

Fifth Edition of

# Leadership Dialogues

**Empower. Strengthen. Innovate.**

*Towards a Safer Future for Our Children*

**Frequently Asked and Most  
Important Questions**

## What is Family Strengthening?

Family Strengthening refers to a deliberate process of empowering families with the necessary capacities, opportunities, networks, relationships, and access to services and resources to promote and build resilience, as well as to actively engage parents, caregivers, children, youth, and other family members in decisions that affect the family's life. It is understood as being more holistic than prevention services on the continuum of care, encompassing three primary aims\*:

- 1) To prevent family separation before it occurs in families from vulnerable communities at risk.
- 2) To build resilience in families who have experienced separation as they reintegrate with children, thereby preventing re-separation.
- 3) To strengthen families who provide family-based alternative care. The overall aim of family strengthening is to enhance the resilience of families.

Miracle Foundation India conducted a Leadership Dialogue on 'Understanding Family Strengthening'. Sector experts & those with care experience were part of the panel for this discussion. Please find the link here: <https://youtu.be/AL44rJGBkPY?feature=shared>

## Where can I find more information on Family Strengthening (FS) & Family-Based Alternative Care (F-BAC)?

FS and F-BAC is a form of care where children who cannot live with their biological parents due to reasons such as abuse, neglect, or parents' inability to provide adequate care are placed in the care of substitute families or individuals, etc. The goal is to provide a stable and nurturing environment for these children by placing them with relatives, extended family members, or foster families who have undergone training and assessment. This approach aims to ensure the child's well-being, promote their emotional and physical development, and maintain their connections to their culture and community. Substitute families assume responsibility for meeting the child's needs while receiving support and supervision from social workers and child welfare agencies to ensure the child's best interests are met. Overall, family-based alternative care prioritizes the child's welfare and aims to provide a safe and loving environment for their growth and development.

You can refer to the following resources for more information. We hope these resources will give you ample information on FS & F-BAC:

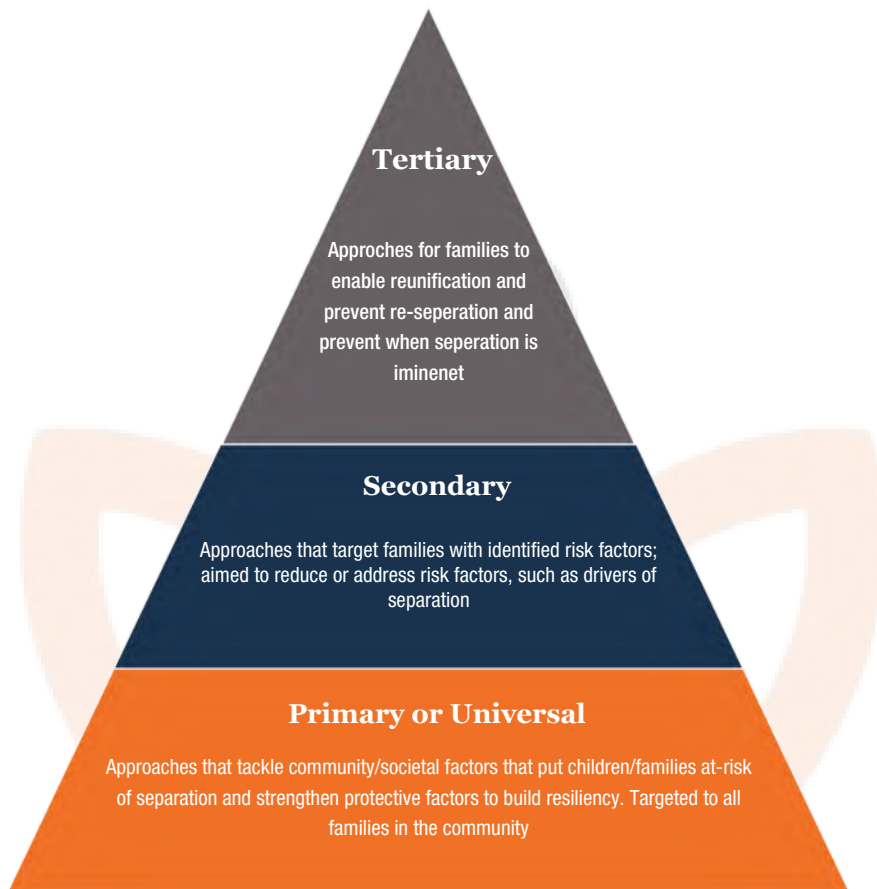
1. [Framework for Family Strengthening within Changing the Way We Care](#)
2. [Kinship care by Miracle Foundation India](#)
3. [A case documentation of Kinship Care in India](#)
4. [Tracing the Evolution of Alternative Care for Children in India in the Last Decade and the Way Forward](#)
5. [Additionally, you can refer to the Leadership Dialogue recordings which are available here-](#)
6. [Model Foster Care Guidelines 2024](#)

\*Framework & Guidance on Strengthening Families in India : Changing the Way We Care

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## What strategies can be followed for family strengthening?

To understand the various kinds of strategies better, let us discuss Changing the Way We Care's (CTWWC) detailed strategy for family strengthening focusing on those families who are at the risk of separation as well as those facing imminent separation and those who are already separated and preparing for reunification or in the process of reintegration. CTWWC has categorized its family strengthening strategy into tiers- Primary or Universal, Secondary & Tertiary.



Families can be identified using vulnerability assessments to determine risks and existing strengths. Linking families to relevant social protection schemes post-assessment can help uplift them and prevent separation. Case management tools like Miracle Foundation's ThriveWell enable comprehensive assessments of family strengths, risks, and progress using five well-being domains: family & social relations, health & mental health, education, household economy, and living conditions. Building the capacity of government bodies like CWPCs and VCPCs further strengthens family-based care systems.

Udayan Care's pilot study in three districts of Madhya Pradesh, including Ujjain, during COVID-19, demonstrated how improved linkages and family strengthening efforts can prevent child separation. The full report is available for further insights. The pilot study report can be found here: <https://iacn.in/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/ffb6a8e1ab2ce038d6bc959a98c18706.pdf>

You may find this compendium highly useful for understanding various family strengthening practices in India: <https://www.worldvision.in/wvreports/Family%20strengthening-prgm.pdf>

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## What measures can be taken to monitor alternative care under Child Protection System?

Several monitoring systems are outlined under the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 (JJ Act) and Mission Vatsalya to oversee the alternative care system. These include agencies operating from the central to district levels, such as the National Commission For Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR), JJ Committees, State Child Protection Society (SCPS), State Commissions for Protection of Child Rights (SCPCR), Child Welfare Committees (CWCs), District Child Protection Units (DCPUs), and Inspection Committees.

Under Mission Vatsalya, additional review and monitoring bodies have been established, including the State Child Welfare and Protection Committee, District Child Welfare and Protection Committee, Block Child Welfare and Protection Committee, and Sponsorship and Foster Care Approval Committees (SFCAC). However, a key challenge remains ensuring these committees are active and fully aware of their roles and responsibilities.

An essential step in improving the monitoring of alternative care—such as foster care, kinship care, sponsorship, aftercare, or reintegration into families—is institutionalizing robust case management systems to monitor each child's and family's progress, ensuring their needs are met holistically. Effective use of tools like Individual Care Plans (ICPs) and Social Investigation Reports (SIRs) is critical in this process, strengthening follow-up mechanisms to ensure the well-being of children and families in alternative care is consistently tracked and addressed.

Additionally, digital tools such as the Thrive Well App (if implemented in states) can enhance the efficiency and accuracy of monitoring, enabling real-time tracking and data-driven decision-making. Capacity building and handholding of the child protection workforce, Child Care Institutions (CCIs), Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), and community volunteers at all levels, combined with active participation from the committees, will contribute to a stronger and more accountable system for alternative care in India.

## What is the limit of schemes that a family can benefit from?

There is no limit to families and individuals including children to access benefits from the schemes as long as they fit the eligibility criteria. To dive deeper into the schemes a family can benefit from please refer to the -

1. [Haqdarshak](#)
2. [My Scheme Portal of Govt. of India](#)

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## **How does family strengthening work in situations when sponsorship schemes are not rolling out regularly in many states?**

In cases where sponsorship schemes have not been rolled out or a child and their family are unable to access the benefits of such schemes, agencies, NGOs, and other family strengthening programs attempt to support vulnerable families in the following ways:

- a. **Local NGOs and CBOs:** These organizations often assist beneficiaries in connecting with government schemes or obtaining necessary ID proofs when families lack them. Many NGOs also provide support—financial or essential services—on a case-by-case basis. They help with skill development and career counseling to assist youth and families in securing employment.
- b. **Strengthening social safety nets:** Facilitating access to existing government schemes, such as MGNREGA, or helping families form or join Self-Help Groups (SHGs), can support the employment of parents and families, thereby improving their stability.
- c. **Mission Vatsalya guidelines:** These guidelines include robust provisions to ensure children benefit from various Central and State Government schemes. Institutions such as Ward-Level Child Protection Committees (WCPC), District Child Protection Committees (DCPC), Panchayat-Level Child Protection Committees, and Gram Panchayats are mandated to link families with social protection schemes, thereby strengthening families as needed.
- d. **Active DCPU and Child Welfare Committees (CWCs):** DCPUs and CWCs are pivotal in identifying vulnerable children and families. They work to ensure linkage with available state schemes such as Bal Sangopan in Maharashtra, Parvarish in Bihar, or alternative resources when dedicated schemes are not in place, preventing children from being left unsupported or placed in institutions.
- e. **Role of PRIs, Urban Local Bodies (ULBs), and other institutions such as DCPUs, WCPCs, and CWCs** play a crucial role in identifying at-risk families early. They provide timely interventions, strengthening child protection systems and ensuring families receive the support they need.

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## What are the future challenges and issues facing institutional care in India?

Institutional care is intended to be a last resort for children who are vulnerable and lack family support. However, many children in India, as in other parts of the world, continue to live in institutions. Studies suggest that most children in institutions have at least one living parent, yet they end up in such facilities, often against their preference. Some key reasons for children being placed in institutions include poverty, deprivation, single parenthood, the death or desertion of one or both parents, severe medical conditions of parents, lack of secure housing, absence of care and developmental opportunities for children with disabilities, and the inability of parents to care for their child due to socio-cultural circumstances (e.g., children of Devadasis, sex workers, or unwed mothers).

There is, however, a gradual yet steady push in India, especially from the Government of India and organizations such as Miracle Foundation India, to strengthen families and ensure children can stay in family-based alternative care systems rather than institutions. This stems from the belief that children growing up in family-based settings have better potential to enhance their emotional, mental, and physical well-being while maintaining a connection with their families.

Below are some of the challenges that can occur in the near future for institutions given the current situation-

1. Institutional care facilities might run short of funds given the push and inclination to transition children from institutions to families which can be beneficial for the children.
2. Institutional care can create a sense of loneliness, particularly for children separated from their families. This narrative has driven efforts to prevent family separation, encouraging institutions to adapt and transition children to family care.
3. Limited funding could result in insufficient infrastructure, hindering institutions' ability to provide adequate care for children.
4. Funding constraints may also lead to limited staffing or a lack of social workers with the necessary skill sets to address the complex needs of resident children. This, in turn, could negatively impact the emotional and psychological well-being of the children.

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**Is there any scheme that involves improving the mental well-being of children and their families before restoring them to family-based alternative care? I would be happy to know more about it so that awareness can be created among families.**

More than focusing solely on the schemes, it is crucial to emphasize working on and improving the mental well-being of children and their families before the restoration process. This involves diligently engaging with both parties to understand the issues or trauma they are experiencing. Some ways to support them and monitor critical developments include:

1. Following a robust Case Management process.
2. Using ICPs, SIRs, and similar tools will aid in the consistent tracking of children and follow-ups, which are critical during and after the restoration process. This approach ensures that the well-being of children and families in alternative care is consistently monitored and emerging issues are addressed promptly.
3. Tools such as the Thrive Well App can further enhance the identification of needs, improve monitoring, enable real-time tracking, and facilitate data-driven decision-making. Insights from these tools can be instrumental in preparing both children and families for the transition.
4. During the transition of a child from a CCI to their family or a foster care setup, the support of a Counselor from the DCPU, CCIs, and other designated social workers can be utilized to provide necessary support for improving mental well-being. Creating a Multi-Disciplinary Team can further ensure comprehensive and effective support during this critical phase.
5. Also, if social workers, the CWC, or other key stakeholders feel that the intervention of qualified professionals is required, the child and the family can be referred to the District Mental Health Program center, which is mandated to support families and caregivers.
6. Mission Vatsalya also emphasizes collaboration with SAMVAD (Support Advocacy & Mental Health Interventions for Children in Vulnerable Circumstances and Distress), a program at the National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences (NIMHANS) that focuses on child protection and mental health.



## Are government schemes effective?

Yes, government schemes can be highly effective when implemented properly, and when the vulnerable population is aware of their availability. The primary objective of these schemes is to uplift individuals, families, and children from vulnerable situations and enable them to live with dignity. There are two types of schemes: Central Government schemes and State Government schemes. In cases where a Central scheme is not accessible, beneficiaries may avail themselves of State schemes as an alternative.

Here are some notable practices:

**One-Window Camps by Miracle Foundation India:** These camps are organized in communities where relevant officials are invited to educate the public about applicable schemes. During these sessions, community members receive support to complete applications and access the benefits of these schemes effectively.

**Simplifying Processes in Madhya Pradesh:** Often, excessive paperwork and the lack of essential documents such as Aadhaar cards or voter IDs hinder people from accessing scheme benefits. To address this, the Madhya Pradesh government has introduced provisions for self-declarations, ensuring that target beneficiaries can access schemes promptly with minimal effort. During the 5th Leadership Dialogue by Miracle Foundation India, speakers highlighted how such initiatives are directly benefiting children and their families. For more details, please refer to <https://haqdarshak.com/>

This approach not only improves accessibility but also ensures that the intended benefits of these schemes reach those who need them the most.

## Who are the nodal actors responsible for implementing family strengthening, and how can they link to government, CSO resources, and community services?

To implement family strengthening, government institutions play a critical role not only in gatekeeping children but also in safeguarding them. Key stakeholders and agencies, such as the DCPU, CCIs, Community-Based Organizations (CSOs), NGOs, line departments, and Community-Based Service Providers like Accredited Social Health Activist (ASHA) and Anganwadi workers, are the nodal actors and key implementers of family strengthening. Additionally, PRIs and Urban Local Bodies serve as the first safety net, helping to identify safety-related issues concerning children.

Under the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 (JJ Act), institutions such as CWC and Juvenile Justice Boards act as gatekeepers and decision-makers for a child's reintegration. The Child Helpline (1098) also plays a vital role in this regard. Furthermore, institutions like schools and Anganwadi centres are crucial in identifying risks and preventing children from falling out of safety nets.

A closer examination of Mission Vatsalya and the JJ Act provides a clearer understanding of the roles government institutions play in safeguarding children and protecting their best interests.



## How can parents understand the importance of keeping children with them rather than sending them to institutions?

1. The first step would be to identify the reasons why parents are keen on sending their child/children to an institution. Often, poverty is one of the main causes of family breakdown; however, it is important to note that many families remain together despite facing significant challenges. There is often a perception that a CCI can provide better opportunities for children, such as education and vocational or livelihood options than the family could offer. In some cases, families lack child care support while they are employed. In others, concerns about the safety of their children—due to factors such as substance abuse or dangerous activities in their neighborhood—drive families to choose CCIs. The reasons can be complex, varied, or singular, and are often unique to each family. Therefore, it is essential to work with each family using an individualistic approach to address their specific circumstances.

2. Another effective way to make the parents understand the importance of keeping children with them is by making them understand the deep impacts of institutionalization of children. Helping them build their relationship with their children can be an effective way to strengthen family bonds.

3. Additionally, a lot of effort needs to be put by Government officials including social workers, DCPOs, CWCs, etc. as well as NGOs, and CCIs when a child is at risk of separation from his/her/ their family. To encourage parents/ family members to care for children, it's important to emphasize the emotional and developmental benefits for the child, such as maintaining cultural continuity and familiar bonds.

4. To support this, the government offers sponsorship of ₹4,000 per child per month, which helps alleviate the economic burden on families. By providing this financial assistance and engaging in ongoing dialogue with the extended family, child protection officials can reassure them of the feasibility and importance of fostering their relative's child, ensuring the child's well-being within their family network.