

**BREADS**Bangalore Rural Educational
and Development Society**Slice**

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Director's Message



Fr George PS
Executive Director, BREADS

Over the years, thousands of children in Karnataka and Kerala have been rescued from abusive situations by BREADS and the Don Bosco network, to ensure their care, protection and development. In response to the great need, and in the absence of safe family environments, the rehabilitative process was largely through childcare institutions. To safeguard the best interests of the child, and in keeping with the norm of institutionalised care as the last resort (Juvenile Justice Act 2000), other forms of rehabilitation were tried. Foster care, was seen as a suitable alternative; which BREADS, through BOSCO Bangalore, has been promoting as a family-based rehabilitative model in its working areas.

Nothing can replace a caring family for a child. The child's holistic development is vitally promoted only in a family environment. Foster care, is therefore a golden opportunity for a deprived child to experience such care and growth. This is the need of the hour. Indeed, it's a very noble undertaking by the fostering parents, to offer a child the experience of life in a family. We hope for proper legislations and that many families will step up to foster children. Because, as the saying goes, it takes a village to raise a child.

What is Foster Care?

Foster care is an alternative form of care—for children without biological parents, or children who cannot live with their own families for no fault of theirs, who reside in childcare institutions, and cannot be easily adopted. Foster care enables a child in difficult circumstances to experience the care of a family in an individual or group setting, for short or long periods of time.

How does Foster Care impact Lives?

Muniswamy's (name changed) journey began on the streets of Ballari at just five years of age. Rescued by the child helpline operated by Don Bosco, he was presented before the Child Welfare Committee (CWC) as per the Juvenile Justice Act. While the authorities tried to trace his parents, Muniswamy lived in a Shishu Mandir (Government Home for children below 6 years) and later, in a Government Boys' Home. When two years of searching yielded no results, it became evident that Muniswamy needed a new home.

BOSCO advocated for Muniswamy's placement in foster care, which the CWC approved, after careful consideration. Muniswamy's transition to his foster family in Kottur, Ballari, was a profound experience that touched the lives of everyone involved. When Muniswamy was officially handed over to his foster care parents after completing the foster care placement procedures, it marked the beginning of a new chapter for him, as well as his new parents.

The couple had been childless for 25 years and they were deeply traumatised by the lack of opportunity to provide love and affection to a child. They received Muniswamy with open arms and hearts, immediately making him an integral part of their lives. Their love and dedication provided him with the nurturing environment he deserved. His foster parents said, "As a family, we had lived with great sadness and disappointment after losing our son, but now seeing



Muniswamy as the son we love and care for, we are living a very happy life.”

For Muniswamy, the transition from a structured institutional setting to the warm embrace of a loving family was a dream come true. Reflecting on his happiness and contentment, he says, “Having lived in the Government Boys’ Home for many years, I now know that living with my parents and receiving their love and care is much better. The BOSCO staff had explained this option of family care and offered me this opportunity. Now I am very happy to get a parent’s care and love”. The stability of a family structure provided him with a sense of belonging and security that played a crucial role in his emotional healing. This is where foster parents make a vital difference to the child, offering an experience of normalcy and acceptance within a family unit, where a caring parental figure is once more real to the child.



In Muniswamy’s case, foster care was the lifeline that rescued him from the hard reality of street life and institutional care. The dedicated efforts of BOSCO and the CWC revitalised his life, offering him a chance to experience the care, love and support that every child deserves. Foster care transformed not only Muniswamy’s life but also the lives of his new parents, proving that family is not always defined by blood, but by the bonds of love and care that transcend all boundaries.

"The love of a family is life's greatest blessing."- Eva Burrows. Some children can only dream of it. Let’s make it a possibility for them.

Why Foster Care?



Besides the fact that children grow up best in a family environment? Where they can learn life skills and values naturally to grow emotionally, mentally, physically and psychologically? Children who grow up in institutions often lack an emotional resilience that develops more easily in a family. They also develop a more intrinsic sense of personal rights and responsibilities in a family. For this reason, even group foster care is a better setting for a child than a large institution.

Most large children’s institutions though well-intentioned, do not provide adequate facilities or nurturing and stimulating environments. Children in institutions, who lack individual attention, are susceptible to abuse, bullying, and other negative experiences which severely impact their growth.

The children in need of care and protection from the State and Civil Society have not reduced. In fact, the COVID pandemic created many more orphans and half-orphans. A *Lancet Child & Adolescent Health* survey claimed 19,17,100 chil-

dren in India, lost parents or caregivers in 2020-21. In response to this claim, the Union Ministry for Women & Child Development declared that only 153,827 children were registered as abandoned or having lost caregivers due to COVID in that period. Even 150,000 is a huge number of additional children in need of care and protection, that cannot be adequately provided by government or private institutions.

The answer, then, is simple. The need is great. The available solutions (institutional care & adoption) are not adequate to meet the need. Therefore, the need for community- and family-based alternatives to support these children during their vulnerable years.



Who can be a Foster Child?

Indian law recommends foster care for children in the age group of 6-18 years, who are in difficult family circumstances. Orphaned or abandoned/surrendered children, victims of physical, emotional or sexual abuse, natural/manmade disasters, domestic violence, or children whose parents are unable to take care of them for various reasons: chronic mental or physical ill health, imprisonment etc., can be placed in foster care with approved caregivers. Adoption, instead of foster care, is preferred for children below six years of age.



Who can be Foster Parents?

Any married couple, with or without children of their own, who want to open their hearts and homes to give children in need, the experience of parental affection and a home environment for a period of time. You must be Indian citizens, above 35 years of age, and in good physical, emotional and mental health, without criminal



convictions or indictments. You need to have an adequate income, home space and basic facilities to meet the needs of the child. Supportive community ties with friends and neighbours would help you and the foster child have a good time together.

The interested family is fully supported by the foster care staff, through counselling and information on few rules that makes the fostering a smooth process and legally acceptable.

What have BOSCO and BREADS done so far?

Indian society has had a strong tradition of joint families and community life, and so, caring for children of the community is not a strange concept. Building on these existing traditions, BOSCO Bangalore supported by BREADS, has been promoting the concept of foster care among different sections of society to create awareness and acceptance in Karnataka, since 2012. BOSCO's promotion of foster care has been appreciated by the District Child Protection services in the various districts.



In 2022-23,

- BOSCO Bangalore reached **101,669** people to spread awareness about foster care. These included panchayat officials, Anganwadi teachers and mothers, religious leaders, self-help group members, ASHA workers, school teachers and Corporate houses. It advocated with **2265** government officials.
- **13** children were placed in foster care; follow up support and counselling were provided for **3** children and their foster families. Over the years, **48** children have been successfully placed in foster care.
- **76** children and **103** parents were identified as potential foster care family members, after careful identification, assessment and follow-up.
- **24** applications are under process with the DCPO for placement of children in foster families.



Accomplishments:

- ◇ BOSCO was member of the committees for developing Foster Care Guidelines at both the Karnataka and National levels.
- ◇ BOSCO presented its Foster Care model to the Department of Woman & Child Development, Goa for their consideration.
- ◇ Two national consultations on Foster Care were conducted and the deliberations published in a book- *Foster Care—An Alternative Family Care for Children without Families*.
- ◇ Published research on existing Foster Care practices: *A Study on the practice of Foster Care—Foster Family Renewed Hope and a New Life*.
- ◇ A short video to propagate Foster Care was made: [Foster care—Love without borders](#).



What are the Protective Mechanisms in the System?

Similar to adoption, the law also has a system for the safeguarding of the foster child and the parent. Various processes provide support, training, monitoring, and follow up of the child and the family. As in all rehabilitative activities based on child rights, the guiding principle remains the best interests of the child, which is to provide an opportunity for the child to live in a family.



- An assigned social worker reviews the child's placement periodically, maintaining relevant records. S/he assists and coordinates between the Child Welfare Committee and the foster family every month to ensure the child's well-being.
- The social worker makes monthly visits to the child's school to assess the child's health, attendance, progress etc. and the family's general environment.
- The social worker also supports the foster parents individually and in groups, through information, and counselling.
- The process is not so tedious and the social worker is available to handhold the parents at every step of the process.



Would you Foster a Child?



Remember, the most important factor is your willingness to bring a child into your home and offer a caring, supportive environment. It may not be the easiest thing in the world or bring you any worldly accreditations, but you will become a life-changing agent. We invite you to consider it! And let us know, we'll be delighted to help you!

August 2023

- Employee engagement with CSR partners
- Plantation drives in support of Karnataka Vanamahotsava
- JPN—Consultation on Unorganised and Migrant Workers in Karnataka
- DB BEST Academy—22nd skill training batch commences
- DREAM state-level review and evaluation meeting
- Distribution of materials (mattresses, computers, water purifiers, etc.) to childcare centres in Karnataka
- Launch of two-wheeler, tailoring and beautician skill training course in Kolar
- Visit by ResponseNet to BOSCO Bangalore
- Volunteers arrive from Austria
- Orientation programme for 20 university students from Bavaria, Germany

September 2023

- Write for Good—Project proposal writing workshop for project staff of the INK province
- BREADS' monitoring visits to project locations
- Executive Director meetings with funding partners

BREADS NEWS



Support for Child Care Institutes

BREADS directly supports nine institutions for the rehabilitation of children rescued from situations of risk (the street, child labour, destitution, abuse etc.), in Karnataka and Kerala. It also supports other childcare institutions...[more...](#)



Employee Volunteer Engagement by Aon Consulting Pvt. Ltd., Bangalore

Aon Consulting Pvt. Ltd. Bangalore organised an employee volunteer engagement programme on the 19 August 2023 at BOSCO Mane and BOSCO Vikas in Chamarajpet. The event aimed to create a meaningful connection between the Aon team and...[more...](#)



Consultation on Unorganised and Migrant Workers in Karnataka

On 6 August 2023, a significant event titled "Consultation on Unorganised and Migrant Workers in Karnataka" was successfully conducted by KISMAT (Karnataka Interstate Migrants Alliance for Transformation). The event aimed...[more...](#)



DREAM State Level Review cum Staff Training

The Drug Rehabilitation Education and Mentoring (DREAM) programme in Kerala conducted its state-level review cum staff training at Don Bosco Monvila on 4-5 August 2023. The event brought together...[more...](#)

[Click here for more news about BREADS.](#)

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