

Concept Note

Training Workshops on Mental Health and Interventions for Better Care and Management of Institutionalized Children and Young Adults

Background

India has an enormous child population, with more than 448 million boys and girls under 18 years of age.¹ As per UNICEF's report, The State of the World's Children 2012, there are 31 million orphan children in India. Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS) also estimated 180 million vulnerable children in 2009 in India. Many of these children, who are out of family protection network, as well as many who may have family, but are totally dysfunctional, can be found living in the streets or in illegal urban settlements. Inhuman and violent life conditions turn many such children into law offenders, drug abusers and exploiters themselves. Mainstreaming them, by providing them with care and protection, is a big challenge, as not much awareness, evaluation and monitoring mechanisms exist for other alternate systems. So, placing them in institutions, even though considered the last resort, becomes an easy option.

Children in institutions cannot be clubbed as a homogenous group too, as each child can face distinctly different risks and specific vulnerabilities depending on whether the child is a boy or a girl; lived in an urban or rural situation; came from an orphaned background, extended or foster family, an institution or on the street; is HIV-infected, or has disability, and many other issues. Care options must meet certain general standards like meeting the specific needs of each and every child on an individual basis. Added to this is an acute scarcity of adequately trained staff to deal with their emotional and psychological complexities.

The two-day workshops will attempt to train the staff, practitioners and different stakeholders who work with Institutionalized children, in issues related to the mental health of children in institutions. Children who enter institutionalization through the Child Protection system are those who more often than not have been through something grave – loss, abandonment, death of loved ones, violence, betrayal, neglect etc. This is what makes the need for an urgent and immediate focus on mental health because, while it is the direst need of the traumatized child, it is the one that has received absolutely no attention. These are seriously victimized children and training people who care and manage the children is what the Workshops are about. The workshop will offer different sessions dealing with different topics related to the care of institutionalised children. At the end, it will come up with a training module, which can be replicated in institutional care - investing in good practices in mental health care and services.