

Director's Message



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Foster care for children in need of care and protection, is an intervention whose time has come. Don Bosco childcare institutions working with children on the street and in marginalised communities have been promoting it over the years, but family-based foster care in India has been a challenge for various reasons. In this Slice, we present the efforts of BREADS and its partners, towards promoting this non-institutional form of rehabilitation for children in situations of distress.

Foster Care for Children at Risk

According to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), nearly 30 million orphaned and abandoned children live in India. That's about 4% of the young population. The National Commission for the Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) reported that between April 2020 - May 2021, 7,464 children lost one of their parents to COVID, 1,742 children lost both parents, and 140 children were abandoned. What happens to these children? State childcare services usually promote adoption for the very young orphans but older children or children with living parents are usually institutionalised if no "fit" relatives are willing to take care of them. It is very difficult for children to cope with the sudden loss of stable homes and families and adjust to a drastically different environment.

As an intervention for the care and protection of children in difficult circumstances, Foster Care is a preferred alternative to institutionalisation, especially in a family setup. Intended for children

deprived of parental care, it is a temporary arrangement in which the foster parents only have guardianship rights and are responsible for nurturing the child in a secure and personalised family setup. Fostering has yet to gain currency as an established form of child protection in India, for various socioeconomic and cultural reasons despite being promoted by the government as well.

Foster care provides a secure and stable family environment for a child which also supports better individual care and attention. This environment helps the child cope with the trauma of the various losses suffered and adjust to a new life, learning to create new relationships with others, while also continuing their education.



Every Child Deserves a Family



Divya and Arun, siblings from Shivamogga in Karnataka, migrated to Doddaballapur with their parents, who were in search of work. Unfortunately, within a few days of moving to the city, their mother passed away and their father contracted tuberculosis.



Seeing their miserable condition, their father's friends admitted the children to a shelter. Shortly, their father also passed away leaving the children orphaned. None of the children's relatives made any contact with them. The emotional trauma that Divya and Arun experienced within a short period, was beyond words and extremely difficult to address.

As part of its outreach and awareness work, the BOSCO Foster Care team visited this open shelter and learned about the situation of these children. The team proposed Group Foster Care for the children as a better alternative to the shelter home, and with the support of the Child Welfare Committee, prospective parents were identified and approved. The children were introduced to their new foster parents and started a more regular pattern and rhythm of life. Both are attending school and seem content and well-settled in their new family. The healthy family environment will hopefully help Divya and Arun overcome their losses and create a better future for themselves.

Usually, older children who have no parents are identified as candidates for foster care. They could be partial or full orphans or have parents unable to look after them for various reasons such as serious illness or imprisonment. The child is placed in a family for a short or extended period and visits the biological parents if the situation permits. In their best interest, children may also be placed in a family outside his/her family relations.

BOSCO, project partner of BREADS in Bangalore, has been at the forefront in advocating the legalisation of a Foster Care system in Karnataka and in the drafting of State guidelines. A member of the International Foster Care Organisation, BOSCO coordinated two Consultations on foster care practices across India with participation from 15 states.



BOSCO was invited by other state governments and Child Rights Commissions to share its foster care models. It also published a study of existing foster care practices, which was the first of its kind in India. BOSCO has used various family-based care models such as formal kinship care, informal kinship care, formal long-term individual foster care, formal short-term care, vocation placement, group foster care etc.



Our traditional Indian culture presents some ideological challenges to the implementation of the foster care concept because of issues of caste and religion. Besides, the temporary nature of the arrangement also presents practical issues of maintenance costs, inheritance etc. Actual implementation of the programme is only possible with the complete cooperation of government departments, causing numerous challenges of awareness, response intervals, finance clearance, personnel transfers etc. that were further compounded by the COVID pandemic. Despite these varied challenges, in the best interests of the child, the Foster Care team perseveres in its efforts to promote this method of intervention in Karnataka.



Currently, the foster care programme supported by BREADS is spread across 10 districts in Karnataka, and its activities between July 2020-June 2021, include:

Networking, capacity building and awareness creation about foster care implementation among multiple stakeholders—communities, NGOs, government, and local institutions: **90319 people reached**

Advocacy with the Government to create convergence among various departments for legislative and policy reforms: **1686 government stakeholders reached**

Identification, careful assessment, recruitment, and proper follow-up support for potential foster care parents and children: **109 children, 131 parents**

Placement and counselling follow-up of individual foster care children and families: **3 (new), 18 (previous)**



Milestones Achieved

Official permission and support from District Child Protection Officers (DCPOs) of various districts to conduct Foster Care interventions and awareness in their jurisdictions.

Permission and support from the Karnataka State Commission for Protection of Child Rights (KSCPCR) to implement Foster Care programmes in 10 districts.

Dissemination of news about BREADS' foster care programmes in different newspapers and other media in Karnataka resulted in widespread public awareness.

Selection of BOSCO by the Director-Integrated Child Protection Scheme, to draft the Foster Care Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for Karnataka.

Preparation and dissemination of Information Education Communication (IEC) materials to create public awareness, creation of a database of prospective children and parents for foster care, and facilitation of the foster care process with government departments

Calendar

December

- DREAM programme launches in Alappuzha, Kottayam, Wayanad
- Inauguration of the 16th skill training batch—DB BEST Academy
- International Migrants Day—KISMAT Karnataka
- Monitoring and evaluation of BREADS' projects
- Christmas celebration at BREADS

January

- DREAM programme launches in Kozhikode, Thiruvananthapuram, Ernakulam
- Monitoring and evaluation of BREADS' projects

BREADS NEWS



Sunday Market- WELivE

The Sunday Market in Kattoor, an initiative of WELivE Alappuzha, under the WELivE programme by BREADS Bangalore and Don Bosco Alappuzha, is successfully running over the month...[more...](#)



'Football against Drugs' by DREAM Kasaragod

Drug Rehabilitation Education And Mentoring (DREAM) Kasaragod, organised an exciting football tournament among the youth at Don Bosco Chullikara on 12 December 2021...[more...](#)



Inauguration of the 16th Skill Training batch-DB BEST Academy

The 16th skill training batch at DB BEST Academy (skill training centre of BREADS Bangalore) was formally inaugurated on 18 December 2021...[more...](#)



International Migrants Day-KISMAT Karnataka

Karnataka Interstate Migrants Alliance for Transformation (KISMAT), an initiative of BREADS Bangalore, celebrated International Migrants Day with two migrant communities...[more...](#)