



Project Lion—Child Protection in India

Supporting Vulnerable Children without Family Care

CHILDREN FIRST



Inspired by the true story of Saroo Brierley, who at the age of 5 became separated from his family, taken into an orphanage after surviving for weeks on the streets and ultimately adopted by a family in Australia as captured in the film *Lion*—Project Lion developed by UNICEF USA is designed to help support children without family care who are living in residential institutions in India.

It is estimated that **1.5 million** children live in residential care institutions in India. Many of these children are often deprived of individual love and care, stimulation, and denied the opportunity to develop cognitive, emotional and social skills—all critical to their development and well-being.

UNICEF believes that strong families are fundamental for the growth, well-being and protection of children—and institutionalization should always be seen as a measure of last resort.

However, in recognizing that residential care is the only option for some of the most vulnerable, **UNICEF is implementing a program that responds to the protection needs of an estimated 200,000 children living in residential institutions in India** to protect them from violence, exploitation and neglect by:

- **Enforcing standards of care:** Establishing a monitoring system to make sure children have access to a proper education, health services, adequate nutrition and protection services targeting residences in Gujarat, Odisha, Maharashtra, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Jammu and Kashmir, Uttar Pradesh and Chhattisgarh.
- **Strengthening the child protection workforce:** UNICEF will provide training to social workers, caregivers, staff and management at child care institutions and other child protection actors to ensure that they have the knowledge, skills and expertise to provide quality support for children without family care.
- **Providing services for vulnerable families:** Support services will be provided to vulnerable families across 50 districts to ensure that at-risk children are able to stay with their families. These include rehabilitative services for children who have been reunited with their families.
- **Modeling alternatives:** To learn more about alternative child care experiences, including community-based care, UNICEF will develop a model in three states, document findings, and eventually expand successful models to benefit more children who are living without parental care.

This critical program will ensure that thousands of children in India who have been left without family care can be given a second chance to grow in loving, stable, nurturing and protective environments.