**Concept Note
Consultation and FGD on Current Aftercare Practices in Gujarat**

as part of Udayan Care’s research on **“Current Aftercare Practices” (CAP) India 2018**

**25/09/2018**

**Introduction**

The process of preparing young people for leaving alternative care, and what constitutes their mainstreaming, is not sufficiently researched in India. In order to define what support is necessary for their successful reintegration in society, it is imperative that the existing policies and practices be studied, not only from the perspective of people who develop these policies and who administer these services, but more importantly from the view point of the careleavers who transition out of alternative care. To understand their level of preparedness for independent living and integration in society, and how different practices affect their level of preparedness, a thorough research is needed. There is also an urgent need of data on children in care, and who transition into aftercare or just fall into oblivion. Without these numbers, and without adequate tracking mechanisms, no adequate solutions can be found.

With this idea, Udayan Care developed the CAP research: “Current Aftercare Practices”, and with partners UNICEF and Tata Trust, and part funding from Make my Trip has embarked on a journey of meeting stakeholders like policymakers, service providers and the young care leavers who are involved in this process of the continuum of care from *‘care’* to *‘aftercare’.*

The CAP Research has been completed in Delhi, and a report has been published; and it is underway in Karnataka and in Maharashtra. The stakeholders in the state of Rajasthan are invited at an Inception Consultation, to be held on **25th September 2018,** where the CAP Research in State will be launched. On this occasion, the stakeholders will collectively examine the different aspects, practices, existing models of aftercare in the state review the existing definition, principles and their gaps; and discuss workable solutions to strengthen what exists together in a consultative process. This will help to develop the aftercare discourse and get prepared such that all stakeholders can meaningfully participate in the research, by organizing interviews of care leavers, providing informed perspective as key-informants and share the existing documented resources on care and aftercare. CAP documentation process will seek solutions to position care leavers as “wards of the state” and place appropriate responsibility on them and their duty-bearers for their social reintegration.

**Context:** During the transition from childhood to adolescent children under the State’s protection, Children in Need of Care and Protection (CNCP) and Children in Conflict with Law (CCL) have a right to planned development, protection and participation as inheritors of the States’ care and resources. Thus, the state and the non-state duty-bearers who take children under their care need to ensure adequate education, health care, skill building, employability and socialisation amongst other things for children before they are restored or rehabilitated. The CAP research reveals that those restored back to their families before 18 years of age struggled as families were not strengthened enough. Most youth who did not get aftercare are not traceable and are lost to follow up. The struggle and complete invisibility of this population has established that child protection and the continuum of care has huge gaps that should be urgently addressed by ways of tracking and monitoring those who leave care. While in care, developing skills to gain and retain social bonding, higher education, accommodation, employment, security and stress management techniques for youth transitioning out of care is imperative. The support system while in care is supposed to be a preparatory stage for young adults; it requires the duty bearers to design individualised plans for mainstreaming with adolescent’s participation and be accountable for it.

All across India on attaining of 18 years of age, “care leavers” from Child Care Institution (CCI), Observation Homes, Special Homes, fit facilities and even children under foster care need to be better equipped to deal with transitional challenges and to utilise opportunities. Care leavers need individualised mentoring and holistic aftercare services to be fully settled in life and this could be co-created through a PPP model with the involvement of care leavers as primary stakeholders, and as a responsibility of their duty bearers. Care leavers in India, like the world over, should develop their own agency to support each other and advocate for themselves as a collective.

In Rajasthan, state and civil society have contributed by strengthening cultural systems of care. State-sponsored schemes like Palanhar and Hunar Vikas Yojna have been successful in keeping children in family-based care and providing skill training and placement opportunities to youth in the state. Moreover, residential care for vulnerable women in Nari Niketan or small-group housing model for young adults like SOS Children’s Villages’ and Bachpan Bachao Andolan are few other options available to care leavers under the purview of aftercare services. However, the efficacy of such schemes and aftercare services need to be evaluated from a nuanced perspective of social reintegration of care leavers as conscientious, dignified and empowered citizens of India. Therefore, a more comprehensive definition of “aftercare” and “mainstreaming” needs to be developed – one that situates holistic aftercare supports and services as necessary to uphold the human rights of care leavers.

CAP process will offer a unique opportunity to stakeholders to discuss and debate various aspects of aftercare for care leavers and brainstorm collective solutions to address the gaps in the prevailing practices of care and aftercare to vulnerable adolescents. It is hoped that through this knowledge sharing, evidence building and consultative process of CAP, stakeholders can co-create collaborative solutions to fill in the aftercare gaps.

Through our collective experience, literature search and anecdotal news stories, it is evident that many children in alternative care environments have faced trauma; and in some cases, continue to do so. Therefore, it is not only prudent to develop their coping-mechanisms and resiliency, but also to develop their agency in a manner that makes them capable of demanding and utilising resources as wards of the State. This requires a strategic development of the Individual Care Plan for each child with the child’s unique dispositions, skills, short-comings, talents and aspirations as central to it. Next, regular monitoring of the ICP’s progression and its logical derivation to a Rehabilitation Plan is necessary to realise the true intent of the ‘continuum of care’ concept.

Preceding CAP consultations in Delhi, Karnataka and Pune consultations have successfully flagged and documented this need to link the Individual Care Plan to the myriad life choices available to each youth upon attaining adulthood. The legal, social and moral responsibility of duty bearers needs to be recalled at the consultation such that each stake holder reviews their role of nurturing CNCP and CCL towards realising their social, psychological and economic development in keeping with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the child’ sociological environment. Thus, ‘care’ and ‘aftercare’ has to be understood better to design the social transformation of care leavers by ways of converging schemes, mobilising CSR resources and building capacity of all stakeholders, including care leavers, such that the next generation can claim to have upheld and safeguarded their human rights and fulfilled the SDGs by developing care leavers and foster care youth into contributing members of society.

At present, the **Juvenile Justice Act (2015) defines aftercare as “making provision of support, financial or otherwise, to persons, who have completed the age of eighteen years but have not completed the age of twenty-one years and have left any institutional care to join the mainstream of the society.”**However, Chapter VII of JJ Act relating to Rehabilitation and Social Re-integration makes provision for aftercare of children leaving child care institutions and observation homes. Section 46 reads “Any child leaving a child care institution on completion of eighteen years of age may be provided with financial support to facilitate child’s re-integration into the mainstream of the society in the manner as may be prescribed.”.

In light of this situation, **the Consultation will outline the work to be done for this documentation and the manner in which it will be implemented along with arriving at a joint understanding of after care in the context of Care Leavers from CCIs and family-based care represented by youth and their care takers from Palanhar Scheme. This consultation will be a day long and will be preceded by focus group discussion with participation from select stakeholders with a direct/indirect role in the documentation in Rajasthan**

**PROGRAMME SCHEDULE**

**Venue:** Child Resource Centre, HCM Rajasthan State Institute of Public Administration (OTS) Jaipur 302017 Rajasthan

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| 9.30–10.00am | Registration |
| 10-10.15am | Welcome address by Govt. of Rajasthan on the importance of a documentation work such as this and how it will be leveraged to inform the state’s after care policies.Setting the context of the documentation and its broad contours Dr. Kiran Modi, Founder &Managing Trustee, Udayan Care (UC)Setting the expectation for the day and ask of CAP from the stakeholders Dr. (Mrs.) Rajesh Yadav, Child Rights Center (CRC) |
| 10.15–10.30am | Introduction of the participants |
| 10.30–11.30am | Panel discussion on what is aftercare in context of JJ Act and Palanhar scheme, and to understand challenges faced by existing Aftercare practices in rural and urban Rajasthan (how do care givers prepare children before exit at 18 years)  |
| 11.30–11.45am | Tea Break |
| 11.45am-1.00pm | Stay-in group discussion and parallel FGD on aftercare gaps and suggestions to address the gaps for 1. Policy implementation
2. Extending and improving Aftercare services
3. Developing a care leaver support system
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| 1.00-2.00pm | Lunch |
| 2.00-4.00pm | Discussion on questions followed by presentation from the groups to a plenary to conclude and prioritize important recommendationsChair: Mr Sanjay Nirala and moderator Dr. Shivani Bhardwaj |
| 4.00-4.15pm | Tea break |
| 4.15-4.40pm | The CAP research process so far - sharing of challenges faced to discuss how to plan the data collection better Karnataka experience by Ms. Usha Kiran, State Research Officer, NIMHANS-CAP PartnerMaharashtra CAP experience by Mr. Rakesh Prajapati, State Research Officer, Udayan Care Delhi CAP experience by Ms Rini Bhargava, Research Coordinator Aftercare Outreach Program Udayan Care |
| 4.40- 5:00pm  | Conclusion on take away from the discussions by Ms. Sharmila Ray, Child Protection Specialist, UNICEFVote of thanks by Dr. Kavita Mangnani, State Documentation Officer, Rajasthan |