

# Supporting Youth Leaving Care

## Current Aftercare Practices (CAP) in Rajasthan

### Background:

Aftercare is a continuum of care process towards social reintegration and mainstreaming, applicable to youth leaving Care on attaining adulthood. Apart from India's ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), national policies, laws and schemes have been formulated in India, with special provisions for care and protection for out-of-home-care (OHC) children and youth leaving care or Care Leavers. The Juvenile Justice Act, 2015 and its Model Rules, 2016 and the Integrated Child Protection Scheme, 2014 (ICPS) govern the provisioning of Aftercare services in Rajasthan.

The Palanhar Scheme, launched in 2005, provides support to 9 categories of children living in difficult circumstances. A person taking responsibility of caring and bringing up such a child is called 'Palanhar' and their annual income should not be more than Rs. 1.20 Lakhs. The scheme provides support to children through Aaganwadi and school system till 18 years of age (recently extended upto 19 years in certain cases contingent on completing school). The support provided under this scheme is Rs.500 every month till the age of 5 and Rs.1000 every month from 6 years until the child attains the age of 18. In addition to this, an amount of Rs. 2000 / - as a one time annual cash support as education subsistence allowance (excluding widow palanhar and nata pratha palanhar) is provided.

The eligible Palanhar beneficiaries and children exiting Child Care Institutions in the State are supported after the age of 18 years by linking them to Mukhya Mantri Hunar Vikas Yojna (MMHVY), a scheme that supports skill development.

### Research Overview:

Udayan Care, with the support of Department of Child rights (DCR), Child Resource Centre (CRC) and UNICEF Rajasthan initiated a Current Aftercare Practices (CAP) Documentation in 2018 with the aim to gather on-ground systematic evidence on Aftercare in the State. Towards this, Udayan Care partnered with Department of Child Rights, Government of Rajasthan; Child Resource Center, HCM-RIPA; UNICEF India Country Office, Delhi; UNICEF State office, Rajasthan and Tata Trusts. The CAP documentation in Rajasthan is part of a multi-city documentation that examines:

- The nature of challenges and opportunities faced by Care Leavers
- The extent of existing Aftercare interventions
- The gaps and promising practices within the Aftercare ecosystem
- Recommendations to develop a robust Aftercare programme

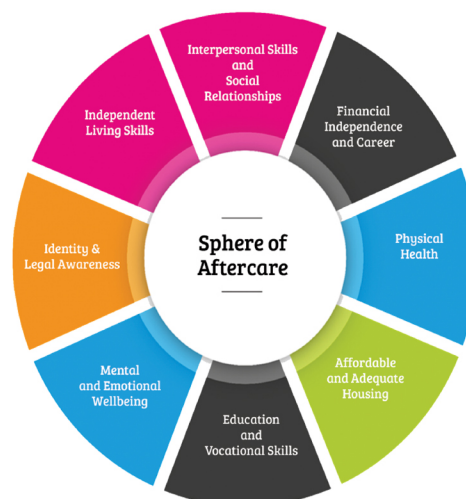
This study was conducted with 81 Care Leavers (CLs) and 17 Palanhar beneficiaries as the primary stakeholders, and 25 government functionaries, private service providers, professionals and duty-bearers as key-informants (KI) from September 2018 to March 2019. Quantitative and qualitative data was collected through:

An indigenously developed questionnaire catered to understand the situation of Care Leavers in the state

- In depth interviews conducted with care providers (KI)
- FGDs to understand issues faced in providing or administering Aftercare
- Inception consultation with stakeholders held in September, 2018
- Secondary data through desk research, literature review and current intervention approach documentation

### Sphere of Aftercare

Based on Udayan Care's several years of experience in service delivery, extensive secondary research, learnings from the pilot study. Udayan Care's research team developed a thematic framework that governs this study. This research puts forth the 'Sphere of Aftercare' as a comprehensive ideology of rehabilitative support and services for CLs transitioning out of care. The data has been analyzed in the backdrop of the 'Sphere of Aftercare' concept. The 'Sphere of Aftercare' framework divides the scope of Aftercare support/services into eight distinct, but interdependent domains that are essential for CLs' mainstreaming as they transition out of care. These domains are as mentioned in diagram:



Care Leavers' Demographic Profile (N=81)

Age		Gender	Aftercare Status	
18-21 years: 56 (69%)	Above 23 years: 13 (16%)	Male: 34 (42%)	Receivers: 58 (72%)	
21-23 years: 12 (15%)		Female: 47 (58%)	Non-receivers: 23 (28%)	
Care Status		Nature of Aftercare	Marital Status	
Govt.: 29 (36%)		Govt.: 16 (28%)	Single: 65 (80%)	Divorced/separated: 1 (~1%)
NGO: 52 (64%)		NGO: 42 (72%)	Married: 15 (~19%)	
Education				
Primary School: 4 (5%)		Class XII pass: 35 (43%)	Post-Graduation & Above: 2 (2%)	
Class V – X: 29 (36%)		Graduation: 11 (14%)		



# RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS



## LIFE IN CCI

- Average age of admission to CCI = approx. 8 years
- 28% CLs were still living in the CCI post 18 years under their formal Aftercare programme
- 30% CLs reported being placed in more than one CCI
- 47% CLs were not consulted in their individual care planning including rehabilitation planning. 9% CLs were unsure of their involvement
- **66% CLs from Govt. CCIs reported not being consulted in individual care planning vis-à-vis 37% from NGO CCIs**
- 16% CLs reported that they were unable to continue their education as per their wishes during their childhood
- **Almost 78% CLs never attended a financial literacy training, or one-on-one consultation with a caregiver, staff, mentor or expert**
- **70% CLs had never received one-on-one career guidance nor attended any career-development workshop**
- **Almost 68% CLs never received legal literacy training**
- 74% CLs have a bank account



## SKILL DEVELOPMENT IN CCI

Skills Development Index identified under 3 broad categories: Independent Living Skills, Interpersonal Skills, Job-readiness & Vocational Skills

- 86% CLs from Govt. CCIs had 'unsatisfactory' Skill Development Index score vis-à-vis 54% CLs from NGO CCIs
- A greater proportion of CLs from NGO CCIs reported 'satisfactory' or 'neutral' life experiences in CCIs as compared to CLs from Govt. CCIs
- **95% CLs fell in the 'unsatisfactory' range of the Independent Living Skill Index (household management, nutrition, disaster management etc.)**
- Skills acquired during childhood (Skill Development Index) was found to have a significantly moderate to strong correlation with life in the present

The extent of skills acquired during childhood in a CCI was found to be moderately correlated with almost all Domains of Aftercare

There should be a dedicated one-stop resource center for care leavers. This center should have the necessary infrastructure and resource base to counsel and support the care leavers in various areas such as career development and job placement, independent living skills, matrimonial counselling, etc.

- Member Juvenile Justice Board

## ACADEMICS AND CAREER

- 33% CLs reported not completing their higher secondary education (up to Class XII), with a higher female skew. 22% CLs shared that their education was discontinued against their wishes, after turning 18 years
- 6% CLs (all females) were neither in education, employment or training (NEET). This is lower than the national average of 27%, perhaps signifying CCI focus on education, employment and training
- 62% CLs reported their education and/or skill level were inadequate to achieve their academic and career goals
- **Only 9% Aftercare receivers had acquired adequate vocational skills and educational qualifications vis-à-vis 0% non-receivers**
- **Only 34% females were in salaried jobs vis-à-vis 59% males**
- 62% CLs from NGO CCIs were engaged in full-time or part-time jobs vis-à-vis 48% CLs from Govt. CCI
- A greater proportion of CLs from NGO CCIs had received explicit training in vocational skills and job-readiness skills in comparison to CLs from Govt. CCIs
- **85% reported the need for assistance in completing their higher education**
- **65% required assistance in job placement**
- 47% reported the need for vocational and job readiness skill development

"A major challenge is that children are provided all the necessary support in the form of housing, food, clothing, education, etc. in a CCIs. But suddenly at the age of 18 years, they are asked to move out with no place to go. How will they afford a house/rented accommodation at such an age? How will they continue their education?" - Member, Child Welfare Committee



## IDENTITY AND LEGAL AWARENESS

- **95% CLs reported having an Aadhar card**
- Only 38% CLs possessed Voters' ID
- A lesser proportion of CLs from Govt. CCIs had basic identity documents such as domicile certificate/proof of residence and passport as compared to CLs from NGO CCIs
- **88% CLs were not aware of their right to Aftercare support**
- 35% CLs reported the need for legal literacy workshops/training

"The main purpose of child/youth care is to make them good citizens. Aftercare should allow them to stand on their own feet and they should become capable to lead their life independently." - Practitioner, NGO CCI, Ajmer



## HOUSING

- There are no dedicated Aftercare facilities in the state
- 40% CLs were living in housing that was supported by their CCI/Aftercare programme or Government
- **60% CLs lived without any housing support from any CCI/Aftercare programme**
- 45% Aftercare receivers did not get housing support but accessed services/support in other domains such as higher education, vocational training and financial aid
- **77% CLs reported the need for assistance in finding adequate housing**
- 47% CLs reported the need for better physical healthcare amenities

“Those girls who are studying or are working, there should be different home or hostel for them. Those girls should not be kept in Mahila Sadan. Apart from this there should be different stay facilities for girls who are staying in Mahila Sadan on court order.” – Associate Director, Mahila Sadan

## MENTAL HEALTH



- **67% CLs reported facing recurring emotional distress**
- Almost 1 in every 5 CLs reported multiple symptoms of psychological disorders. Most female CLs reported these symptoms
- A greater proportion of CLs from Govt. CCIs reported multiple symptoms of psychological disorders as compared to CLs from NGO CCIs
- **Only 8% CLs sought assistance from professionals for mental health concerns. 50% CLs sought assistance from non-professionals such as friends or mentors**
- **42% CLs reported the need for professional mental health interventions**

Sometimes the children return back with a heavy heart of not being able to achieve their desired job or higher salaries. They blame their backgrounds and the absence of parents for such feelings. In such circumstances, we counsel and calm them down. - Member, Child Welfare Committee



## FINANCIAL SECURITY

- Only 51% CLs reported independent sources of income by means of salaried jobs, daily wage labour or internships
- **65% males reported having their own sources of income vis-à-vis 36% females even though a comparable proportion of females had acquired secondary or higher education**
- 38% CLs reported having no additional financial support available to them
- 23% CLs reported that their income/allowance was unable to cover their cost of living
- **A greater proportion of non-receivers scored 'unsatisfactory' on the Financial Index as compared to Aftercare receivers**
- 52% CLs from Govt. CCIs reported 'unsatisfactory' level of financial literacy and security and incidence of monetary crisis vis-à-vis 21% CLs from NGO CCIs
- **40% CLs were not actively saving**
- **57% CLs reported the need for training/guidance to achieve financial independence**
- 52% CLs wanted the current financial support of Rs. 2000 under ICPS to be increased between 5000-15000
- **62% CLs wanted the financial support under ICPS to be credited directly to the CLs' account**

“Aftercare should basically function as a bridge between CCI life and independent living in the society.” – District Child Protection Officer

## SOCIAL INTEGRATION



- A large proportion of CLs from Govt. CCIs reported inability to maintain relationships with their parents and biological siblings, wherever applicable as compared to CLs from NGO CCIs
- 22% Aftercare receivers reported the 'satisfactory' acquisition of social skills and ability to maintain relationships vis-à-vis 10% non-receivers
- **91% CLs reported difficulties in maintaining romantic relationships or considered such relationships to be "not applicable" to them**
- 75% CLs shared that they have a formal or informal group or alumni association for peer support
- **94% CLs reported positively to the idea of a youth collective and shared that they would like to contribute to and benefit from such a youth collective**
- 30% CLs thought that Aftercare services should be provided in-person through a physical facility/office, whereas 26% preferred an online portal such as a website or app to avail these services.
- 35% CLs suggested that Aftercare services should be accessible through multiple portals/mediums

“Successfully settled CLs can form a group in collaboration with society members, DCPU officer and youth who are willing to do voluntary work. Other than this, committees like 'Nehru Yuva Sangathan' and Scout Guide Group can come together to help these children/young adults.” -Member, Department of Child Rights (DCR)

# Research Insights: Palanhar Beneficiaries

Palanhar Beneficiaries' Demographic Profile (n=17)

Age	Gender	Marital Status
18-21 years: 17 (100%)	Male: 6 (35%) Female: 11 (65%)	Single: 17 (100%)
Education		
Primary School: 0 (0%)	Class XII pass: 12 (71%)	Post-Graduation & Above: 0(0%)
Class V – X: 4(23%)	Graduation/Diploma: 1(6%)	

- Application submission and sanction under Palanhar scheme is completely online
- 65% Palanhar beneficiaries have a bank account. 94% Palanhar beneficiaries have an Aadhar card
- 94% Palanhar beneficiaries possessed Voter's ID card
- **82% thought their education and/or skill level were inadequate to achieve their academic and career goals**
- 94% of Palanhar beneficiaries were enrolled in educational institutions
- **Only 1 Palanhar beneficiary was linked to the Mukhya Mantri Hunar Vikas Yojana**
- 24% Palanhar beneficiaries had independent source of income and all of them were in salaried jobs
- 41% Palanhar beneficiaries were engaged in part-time jobs
- **None of the Palanhar beneficiaries reported receiving basic IT, communication or job readiness training**
- All of the Palanhar beneficiaries scored 'unsatisfactory' on Skill Development Index

## Aftercare Quality Index

The provision of Aftercare Support and Services has an impact on overall outcomes in all domains in Adulthood. A composite score, comprising of the following 8 indices, was computed to give the Aftercare Quality Index: Housing Index, Independent Living Skills Index, Social Support and Interpersonal Skills Index, Emotional Wellbeing Index, Physical Healthcare Index, Financial Index, Academics and Career Skills Index, Legal Index. **AQI has been calculated for the total sample size which is inclusive of the Care Leavers and Palanhar beneficiaries (n=98)**

- A greater proportion of Aftercare non-receivers (62%) scored 'unsatisfactorily' on Aftercare Quality Index in comparison to Aftercare receivers (27%)
- A greater proportion of females had 'unsatisfactory' Aftercare Quality Index than their male counterparts. However, overall only 8% of the young adults fell in the 'satisfactory' range suggesting that not many of them had favourable outcomes in present life regardless of gender
- A greater proportion of CLs from Govt. CClis (52%) had 'unsatisfactory' Aftercare Quality Index than CLs from NGO CClis (15%). This poses an opportunity for child care organisations in Rajasthan to re-evaluate the practices of Care and Aftercare, share and scale promising practices and bring parity between different approaches
- All of the Palanhar beneficiaries fell in the 'unsatisfactory' range of the AQI. Further research is required to understand these findings, however, field observations suggest that the current situation of those who grow up in family care are different from CLs, and a more in-depth comparative study may be required to ascertain these. Regardless, the findings conclusively show that Palanhar beneficiaries also require continued Aftercare support/services in certain domains of the Sphere of Aftercare
- CLs' educational and vocational skills attainment had a significant positive correlation with overall outcomes in adult life – Sphere of Aftercare

These findings are crucial to our understanding of Aftercare as they support the ideology of a continuum of care, where experiences, values, knowledge and skills accumulated in care and Aftercare have a direct and profound impact on experiences and outcomes in adult life.

## Discussion Points

1. State focus on Aftercare as part of a distinct mainstreaming and reintegration process through the Aftercare Guidelines (understand non-institutional approach with adequate housing support through community based hostels, scattered rented housing, PGs or group homes)
2. Broadening scope of Palanhar to certain Domains of the Sphere of Aftercare
3. Gender neutral approach to education and career interventions for CLs and Palanhar beneficiaries
4. Capacity building and trainings on Pre-aftercare and Aftercare as a continuum of care
5. Collectivizing Care Leavers and linkages of schemes for Care Leavers and Palanhar beneficiaries
6. Awareness and accessibility of affirmative action such as reservation for Care Leavers



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