

History and Evolution of Child Care Institutions in India

Moirangthem Linthoinganbi Chanu¹, T. Deepamanjuri Devi²

¹ Research Scholar, Department of Sociology, Manipur University, Canchipur

² Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, Manipur University, Canchipur

Abstract:

Orphan care in India has a long history which undergone significant changes from traditional community-based support systems to formal institutional. Historically, the care and protection of orphaned and vulnerable children were cared for by extended families, local communities and religious institution. Over time, various child care institutions, orphanages and welfare organisations emerged across the country. The Government of India has introduced several legal and policy frameworks the rights and welfare of orphaned children. Several initiatives such as Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act and the Integrated Child Protection Scheme which strengthened child protection systems and promoted family-based care, foster care and adoption. Despite these, challenges such as inadequate resources, overcrowded institutions, limited monitoring continue to affect the quality of care provided to children. In Manipur, total numbers of 86 home are distributed among: children home (52), open shelter (15), SAA (9), special home PPP model (2), place of safety PPP model (1), observation home (5), children home for trans boy (1), children home for trans girl (1) are there. The paper examines the historical and evolution of child care institutions in India. It highlights the need for a comprehensive and child care institution that prioritizes family-based care, social inclusion and the overall development and protection of orphaned children.

Keywords: Child-care institutions, Juvenile Justice, Integrated Child Protection Scheme

Introduction

Children are the most innocent and loving being which needed proper care and protection for their future in this world. They survive under the care and protection of their loving families and parents. But due to several reasons some of them face the harsh fortune of their childhood which one is unbearable with the loss of their parents and guardian.

According to UNICEF, 153 million children have become orphans (one who lost mother or father or both) worldwide, each with their own story of parental loss and survival. With this latest research organized to understand how many orphans are there in the world today. The numbers are unimaginable: every day, about 5,700 children become orphans due to war, earthquakes, poverty, illness, and other causes. Every minute, 115 more are added to the number. Moreover, children represent nearly a third of the global population, they make-up almost half of those living in extreme poverty. Over 250 million – and more than one in four live in conflict, violence or in the aftermath of the tragedy. The numbers paint a dark picture for the lives of millions of orphans. Nevertheless, it's the unknown of their futures that leaves many feelings sad and concerned about their well-being. While about 250,000 children are adopted every year, the remaining millions never get a chance to experience the love and the safety of a family¹. A heart-breaking report reveals that almost 14 million

¹uacua.org/how-many-orphans-in-the-world-2025-truth/

children in institutions will have to leave their institutional facilities and enter adulthood without a permanent family to support them or offer them the much-needed love and discipline through the years. These are children who may lack the necessary tools and the opportunities to make it in the world and will be forced to do it on their own.

It will be very hard to know the exact number of orphans living in the world as there is inadequate data available. Although, it has been estimated about 153 million orphans in the world but this number does not include many children who have lost parents and families. It does not count or include of children who are living in orphanages, shelters, or other care institution. Children who have been trafficked, street children and children affected by wars were often excluded in the statistic report. Many children lost their parents due to poverty, diseases, malnutrition, natural disasters, conflicts and other problem every day, hence more orphaned children continue to increase day by day. Behind every number is a real child who has experienced sad full story and loss of their parents. These unfortunate and destitute children need love, protection, security, education, healthcare, and support so that they are able to have a healthy and better life in future.

Orphan crisis is one of the serious problems which affects in all countries of the world. Some countries have a much larger number of orphaned children than the other though every country has orphan issues. With more than 30 million children who have lost their mother, father or both parents, India has the highest number of orphans in the world. Nigeria has about 17.5

million orphans, while Ethiopia has around 5.6 million. Even developed countries such as the United States face orphan issues- about 3.2 million children have lost at least one parent and around 370,000 children have lost both parents. This large number indicates that orphanhood is a global issue which vulnerable children often need support, care, protection, security and education in order to give them a healthy and well-being life.

UNICEF and WHO estimates for 2025

In 2024, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) estimated that 96 out of 100,000 children lived in institutional care worldwide. Numbers vary significantly in different regions. The highest rate is in Western Europe, with 296 children per 100,000 living in institutional care, and lowest in the Middle East and North Africa, with only 36 children per 100,000. These differences reflect different social policies, levels of family and community care, and the quality of data.²

The official information about child care situation shows only partial of the real problem. Many children living in privately run orphanages, informal cares and shelters are excluded in official statistic as there is not proper registration in the government record. As such the actual number of children living in child care might be much higher than government record. Such unrecorded or hidden children become very difficult and challenging for government authorities, local official and child protection agencies to understand and react for appropriate care and protection on children who need real help. Accurate information is crucial so that authorities can develop proper care and social welfare programs for children who need assistance.

HIV/AIDs on children have a serious effect worldwide. Due to AIDs, many children lost one or both of their parents. About 14.1 million children around the world had become orphans due to AIDs. And around 10.5 million children out of 14.1 million children live in Sub- Saharan Africa. These children often face many problems including basic necessities of life and emotional support. It is very difficult, challenging and

² Uacua.org/how-many-orphans-in-the-world-2025-truth/

uncertain for children who lost parents at a young age. Hence, HIV/AIDs is not only a health problem but also a humanitarian crisis, as it affects the lives and well-being of millions of innocent children.

ORPHAN IN INDIA

India has the largest number of children in the world and there are millions of children who need parental care. It is estimated that about 55 million children in India in the age group of 0 to 12 years have lost or been torn away from their parental care (GCM India; UNICEF, 2005). India is the largest democracy in the world with a population of one billion above and with over 400 million children (the largest number of children in the world). Devastatingly, there are a large number of very vulnerable children. In India alone it is estimated that there are 18 million street children and millions more child labourers who are trying to make ends meet. Many are reported to be drawn and nursed into delinquency, crime, prostitution and involvement with gangs and drug trafficking, a large number of children on the streets or in the child labour homes are simply unaccompanied children dealing with difficulties of poverty, neglect and deprivation (Shrivastava, 2007).³

Many orphanages in India are already reached their maximum intake capacity yet millions of children still live on the streets without any support. According to the 2011 Census report, out of total population of 1.21 billion people living in the country, 15.88% are children aged 0-6 years. This indicates a large number of young children are living in India. As children are an important part of society, the country has a great responsibility to provide them with proper care, protection and opportunities for a better future.

The condition in conflict- affected states like Jammu and Kashmir has been equally difficult. A huge number of children have lost their parents over the years due to violence in the region. According to the Jammu and Kashmir Yateem Foundation survey in 1996, there were about 15,000 orphans in the state. Other reports have given out different numbers of orphans in the region – The UNICEF figures mentioned in the United Nations General Assembly Report (2010) state about a million orphans in Kashmir; while the Save the Children report of 2006 says that about 120,000 orphaned children were living in Jammu and Kashmir in institutional care; while another human rights report titled ‘Ignored Orphans of Jammu and Kashmir’ published in 2011 suggests the number of orphans in the state to be about 600,000.

Whether the numbers of liability vary across the different statistics or not is irrelevant to the fact that children who lose their parents will often go through great psychological and emotional trauma, poverty, and social exclusion. They are in need of psycho-social care and in need of protection and hence, are more at risk than other children- explain Subbarao and Coury (2004)⁴. Accordingly, children who have lost their parents are among the most highly-vulnerable populations of society and this group requires immediate actions like- humanitarian assistance such as financial assistance, medical assistance and counselling as well as longer-term relief such as psychological support, social integration and general protection and security.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of the “orphan child” has attracted a lot of attention in academic studies, social policy talks, and child welfare research. For this research paper some important concepts, definition, boos, journal and research studies and articles have been utilized and related review of literature have been reproduced here.

³ M. Mudasir Naqshbandi, Rashmi Sehgal (Rimsha Abdullah), Fahim ul Hassan (2012) Orphans in orphanages of Kashmir “and their Psychological problems”, International NGO Journal Vol. 7(3), pp. 55-63, October 2012

⁴M. Mudasir Naqshbandi, Rashmi Sehgal (Rimsha Abdullah), Fahim ul Hassan (2012) Orphans in orphanages of Kashmir “and their Psychological problems”, International NGO Journal Vol. 7(3), pp. 55-63, October 2012.

Traditionally, an orphan is seen as a child who has lost one or both parents due to death. International organizations like the United Nations have a broader view, defining an orphan as any child under 18 who has lost one or both parents. This definition is commonly used in demographic studies and social research focused on child welfare and protection (UNICEF, 2010)⁵. Within this framework, orphanhood is divided into categories like maternal orphans, paternal orphans, and double orphans. These categories reflect the different types of parental loss that children experience across various societies. In recent decades, orphanhood has become a major concern in global child welfare discussions due to the increasing number of children living without enough parental care. Estimates show that over 150 million children around the world have lost one or both parents. This highlights the seriousness of the issue and the urgent need for effective child protection and welfare system (Whetten et al., 2009⁶; Escueta et al., 2014). The lack of parental care often puts these children at risk for various social and economic problems. Many orphaned children struggle to access basic resources like education, healthcare, and stable living conditions without parental guidance and support. Research also reveals that orphaned children are specially at risk for poverty, social exclusion and emotional distress, and are easily for trafficking, all of which can greatly impact their overall growth and well-being. Losing parental support can disrupt their chances of getting an education and limit their social mobility in the society. Additionally, many orphaned children find it very hard to form stable relationships or cope with the emotional stress of losing their parents. Studies indicate that they are more likely to face social marginalization and have limited access to educational and economic opportunities, which can affect their personal and social development in the long run (Sinha et al., 2016)⁷.

From a sociological perspective, orphanhood is not just about losing one or both parents, it also includes the lack of proper parental care, love, protection and emotional support. Scholars argue that orphanhood should be seen within a wider context, covering children who face vulnerability even when their parents are alive. In this regard, Skinner et al. (2006) introduced the idea of “orphans and vulnerable children” (OVC) ⁸. This concept goes beyond children who have lost parents to include those who are abandoned, neglected, or living with caregivers who cannot provide proper support. This broader view acknowledges that many children not officially labelled as orphans may still face similar challenges due to poverty, armed conflict, illness, social instability and social exclusion.

Social researchers have also looked into the social and institutional environments that orphaned children grow up in. Historically, the care and protection of children without parental support was mainly provided through residential institutions such as orphanages, charitable homes and religious organisations. These institutions aimed to offer basic services like shelter, food, education and protection for children who lacked family care. For a long time, institutional care was seen as a key way to meet the needs of orphaned and abandoned children. However, recent research in child welfare has highlighted the value of family-based care

⁵ UNICEF. (2010). *Children and AIDS: Fifth stocktaking report, 2010*. New York: United Nations Children's Fund.

⁶ Whetten, K., Ostermann, J., Pence, B., Whetten, R., Messer, L., Ariely, S., O'Donnell, K., Wasonga, A., Vann, V., Itemba, D., Eticha, M., & Madan, I. (2009). *A comparison of the well-being of orphans and abandoned children ages 6-12 in institutional and community-based care settings in five low- and middle-income countries*. PLoS ONE, 4(12), e8169.

<https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0008169>

⁷ Sinha, A., Lombe, M., Saltzman, L. Y., & Whetten, K. (2016). The role of caregiver and community support in the educational outcomes of orphaned and abandoned children in India. *Global Social Welfare*, 3(1), 23-32. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40609-015-0037-7>

⁸ Skinner, D., Tsheko, N., Mtero-Munyati, S., Segwabe, M., Chibatamoto, P., Mfecane, S., Chandiwana, B., Nkomo, N., Tlou, S., & Chitiyo, G. (2006). Towards a definition of orphaned and vulnerable children. *AIDS and Behavior*, 10(6), 619-626. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10461-006-9086-6>

arrangements, such as adoption, foster care and kinship care. These approaches endeavour to give children a stable and supportive family environment instead of placing them in large institutions.

Studies have shown that children raised in the family settings often show better psychological adjustment, emotional growth and social integration. For instance, research comparing institutional care with community-based care has found that children in the family environments usually have better positive developmental outcomes than those in institutional care (Whetten et al., 2009)⁹. This increasing evidence has led to global shift in child welfare policies, prioritizing family and community-based care over institutionalization.

In psychology, social work and child welfare, the psychological and developmental effects of orphanhood have been studied. Children often face serious emotional and social challenges when one or both parents are lost. Research shows that orphaned children are more likely to face psychological issues like trauma, depression, anxiety, and trouble forming social connections in the society. Without proper parental attachment and emotional support, a child's sense of security and belonging may be disrupted which can lead to many problems. These aspects are important for healthy emotional development (Perry et al., 2020; Kyaruzi, 2022)¹⁰. As a result, many orphaned children have difficulty adjusting to social situations and building stable relationships in society which can affect other parts of development too, including education and cognitive skills. Children without consistent care may have academic problems stemming from emotional stress, lack of resources, or unstable living situations. A study involving multiple countries on orphaned and abandoned children shows that a child's mental well-being and cognitive growth strongly depend on the quality of caregiving and the presence of supportive social networks (Escueta et al., 2014)¹¹. To help the orphan children deal with the negative consequences of losing parents, supportive caregivers, stable homes, and access to education and health services are crucial. In recent years, global child rights frameworks have significantly influenced orphan care policies. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child states that every child deserves protection, care, and the opportunity to develop, regardless of their family situation. Therefore, modern child welfare policies increasingly favour community-based and family-like care instead of institutional care. Overall, research indicates that orphanhood is a complex social issue shaped by various social and economic factors. To enhance the well-being of these children, effective policies and support systems are needed.

METHODOLOGY

This paper examines a qualitative research approach to explore the historical and evolution of child care institutions in India. The research is primarily descriptive and analytical in nature which relies on secondary data sources (academic books and peer-reviewed journal article) and documentary analysis. The study uses a historical research method which involves examining at past events and developments to understand how child care systems have changed. It also examines the history of institutions, government policies and practices for

⁹ Whetten, K., Ostermann, J., Pence, B., Messer, L., Ariely, S., O'Donnell, K., Wasonga, A., Vann, V., Itemba, D., Eticha, M., & Madan, I. (2009). A comparison of the well-being of orphans and abandoned children ages 6-12 in institutional and community-based care settings in five low and middle- income countries. *PLoS ONE*, 4(12), e8169.

<https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0008169>

¹⁰ Kyaruzi, F. (2022). Psychological challenges facing orphans and vulnerable children in institutional care. *International Journal of Child, Youth and Family Studies*, 13(2), 45-60.

¹¹ Escueta, M., Whetten, K., Ostermann, J., & O'Donnell, K. (2014). Adverse childhood experiences, psychosocial well-being and cognitive development among orphaned and abandoned children. *BMC International Health and Human Rights*, 14(1), 6.

<https://doi.org/10.1186/1472-698X-14-6>

the care of abandoned children. The paper examines through this approach on how systems of child care in India have gradually evolved.

The study also evaluates government reports and policy documents related to child welfare, especially the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act and the Integrated Child Protection Scheme. The research also analysed and used reports and publication from international organisations such as UNICEF and UNESCO. Moreover, historical records, census reports, and policy reviews related to orphan care and protection in India were study to provide additional information, context and understanding.

Data were analysed and examine thoroughly using thematic and historical analysis. For proper study, relevant and coherent sources were identified from academic databases, government websites, institutional reports and library collections.

This collected data was carefully analysed and examine thoroughly using thematic and historical analysis. Information obtained from various sources was reviewed and categorized into key themes. These themes include traditional and community-based child care practices, the emergence of orphanages and charitable institutions in India and globe. And the role played by voluntary and faith-based organisations, the evolution of state policies and legal frameworks, and recent reforms in child protection and institutional care.

LIMITATION

This study mainly relies on secondary sources (books, research articles, reports, official documents). Therefore, the findings are influenced by the availability and reliability of existing literature and official documents only. The study lack on primary sources (include interviews, surveys, or direct observation). Although the research aims to provide a broad understanding of the evolution of child care institutions in India, it may not fully capture regional differences or practices in the available sources as there is no well-documented data.

HISTORY OF CHILD CARE INSTITUTES IN INDIA

The history of child care institutions in India shows a gradual and steady change over time that shaped by social and cultural traditions, religious values and idea, and institutional developments. In the past, orphaned and abandoned children were usually cared by extended family systems or by local communities, where kinship networks played a crucial role in ensuring their survival and well-being of child. Religious institutions, like -temples, mosques, and churches, also contributed by offering shelter, food, and basic care to vulnerable and abandoned children. During the colonial period, more formal systems of care began to come into sight with the establishment of orphanages, many of which were founded by Christian missionaries and charitable organizations to support vulnerable and abandoned children affected by poverty, epidemics, war and famines. Succeeding India's independence in 1947, the government gradually and steadily expanded its role in child welfare through various laws, policies, and institutional mechanisms for the welfare of the vulnerable children. In joint effort with non-governmental organizations, systems such as child care institutions, foster care, and adoption services were enhancing and consolidating. In present time, child care institutes in India operates

within legal frameworks like the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act¹², which emphasizes protection, rehabilitation, and family-based alternatives for children without parental care.

Ancient and Medieval India

In ancient and medieval India, the concept of organized child care institutes did not exist in the way they are understood today. Instead, the responsibility of caring for orphaned or abandoned children was mainly handled within the family and the wider local community. The joint family system played a crucial role in caring for these vulnerable and abandoned children, as it was a dominant social structure in traditional Indian society. When children become orphans or lost their parents, their relative such as grandparents, uncles, aunts, and elder siblings usually took responsibility for caring them. This helped them continue living in a familiar environment and also maintaining their cultural traditions within their community.

Beyond the immediate family, caste groups have also played a crucial supportive role. To make sure that the orphan and vulnerable children were not completely neglected, community members often helped the children by providing food, shelter, and protection. Religious values and idea further strengthened this sense of responsibility. In Hindu traditions, the concept of daan (charitable) encouraged and motivate people to help those in need, including orphaned children. Similarly, Islamic teachings emphasized zakat and compassion toward orphan children as a moral obligation. Buddhist monasteries and temple institutions sometimes provided shelter, food and basic education to destitute children¹³.

Colonial Period (18th Century–1947)

The British colonial period marked a substantial change in the way orphaned and abandoned children were cared for India. The 19th century saw the emergence of formal orphanages and institutional care dissimilar like earlier periods when care was mainly provided by the families and the communities. Many of these child care institutions were established by the Christian missionaries and charitable organizations in the major urban centres such as Calcutta, Madras and Bombay. During the colonial period, social crises like severe famines, epidemics, and widespread poverty left many children without parental support which led to the growth of these organizations. Missionary and charitable run orphanages with an aimed to provide basic necessities such as food, clothing and shelter to abandoned and destitute children. These institutions also focused on education and vocational training besides meeting their immediate needs. Many of these institutions were shaped by the British Poor Law traditions, which promoted institutional care for the poor, abandoned and vulnerable children.

During the colonial era, legal frameworks related to child welfare were introduced by the British administration. One important development was the Guardians and Wards Act of 1890¹⁴, which formally regulated the appointment of guardians for minors. This legislation provided official recognition to guardianship arrangements which laid the foundation for greater state involvement in the protection, welfare and security of children without parental care in India.

¹² Government of India. (2015). *The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015*. Ministry of Women and Child Development.

¹³ Kumar, D. (1995). "Childhood and the Family in India". *Indian Economic & Social History Review*, 32(3).

¹⁴ Guardians and Wards Act, 1890 (Act No.8 of 1890)

Post-Independence Era (1947–1980s)

In post-independence era, protection and welfare of destitute children became an important part of the country's social development agenda. The government of India has recognized that children who were orphaned, abandoned, or in difficult circumstances required organized support and legal protection and security. Consequently, several laws and policies were introduced to regulate the care and rehabilitation of vulnerable and abandoned children. One of the early efforts was the **Children Act**¹⁵, which focused on the protection, care, and rehabilitation of neglected and delinquent children. Later, the **Juvenile Justice Act**¹⁶ was enacted to establish a more comprehensive national framework for juvenile justice and child protection.

During this era, both government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) began to establish and expand child care institutions across the country. These institutions provided shelter, food, clothing, education, and basic services to children without parental care. Institutional care gradually and steadily became the dominant model for supporting such children. Simultaneously, adoption procedures started to become more organized and regulated properly, helping provide permanent family environments for children in need.

Human Rights-Based Reform Era (1990s-Present)

In 1992, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) ratified India's approach to child welfare which underwent a major transformation. This marked an important shift from viewing children in need of care mainly as beneficiary of charity to identify them as individuals with legal rights that must be protected by the state and society. The human rights-based reform emphasized the child's right to protection, development, participation, and a family environment.

During this period, one of the key developments was the establishment of the Central Adoption Resource Authority (CARA). CARA functions as the central regulatory body responsible for managing and assessment adoption processes in India. Its role is to conduct a transparent and ethical consideration, prioritizing the best interests of the child and preventing illegal or exploitative practices. The Government of India in 2009 launched another important initiative, the Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS). The scheme aimed to create a thorough safety net for abandoned and vulnerable children by strengthening institutional and non-institutional care services across the country. In recent years, ICPS has been restructured and implemented under Mission Vatsalya, which continues to focus on reinforcing child protection system and services.

Legal and official reforms played an important role in improving child welfare mechanisms. The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act¹⁷ introduced stronger provisions for the care and rehabilitation of children in difficult circumstances. This Act highlights family-based alternatives such as foster care, adoption, sponsorship, and aftercare programs rather than solely on institutional homes only. Additionally, the establishment of the Childline India Foundation created a nationwide emergency helpline (1098) for children in distress. The service allows children facing abuse, neglect, or crisis situations to seek immediate help, security and protection.

¹⁵ Government of India. (1960). *The Children Act, 1960*.

¹⁶ Government of India. (1986). *Juvenile Justice Act, 1986*.

¹⁷ Government of India. (2015). *Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015*.

Overall, the right-based reform era represents a significant shift in India's child welfare system. To ensure healthy development and well-being of destitute children, deinstitutionalization and rehabilitation of the destitute children is essential instead of depending mainly on long-term institutional care, policies increasingly promote family-based care, local community support.

HISTORY OF CHILD CARE INSTITUTIONS IN MANIPUR

In Manipur, child care has long been shaped by the strong tradition of community support. In former times, extended family members, neighbours, and the community were usually taken up the responsibility of caring for children when children lost their parents or were abandoned. Women's groups, churches, and voluntary non-governmental organisations (VNGOs) also played an important role in supporting such children. This informal system reflected the close social bonds within Manipuri society, where the well-being of abandoned and vulnerable children was seen as a collective responsibility. In contrast with many other parts of India, where orphanages were established during the colonial period by missionaries or colonial administrations, formal institutions for child care in Manipur developed much later, mainly after the mid-twentieth century. Here in Manipur, unlike in main India, the concept of foster care has not been heard. Local women's organisations, religious institutions, and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) took the initiative to establish children's homes in Manipur. These homes began to provide shelter, food, clothing, education, and other essential services to orphaned, abandoned, and vulnerable children¹⁸.

In Manipur, total numbers of 86 home are distributed among: children home (52), open shelter (15), SAA (9), special home PPP model (2), place of safety PPP model (1), observation home (5), children home for trans boy (1), children home for trans girl (1) are there¹⁹.

Over the past few decades, the role of the state has also become more prominent in ensuring the protection and welfare of these children. Child care institutions in Manipur now operate under national child protection frameworks such as the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2000²⁰ and the Integrated Child Protection Scheme (2009)²¹ of the Ministry of Women and Child Development. These policies provide regulatory guidelines, financial assistance, and monitoring mechanisms to ensure that abandoned and vulnerable children receive proper care, protection, security and opportunities for rehabilitation and development.

Traditional Community Care (Pre-1950s)

In Manipur, prior the establishment of formal orphanages, the care of orphaned, abandoned, destitute or vulnerable children was largely the responsibility of families and the wider community. When children lost their parents; relatives, neighbours, and community members would step in forward to raise and support them as Manipuri society was closely knit, unite and strongly guided by kinship ties, clan relationships, and a sense

¹⁸ UNICEF. (2007). *The State of the World's Children 2007: Women and Children – The Double Dividend of Gender Equality*. New York: UNICEF

¹⁹ Socia welfare department (Manipur)

²⁰ Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015. Government of India.

²¹ Government of India – Ministry of Women and Child Development. (2009). *Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS): Implementation Guidelines*. New Delhi.

of brotherhood among villagers. As the children well-being was considered a shared responsibility of the family and community sending children to institutions was uncommon.

This informal childcare system was deeply rooted in the cultural traditions of both Meitei and tribal communities which research conducted among residents of Imphal indicates. Families often relied on extended relatives and trusted local community members to help, care and support for children when needed. Nevertheless, with the growing impact of modernization, migration, poverty, and social unrest, these traditional system support networks began to loosen and becoming weaken. As these pressures increased, the ability of families and communities to provide adequate care for destitute children declined, which lead to the gradual emergence of institutional forms of childcare in the state²².

In the state of Manipur, the first institutional children care project initiated the childcare programs through establishing the children's homes, primarily run by women groups, NGOs and various welfare organisations. It happened after India got independence. Special attention is made of the Children's Home at Dewlahland²³, Imphal, which was establish in 1960 by the Manipur Mahila Kalyan Samiti and offers a home for abandoned, vulnerable or unattended boys and disadvantaged children, an education and other basic essential of life was given.

The Care of Children in Institution in Manipur: An Alternative Perspective the child care institutions in Manipur were established for the first time to address the issues of orphanages and to expand the voluntary efforts for child secure and welfare, as the child caring institutions set up by the State were very few.

Over this period, homes were generally community-based run, funding came from local donations and philanthropy, and the focus was mainly on food, shelter, and basic education²⁴.

Expansion through NGOs and Faith-Based Initiatives (1990s–2000s)

With the involvement of many NGOs, churches and concerned citizens major orphan care work in Manipur began in the 1990s. Various children's homes were established to address issues such as: poverty, HIV/AIDS-affected children, armed conflict and displacement, child trafficking and abuse etc.

Examples include: The projects involved: 1. Tabitha Children Home (2008)²⁵- a children home for children infected with HIV/AIDS and youth at risk.

2. Compassion Manipur Children's Home (2006)²⁶- The first project which was started as a residential children's home to meet the needs of children who are at risk of drug addiction, exploitation and poor quality of education.

²² Singh, K. S. (1998). *People of India: Manipur*. Anthropological Survey of India, New Delhi

²³ Manipur Mahila Kalyan Samiti. (1960). *Children's Home, Dewlahland, Imphal*.

²⁴ Singh, K. S. (1998). *People of India: Manipur*. New Delhi: Anthropological Survey of India.

²⁵ NSCP Manipur. (2008). *Tabitha Children Home Project*. Imphal.

²⁶ Compassion Manipur. (2006). *About Compassion Manipur Children's Home*. Imphal

3. International Orphan Home (2006)²⁷ - was set up by a group of social activists to serve the needs of the poverty-stricken and marginalized people of Manipur.

Government Involvement and Policy Framework (2000s–Present)

The role and initiative of the government of Manipur in orphan care has become more structured and significant since early 2000s. With the introduction of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2000²⁸, which established clear guidelines for the functioning of children's homes across the country is a major step in this direction. In accordance with this law, orphanages and other child care institutions in India were required to follow specific standards to ensure the safety, well-being, security and protection of children in their care. This brought greater accountability, rules and regulation to institutions that looked after vulnerable and abandoned children. An additional important development was the launch of the Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS) in 2009 by the Ministry of Women and Child Development²⁹. The scheme provided financial support, resources, and administrative assistance to strengthen child protection and security services at both the national and state levels. In Manipur, the scheme worked in cooperation with the Social Welfare Department and helped support several child care institutions. For example, homes such as Glory Children Home in Bishnupur received assistance to care for abandoned, orphaned, destitute and vulnerable children. These policies which aimed to improve the quality of care in children's homes, guarantee proper monitoring, and encourage alternates such as adoption and foster care³⁰. The broader target has gradually shifted toward protecting children's rights and helping them grow within supportive family or community environments whenever possible.

CONCLUSION

Over the years, the system of caring for orphan in Manipur has gradually shifted from informal family, local community-based care to more organised institutional and state-supported services. Conventionally, children who lost their parents were looked after by relatives and members of the community. Nevertheless, as social conditions changed, community and women's organisations began to take a more active and prominent role in organised child care. In the 1960s, these groups-initiated efforts to support abandoned, orphaned, destitute and vulnerable children by providing shelter and basic care. During the last quarter of the twentieth century, many community-based and faith-based organisations further broaden and expanded these efforts by establishing children's homes across the state. In recent years, government policies such as the Juvenile Justice Act and the Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS) have played a crucial role in regulating and supporting these institutions in the state. Regardless of the increasing involvement of the state, many children's homes in Manipur still rely heavily on community support, donations, and charitable contributions which shows that community participation and social initiatives remain essential in ensuring the care, protection and well-being of abandoned and vulnerable children.

²⁷ International Orphan Home. (2006). *Organisational Profile*. Manipur.

²⁸ Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015. Government of India. New Delhi.

²⁹ Government of India, Ministry of Women and Child Development. (2009). *Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS): Implementation Guidelines*. New Delhi.

Government of India, Ministry of Women and Child Development. (2015). *Model Rules under the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act*. New Delhi.

³⁰ Government of Manipur, Directorate of Social Welfare. (2016). *Implementation of Integrated Child Protection Scheme in Manipur*. Imphal.

REFERENCES

- Altekar, A. S. (1959). *The Position of Women in Hindu Civilization*. Motilal Banarsidass.
- Bajpai, A. (2017). *Child Rights in India: Law, Policy and Practice*. Oxford University Press
- Bajpai, A. (2017). *Child Rights in India: Law, Policy, and Practice*. Oxford University Press.
- Bajpai, A. (2018). "Juvenile Justice in India." *Journal of Indian Law Institute*, 60(1).
- Browne, K. (2009). *The risk of harm to young children in institutional care*. London: Save the Children.
- Choi, K. R., Stewart, T., Fein, E., McCreary, M., Kenan, K. N., Davies, J. D., Naureckas, S., & Zima, B. T. (2020). *The impact of attachment-disrupting adverse childhood experiences on child behavioral health*. *Journal of Pediatrics*, 221, 224–229. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpeds.2020.03.006>
- Compassion Manipur. (2006). *About Compassion Manipur Children's Home*. Imphal.
- Csáky, C. (2009). *Keeping children out of harmful institutions: Why we should be investing in family-based care*. London: Save the Children.
- Escueta, M., Whetten, K., Ostermann, J., & O'Donnell, K. (2014). Adverse childhood experiences, psychosocial well-being and cognitive development among orphaned and abandoned children. *BMC International Health and Human Rights*, 14(1), 6. <https://doi.org/10.1186/1472-698X-14-6>
- Escueta, M., Whetten, K., Ostermann, J., & O'Donnell, K. (2014). Adverse childhood experiences, psychosocial well-being and cognitive development among orphaned and abandoned children. *BMC International Health and Human Rights*, 14(1), 6. <https://doi.org/10.1186/1472-698X-14-6>
- Government of India – Ministry of Women and Child Development. (2009). *Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS): Implementation Guidelines*. New Delhi.
- Government of India, Ministry of Women and Child Development. (2009). *Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS): Implementation Guidelines*. New Delhi.
- Government of India, Ministry of Women and Child Development. (2015). *Model Rules under the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act*. New Delhi.
- Government of India. (1960). *The Children Act, 1960*.
- Government of India. (1986). *Juvenile Justice Act, 1986*.
- Government of India. (2015). *Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015*.
- Government of India. (2015). *The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015*. Ministry of Women and Child Development.
- Government of India. (2021). *Mission Vatsalya Guidelines*. Ministry of Women and Child Development.
- Government of Manipur, Directorate of Social Welfare. (2016). *Implementation of Integrated Child Protection Scheme in Manipur*. Imphal.
- Haokip, T. (2015). *Ethnicity, Conflict and Development in Northeast India*. Routledge.
- International Orphan Home. (2006). *Organisational Profile*. Manipur.

- Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015. Government of India.
- Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015. Government of India. New Delhi.
- Kumar, D. (1995). "Childhood and the Family in India." *Indian Economic & Social History Review*, 32(3).
- Kyaruzi, F. (2022). Psychosocial challenges facing orphans and vulnerable children in institutional care. *International Journal of Child, Youth and Family Studies*, 13(2), 45–60.
- M. Mudasir Naqshbandi, Rashmi Sehgal (Rimsha Abdullah), Fahim ul Hassan (2012) Orphans in orphanages of Kashmir "and their Psychological problems", International NGO Journal Vol. 7(3), pp. 55-63, October 2012
- Manipur Mahila Kalyan Samiti. (1960). *Children's Home, Dewlahland, Imphal*.
- Ministry of Women and Child Development. (2009). *Integrated Child Protection Scheme*.
- Mulheir, G., & Browne, K. (2007). *Deinstitutionalising and transforming children's services: A guide to good practice*. Birmingham: University of Birmingham Press.
- National Institute of Public Cooperation and Child Development (NIPCCD). (2011). *Child Care Institutions in India: A Study of Institutional Care*. New Delhi.
- NSCP Manipur. (2008). *Tabitha Children Home Project*. Imphal.
- Raman, V. V. (2009). *Women and the Family in Colonial India*. Oxford University Press.
- Guardians and Wards Act, 1890 (Act No. 8 of 1890).
- Singh, K. S. (1998). *People of India: Manipur*. Anthropological Survey of India, New Delhi.
- Singh, K. S. (1998). *People of India: Manipur*. New Delhi: Anthropological Survey of India.
- Sinha, A., Lombe, M., Saltzman, L. Y., & Whetten, K. (2016). The role of caregiver and community support in the educational outcomes of orphaned and abandoned children in India. *Global Social Welfare*, 3(1), 23–32. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40609-015-0037-7>
- Skinner, D., Tsheko, N., Mtero-Munyati, S., Segwabe, M., Chibatamoto, P., Mfecane, S., Chandiwana, B., Nkomo, N., Tlou, S., & Chitiyo, G. (2006). Towards a definition of orphaned and vulnerable children. *AIDS and Behavior*, 10(6), 619–626. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10461-006-9086-6>
- uacua.org/how-many-orphans-in-the-world-2025-truth/
- UNICEF India. (2013). *The State of the World's Children*.
- UNICEF. (2004). *The framework for the protection, care and support of orphans and vulnerable children living in a world with HIV and AIDS*. New York: United Nations Children's Fund.
- UNICEF. (2005). *The State of the World's Children 2005: Childhood under Threat*. UNICEF.
- UNICEF. (2006). *Africa's Orphaned and Vulnerable Generations: Children Affected by AIDS*. New York: UNICEF.
- UNICEF. (2007). *The State of the World's Children 2007: Women and Children – The Double Dividend of Gender Equality*. New York: UNICEF.

UNICEF. (2010). *Children and AIDS: Fifth stocktaking report, 2010*. New York: United Nations Children's Fund.

UNICEF. (2013). *Children in Vulnerable Situations in Northeast India*. New Delhi: UNICEF India.

United Nations. (1989). *Convention on the Rights of the Child*. New York: United Nations.

Whetten, K., Ostermann, J., Pence, B., Whetten, R., Messer, L., Ariely, S., O'Donnell, K., Wasonga, A., Vann, V., Itemba, D., Eticha, M., & Madan, I. (2009). A comparison of the well-being of orphans and abandoned children ages 6–12 in institutional and community-based care settings in five low- and middle-income countries. *PLoS ONE*, 4(12), e8169. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0008169>

Whetten, K., Ostermann, J., Pence, B., Whetten, R., Messer, L., Ariely, S., O'Donnell, K., Wasonga, A., Vann, V., Itemba, D., Eticha, M., & Madan, I. (2009). A comparison of the well-being of orphans and abandoned children ages 6–12 in institutional and community-based care settings in five low- and middle-income countries. *PLoS ONE*, 4(12), e8169. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0008169>

Publisher's Note: *The views and opinions expressed in this article are solely those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher, editors, or the editorial board.*