

A Study on Status of Runaway Children in Dindigul District

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Abstract

Human begin does not remain the same until he dies from the day of conception. Those changes, along with the environment, are leading him on the path of progress. Any growth depends on the man his age. Traditionally, a part of a child's life can be predicted during pregnancy. Part of it is unpredictable. According to the genetic biogenesis inherited from the mother and father, a child's functioning is determined by the environment actions and improves the lives of children, could fall and his or her life functions. The present study aims to find out the Study on Status of Runaway Children in Dindigul District. A samples of 50 respondents selected randomly were studied. Primary data were collected by using a structured interview scheduled. All the respondents were asked the some questions in the same fashion and they were informed the purpose of study. Percentage analysis and cross tabulation was applied in the present study. The findings and observations are the result and outcome of the interpretations made during the study of analysis.

Keywords : *Status, Runway children and Demographic variables*



Introduction

Biological and psychological humans are neither the strongest nor the biggest or the fastest of all the creatures, nor are they specifically suited to their environment. Yet not only have they ensured their survival but also made rapid progress as a race. Obviously, their intellectual abilities and socio - cultural aspect have more than compensated for what they lacked biologically and psychologically. Locked in a permanent struggle against environmental conditions, that primitive man recognized the importance of group endeavor or society for his existence. Thus by co-existing in the form of families and tribes, he progressively acquired knowledge and experience, learned how to know and express his and aspirations and so defined and fashioned his intellectual faculties.

The human child is probably the weakest of living offsprings, and left to itself, cannot possible survive. The adult members must tend the child, provide it with nourishment, and protect it from harm during its prolonged childhood. This prolonged childhood also helps the child to prepare his/ her better adult life. During this period the child needs to learn the necessary skills for its survival into in this world. since human life is not only a biological and physiological function, the child has also to get training in the intellectual, social and cultural aspects of existence. It has to learn the norms and values of group. In other words a child needs to be socialized, acculturised and provided and knowledge and skills of survival.

The human child is full of potentialities. It has the potential to grow into a full grown, mature, competent adult men or women. It has the potential of becoming a poet, of a plausible or a teacher, of this potential physically, mentally, emotionally, socially, and spiritually beneficial environment for creating and caring for the child's development.

One day early in the morning, the Dindigul railway station was packed with people. Everybody is busy boarding at the train. The child helpline workers were watching the crowds. Sangeeta and Vithya they are were standing at the railway station platform. They are standing alone in an area of platform. They don't know where to go for them. The workers of the child line doubted their activities of the two of them. Suddenly they were trying to get -----down on front of a train. The

child line workers rescued them. The two child welfare workers took them to their office. They are asking why should you do like this? The two children said have problems in our families, Things like beating, scolding by our parents done in daily our families. So we are affected by anxiety. So we both them came to her thought we could committed suicide. Child welfare worker was shocked to hear statement of children's. The children were then handed over to the railway station police. Children were produced before CWC in Dindigul by Scope India organisation that is working in the Dindigul railway station to protect the interests of such children. Children's fathers were worried and was searching for the girls for two days. Finally they got information from the CWC in Dindigul and they brought back the girls after two days. Good counselling given by the Scope India, the girls realised strength and weakness and worth of his self-esteem. After they are send reception home for children. Children were given counselling, and then they went to their parents three months later.

In all of the many social groups that we as individuals belong to, we have a status and a role to fulfill. Status is our relative social position within a group, while a **role** is the part our society expects us to play in a given status. For example, a man may have the status of father in his family. Because of this status, he is expected to fulfill a role for his children that in most societies require him to nurture, educate, guide, and protect them. Of course, mothers usually have complementary roles.

Both achieved and ascribed statuses exist in all societies. However, some cultures choose to emphasize the importance of one or the other. Children are encouraged from an early age to be independent and self-reliant. Children are taught in school from an early age that, despite the fact that they may be from a poor family, male or female, they should aspire to get a good education, better themselves and their family economically, and even become a leader in society.

The Term "Child in India"

Children are the happiest persons in the world. Without worrying about anything one and all children communicate pleasure. Children have a soft heart and

can be expected trust treat everyone equal. Children love it expect them to play and enjoy the game along with others.

According to the Census of India, children are under 14 years of age. In our Constitution of India, a child is under 14 years of age. The Juvenile Justice Act 2000 which has been implemented in the country explains that children under the age of 18 are children.

The concept of when and how childhood ends today is made clear by scientific research in the fields of medicine, sociology, psychology and education. Today, the age of a child is universally accepted. Improvement in the overall development of the body, mind, and emotion, social and spiritual level requires that a fully developed human beings need a minimum of 18 years, so we call the period from the birth of a man to the age of 18 years is what we call childhood.

Therefore, the definitions of children differ from society and culture perspectives, but the UN's Children's Rights Convention, created in 1989, defines children under the age of 18 who need to be acknowledged that the body needs to be fully developed

Rights of Children

Children are the subject of their own rights. The Convention views every child as an individual and as a member of a family and community, with rights and responsibilities appropriate to his or her age and stage of development. By recognizing children's rights in this way, the Convention firmly sets the focus on the whole child.

Through its several articles, CRC broadly talks about four sets of rights of children:

- The right to life
- The right to protection
- The right to development
- The right to participation

CRC focuses not just on the rights' holders, i.e., the children, but also the duty bearers, i.e. the State, the family and other systems that are engaged in life of children.

Children Constitution of India

India is home to almost 39% of the world's children. More than one third of the country's population, around 440 million, is below 18 years. India's children are India's future as strength of the nation lies in a healthy, protected, educated and well-developed child population that will grow up to be productive citizens of the country. India must invest resources in children proportionate to their huge numbers.

It is estimated that around 170 million or 40 per cent of India's children are vulnerable to or experiencing difficult circumstances. There is, therefore, an urgent case for increasing expenditure on child protection so that the rights of the children of India are protected. The neglect of child protection issues results in outright violation of the rights of the children and increases their vulnerability to abuse, neglect and exploitation.

The Constitution of India recognizes the vulnerable position of children and their right to protection. Article 15 the Constitution guarantees special attention to children through necessary and special laws and policies that safeguard their rights. The Right to equality, protection of life and personal liberty and the right against exploitation is enshrined in Articles 14, 15, 16, 17, 21, 23 and 24.

The child rights and welfare concerns have been addressed in a number of International Conventions and Standards on child protection including the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) 1989, the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice (The Beijing Rules), 1985, the UN Rules for the Protection of Juveniles Deprived of their Liberty, 1990, and the Hague Convention on Inter-country Adoption, 1993. The Government of India ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) in 1992. The Convention prescribes standards to be adhered to by all State parties in securing the best interest

of the child. It emphasizes social reintegration of child victims, without resorting to judicial proceedings. The UNCRC outlines the fundamental rights of children, including the right to be protected from economic exploitation and harmful work, from all forms of sexual exploitation and abuse, and from physical or mental violence, as well as ensuring that children will not be separated from their family against their will.

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child UNCRC

Scope of protection for children in need of care and protection in India

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (1989) is an international statement of the civil, political, economic and cultural rights of children. This is a major milestone in the historic effort to achieve a World Fit for Children. UNCRC is based on the principles of non-discrimination and the best interest of the children. It ensures basic rights to survival, development, protection and participation of all children in the world. The UNCRC is ratified by India, which is having the highest number of children in the world with more than one third of the population below the age of 18, during 1992.

Constitution of India guarantees, through *Article 15* - 'Prohibition of discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth'. *Article 39* enshrines that State shall, in particular, direct its policy towards securing - the health and strength of workers, men and women, and the tender age of children are not abused and that citizens are not forced by economic necessity to enter vocations unsuited to their age or strength; that children are given opportunities and facilities to develop in a healthy manner and in conditions of freedom and dignity and that childhood and youth are protected against exploitation and against moral and material abandonment. *Article 47* - imposes on the State the primary responsibility of ensuring that all the needs of children are met and that their basic rights are fully protected.

Since signing of the UNCRC there is a paradigm shift in the approach of the government towards children from welfare approach to rights based approach. Government of India enacted new legislations since signing of URCRC to protect

the rights of the children. One such important legislation is the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2000 (JJ Act).

The National Policy for Children (NPC) in India is revised in tune with UNCRC during 2013.

The NPC recognises that a child is any person below the age of eighteen years; childhood is an integral part of life with a value of its own; children are not a homogenous group and their different needs need different responses, especially the multi-dimensional vulnerabilities experienced by children in different circumstances; and a long term, sustainable, multi-sectoral, integrated and inclusive approach is necessary for the overall and harmonious development and protection of children. NPC also states that all children have the right to grow in a family environment, in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding and families are to be supported by a strong social safety net in caring for and nurturing their children.

With regard to child protection the NPC states that

“Children have the right to be protected wherever they are. The State shall create a caring, protective and safe environment for all children, to reduce their vulnerability in all situations and to keep them safe at all places, especially public spaces. A safe, secure and protective environment is a precondition for the realization of all other rights of children. The State shall protect all children from all forms of violence and abuse, harm, neglect, stigma, discrimination, deprivation or any other activity that takes undue advantage of them, harms their personhood or affects their development. To secure the rights of children temporarily or permanently deprived of parental care, the State shall endeavour to ensure family and community-based care arrangements guaranteeing quality standards of care and protection. The State commits to taking special protection measures to secure the rights and entitlements of children in need of special protection, characterised by their specific social, economic and geo-political situations, including their need for rehabilitation and reintegration. The State shall also promote child friendly jurisprudence, enact progressive legislation, build a preventive and responsive child

protection system and promote effective enforcement of punitive legislative and administrative measures against all forms of child abuse and neglect”.

Review of Literature

Reviewing various studies that have investigated the relationship between family factors and runaway incidence of Children and prominent theories associated with the phenomenon, Ravi Shankar and Ravidra Gadkar (2015) concluded that multiple family factors that influence a child to run away from home such as, Family Pattern, Family Structure, Family relationships, Changes in Family relationships, Roles of family members, Parental attitude, Parenting practices and Family social status.

Poor parenting practices’ appears to play a major role in influence of family environment on runaway behaviour of the child. Based on studies conducted in Balochistan, Jahangir Khan Achakzai (2011) revealed that the prominent factor behind children running away to be punishment at home by parents/ guardians.

Jennifer Benoit-Bryan(2013) based on a panel study conducted on behalf of the National Runaway Safeline, examining the correlations between family level variables and runaway behaviour by adolescents using crosstabs and multiple logistic regression revealed that there is compelling evidence that running away from home as an adolescent is strongly connected with family characteristics.

There are many other studies (Bal Sakha, 2014; D'Lima & Rima, 1992; Panicker & Nangia, 1992; Save the Children (2008), Harper and Iyer (2013, p. 50), McFadyen, (2005), Schwinger (2007), McFadyen, 2005, Aggarwal, (2002) that have emphasised the family factors have a greater influence children to be on the streets.

Most of the above studies, while emphasising the importance of family environment, It is also said that children are on the streets also because of other factors such as uninteresting and non-friendly school situation, corporal punishment in schools (Alex, 2007), peer group influence, substance abuse, etc. However, none of the studies have focused the external conditions that push the family into such

situation. A few studies have focused on the poverty factor of the families. Though, not those children from all poor families are running away, but poverty does trigger breaking of families and mal treatment of children. It implies that it is necessary to intervene in promoting the lives standards of poorer sections along with other child protection programmes.

Psychological factors

Cynthia Watters and Paul O’Callaghan (2016) emphasised Psychological reasons for children being out of home and on streets. This article is based on the available quantitative literature on mental health and psychosocial interventions among children and adolescents in street situations (CASS) in low- and middle-income countries. It is stated that psychological intervention is necessary for reintegrating runaway children with their families. It is true that in general the mental health problem among adolescents is a neglected area, but mental health issues are factored by conditions in the family, community and educational institutions. Economic difficulty, physical punishment at school, educational pressure, teasing at school and parental fights, low social status, poor families, nuclear families and sudden death of parents were significantly associated with indicators for depression among children and adolescents (Vivek Bansal et al (2009), Janay and Carolyn (2005) and Sandeep et al (2010)).

Reunification and reintegration process

Based on Sathi (an NGO working on runaway children) model Harper and Iyer (2013), has stated that proper orientation for the children is necessary before reintegrating them with their families. It is mentioned that 95 per cent of the children sent back home through early intervention efforts do stay back and settle down to continue either schooling or vocation (p.49). It looks like the conclusion is based on the data provided by the NGO rather than based on any empirical evidence. There is no detailed study conducted with the reunified children by the authors. There is no detailed information in the study about the social economic background of the children who are reunited. Only a detailed study of the beneficiaries would inform the success rate of such interventions.

Berckmans, Velasco, Tapia, and Loots (2012) have rightly pointed out that the process of interventions for reuniting and reintegrating children back in their families should be undertaken at various levels. At the micro level it is necessary to understand the strength of his or her social ties from the children themselves for effective reintegration. In this context it is necessary to listen to the children themselves or in other words providing space for children to participate in the decisions. In other words, sending them home without knowing about their family and reasons for leaving home will not end in a successful reintegration. According to the authors it is necessary at the meso level, to work with family, community, CSOs and other institutions like schools to create a protective environment for the child. The macro level context includes policy framework to strengthen the child protection structures (including child protection system, Juvenile Justice Systems, health care structure, etc.) and policies on social welfare/social protection on the other. Government policies and effective implementation in terms of social protection, child protection, education, and health and so on are very important.

Objectives of the Study

1. To understand the present situation of all the children restored to their families from the records of the IPs and phone calls and understanding the current status of the children in terms of their well-being in the family, education, health care and adjustment to community/context through a sample study.
2. To understand the present situation of children referred to long-term care homes- adjustment to the environment of the institution, engagement in education and other development activities and plan for future.
3. To understand the process of referring children to their families- experience in terms of following the procedures, engaging with key stakeholders, proactive or innovative approaches, challenges involved and time taken for sending children to child care institutions. Also, what efforts were made to trace their families for restoring them? (representative sample)
4. To study factors that influence children's continuity with family after restoration (findings from the previous study will be used to study these factors in Tamil Nadu sample.)

Methodology of the study

The total number of children rescued by the Organization amounted to 534 runaway children's cases in Dindigul area which were only 20 children to other states of India. Out of the 534 rescued children 293 children belong to the Dindigul district. All the children were rescued from the railway stations mostly reunified with their families. Out of 293 children 50 were selected for the study based on stratified random sampling method. The 23 children in the area under the panchayat union in Dindigul district. 23 children were in Dindigul urban areas. Four children were also examined in the rural area.

Design of the Study

The researcher has adopted both exploratory and descriptive research design for this study.

Intensive Sample study

50 Children were classified by four variables before the sample is selected. These are

- (a) Gender,
- (b) Age group (up to 9, 10-12, 13-15, and 16-18)
- (c) Reasons for leaving home and
- (d) District of blocks

Validity of the sampling

The characteristics of the sample children and their families presented here represent the conditions not of all the children who were reunited. Moreover the findings can be considered only as indicative of the conditions of such children as the study focussed only on the children rescued and reunited with their families from nearest Dindigul district.

Methods of data collection

A structured questionnaire is prepared for interviewing children and their families (annexure 2) based on this questionnaire includes questions on socio-economic and demographic profile of the households and reasons for children

leaving home. Questions include the time taken reunite the children with their families and the services provided to the children along with the perception of parents, children and the current status of children. So the researcher has adopted interview schedule method for this study.

Data analysis

Data analysis process started as the data collection proceeded. The information from interview schedules was coded and entered into excel sheet. Themes and narratives were also drawn out from the data

Challenges in the field work

Many children rescued from rural areas were in remote areas with limited transport facilities. It was so difficult to trace the addresses of many of the sample children both in urban and rural areas. Lots of time and energy is spent on locating the sample children and their households.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS

Table 1

Distribution of the Respondents by their Sex

Sl.No	Responder	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
1	Male	45	90.0
2	Female	5	10.0
3	Total	50	100.0

The table present of the respondents by their sex total of 50 children out of 45 male children and 5female children information were collected. From the data it is clear shows that more than 90% in male children and 10% girl children responding to the question in this study.

Our sample shows that of the total runaway children only 10 per cent are female children. This is slightly more in urban areas than the rural areas. It looks like the tendency to run away is high among boys than girls.

Whereas, in urban areas the proportion of runaway children in 10-14 and 15-18 are almost equal. This could be because of the higher exposure of urban children

to the outside world and easy transport facilities. This trend is true in all the Dindigul district.

Table 2
Distribution of sample children, gender and age group

Age groups wise	Male	Female	Total	Percentage (%)
0-5	0	0	0	0
6-10	6	0	6	12.0
11-15	22	2	23	46.0
16-18	17	3	19	38.0
Total	45	5	50	100.0

The table above shows that 92% of children between the age groups of 11 to 18 the remaining 12 percent are children from 0 to 10 years old. So we can study only focused on adolescent age group. The study is carried out by collecting information from children in the one block and one urban area of the district, taking the average number of children.

It shows that the tendency for running away is more among the children in the age group of 15-18 than 10-14 in the rural areas. Whereas, in urban areas the proportion of runaway children in 10-14 and 15-18 are almost equal. This could be because of the higher exposure of urban children to the outside world and easy transport facilities. This trend is true in all the districts.

Table 3
Current schooling and work status of sample children by age group

Age Group Wise	Currently what are doing for children			
	Working	Studying	Idle	Total
6-10	0	5	0	5
11-15	0	6	0	6
16-18	18	21	0	39
Total	18	32	0	50

Out of 50 runaway children covered in this study we found that only around half of them are continuing their studies. All children in the age group of up to 9 years and nearly 95 per cent of children in the age group of 10-12 are in school. In the 13-15 age group around 69 per cent of the children are in school and in 16-18

years only less than one third of the children are continuing their studies. Though all the 23 children have been to school, 50% of them have dropped out of school at present.

Tamil Nadu had a major lead in the introduction of early Acts for compulsory elementary education and many innovative schemes. However, there is an unregulated growth of private sector in school education in the past one and half decades. This has added to the existing child protection issues in the state.

Reasons for a Child Run Away

This section shares findings related to perceptions of respondent children's on the reasons for a child to run away. In their interviews, restored children were also asked their own reasons for leaving home. The responses of all these respondent groups are being shared below.

Table 4

Distribution of all rescued children by reason for leaving homes

Sl. No	Reason for Leaving	No of children	Parentage
1	Dislike/Pressure of studies	11	22.0
2	Corporal punishment at home	3	6.0
3	Searching for family	4	8.0
4	Home environment uninteresting/ difficult	3	6.0
5	Difficult Working Conditions	2	4.0
6	Fear of Punishment	3	6.0
7	Seeking Work	7	14.0
8	Seeking Leisure and Recreation	3	6.0
9	Feeling Neglected/ Lonely at Home	3	6.0
10	sightseeing/city attraction	10	20.0
11	child marriage	1	2.0
	Total	50	100.0

Restored children mostly stated following as the reason for their running away: scolding and beating by the parents or other family members. While this reason was stated by both boys and girls in all age groups, this was stated more some boys as well as girls shared that they ran away as they were angry and upset

with family over some issues. Peer pressure was stated as a reason only by boys below 14 years of age.

Table 5
Whether Drugs or Other Substances Used

Whether drugs or other substances used	Frequency	Percent
Yes	3	9.4
No	47	90.6
Total	50	100.0

Restored children were asked whether they got engaged in use of drugs or other substances while they were outside home. 91% of children reported that they did not engage in this. However, 9% children did state that they used drugs etc during their stay outside home.

Table 6
Distribution of households by source of borrowing

Source	No. of households	% to total borrowings
Commercial bank	1	2.1
Cooperative society	2	4.3
Micro finance	12	19.5
Relatives	10	21.7
Friends	13	28.2
Private Money lenders	12	23.9
Total	50	100.0

About two thirds of the households have borrowed up to 50000 and another 12.8 per cent of the households have borrowed up to Rs.100000. The remaining households have more than Rs.100000 as outstanding loan (see table 4.18). Generally the interest rate for borrowings from private sources range from 36 per cent 96 per cent per annum. Interest payment eats away most of the income of these households and the vicious cycle keeps them under difficult survival at all the times.

When we look at the reasons for borrowings, most of it is not for productive purposes. About 75 per cent of the households have borrowed for family expenditure, education and medical expenses. Around 12 per cent of the households

have borrowed for the purpose of house construction. Remaining households have borrowed for business and agriculture. Thus it shows that most of the borrowings are for consumption purposes

Conclusions

Key conclusions based on the research study with suggestions for runaway children are presented in this paper. The suggestions presented in here are for further discussions and consultations to get more insights from those who are working on the subject.

Existing literature review suggests that most of the earlier studies on runaway children emphasised the importance of family environment as well as the environment in the education system. What is missing in the studies relate to the externalities of the family environment. Though poverty is not the basic factor that pushes children out of families, most of the runaway children are from poorer sections. This implies that poverty has been a factor destabilising families and pushing children out. Secondly there are not many studies that have gone into the details of the problems and prospects faced by the reunited runaway children the present study is based on a sample survey of runaway children reunited with their families in Dindigul district.

Conclusions are drawn based on the study on the status of reunited children

- The phenomenon of Runaway children is equally important in both urban and rural areas.
- A preponderant majority of the households from where children ran away are nuclear type families accounting for 80 per cent and 23 per cent of them are families with single parent. Runaway children are not a phenomenon in large families as the average size of the families studied is 4, only marginally higher than the state average.
- Higher proportion of adolescent children in these families differentiates these families from other families in general. Unaddressed issues of adolescents in general and their mental health status seem to be one of the

causes that push such children out of their families. This is true in the case of urban as well as rural and across the districts.

- Compared to the state, the literacy levels in the families of runaway children are much lower.
- Among Reunited children also only 55% are in school, 17% are working and 28% idle. All these are higher in the older age group.
- A preponderant majority of the workers, both men and women in the studied families are not engaged in regular and protected jobs. 43 % of women in these households work as domestic workers with very low pay.
- Low income, high indebtedness and instability in the family are the factors that influence the way children are cared for. Inadequate parental care/abusive situation and the conditions in schooling are the reasons cited by the runaway children.
- One fifth of the families do not want their runaway children back in their families and majority of the families have not even registered police complaints when their children were missing.
- There is a drastic reduction in children's schooling before and after reuniting. Before running away 85% of the children were in schools and this has come down to 55 per cent after reunification. Almost one third of the adolescent children have no aspirations about their future.
- Children in slums, especially the adolescents, are influenced by peer groups and exposed to ever expanding information technology and consumer culture. Secondly the easy access to liquor and other substances sucks them into addiction and tendency to lead an anarchist life. Added to this is the behavior of the adult males in these families who are also alcohol addicts.
- In order to make the Families to fulfil the responsibilities towards their children they may need external support. We have seen that marital disputes, alcoholism, indebtedness, mental illness of caregiver or family members etc. are the factors that brings disharmony in the poor families. There is very limited or no access for intervention regarding alcoholism in family.
- In many families where both parents work, they do not have quality time to watch over their children. Thus there is a tremendous need for such

resources. It is seen that 17 per cent of the reunited children are made to work for lack of resources in the family. What can be done in these cases?

- Unfriendly Education systems pushes many children out of school and make them run away. There is often corporal punishment in schools (even in children homes for that matter) and the environment in hostels is not very conducive to children's like. There is a need to work on education in a sustained manner with various stakeholders.
- Case studies presented representing the 13 per cent of most vulnerable children suggests that the mental health needs of children need to be recognized and addressed. Parents neither have awareness about the mental health issues of children nor have the capacity to recognise it. In many cases of substance abuse they require interventions in the form of treatment. The family may not have the resources and it requires a special strategy for addressing such mental health needs.
- Even when children continue to be with their families, their life possibilities may not turn out to be different than what was there before running away. Unless the contextual vulnerabilities are challenged the lives of many children could continue to be the same even after reunification.

Conclusions on Functioning of Child protection structures

- RCI closely works with the railway authorities and other stakeholders in the station and with the CWC. Coordination with CWC remains a challenge in two locations.
- Adequate efforts are not there at the State level to make the CWCs and DCPUs at the district level to support the work of the implementing partners. RCI should play a greater role in bringing the CP stakeholders at the district level more closely for effectively rescue, reunite and rehabilitate the children with close follow up.
- While the agencies like the CWC, DCPO, SJPU and Child Help Line are of support only in rescuing and in reuniting the children with their families, follow up support is either very poor or absent.
- Though good training has been provided to the staff of CP structures, child rights perspective is lacking.

- SJPU's approach to parents and children are not very friendly and left for much to be desired. They need more sensitisation.
- In many cases CWC is pushing its responsibility to RCI partners (eg caring for the girls in the reception home in Dindigul). It was found in Salem where RCI is working in the Salem Junction, CWC is pushing most of the other state children to RCI open shelter instead of reception home. The burden of identifying the addresses for reunification is pushed to the RCI partner.

Suggestions for effective follow up and rehabilitation

- Vulnerability assessment: When vulnerability assessment is done, it should also include assessment from the families, if not for all the families but at least for the most vulnerable ones. This should be followed with a need assessment in short term, long term and medium term with proper plans for intervention through follow ups and organising needed interventions. The need assessment could be about schools, families, community, skill development opportunities and peer groups and so on. (For example what intervention is needed for bringing a drop out child back to school instead of leaving the decision to the children and family alone? Need to work with the school authorities to change the unfriendly situation in the school, bottlenecks in children going to school; planning for alternative skill development for older children). Once we have a proper plan we can look for support from other stakeholders for follow up and fulfilling the needs. Follow up plan should also have a time bound target for each child that is achievable and subjecting to close monitoring and scrutiny.
- Stakeholders mapping and networking: While there is a networking among the rescuing agencies, there is no such network developed for follow up and family strengthening interventions. This needs to be developed in each district along with government agencies like DCPU, CWC, CSOs (generally working on CP issues should be made to include in their agenda, follow up the reunited children and reporting) and individuals. Proper linkages and plans should be worked out in this network to follow up and work for changing the situation of children. The network should also focus on working with other departments such as education, health, special children, RD, SW, SC/ST/BC welfare, skill development etc. for linking the families and children for fulfilling their needs.

This network should be working for linking such families with sustainable social protection interventions of the state and advocacy for priority of such families. It is also important for this network to focus on Career guidance for children – depending on the interest of them.

- At the local level: Strengthening VLCPCs, SMCs, PTAs, is necessary to prevent drop outs and readmit the runaway children. These committees should be made to work for prevention of children running away and follow up reunited children. Developing a volunteer corps is necessary at the village level to follow up reunited children and report. VLCPCs should also focus on family strengthening through prioritising vulnerable families with social protection and employment generating schemes.
- Creating a volunteer corps in districts and training them – referring children to them for follow up and support link ups with other agencies
- Leveraging resources from the State and other CSR funding for family strengthening and benefitting children
- Advocacy for creating resource centres for de-addiction treatment for adolescent children. While this is a temporary solution, advocacy from organisations working for the welfare of children should also be working against the ever expanding sale of liquor by the state of Tamil Nadu. During 2016-17, women have been protesting all over Tamil Nadu for closing down the liquor shops.
- Advocacy for Life skills education for children
- Advocacy with the State for DCPOs play more active role in follow up with accountability
- Advocacy for access to skill development support for reunited children is necessary. Most of the skill development schemes focus only on persons who have completed 18 years. Out of school children in the 16-18 category should also have access to such skill development.

Suggestions on Long term care

- It is necessary that the development of strategies and programs to resolve identified issues, with appropriate multi-disciplinary interventions, to attain the aim of a more holistic approach to child development. It is necessary to appoint

and train case managers who can identify creative skills and abilities of children who can fulfil their potential to become productive citizens.

- It is imperative to develop child friendly strategies to solve identified issues and search for a more multi- disciplinary child friendly practices.
- It is imperative to develop child friendly strategies to solve identified issues and search for a more multi- disciplinary child friendly practices.
- For those children with parents and relatives, especially for the deprived families, strategies for social protection systems should be developed with community based support mechanisms that will enable and empower children to remain in families and grow and develop to their full potential.
- Literature and statistical data on care home leavers is largely under-researched and under-represented in India. This highlights the need for in-depth analysis of this reality in order to suggest policy guidelines for adolescents care homes in India in the ages of 18 to 21 years

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