

Udayan Care

Impact Report



MJF Global
Part of the Martin James Foundation



"With timely, coordinated support, families can provide safe and nurturing environments for children."

Udayan Care Team

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Partner Overview

Udayan Care is an Indian organisation with headquarters in Delhi, founded in 1994. It works in 44 cities across 16 states to empower vulnerable children, women, and youth through various programmes. The organisation also conducts research, develops training courses, and contributes to conferences, including serving as a founding member of BICON. It conducts advocacy to influence policies and practices on the standards of alternative care in South Asia.



Project Context and Goals

MJF's partnership with Udayan Care began in 2021 to support their FiT Families Together project, which aimed to strengthen family reintegration for children who had been rapidly restored with their families after leaving a Child Care Institution (CCI), often with minimal wrap-around support or follow-up.

In response to COVID-19 in 2020, various government bodies in India issued directives to reunify children with their families. However, these measures were implemented with limited assessment and follow-up. Reintegrating a child who has spent time in institutional care back into their family is a delicate and multi-layered process, which requires a deep understanding of the child's needs, adequate resources, and strong partnerships with communities and stakeholders. Without sufficient time and investment (including thorough assessment, planning, preparation of children and the families, and ongoing monitoring), children may face further risks and trauma.

Udayan Care initially identified 54 children from 31 families in Delhi who had been returned home during the 2020 lockdown. This group included both children previously in CCIs and their siblings. While Udayan Care initially provided case management and support only to those specific children, they quickly found their siblings, families, and communities at large required support as well.

As Udayan Care provided support for these specific families, they found a strong correlation between the services needed for a healthy reintegration and those needed for families potentially at risk of unnecessary separation, leading to an expanded set of goals and aims during the project and still continuing.

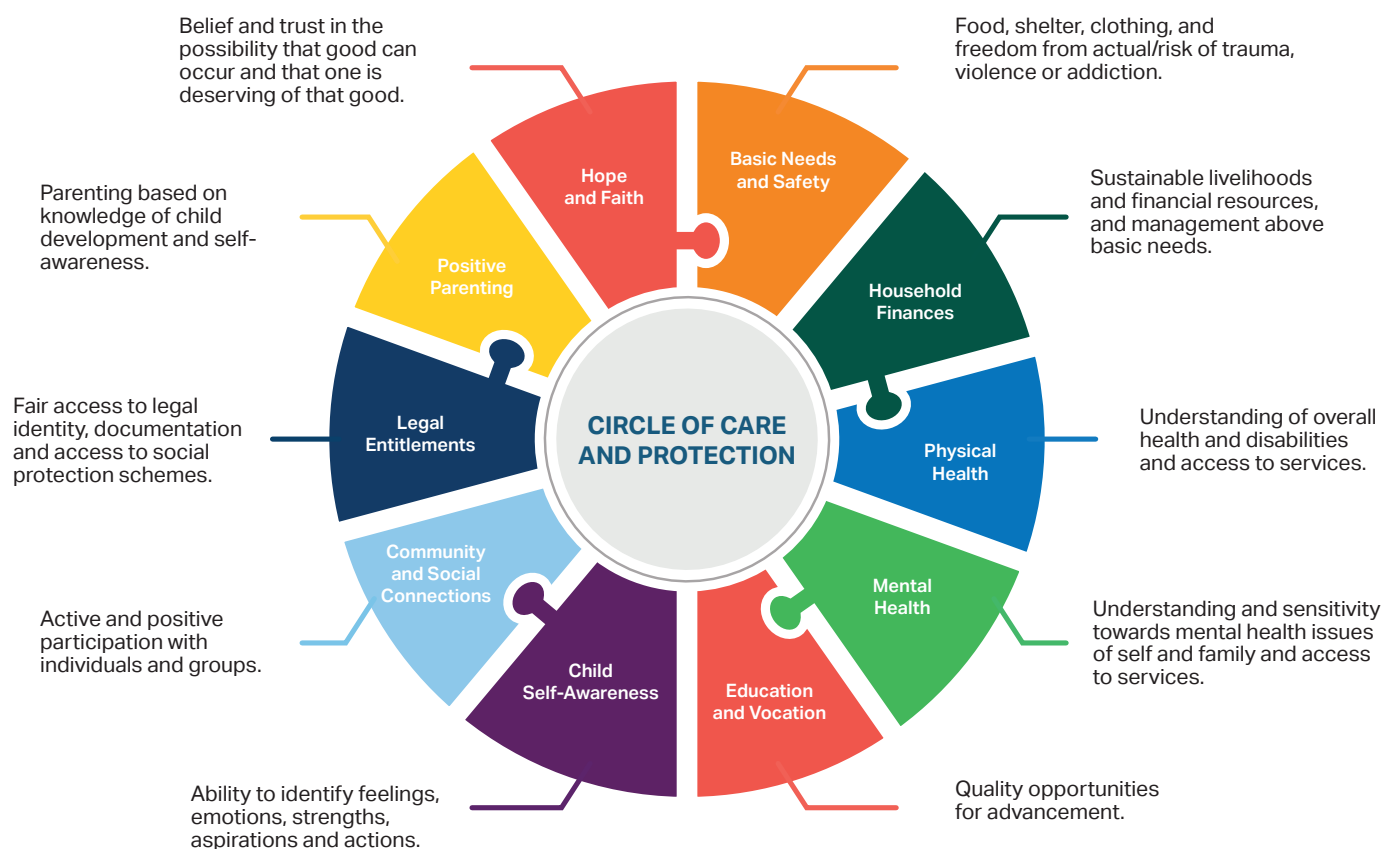
This led to two bodies of work under the FiT Families Together Project: reintegration and prevention/family strengthening, whereby Udayan Care primarily provided family strengthening services for families, referred to them by state systems.

This enabled them to develop an approach to the children, families and communities served that was both responsive and anticipatory.

As the project continued, Udayan Care also increased their advocacy work across India and beyond, working to shift mindsets and community perceptions of institutionalisation within the communities served and more broadly throughout India. Their extensive data collection has also served to produce a robust set of processes, procedures, and practices available to other organisations endeavouring to serve similar populations within their own context.

Primary Intervention(s)

Throughout the FiT Families Together Project, Udayan Care has developed and refined an approach named the Circle of Care and Protection that guides and shapes their service to children, families and communities. This approach includes providing holistic support across ten domains described in the diagram below:



By shifting from solely child-centric interventions, they found that an entire-family approach enabled better impact both in the short term and the long term.

Additionally, Udayan Care operated with their Sensitive Trust-Based Reintegration model, whereby the team worked to build trust over time with the entire family. Slowing their initial approach allowed the teams to co-design the appropriate interventions and services with the parents, rather than imposing a specified model on every child and family.

Significantly, Udayan Care intentionally employed and elevated staff members who had lived experience of care in a Child Care Institution. They found this to be more effective and deeply significant for the families served, identifying these team members as key to the overall success of the FiT Families Together Project.

Major Milestones and Progress Achieved

Udayan Care's FiT Families Together Project has achieved significant impact over the last three years. What started as an emergency response to a specific group of children has expanded into a community-led approach to child protection that is replicable throughout India. Their work has accomplished several significant milestones throughout this project, ranging from macro impacts seen in policy shifts at state and local government levels to deeply impactful work done for individual children and their families, including:

1. The FiT Families Together Project involved gathering local stakeholders from multiple sectors to provide services and government linkages to families served. This collaborative approach led to the creation of the Delhi State Network on Family Strengthening in 2022, which includes 23 members, ranging from community-based organisations to relevant government ministries and officials, representing a powerful step towards the level of coordinated approach needed to truly support vulnerable children and families. This has also allowed for community referrals and access to legal support for families.
2. Udayan Care has collaborated very closely with various governing bodies that facilitate services for children and families. This includes a close level of coordination with local Child Welfare Committees (CWC), which are primarily responsible for the hearing of cases to place children in alternative care. By working closely with CWCs, Udayan Care has been able to advocate for family strengthening support and has successfully prevented the reinstitutionalisation of 29 children (to date). Udayan Care has also facilitated 27 referred cases from the CWC and provided indirect support to another 15 families. Additionally, Udayan Care coordinates with the police to create child friendly spaces for children presently in contact with the law in any capacity, and works to provide child-centric support for children involved in sexual abuse cases.



3. Over the course of the project, Udayan Care prevented 78 children from 29 families from family separation, providing linkages to relevant services and support throughout their community. The success of their individualised, tailored support has also allowed Udayan Care to expand their influence through collaboration at the state and local levels, and further impacting the CWCs that are responsible for the placement of children into alternative care.
4. In total, Udayan Care supported 56 families with 196 children and young people, and their broader communities throughout the duration of this project.

MJF Contributions to Partner

Over the course of the three-year project, MJF contributed £58,183 towards the overall budget of the FiT Families Together Project, which represented 60% of the total project cost. While MJF was not the sole donor of this project, Udayan Care regularly credits the excellent support and guidance received from the MJF Global team as being crucial to the setting of their vision and scope, and key to the success of their interventions. In addition to project funds, MJF provided two learning grants in the amount of £1,000 each, enabling Udayan Care to travel within India and to BICON in October 2025, where they shared their lessons learned with other organisations seeking to similarly serve children, families, and communities. MJF also funded an endline evaluation report in which external evaluators conducted an evaluation of the FiT Families Together Project using a Realist Evaluation approach. This aimed to establish a context-mechanism-outcome chain in various areas of the project, seeking to understand what works, in which circumstances, and for whom.



In addition to financial support, MJF provided extensive support and consultation to Udayan Care throughout this project. This included monthly calls with the team and one project visit. Udayan Care has frequently mentioned how valuable this input was as they built and refined their approach to serving the children and families throughout this project.

Additionally, MJF Global supported Udayan Care as they sought additional funding bids and conducted a series of sessions and workshops with their team on various communication topics, including informed consent and ethical storytelling. Finally, MJF Global consulted with both Udayan Care and external evaluators to shape and refine their endline evaluation report, leading to a robust piece of research establishing the goals, aims, and outcomes of the FiT Families Together Project.

Challenges and Lessons Learned

At the end of the partnership, MJF Global met with leaders from Udayan Care to reflect on their overall challenges and lessons learned. They shared several key learnings that are relevant to all seeking to serve children in a similar manner:

First, reintegration is sensitive. It is not an end point, but a process. Building trust with families is key prior to any interventions. Udayan Care found that families were initially reluctant to receive support and visits, but as trust was built, families began to co-design the solutions necessary for their contexts and circumstances. The team began using the word “repair” to describe reintegration work to capture how extensive the level of support was that a child and their family required upon reintegration.

Second, child-specific solutions are not sufficient. They found that efforts seeking to support the child in a standalone manner often failed to adequately protect that child. Instead, they found that interventions must focus on the family as a unit, finding that the best way to support and protect the child was to bolster their entire family. Case management must be relational and reflective, not merely administrative. Through visits, they found that parents truly are allies in a child-centred approach, not enemies. To achieve these goals, they also found it crucial to work to streamline documentation and monitoring tools, as overburdening those directly serving children and families can dilute their impact.



Third, they found that material support cannot be overlooked when seeking to strengthen families. They consistently found across the families served that poverty and underlying issues were the primary drivers to institutionalisation, and that helping to maintain sources of income, provide material support, and partner with community organisations and systems allowed the team to sustainably support the families involved in the project. Holistic, multi-domain, and multi-stakeholder-based support is most effective when coordinated.

Finally, Udayan Care shared this powerful summary of their lessons learned through the Fit Families Together Project: “We’ve seen that with timely, coordinated support, families can provide safe and nurturing environments for children who were once institutionalised.”

Next Steps and Progress Made

The impact achieved by the FiT Families Together Project is extensive, far-reaching, and still developing. Udayan Care has established proof-of-concept through this initial three-year project, demonstrating that vulnerable families can and want to care for their children when supported holistically. The external evaluation team made clear the uniqueness of a project like this throughout India and were eager to capture and magnify its success for further scaling throughout Delhi, India, and beyond.

Based upon the documented success of this project, Udayan Care has attracted funding from a major donor in India to scale this project into another part of Delhi. Additionally, Udayan Care continues to be a prominent advocate in care reform efforts within Asia through their leadership at BICON, and publication of their international academic journal, *Institutionalised Children Explorations and Beyond*, ensuring that their powerful lessons learned throughout this project will continue to have ripple effects throughout Delhi, and influence other actors involved in care reform.





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