, the regional director Asia of HHC, conducts an interview of Professor Andy Bilson, who is emeritus professor at the University of Central Lancashire, where he serves as the associate director of The Centre for Children and Young People's Participation. He is a strong advocate for promoting children's rights and reform of the child protection systems. He is committed to the cause of deinstitutionalisation. Ms Boudrie's interview explores Professor Bilson's professional growth and the transformations that occurred within him as well as in the field. The interview reflects the wisdom, insight and internal direction that serve to place such individuals in prominent places of service.

The research section is a compilation of five interesting papers that addresses various aspects of this central theme. We begin with an article that addresses the overarching question of how one develops a family-based model of care. The paper is the end product of the efforts of several contributors from different organisations, working in this field and grappling with this very issue. Their approach is rather unique. With the recognition that transitions to family-based models of care might pose some challenges, these agents of change developed an experiential workshop which mirrors the conditions of an organisation transitioning to family care. This novel idea takes participants through the various stages of implementation and in the process, helps them develop a personalised plan for their programmes; unique in concept and much needed for the SAARC region, as cultural and other social variables are bound to have an impact.

All programmes need considerable financial support to be successful. In the next paper, Ghazal Keshavarzian and Joel Borgström consider the efforts of Elevate Children Funders Group, a consortium of foundations dedicated to building strong families providing a safe and violence-free environment for its children, advocating for investing in families and communities rather than orphanages. Drawing from a substantial literature review that highlights the problematic outcomes of children growing up in institutions, the author examines the role that both private and government funding plays in promoting different forms of family-based and alternative care. While the paper draws from a recently commissioned funding stream analysis in Nepal, its findings and strategies are applicable to many settings in the SAARC region.

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For our next paper, we delve into two central and guiding principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its implementation in eight South Asian countries. The principles advocate measures to prevent the unnecessary separation of children from their families as well as strongly recommends that a child be placed in alternative care as a measure of last resort. The authors acknowledge that while progress in the implementation of these goals has been made, a more thorough analysis of its implementation and of its outcomes remains elusive. They examine the factors contributing to this and suggest avenues for change and growth.

For several years, Child in Need Institute (CINI), a national level NGO working in India since 1974, in collaboration with HHC, have been implementing a project titled 'Strengthening Family-based Alternative Care System in Jharkhand'. In this paper, they provide an in-depth review of the vulnerability factors that lead to family/child separations and efforts that can be made to avert such tragic situations. The paper explores their participatory governance process that involves community-based institutions along with other children and women groups to provide safe spaces for children. This helps in identifying children at risk, in tracking them and eventually providing effective interventions for their well-being.

The final paper in the research section by Pradeep Nair, explores some of the mental health concerns that appear when children and young adults are displaced and placed in community-based alternative care arrangements. His work with Tibetans living as exiles in settlements in Dharamshala, India, provides us with an in-depth analysis of the day-to-day problems of repatriation and resettlement in an unfamiliar demography. This is perhaps not unlike a situation when a child is removed from their home (whether it be an institution or family) and placed with another family. A strong case is made for reuniting children with their families, as the challenges posed by transitional spaces often lead to disastrous outcomes.

The theme of Trauma-Informed Care (TIC) is central in Audria Choudhury's paper, composed for the good practices and models of alternative care section of the issue. Children are traumatised when separated from their families, and in this paper, the author defines the principles of TIC as practiced by Miracle Foundation, with children enrolled in alternative care. Further explication of how TIC principles are applied with children, families and the childcare institution staff through capacity building, along with access to counselling and mental health resources, follows.

For the international perspective, in Kathryn E. van Doore's paper, we learn of a widely held practice in Australia known as 'orphanage trafficking'. This refers to the recruitment of children into orphanages for the purpose of profit and exploitation. The author traces the evolution of this practice as well as the significant emerging policy and legislative reforms that are being undertaken by the Australian government. Ensuring that funding and finances are divested from institutions is advocated for in the SAARC region, along with a criminal justice response to orphanage trafficking in general. This article is an essential read to those involved in the prevention of child trafficking across many sectors in the SAARC region.

We then have our customary opinion pieces. Devanshi Khetawat, undergraduate student researcher at the University of Bath, explores the cognitive, behavioural and emotional benefits of deinstitutionalisation for children with disabilities, by conducting a comparative study of the United Kingdom and India. She is a strong advocate (based on her research and analysis) for the implementation of family-based care for children with disabilities, showing benefits across several areas of development in her findings.

From the perspectives of children and youth in care, we have two different perspectives by young adults who spent most of the childhood and adolescent years in an orphanage. Zafina Yonjan, who grew up in an orphanage in Nepal, shares a painful story of how upon being separated from her family and placed in a church-run orphanage, she was forced to perform for the 'foreigners' who either funded the orphanage or volunteered in some capacity. Zafina painfully recalls how she longed to be reunited with her family, and this persistent feeling of wanting to run away and find her biological family remained with her throughout the duration of her stay in the orphanage. Zafina's experience at the orphanage was not pleasant or heartwarming and her narrative speaks to her eternal longing to leave. Karishma Singh, on the other hand, gives us a moving and encouraging account of her experience in a childcare institution. Her narrative, which reflects the substantial growth and progress made when she left her home to live in an institution, suggests that not all homes are the same. The SAARC region has several thousand childcare institutions that provide care for children who have been abandoned or are in need of care and protection. While the need to find family-based care for all children remains imperative, so is the ongoing need to strengthen capacity building for staff and personnel in such places. There is an interim period while we transition children out of institutions, according to the no child left behind principle, and it is important to create the capacity to support the safe transition of all children into loving families during this period.

We end with our movie and book reviews. Lakshmi Madhavan's review of the popular movie Annie (1982) is poignant in its description of young Annie, as she waits and dreams of a home and parents who will one day find and call her their own. The review takes us into the life of children in the orphanage and their hopes and aspirations. Annie's world is filled with challenges, as several agendas appear and prevail in those who choose to adopt her. The movie not only depicts the dreams of young children who wait to find a home but also the pitfalls that can sometimes occur as one moves through these transitional stages.

Lara Sheehi's captivating account of the memoir by Francine Cournos, whose account of her life and her struggle to find herself, highlights the emotional sequela of dealing with profound losses and the transformative nature of healing through therapy. Dr Sheehi's scholarly review is lyrical and draws us into a world of trauma and loss, shaped by cultural and familial features. Her review strengthens the need for TIC and the thoughtfulness in understanding the problems that appear when working with someone with a complex history of loss. The memoir itself is a sensitive portrayal of one individual's journey, as Dr Sheehi rightfully points

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out. It, therefore, behooves us to keep in mind that every journey and its outcome is unique, shaped as it would be, by one's narrative, one's cultural, social and political history.

I am indebted to my editorial board for their ongoing support and guidance as we traverse these unchartered territories in our development. The journal relies on the contributions of its readership in the region and internationally, and we look forward to your input as we move forward in these endeavours.

Monisha Nayar-Akhtar Editor-in-Chief



Foreword

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The year 2019 marked two important anniversaries: Thirty years since the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and a decade since the Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children were recommended by the UN General Assembly in 2009. This special issue of an already classic journal that focused on children without parental care will mark this milestone by looking at how deinstitutionalisation led to significant and positive changes on the lives of children; what lessons we can learn and how using a sharpened focus on transforming the lives of children in institutional care we can catalyse wider, broader systemic change.

Since the adoption of the guidelines, we witnessed and, most importantly, we took part in a real movement for change, mostly focused on the development of alternatives to institutions, the transition from reliance on institutional care and the development of coordination and gatekeeping mechanisms. At government level, across European countries, political will for deinstitutionalisation translated into national legislation and action plans focused on the transition from institutions to family and community-based care. A significant number of national governments implemented moratoria on the placement of young children in any forms of residential care and developed policy provisions to cater for the alternative care of children, including aftercare. Inspired by some of these national examples of transformation, commitment to care reform spread to Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean region, helping us to understand how best to catalyse and sustain change in different socio-economic contexts.

National pilot initiatives aimed to transform institutions, and child protection systems led to an increasing confidence that homemade solutions can be developed and successfully implemented, and ultimately, it built the confidence that institutions can be eliminated. We witnessed and contributed to the development of strong national social workforce contingents, and the recognition that trained community volunteers to play a key role in supporting children in families and in building resilient communities.

Such developments accelerated over the last five years due to the support of an increasing number of funders; private, corporate and institutional donors, who committed to funding for the transition of children into families and the development of alternative care. We have increased the awareness of the harm from institutions, across the world, as well as the recognition that sometimes helping is not helping, and orphanages contribute to the displacement of children out of their families and communities.

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What are the valuable lessons we learnt?

Focusing on the situation of children outside family care, and especially those in institutional care, can be used strategically as an entry point for broader child protection system strengthening. By stimulating an effective investment in children, and development of a professional workforce while fostering interministerial coordination and promoting a child-centred agenda, the transition from institutional to family and community-based care can be an avenue to strengthen the child protection system as a whole.

Efforts to reform the child protection and care system are also likely to drive focus and resources towards community development. It is widely recognised that families affected by poverty are more vulnerable to being separated. Child protection systems based on institutional care deal with the symptoms of family separation by placing children in institutions but have no impact on the causes and effects of poverty in a household. Institutional care is also a driver of intergenerational transmission of poverty.

Across the world, the long-term consequences of institutionalisation on millions of children lead to poor education and health outcomes and social exclusion, which in turn affect children's ability to earn an income when they become adults. The transition from reliance on institutional care and child protection and care reform, on the contrary, helps to liberate resources locked into the institutional system and redistribute them to support the most vulnerable individuals and groups.

The analysis of the factors pushing children into institutional care (e.g., extreme poverty, disability, discrimination of ethnic minorities, lack of community services in rural areas, incidence of HIV/AIDS, etc.) allows the gathering of crucial information about vulnerabilities and gaps in service provision in a given territory.

Consequently, the process of family tracing and reintegration allows for the development of services and other forms of assistance in communities where they previously did not exist, reaching a number of beneficiaries, which is often significantly larger than the number of children who were deinstitutionalised. At the macro level, care reforms can be situated into a coherent framework of interventions to strengthen social protection, health, education and other key policy areas crucial to supporting children and families.

We are looking forward to continuing this journey of learning and transformation, so we can always improve how best we can serve the interest of children without parental care, and we are delighted to announce the fourth Biennial International Conference on Alternative Care for Children in Asia, which will take place from 10 to 12 September 2020 in Kathmandu, Nepal. The conference will give us all an opportunity to share, learn and get inspired.

I would also like to thank Dr Kiran Modi for her relentless pursuit of excellence, for her commitment to children and families. Realising her vision, Udayan Care is transforming and improving aftercare for those young people who have spent their childhood in care. As Karishma, who recently left Udayan's care, writes in her story: 'Today I stand as a strong and independent woman, which is the result

of a lot of hard work, sleepless nights, sacrifices, overcoming my fears, insecurities and pain, breaking personal, mental and social barriers and bringing and accepting the change to my life'.

Enjoy reading the journal, and we are looking forward to welcoming you at the conference...

Note

1. See Better Care Network and Global Social Service Workforce Alliance (2014), pp. 19–20: 'Care reform has been the entry point for reform of the whole child protection sector in Rwanda and in this way has had a significant influence on the development of a workforce at the prevention and intervention levels'. See also Joint Inter-agency statement 'Strengthening child protection systems in Sub-Saharan Africa: a Call to Action', 2012.

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