

# IMMERSIVE SIMULATION LAB: TRANSITION TO FAMILY- BASED CARE IN INDIA



# Welcome

Welcome to Snehalaya's first event addressing Family-Based Care (FBC) in India, we are excited to have you here with us today and hope you find the experience useful and rewarding.

It is our intention that you leave with the practical knowledge and understanding of the legislation and the role you can play in ensuring every child receives their right to live within a family environment.

Snehalaya has over 30 years' experience in caring for children from a range of backgrounds and has an established reputation for providing support to some of the most marginalised communities. We realise that our current projects are limited and are fully committed to extending our existing childcare provision to introduce more family-based options to our current beneficiaries to ensure their full development.

We are grateful to the Maharashtra State Commission for Protection of Child Rights' enthusiasm in supporting our work and co-hosting today's event. Like us, they want to ensure that the transition is smooth and that everyone fully understands what FBC means and together we are committed to developing and delivering the support required that is in the best individual interest of each child.

Wherever possible, and when in the best interests of the individual child, the Maharashtra State Guidelines for the Integrated Program of Non-Institutional Family-Based Services for Child Protection (released 19 June 2019) prioritise the retention or reunification of children within their families.

We have found that many of the children currently living in our childcare institution have families that are living and we believe that, where it is safe to do so, it is our collective duty to provide the support that will enable families to be reunited. So, as it isn't possible to share everything in one day, we will instead provide an introductory overview on FBC and then focus on the family-strengthening that will make this a reality.

This is very much a participatory event and you have been carefully selected to join us today as you have a key role to play in the success of Maharashtra leading the way in moving towards effective and robust delivery of the national and state guidelines and principals.

We look forward to hearing from you throughout the day as we co-create the way forward for the thousands of children currently living in childcare institutions in our state. We sincerely hope you enjoy the day and invite you to continue the journey with us as we further develop a model for FBC at district level.

## Ian, Pravin & Girish

A heartfelt thank you to Sakal Social Foundation, registered office: 595 Budhwar Peth, Pune 411002, for the sponsorship of the venue and food for this event.



Snehalaya believes that every woman and child should have the right to a life free from inequality, cruelty and discrimination and with over 30 years' experience advocating for child rights and caring for children from a range of backgrounds, we have an established reputation for providing support to some of the most marginalised communities. To date we have supported 200,000 beneficiaries through 22 rehabilitation, health and education and awareness-raising projects. Our flagship rehabilitation center is a childcare institution (CCI) which shelters over 200 children, 70 women and 30 girls and 30 boys over 18.



We have been working with Florence Koenderink from Why Family-Based Solutions since 2011 and over the past nine years she has shared her valuable experience on the transition to family-based care in other countries. She helped us realise that there was a need to extend our current childcare provision to introduce more family-based care options to our current and future beneficiaries to ensure their full development.

In 2018, she introduced us to Ian who visited our projects and suggested we were perfectly positioned to create a replicable model as an empanelled NGO in Ahmednagar District. Determined to lead rather than follow, we signed a MoU with Children's Emergency Relief International (CERI) which provides us the technical guidance and support to help us understand and negotiate the guidelines, which we plan to share with you today.

We are committed to creating a replicable model of an empanelled NGO acting as a district-level, one-stop-shop for family support and funding available from the government. We are already working with the relevant government stakeholders and CCIs in our district to start the move towards FBC, including the initiation of the Ahmednagar District Sponsorship and Foster Care Approval Committee (SFCAC). By documenting how we are leading and implementing changes at a district level we plan to develop a replicable model which will can be shared at state and national levels.



## Dr Girish Kulkarni

Our founder, Girish established Snehalaya in 1989 by approaching sex workers in one of Ahmednagar's red-light areas. He started out by taking two children to a local park each day, building the trust of the community by educating and keeping their children safe. As a result, today there are no second-generation or underage sex workers in our entire district and our projects remain firmly rooted in preventing the exploitation of women and children.

Girish is a trained journalist and professor with S.P Pune University, a pioneer for social change, a visionary and an inspirational leader. Girish holds a doctorate in Political Science and Public Management, as well as two masters in Politics and Sociology, and he was bestowed the

President of India Award 2012 for his service to his country in the field of Social Work. He continues to drive the organisation, inspiring our team, empowering our beneficiaries and expanding our networks of supporters and volunteers.



The Maharashtra State Commission for Protection of Child Rights (MSCPCR) was established in 2007 as a statutory body under *Commission for Protection of Child Rights Act 2005* to protect, promote and defend child rights in the state.

Child Rights as per Section 2 (b) of the Act includes the rights provided under the Child Rights Commission which include: protection against discrimination, ensuring the best interests of the child and the inherent rights to life, health, education and the benefits of social security. Most importantly a child shall not be separated from their parents against their will, except when such separation is necessary for the best interest of the child and a child deprived of a family environment, shall be entitled to special protection and assistance provided by the State.

## Pravin Ghuge

Pravin comes from a humble background in Andur, a village in the Tuljapur tehsil in Osmanabad. He completed his school and college education at Andur where he came into contact with organizations like Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (All India Student Council) and Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangha. His active participation in the work of Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad started with the Kashmir Bachao Andolan (Save Kashmir Movement) in 1979.

Between 1994 and 2006, he was as a social worker for Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad, working in the tribal areas of Thane district and has also worked as province minister and national minister for the Parishad, while leading movements for Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad.

He has participated in various conventions and symposiums in support of name change of 'Babasaheb Ambedkar Marathwada University', travelling to villages in Marathwada to justify the name change. He also led the student's movement to get Xerox copy of answer sheets of university exams, successfully. He led the protest against the uncontrolled fees charged by medical and engineering colleges until the decision of appointing a separate body, 'Shikshan Shulka Samiti' as an independent regulatory body for college fees was made. He has also actively participated the 'Indianization of education'.

Pravin has been Union Minister in Marathwada division for the Bharatiya Janata Party, Chair of Marathwada Youth Development Board and actively participated in the 'Chitte River' Revival Campaign. He has been Chair of Maharashtra State Commission for Protection of Child Rights since May 2017, playing an active role in securing Aadhaar cards for orphans and street children and taken the initiative to effectively implement the 'Student's Protection Movement' across Maharashtra. He has made the appointments to the Child Welfare Committee a priority, implementing initiatives for training and empowerment. He consistently pursues and implements adoption, foster care, sponsorship and aftercare plans as he believes that every child in rehabilitation centers and child care institutions has the right to be brought up in a family environment.



Children's Emergency Relief International (CERI) works with children, families, communities and governments to provide a family environment as the first and best option for children to grow in. In developing countries, children at risk of abuse and neglect are traditionally placed in an orphanage, for their own protection. Taking children away from family and isolating them from community deepens the effects of their trauma. Growing up in a family, makes or breaks a child's chance at a bright future.

CERI helps create a path to family for children, works with at-risk youth to achieve independence and strengthens families to provide the best home environment for their children.



## Ian Anand Forber-Pratt, MSW Our Facilitator for the Day

Ian works in the field of child protection and child care system reform in India, Sri Lanka, the United States and globally. Ian completed his Masters in Social Work from Washington University's George Warren Brown School of Social Work [Brown School] and serves as the Director of Global Advocacy for CERI. He also serves as an adjunct professor at the Brown School where he teaches Policy and Services for Children and Youth at the Masters level.

Ian is passionate about bridging gaps between policy and practice in the fields of child welfare and protection at global, state and local levels. He was a drafting committee member for the first national legislation on foster care in India and is instrumental in sponsorship, family strengthening, aftercare and foster care legislation at state, union territory and national levels in India.

He currently sits on the drafting committee for Sponsorship and Family Support Guidelines for India. He has worked in countries as part of child protection system reform in Eastern Europe, Africa and throughout South Asia. He consults for international organisations on strategic planning and theory-of-change development in the field of family-based alternative care. His training specialisations include:

- Theories of social change in child welfare care reform;
- Scaling, replication and evidence-based practice of social programs;
- Social franchising; de-institutionalisation;
- Reintegration and reunification of children to families;
- Alternative care approaches for children who have been sexually exploited or trafficked and;
- Implementation framework and strategic planning for governments to bridge policy to practice gaps.

Personally, Ian is an international adoptee and specializes in therapy with adoptive families both international and domestic in identity, root search and cultural competence. He deeply believes in every child's right to family and helps governments, organizations and individuals be part of social change in demanding rigorous standards for children needing care and protection throughout the world. Ian lives with his wife, their son Zane and an ever-revolving door worth of family and guests in St Louis, Missouri, USA and is in India often.

Snehalaya is grateful for Ian's guidance and support and for facilitating today's event. As the author of many of the guidelines currently shaping FBC in India and experience and expertise in global family-based practices, including the drafting of the Maharashtra guidelines, he is perfectly placed to demystify and clarify the process.



Why Family-Based Solutions

Why Family-Based Solutions is dedicated to putting an end to the institutionalisation of children, to making sure that all vulnerable children receive the care and protection they need in a family-based setting and to make sure that children are not separated from their own families – or are reintegrated if they have already been separated – unless it is in their best interest, for children all over the world. Founder Florence is a regular visitor to Snehalaya's projects and has played a key role in our movement towards family-based care and continues to drive our transition with practical support and advice.

**Both our Indian values and science affirm that children grow best in healthy families. For vulnerable children and at-risk families, a wide range of family support and care options together contribute to a robust “continuum of care” that can meet the unique needs of each child and maximise opportunities for children to grow up in nurturing families.**

**Organisations that currently provide residential care, such as orphanages and children’s homes, are often well-positioned to reshape their programs to support care for children within families. These programs typically have competent staff, committed donors, and strong relationships in the communities where they serve, enabling them to make major contributions to family care.**

## **Aims of the day**

Wherever possible, and when in the best interests of the individual child, the Maharashtra State Guidelines for the Integrated Program of Non-Institutional Family-Based Services for Child Protection (released 19 June 2019) prioritise the retention or reunification of children within their families.

Engaging with new models of care brings many unknowns. Will children be cared for well? How will donors and partners respond? Will we succeed? It can be a very uncertain time for a program.

Today's simulation lab is designed for true engagement and learning surrounding the on-the-ground realities of transitioning to family-based care. The lab brings top level decision-makers and influencers' expertise to the table to work through real-life scenarios and co-create the way forward.

The objective of the day is to identify and connect the leaders responsible for the relevant support schemes able to deliver family strengthening services. You will receive an introduction to family-based care, including the roles of each stakeholder, and an overview of Snehalaya’s progress in creating a model for an empanelled NGO working at district level.

Through an activity-based program and the sharing of case studies with representative NGOs, delegates will then work together to create streamlined and comprehensive family strengthening support solutions.

# Why Family-Based Care?

Children in institutions experience at the very least psycho-social deprivation, which has serious consequences. It affects the way their brain develops, it affects the way they interact with the world around them, and it affects their behaviour, not just while in the institution, but also in their later life. Children who have spent time in an institution, particularly if it was at a very young age, have a very high risk of developing attachment disorders, physical and mental health problems, challenging behaviours, developmental delays, problems with social interaction and coping with living in the community when they become adults.

Institutionalisation causes growth stunting, reduced brain size, and a weakened immune system, due to over-activating the stress response of children. All of this is the result of the impossibility of meeting all of a child's need in an institutional setting, while those needs are met in almost all families without giving it any thought.

The image below clearly demonstrates the difference in brain development of a child living within a family environment versus a child growing up in institutionalised care.

## 3 Year Old Children

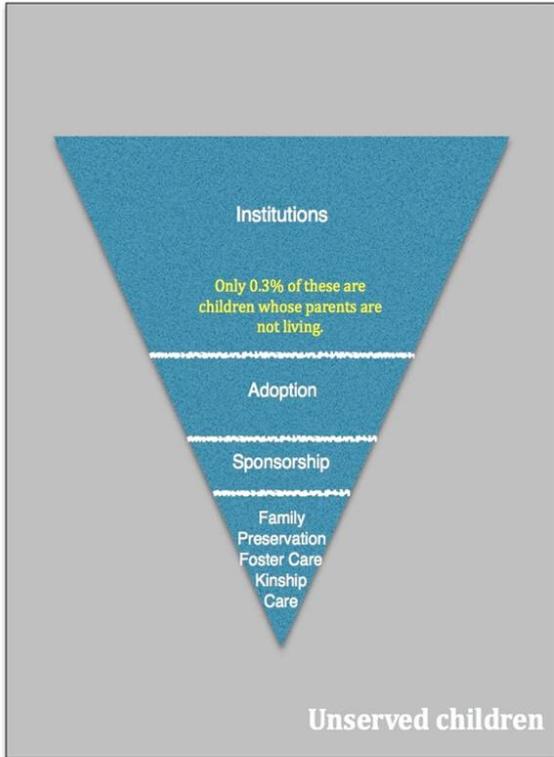


Normal

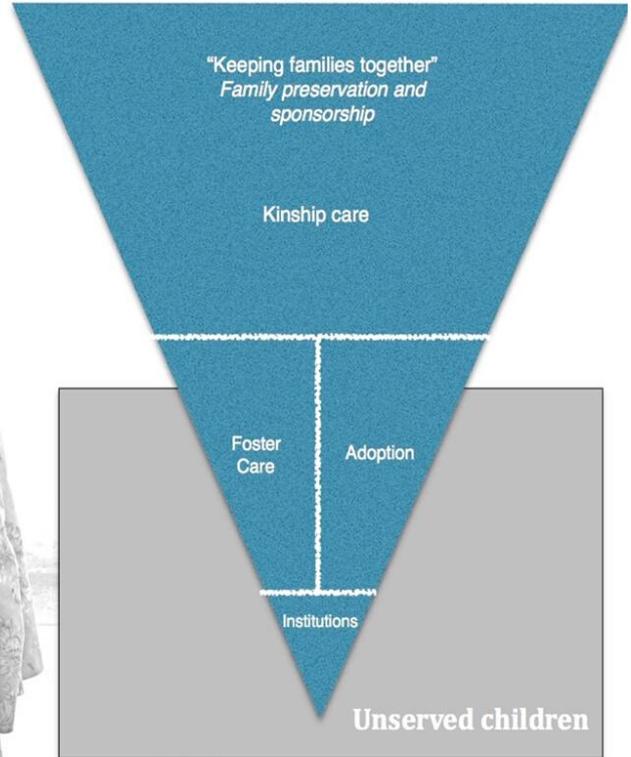


Extreme Neglect

**The Current Situation**  
*An over-reliance on institutions  
and a large population of  
unserved children*



**The Goal**  
*Safer and stronger families,  
robust family-based care  
alternatives, and fewer unserved*



## Best Interests of the Child

**Every child should be able to live in a family, either with their parents or in an attachment-based, family styled environment while experiencing a sense of belonging.**

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989

As you can see in the image above the current situation has the large majority of children living in institutionalised care. It's a sad fact that many of these children living in care actually have living family and that the main reason for children being placed in care is due to poverty or health-related issues. Effective family strengthening will not only prevent further children from being placed in care but, when safe to do so, will also help reintegrate those currently living in care back into their families.

Snehalaya is committed to create individual care plans in partnership with every individual child, their families, their current caregiver, the communities they live in and any other stakeholders with a vested interest in the best interests of that child. We have already identified that over half of the 200+ children we shelter have living family and over half of them are here due to ill health and poverty in their families.

To effectively deliver family-based care, funding is already available to families via district-level DCPUs, following approval by the SFCAC. However there is also a mandate to connect families with existing services and funding available to help them. Snehalaya is currently working on a directory of services that identify the government schemes and support available and other NGOs and organisations that will help us to safely reunite children back into their families and communities, without negatively impacting on their health and wellbeing.

Through the implementation of family-based care we aim to invert the pyramid to ensure as many children as possible are living in a family environment, which is in their best interests.

# Legislation & Guidelines

The 2019 UN Resolution on the Rights of the Child, commits the 193 member nations to gradually shift support away from older systems of child institutionalization and focus instead on organizations that use family and community-based care models. There is also a commitment to ensure that young people leaving alternative care receive adequate support for their transition.

The good news is that India and Maharashtra already have legislation and guidelines in place that will help us to fulfil this directive.

## **The Model Guidelines for Foster Care, 2016**

Notified by the Government of India's Ministry of Women & Child Development on 11 November 2016

Revised version to the Model Guidelines for Foster Care, 2015

They take strength from:

**Juvenile Justice (Child Care & Protection) Act, 2015 (JJ Act) -  
Section 44**

**Juvenile Justice (Child Care & Protection) Rules, 2016 (JJ  
Rules) - Rule 23**

India's States/UTs are at liberty to adapt or adopt these Guidelines to suit their socio-economic and geographic needs.

**Maharashtra State Guidelines for the Integrated Program of  
Non-Institutional Family-Based Services for Child Protection,  
19 June 2019**

**The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act 2012  
(POCSO)**

**Revised Integrated Child Protection Scheme (2014) (ICPS)**

**Adoption Regulations, 2017**

# Stakeholders

## DISTRICT-LEVEL

### District Women and Children Development (DWCD)

#### District Child Protection Unit (DCPU)

The nodal authority for implementing to the foster care programme in a district. It also releases the funds available to support children reintegrating back into their families and prevent other children being placed in care. The main responsibilities fall to:

District Child Protection Officer (DCPO)

Protection Officer-Non Institutional Care (PO-NIC)

Protection Officer-Institutional Care (PO-IC)

#### Child Welfare Committee (CWC)

Given the power to take all decisions related to placement of a child in foster care

### Sponsorship and Foster Care Approval Committee (SFCAC)

The committee reviews and sanctions the sponsorship and foster care fund held by the DCPU. This is made up of:

**Chair:** District Women and Children Development (DWCD)

Chair / Member of CWC

District Child Protection Officer, Protection Officer - Non-Institutional Care  
Representative voluntary organisation(s)

## EVERY LEVEL

WCD

MSCPCR

NGOs

Childline

SAAs

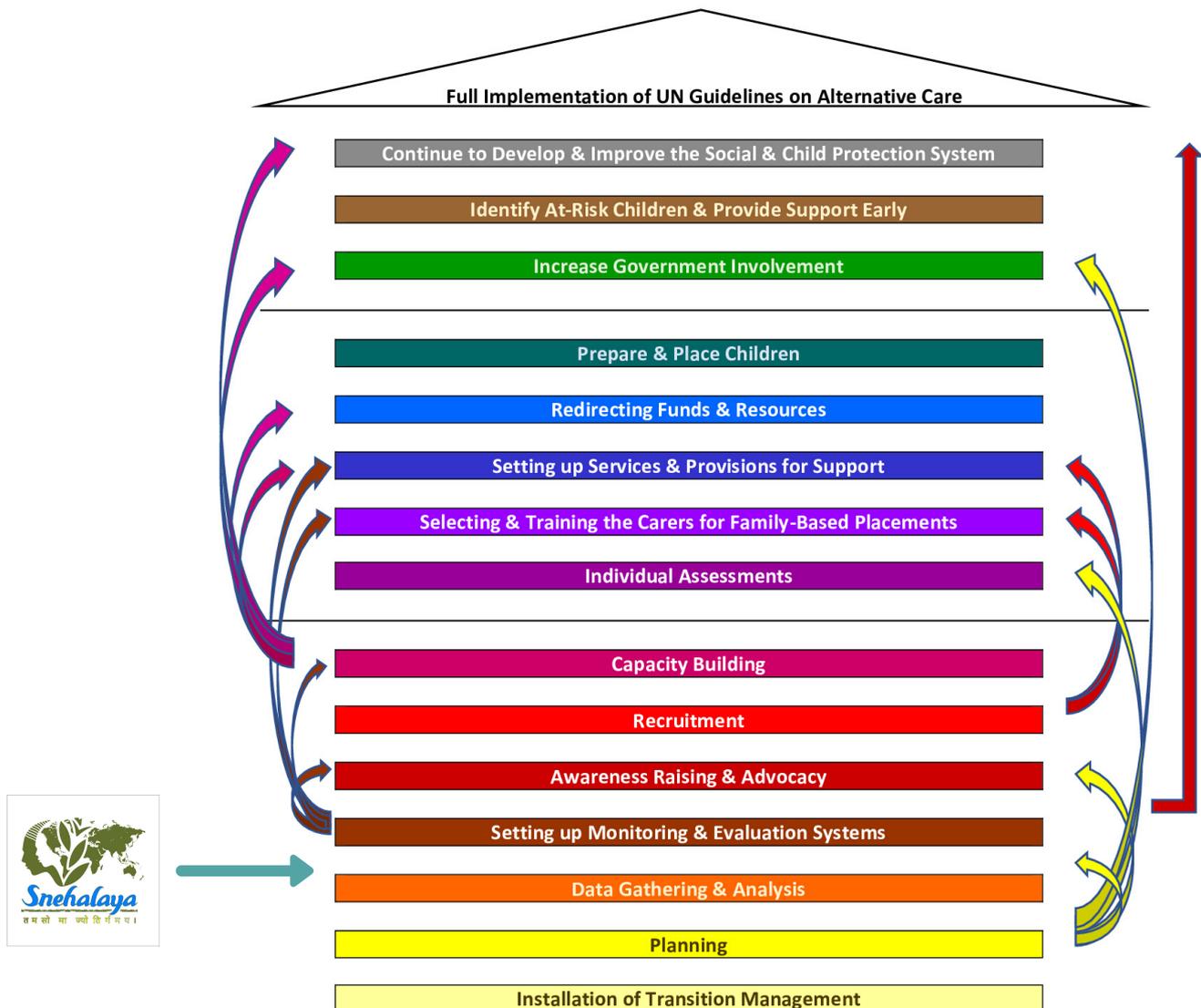
Politicians

Police

Community leaders

etc

# Next Steps



Thank you so much for coming today, we hope you have found the day insightful and useful and like us have made contact with the people who can help Maharashtra move forwards in providing children with family-based solutions.

While Snehhalaya has started the process towards family-based care, as you can see from the diagram above, we are still at the start of our journey. We need your help as we work through the process and equally, we are available to help you implement or move forwards with deinstitutionalisation.

Please stay in touch and if you would like to help or know more about our progress or information on what we have done, please contact:

**Mahesh Markad, Project Manager, Snehhalaya's Family-Based Care team,  
email: [fbc@snehalaya.org](mailto:fbc@snehalaya.org), tel: 9604040068**



## Snehalaya

239 F Block, MIDC,  
Ahmednagar,  
Maharashtra 414111,  
India

Tel: 0241 2778353

email: [info@snehalaya.org](mailto:info@snehalaya.org)

[www.snehalaya.org](http://www.snehalaya.org)

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