**Background**

**Care Leavers** are young persons, who have lived in institutional care, foster care or any other form of alternative care as a child and have left them at the age the law requires them to. Having lived in highly protected and controlled environment till this age, 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 settings. 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 in India, conducted by Udayan Care, “[Beyond 18, Leaving Child Care Institutions – A Study of Aftercare Practices in Five States of India, (2019)”](https://udayancare.org/research-and-publication/research-studies-and-papers)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](http://www.udayancare.org) 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.

**SOS Children’s Villages**, our partner organization, has also been supporting the formation and development of care leavers’ associations globally, including the first such association in Asia which was formed in Sri Lanka as the ‘Generation Never Give Up Network’ (GNGN). In addition, a global research was conducted by SOS in 2018, on ‘[Decent Work and Social Protection for Young People Leavinng Care’](https://www.sos-childrensvillages.org/getmedia/842a5811-fdb7-41c4-a0b2-45b0e5e79090/SOS_LeavingCare_web.pdf) identifying the gaps and responses in 12 countries worldwide.

The special interest on care leavers has been a main focus of research for almost 10 years at the **University of Hildesheim**. One example is the international transfer to practice research project “[Higher Education without Family Support](https://www.uni-hildesheim.de/fb1/institute/institut-fuer-sozial-und-organisationspaedagogik/forschung/abgeschlossene-projekte/hei-careleavers/)” (2012 – 2014). University of Hildesheim has played a crucial role in laying ground for the foundation of the first care leaver led organisation in Germany (German Care Leaver Association).

Encouraged by the Care Leavers, Udayan Care, in collaboration with Amity University, and with support from SOS Children’s Villages, the University of Hildesheim, and some individual experts on child and youth care including Care Leavers is convening a two days, first of its kind Convention in India 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, practitioners 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.

**The Care Leaver:**

* is between 18 to 35 years’ old
* has been living in residential or foster care or any other form of alternative care
* is able to communicate in English
* is interested in working with other care leavers from different countries and wants to be active, cooperative, to meet other young people
* is available from 12th to 15th March 2020
* is willing to sign the fair play contract (attached)

**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.

**The following questions will guide the convention:**

* Why is support to care leaver and their self-organisations important in countries, regions and transnationally?
* What kind of barriers and support experience care leavers in their personal life, in the local communities, in educational system, and labour market?
* What are their successful strategies to cope with the demands? Which strategies are not effective and why?
* How can social support networks influence the transition to adulthood of care leavers?
* What kind of peer-programs could support care leavers in their personal, educational and employment aspirations in the countries and regions?
* How can digital technology “help” the social support?
* What kind of transnational joint development is possible in support programmes for care leavers worldwide?

**Participants:** Around 130 Care Leavers from India as well as other parts of the world come together interfacing with different actors and stakeholders. Total participants to be around 250.

Overall, the convention could be a next step to a transnational care leaver movement and towards a global care leaver association!

**Convention Design:** The convention will consist of inaugural sessions, main plenary sessions, a valedictory session, and breakout sessions, on both days. Throughout the 2 days, the participation of care leavers will be encouraged.

There will be a core group (group leader, facilitator and moderators) for each breakout sessions and care leavers and subject experts will share their thoughts as a panel after which group interactions and participation of all will be encouraged.

**Outcomes and Follow-up**: The convention will draw a report that captures the key deliberations and recommendations made, which will be shared with different governments and actors and closely be followed up to lead to a transnational care leavers movement, especially in South Asia as a region, where the geo-political and cultural context in the right countries are similar and bond by each other.

**On the third day, 15th March, we are also trying to put together an excursion trip for the care leavers to Agra.** This shall be **optional** for the Care Leavers to be part of. It will help them to spend some more time together in a fun way and be part of a strong cultural tour to the iconic Taj Mahal, the symbol of love for the world, hoping to inspire the Care Leavers.

**For more information, please visit** [www.careleaversconvention.in](http://www.careleaversconvention.in)