

The First International Care Leavers Convention in India
March 13-14, 2020
In collaboration with Amity University Campus, NCR, Noida, India

Background

Care Leavers¹ in India are young persons, who have lived in institutional care as a child and have left them at the age of 18 years. Having lived in highly protected and controlled environment till the age of 18, they find it difficult to live independently in the Society. The transition from living in a protective care facility to independent living often brings a host of difficulties, due to the absence of a pivotal family-like ecosystem, minimal community integration, and limited ownership of essential resources, at the care setting like that of a CCI. This leaves them with no confidence in their own agency, lacking basic life skills, disrupted education, they are often left with little job opportunities and stop dreaming or aspiring in life. To settle for the early start, they are pushed to get into menial jobs and often stigmatised in the society.

Having not experienced permanency in their lives, these young persons go through immense mental stress and have no access to support services. The outcomes then are but logical – taking to streets, substance abuse, homelessness and jobless, and hence pushed towards crime or not engaged in anything, often leading to suicidal tendencies. The seminal research on the subject, “[Beyond 18, Leaving Child Care Institutions – A Study of Aftercare Practices in Five States of India, \(2019\)](#)” dwells in details about their situation and captures their voices and aspirations in the form of a set of recommendations. One of the strong asks from the youth is the need for formal and informal support groups, in the form of collectives, networks and platforms that bring them together. Such networks exist in others parts of the world, especially Europe, Ireland, Germany, African countries.

[Udayan Care](#) since 2017 has supported an informal support group of Care Leavers from Delhi and this group launched itself at an international conference in March 2018. Known as CLAN, (Care Leavers Association and Network), this youth group has been formed as a city wide network so that CLs from different CCIs can join and there can be a greater synergy and support system amongst themselves. Members of CLAN Delhi recently met with Care Leavers from Germany in an exciting five days learning and sharing programme, in partnership with the University of Hildesheim.

Encouraged by the Care Leavers, Udayan Care is convening a two days, first of its kind in India Convention that aims to bring together Care Leavers from different parts of India and other countries, especially Germany, Egypt, Sri Lanka and other countries, to come together under one roof to know, learn and share their experience of being in care and transitions and also interface with different actors, practioners and experts. This first of its kind Convention will be the starting point for a strong movement and building a collective voice to improve the situation of vulnerable children and youth in India.

Objective of the Convention: Bring Care Leavers together and provide them a platform to emerge to learn, share and exchange experiences, knowledge and challenges on their situation such that it amplifies their voices and attracts the attention of decision makers to act upon their demands through betterment of the policy and practice related to them. The entire convention is based on principles of freedom, voluntarism spirit, free will and respect for dignity of youth. The network is based on the philosophy of “nothing for us without our active engagement” and to be anchored and driven by the Care Leavers themselves, with them being the decision makers in a democratic and transparent manner.

Visit www.careleaversconvention.udayancare for registration and more information.

¹ “**Care Leaver** refers to the youth, who have transitioned out of care, on attaining 18 years of age after having lived in a state or NGO-run CCI” – as defined in the “Beyond 18, Leaving Child Care Institutions – A Study of Aftercare Practices in Five States of India, (2019)”.