

# प्रेरणा पत्रिका

Building Stronger Communities,  
Echoing Voices from the Field



**Edition 1**

January to June 2023:  
A Round-up of our new Programs

**Protecting Rights.  
Creating Choices.  
Restoring Dignity.**

# Note from the Co-Founders' Desk



**Priti Patkar**  
Co-Founder



**Pravin Patkar**  
Co-Founder, Director - ATC

It has been 37 years since Prerana started working in the red-light areas (RLAs) of Mumbai to protect women and children from the threats of intergenerational human trafficking by defending their rights, providing a safe environment, supporting their education and health, and leading advocacy efforts. The determination of prostituted women to ensure a safe and dignified life for their children led us to start perhaps world's first Night Care Centre (NCC) in the Kamathipura RLA in 1989. Today, our NCCs are functional in the RLAs of Kamathipura, Falkland Road and Vashi-Turbhe. While running these NCCs, we identified that prostituted women faced some major challenges in providing a safety net for their children. Some of them included the exposure to exploitative conditions, physical and sexual violence and its normalization by the agents of the sex trade, lack of education support, retention in school, mental health concerns and the apathy shown by society towards the children born to prostituted women. In the absence of any other alternative care services dedicated for these children, the women who felt their children are unsafe and are likely to be

abused, were left with no option but to seek institutionalisation for their children. Hence, children would come in contact with the Juvenile Justice (JJ) System as 'children in need of care and protection', and inevitably get separated from their mothers who are their only parent and family.

The core of our NCCs stands strongly on two pillars namely,  
(a) the uncompromising grit of the prostituted mothers to keep their children safe and close to them and,  
(b) our matching commitment to uphold the 'Principle of Institutionalisation as a measure of last resort', as enshrined in the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act 2015.

Over the years, our NCCs have grown into an inclusive and equitable alternative care model for the children to access equal opportunities, understand their rights, acquire developmental skills and thrive with respect and dignity. Through our NCCs, we have adopted a child-centric approach to provide dedicated support, create community-based child protection

services, secure a child's right to family-based care and ensure that they are not separated from their mother, unless it is in their best interest. Guided by our commitment to uphold the principle of necessity, suitability and appropriateness, we took our learnings to cater to the need for alternative care of other marginalised communities and launched two flagship programs, Unnati and Aashiyana, in 2022. The two programs largely focus on family and community strengthening, de-institutionalisation and effective gatekeeping. With the child's best interest at the core, we have been working at the community, family and stakeholder levels to discuss alternative care, practice gatekeeping to identify areas of support to strengthen families and prevent a child's entry/re-entry into the JJ system, unless it is in their best interest.

The past six months have been a roller coaster ride for us as we explored newer collaborations, analysed the dynamics of different communities, kickstarted multiple capacity-building programs for local and state-level government stakeholders, amplified the scope of Help Desks at the

Child Welfare Committees (CWCs), and made efforts to reintegrate as well as retain children in families. We strongly believe that it takes a village to raise a child, and we all are a part of that village.

To ensure your continued support in this endeavour, we are launching this half-yearly newsletter, Prerana Patrika. Every 6 months we shall come to you with highlights of our work, our collaborations with the stakeholders and the voices from the community. Collectively, we wish to build a community of individuals who walk with us on this path of Protecting Rights, Creating Choices, and Restoring Dignity of children and their families. Our every past and future interventions will continue to be dedicated to all the children Prerana could and couldn't protect.

Our co-founders observed the plight of women and children in red-light areas during their field work, and were determined to take action

1986

Expanded to our three-pronged model to prevent intergenerational prostitution into the sex trade

1989-90

Started our interventions in the red-light area in Vashi-Turbhe

2000

Started Falkland Road NCC and Established our Anti-Trafficking Centre (ATC)

1999

- Appointed on working groups of Ministry of Health, Government of India, and contributed to the 10th and 11th Five Year Plans;
- Appointed as **Expert by the National Commission of Women and the Central and State Level Advisory Committee** to combat human trafficking

2002-05

### Our Three-Pronged Model to Prevent Intergenerational Prostitution

Our Night Care Centres (NCCs) continue to be a shelter and safe space for children of the women in the sex trade, to protect them from the dangers of the red-light area.

Institutional Placement program (IPP) de-links children from exploitative and abusive environments/situations, and provides long-term residential care and development.

Educational Support Program (ESP) is designed to suit the educational needs of children living in the red light areas.

Opened the first ever **Night Care Center (NCC)** in a red-light area, in Kamathipura

1989

Recipient of **Stars Foundation Award for Best Practices in Child Protection (UK)**

- Started **Naunihal Girls' Shelter**
- Launched a physical AHT resource centre

2010

**NEW!**

Project Unnati launched to focus on facilitating deinstitutionalisation and gatekeeping to support vulnerable children through a family strengthening and alternative care approach.

Project Aashiyana launched to focus on community-strengthening and ensure children thrive in families with dignity and equity.

Awarded UNAIDS '**Civil Society Award**' for our work with children affected by HIV/AIDS

2007

2009

2010-12

Participated in consultations on drafting of the **Protection of Children Against Sexual Offences Act, 2012**

Received the international **Mother Teresa Memorial Award for Social Justice**

2018

Launched Project Unnati and Project Aashiyana

2022

Project Udaan initiated in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic to extend financial and social support to children and families affected harshly by the pandemic

Appointed member in the Supreme Court committee in Budhadev Karmaskar vs The State of West Bengal

2020

2016

- Launched the online version of ATC
- Initiated project **Sanmaan** that works with children found in and rescued from begging

Initiated project **Aarambh**, a joint partnership between Prerana and ADM Capital Foundation, to focus on issues related to child sexual exploitation and document best practices in child protection

2014

2021

# Unnati

## Redefining Care

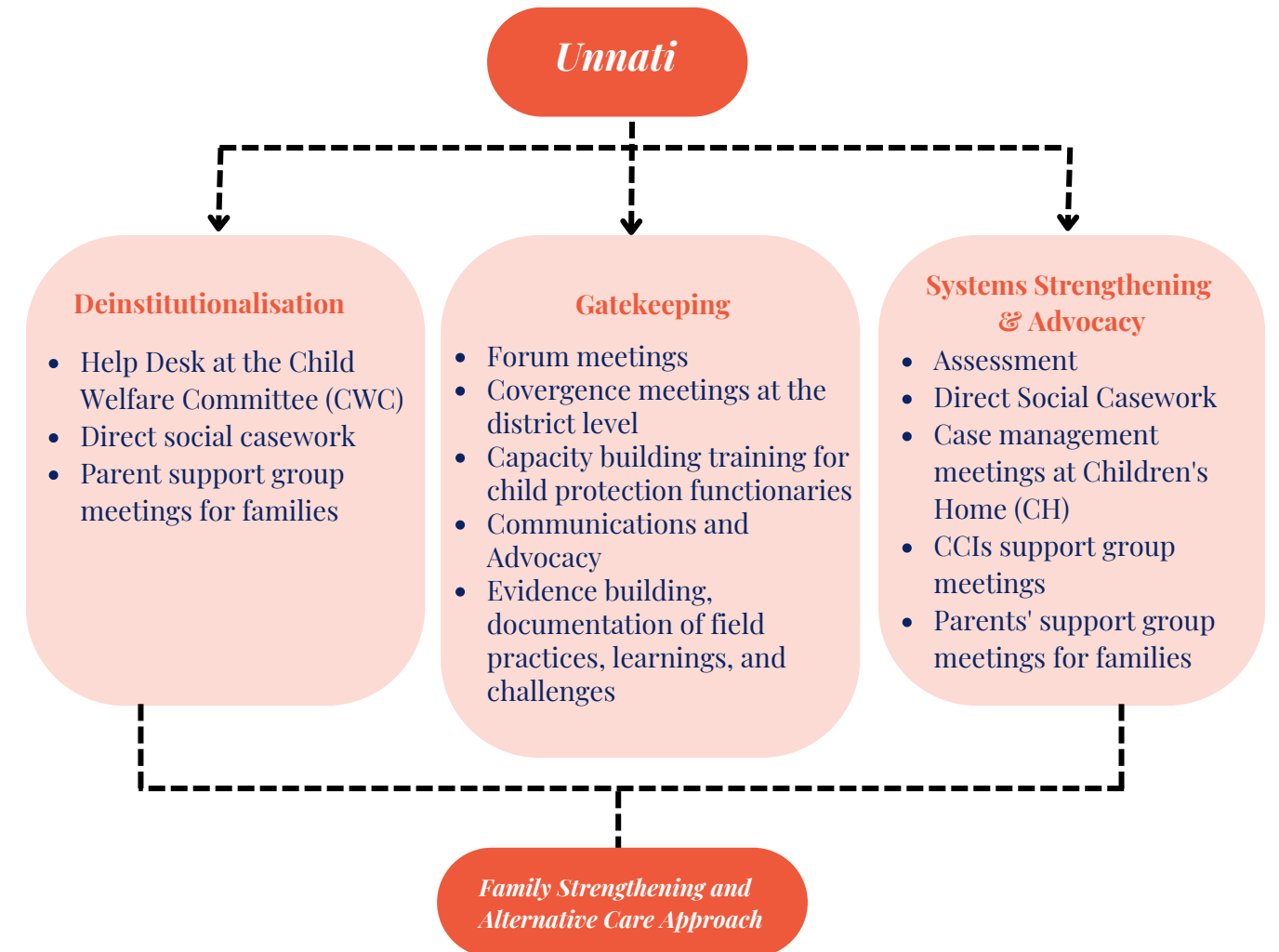
### Introduction

Launched in May 2022 and supported by Kalpana Parekh & Family, Project Unnati focuses on facilitating Deinstitutionalisation and Gatekeeping to support vulnerable children through a family strengthening and alternative care approach.

A study conducted by the Ministry of Women and Child Development (WCD) in 2018 reported that India has **9589 Child Care Institutions (CCIs)**, with **370,227 children in need of care and protection** residing in those. Conventionally rooted in a welfarist and charity-based approach, the safety, protection and basic developmental needs of children growing up in CCIs often remain neglected and compromised. Various research papers have concluded that long-term institutionalisation has shown traits of delayed cognitive & physical

development, isolation from their community, substantial delay in IQ, deviant attachment, etc., in children, all of which constitutes the Institutional Child Syndrome. It is thus crucial to reassess the root causes of institutionalisation and overcome structural barriers through effective gatekeeping.

Guided by two fundamental principles laid out under Section 3 of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015: 'Principle of institutionalisation as a measure of last resort' and 'Principle of family responsibility', Unnati aims to prevent and restrict unnecessary family-child separation, facilitate re-uniting children with their families, and prevent re-institutionalisation through a multi-dimensional family strengthening approach.



### Myth Buster

Deinstitutionalisation does not mean 'shutting down of institutions'. Instead, it means restoring children who have been in long term institutional care without any assessment of their needs. It also means restoring children who are no longer in need of care and protection, as per Section 2(14) of JJ act 2015. ♦

### Outreach

<p>Cases referred by CWC for deinstitutionalisation and gatekeeping</p> <p> <b>95</b></p>	<p>Children deinstitutionalised</p> <p> <b>19</b></p>	<p>Children &amp; families who benefited from Helpdesk at Mumbai City II &amp; Thane CWCs</p> <p> <b>252</b></p>	<p>Children for whom positive linkages were established (social security documents, govt. schemes, NGO run programs)</p> <p> <b>24</b></p>
<p>Children who received direct financial assistance</p> <p> <b>25</b></p>	<p>Parents who benefitted from parent support group meetings</p> <p> <b>33</b></p>	<p>Individuals reached out through convergence meetings/ roundtables on deinstitutionalisation, gatekeeping, family strengthening &amp; alternative care</p> <p> <b>215</b></p>	<p>No. of child protection stakeholders reached out to through training programs</p> <p> <b>125</b></p>

## Highlights

### Help Desk kickstarted at Mumbai City II, Thane and Mumbai Suburban CWCs

In alignment with Rules 24 (1) of Maharashtra Juvenile Justice Rules 2018 which states – “recognising that every child has the right to grow in a family and in accordance with the principles of this Act under section 3 (xii), the State Government shall promote family support services to prevent the child from separating from its biological or extended family or if the child is admitted to the Child Care Institution, to reunite the child with its biological or extended family wherever possible and in the best interest of the child”, the Help Desk was kickstarted in consultation with the District Women & Child Development Dept. office and the Mumbai Suburban CWC in 2018. The Help Desk was further expanded to the Thane and Mumbai City II CWC offices. Over the years, it has played a crucial role of linking vulnerable families and children with appropriate family support services and schemes, preventing parent-child separation through dedicated gatekeeping and orienting those visiting the premise of the CWC to their roles and functions. Currently, the Helpdesk is functional in Mumbai City II and Thane districts. In the past one year, **252 children and families received assistance** from the intervention at the Thane and Mumbai City CWC premises.

★ **During one of the regional monitoring review meetings of JJ Act and POCSO Act, organised by Maharashtra State Commission for Protection of Child Rights (MSCPCR), the District Women and Child Development Officer, Thane district, acknowledged the benefit that the stakeholders from the district including the children and families have received from the Helpdesk intervention supported by Prerana.**



Prerana's social worker interacting with families at the Thane CWC

### Series of Parent Support Group Meetings

To integrate the family strengthening approach in its interventions, the team launched a one-of-its-kind series of **Parent Support Group Meetings** with families of children. The platform emerged as a conducive and safe space for parents, and a total of **33 parents** have benefitted from these meetings so far.

They keenly shared their concerns related to daily interactions with their children, effective parenting skills and other challenges related to access to social security documents, livelihood, education etc. One of the 2 meetings focused on supporting parents to identify their skills, interests and available livelihood opportunities, guiding them on how to build a small-scale enterprise.



A parent sharing their experience during the Family Support Group meeting organised by team Unnati.

deinstitutionalisation and gatekeeping, highlight the need for alternative care services, integrate it into mainstream discussions and guide policy advocacy.

### Trainings Series with Aspiring Social Workers

To build the capacity of students of social work in conducting effective needs assessment of vulnerable children and bridging the existing human resource gap of the district child protection system, Prerana signed a **Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)** with **College of Social Work, Nirmala Niketan** for a **four-part training series**. Till date, two trainings have taken place and **60+ students** and faculty members have been trained on the

effective documentation of the **Social Investigation Report** as envisaged in the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection) Act 2015. Child protection functionaries namely Ms. Shobha Shelar (District Women and Child Development officer, Mumbai City) and Advocate Mahadev Sawant (Chairperson, Child Welfare Committee, Mumbai City II) were the esteemed chief guests for the inaugural session.

### Forum on Deinstitutionalisation, Gatekeeping, Family Strengthening and Alternative Care

In a pioneering step towards building conceptual clarity within the sector, the **Forum on Deinstitutionalisation, Gatekeeping, Family Strengthening and**



A group of children engaging in painting activities organised for them during the Family Support Group meeting.



Still from a Social Investigation Report Training a Nirmala Niketan College of Social Work.

**Alternative Care in Maharashtra** was formed as a result of a learning workshop hosted by Prerana. **20+ sector experts** including **Dr. Nilima Mehta and Dr. Mohua Nigudkar**, along with key institutions and organisations like Catalyst for Social Action, and Miracle Foundation India, Bal Asha Trust, Indian Association for Promotion of Adoption & Child Welfare, etc., have been active participants of the forum. So far, three meetings of the forum have been hosted in Mumbai. The

Forum has been formalized with the curation of a Core Committee consisting of Prerana, Miracle Foundation and Catalysts for Social Action and a Terms of Reference (ToR) document that guides its functioning along with an Advisory Committee. It has emerged as a platform to build conceptual clarity on deinstitutionalisation and gatekeeping, highlight the need for alternative care services, integrate it into mainstream discussions and guide policy advocacy.



A social worker from team Unnati on a field visit.



**Maithili Parekh**  
Philanthropist,  
Parekh Family

### Partners' Speak

I have learnt a tremendous amount about child protection and its current issues through our engagement as funders in this space. The problem of child protection is complex and therefore needs a multi-pronged approach, a sensitive case-by-case handling, and tremendous patience and understanding – creating safety nets for prevention, communication and support systems through social workers, strengthening gatekeeping, and supporting the CWC in their needs are all pieces of this endeavour. However, one belief remains consistent – the problem, and therefore how we work toward a solution, must be analysed through a child-centric lens.

### Domestic Violence as an Emerging Determinant of the Need for Institutional Care

#### Background

Ms. Lata Singh was covered in bruises when she approached the Child Welfare Committee (CWC), Mumbai City II in October 2022, requesting institutional placement for her children, Nisha (6) and Sakshi (5). She interacted with Prerana's team at the Help Desk functioning at the Mumbai City CWC, and during the preliminary assessment it was found that she is a victim of domestic violence. Her sister-in-law who had accompanied her further elaborated that Ms. Lata's husband perpetuated this violence upon her and that his violent outbursts were very frequent at the time.

When the team conducted a home visit following the CWC's order, Ms. Lata remained reserved while discussing incidents of domestic violence and said it wasn't frequent. Instead, she shared that her primary reason to request for institutional placement for her children was due to financial instability. She stressed upon the inability to sustain the family being a homemaker and her husband's lack of financial contribution to the household. Her husband is alcohol dependent, was rarely home and would usually be inebriated. He would also spend whatever little he earned from his job as an automobile mechanic, on alcohol. Ms. Lata had separated from her husband once

about four years ago due to the abuse emerging from the family's rejection of the birth of the second girl child, Siya. She lived with her mother for 3-4 years and financially supported the family with her tailoring business, until her mother's death in late 2021. After her mother's passing, she was forced to move back with her husband. Since then, she neither had the equipment nor any other means to continue her work.

While Nisha and Sakshi have been studying in the BMC school without any fee expenses, they were removed from multiple tuition classes due to fee pendency. She was trying to ensure her children continued to attend the school but was constantly distressed about not being able to afford three meals a day. Their neighbors and relatives would help them by providing ration, and they would avail 6kg of rice and wheat every month through their orange ration card. During the course of interactions, Ms. Lata started to open up about the intensity of physical and verbal abuse that she had faced. She also added that her husband wasn't abusive towards their children, but she fears that watching the altercation between their parents has already started affecting Nisha and Sakshi. She also expressed her concerns for its long-term repercussions on her children.

#### Prerana's Interventions

At every stage, the team continued having discussions with Ms. Lata on how best she could protect herself and her children. She also shared that she could not think of leaving her husband or filing a case against him because of his deteriorating health and her financial instability. Given her commitment to provide an encouraging environment for her children, she expressed her wish to start tailoring again to support herself and her children. She was also willing to explore various alternatives for earning a living, including receiving training if it could guarantee her an income. After an assessment of her skills in operating sewing machines and the garments she had previously made, a proposal to provide her with monetary support was approved by the internal sponsorship committee at Prerana, and thus this support was extended to her in December 2022. The team supported her throughout the purchase of the sewing machine and raw material to minimize her distress in an already vulnerable situation. Ms. Lata has recently started taking small orders and reaching out to potential customers and workshops/vendors for individual and bulk orders. Until her business gains traction for her to earn enough to sustain her family, she is considering taking on some additional work as a housekeeper in the neighborhood. The team continues to support Ms. Lata in her livelihood through helping explore resources and opportunities to expand her business, including approaching other organizations working on livelihood for women. Meanwhile, the team also attempted to build a rapport with Nisha and Sakshi and once they became comfortable, the team started to develop a plan to discuss

relevant topics such as personal safety and their understanding of the violence they witness at home. Through this case, the relevance of gatekeeping at the CWC level was reinforced as crucial to prevent the institutionalization of children, unless it is in their best interest. This is also one of the cases where domestic violence against the mother emerged as a key determinant for the requirement of institutional placement of children.

While Nisha and Sakshi are not directly victimized by the physical violence and do not come under the definition of Children in Need of Care and Protection as per the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act 2015, they and the family require support, protection, and care to prevent them from seeking institutional care. Owing to the primary caregiver, in this case Ms. Lata's vulnerability it becomes crucial to create a safety net around the family. Moving forward, it is also essential to build evidence on how and why domestic violence is a child protection issue, and to look at its disastrous impact on children's well-being. ♦

**When the team conducted a home visit following the CWC's order, Ms. Lata remained reserved while discussing incidents of domestic violence and said it wasn't frequent. Instead, she shared that her primary reason to request for institutional placement for her children was due to financial instability. She stressed upon the inability to sustain the family being a homemaker...**

**While Nisha and Siya are not directly victimized by the physical violence and do not come under the definition of Children in Need of Care and Protection as per the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act 2015, they and the family require support, protection and care to prevent them from seeking alternative care, especially institutional care.**

# Aashiyana

## Introduction


Kickstarted in June 2022, Aashiyana has been conceptualized as an intervention under the Transform NEEV Collective to strengthen communities, enhance community-based child protection mechanisms, prevent children from entering the Juvenile Justice System and ensure that insitutionalisation is adopted only as a measure of last resort. With its experience of working with children from marginalised communities, Prerana identified key child protection issues like access to education, retention in school, mental health concerns,

engagement in family-based income generation activities, physical and sexual violence & exploitation, lack of community-based child protection mechanisms, lack of understanding of child protection laws, services and systems among different stakeholders operating in the communities, and neglect of children in these communities. It was thus needed to create and strengthen safety nets for children and to empower families to keep their children safe at home and in the community. This was crucial to ensure that children don't fall

through the cracks, inevitably come in contact with the Juvenile Justice (JJ) system and get unnecessarily separated from the family. Through Aashiyana, Prerana aims to ensure that children thrive in families with dignity and equity. The project focuses on community-based gatekeeping, strengthening families and communities, preventing the separation of children from their families, and advocating for alternative care & community-based childcare services.

The community centres under the project further provide an alternative recreation and learning space to encourage children to attend the school regularly, enable access to psycho-social support, link them/their siblings/parents to relevant vocational trainings and engage them in holistic personality development activities. With the child at the centre, the program holistically works with families, the community and local stakeholders to secure a child's right to family-based care.

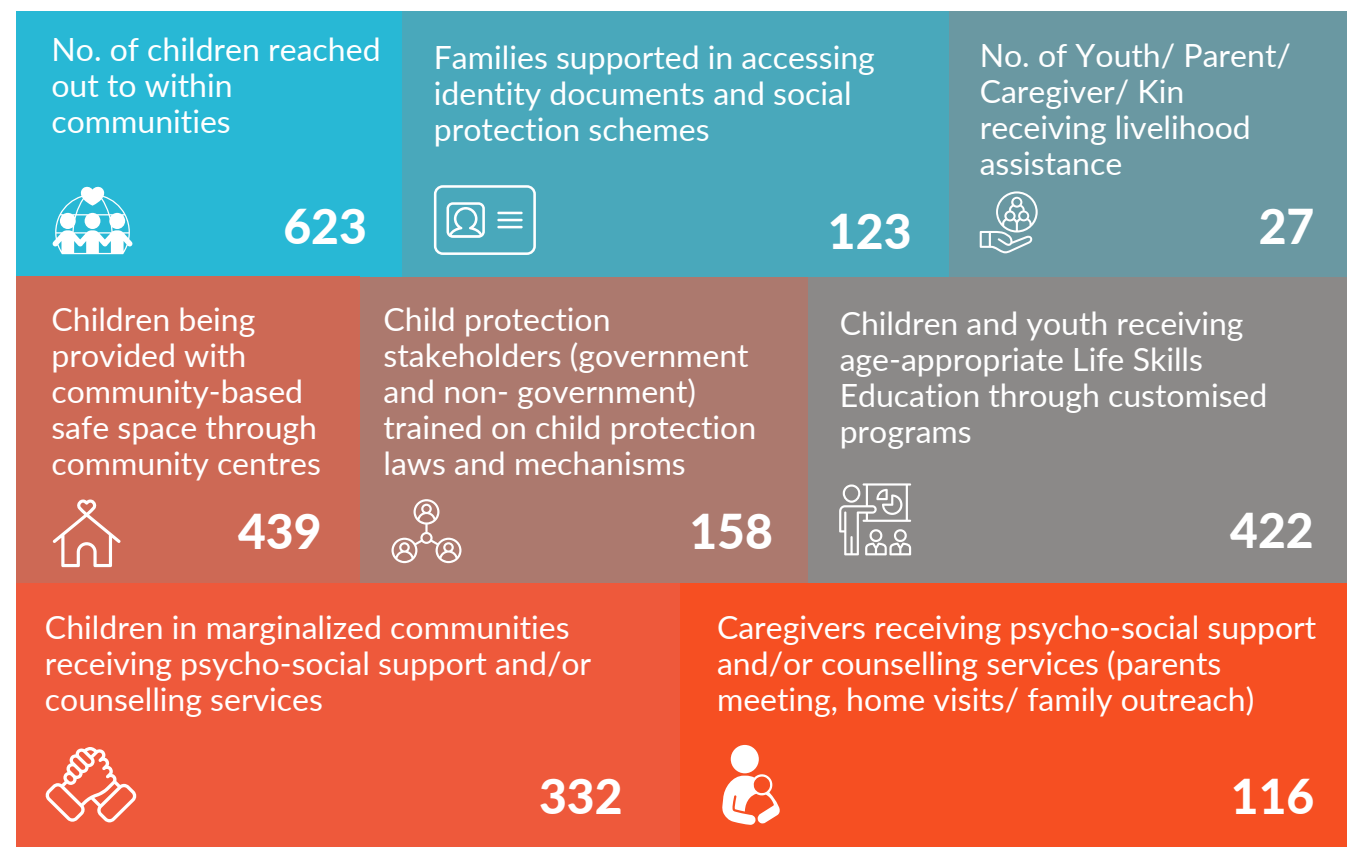


 **Child Protection is the prevention of and response to violence, exploitation, harm and abuse of children in all contexts.**





## Outreach



## Highlights

### Launched Help Desks in Vashi and Sathe Nagar

In a pioneering step towards **strengthening communities and families, 02 Help Desks were inaugurated** by Hon'ble Smt. Justice Swati Chauhan (Principal Judge Family Court and Chairperson, District Legal Services Authority, Mumbai Suburban) and Ms. Sarah Veilex (Child Protection Program Director, UBS- Optimus Foundation) at the Sathe Nagar and Turbhe Stores communities respectively. The desk has been operational to support families to apply for **government schemes and social security documents**, link them to **employment and job opportunities**, and share information on **child protection laws**.

### Kickstarted Children's Collectives

Upholding the spirit of **Article 15 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child**



Help Desk inaugurated in Vashi by Ms. Sarah Veilex (Child Protection Program Director, UBS-Optimus Foundation)

(UNCRC) that highlights the child's right to freedom of association and freedom of peaceful assembly, we worked with children to form **two Children's Collectives** in the Sathe Nagar and Vashi-Turbhe communities. The collective is an equitable platform for children to exercise their right to participation, discuss any child rights violations they have observed in the community, and plan actions to build awareness on relevant issues. Our team has been closely guiding the children to understand their rights, and take steps towards empowering other children and members of the community.

### Partnered with Stakeholder in the Child Protection System

To facilitate continued engagement between the legal justice system and marginalized populations, we established a partnership with the District Legal Services Authority (DLSA), Mumbai Suburban. The legal awareness session on **'Child Rights and Child Protection'** for the children and families at Sathe Nagar became a stepping stone towards this commitment. The

Hon'ble Smt. Justice Swati Chauhan (Principal Judge Family Court and Chairperson, District Legal Services Authority, Mumbai Suburban) addressed the children and the community members on crucial issues such as child marriage, children's right to education, safety and health and the need to encourage girl children to pursue their aspirations. DLSA and Prerana aim to further extend dedicated legal support to families and children through Prerana's community centres and legal help posts to ensure that their rights are protected.

### Initiated Awareness Sessions in our Communities

Furthering our commitment to combat key child protection issues prevalent in the communities, like domestic violence in households, child marriage, children dropping out from schools, eve-teasing with women and girls, etc., we initiated the following interventions:

Organised a session on Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012, for 70+ youth and adolescents



Children from the Sathe Nagar community engage with Hon'ble Smt. Justice Swati Chauhan (Principal Judge Family Court and Chairperson, District Legal Services Authority, Mumbai Suburban).

presided over by Mr. Suresh Kulkarni (former Corporator). Crucial issues such as age of consent and marriage, provisions, regulations and punishments under the Act, sexual assault and harassment, teenage romantic relationships and child marriage were discussed by Mrs. Priti Patkar (Co-Founder, Prerana).

Collaborated with Childline to conduct an awareness session for 50+ parents on children's right to education, the history of the convention of child rights, child marriage, education for girls, the Juvenile Justice System and the roles & responsibilities of bodies like the Child Welfare Committee (CWC). Identifying schools as a crucial space to interact with children and build awareness, we organised interactions with children in schools to organise awareness campaigns on child marriage, the laws pertaining to it and the

need for education for children.

### Conducted Training Sessions with Local Stakeholders

Identifying the crucial role played by local stakeholders like Anganwadi workers in strengthening communities, we organised 02 training sessions on the POCSO Act and the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act 2015. The sessions were facilitated by Mrs. Priti Patkar (Co-Founder, Prerana) to motivate Anganwadi workers to create awareness on child protection laws through their interventions with adolescent girls and their families.

As part of our continued commitment to build capacities of stakeholders within the child protection system, we shall extend the scope of these trainings to the police, CWC members and Children's Homes.



Anganwadi Sevikas with members from Neev Collective and team Aashiyana during the Vashi Help Desk inauguration.

## Partners' Speak



**Rishad Surti**  
Manager,  
Dasra

Children in India constitute one of the most vulnerable sections of our population. Within a larger block of approximately 172 million children at risk, India is estimated to have nearly 35 million children in need of care and protection. In India, child protection issues present themselves in plain sight – on the streets, in the community, at home, in public spaces, and public services. Currently, almost all of India's child protection work takes place at the tertiary level, with focus on children who have already been harmed.

The *Transform Neev Collective* has been initiated to spearhead the movement to change care reform priorities in order to prevent children's separation from their families and their subsequent institutionalisation. Since 2022, over a period of 3 years, the Transform Neev Collective is supporting a strategic portfolio of local partner organisations as part of a collective impact program that aims to work closely with state actors to achieve measurable outcomes in the child protection space. The Collective aims to develop a model that can achieve systemic change at a state level.

The Collective believes that Maharashtra's legal and political ecosystem is primed to support its core objective because of the severe impact of the pandemic on vulnerable families, and the state government's subsequent eagerness to move away from institutionalised care and focus on family care. Hence, the Collective would like to develop a holistic and replicable model in the state of Maharashtra with a wider vision of catalysing change in other Indian states and across the globe.

Engaging in any form of preventive work for children through community participation is incomplete without Prerana. Prerana's project Aashiyana, which aims to strengthen communities and enhance community-based child protection mechanisms, is an important and integral step to our premise of holistic care of children. The project's approach to focus on empowering children and families and thereby strengthening marginalised communities to provide care for children are key interventions to promote alternative, non-institutional, community-based care systems for them. Such community-gatekeeping models form the backbone of the interventions of the Collective and help drive the narrative of Family for Every Child.

In this mission to reform childcare systems in India, organizations like Prerana, will play a pivotal role in enabling collaboration between community stakeholders and strengthening community-based mechanisms to implement preventive child protection initiatives.

With its decades of experience of closely working with vulnerable & marginalized communities, Prerana is primed to catalyze the desired behavior change in the urban areas and help build the narrative on family strengthening and making the child protection system more approachable & accessible for communities.

### Kavita's Battle with Labeling, Trauma, and Self-Harm: Reinforcing the Need for Family and Community Strengthening in Communities

#### Background

Kavita is a 14-year old girl who was often found roaming unaccompanied in the community, and out of school. During our outreach visits, we noted that she would leave the house for days without informing her family and had committed self-harm multiple times. Since she was vulnerable to dangerous situations, we initiated an interaction with her to identify key areas of intervention and provide the required support. During the discussion, Kavita shared that she lives with her mother and father, and has three stepbrothers who live with their grandparents. She further added that she was pulled out of her school in 6th standard as she faced difficulty reading and writing, and expressed interest in resuming her education. As an immediate response, we oriented both Kavita and her mother to our study classes and encouraged Kavita to attend those at our community center. As she started attending the class, we observed an improvement in her reading and writing abilities. The subsequent interactions focused on building a rapport with Kavita, providing her a conducive and safe environment to express herself and simultaneously speaking with her mother about encouraging and supporting Kavita's education. Through these discussions, we also wanted to understand their relationship and the reason for Kavita to commit self-harm.

Once she got comfortable with our team she shared that she was romantically involved with a boy who is currently placed in a Children's Home (CH). When her neighbours and relatives once found her meeting her friend, they informed her parents about it. She stressed on the fact that her parents physically abused her after

knowing about her relationship, which may have triggered her to leave the house without informing them. She shared that her parents did not approve of her relationship and decided to get her married, owing to lack of trust in her. They had been planning to arrange her marriage and proposals were being considered by them. Her maternal uncle too perceived her as a burden on Kavita's mother, and had been pressurizing the family to get Kavita married at the earliest. When her mother suffered a heart attack, her uncle hurled multiple death threats at Kavita and her father. Her mother too expressed the need to get Kavita married as soon as possible fearing her deteriorating health; for her, marrying Kavita was a way to ensure her safety. Eventually, Kavita succumbed to the pressure to get married but she shared with us that she does not wish to get married. Kavita also added that her family consistently uses derogatory labels such as *panauvti* (bad luck) to address her, and that her uncle also hits her, and sometimes even her mother.

**She further added that she was pulled out of her school in 6th standard as she faced difficulty reading and writing, and expressed interest in resuming her education. As an immediate response, we oriented both Kavita and her mother to our study classes and encouraged Kavita to attend those at our community center.**

#### Prerana's Interventions

We spoke to Kavita about continuing her education and also had a discussion with her family to prevent the child marriage. However, her family continued to focus on Kavita's inability to study properly and her misbehavior as strong reasons to get her married. We observed that the lack of family's support, constant pressurisation, ignorance, and labeling had deeply affected Kavita. She seemed to have internalized these incidents which built strong emotions of self-blame and self-hate, leading her to react by leaving home unannounced or causing self-harm. We also felt that her behavior was a response to the trauma she was experiencing due to constant labelling, blaming and threats.

During another interaction, Kavita shared that nobody in the community respected her and that they considered her a 'bad girl'. According to some members of the community, Kavita was once found taking away an android mobile from a house closer to hers, which was recorded in the CCTV footage. They added that the police had taken Kavita to the police station, and her mother pleaded with them and with the person whose mobile was stolen which avoided the situation. When we spoke to Kavita about this incident, she shared that her mother allowed the neighbours to physically abuse her if she does not confess to her act. Kavita added that she was beaten and ridiculed by her mother and neighbour in front of the community, which caused her extreme trauma and embarrassment. Eventually, she confessed to taking away the mobile and giving it to a friend. Her mother then sent Kavita to her uncle's, and she wasn't seen in the community for almost 20 days.

Kavita complained that this incident led everyone to label her a thief, and that she continues to experience physical, emotional and verbal abuse from both her family and the neighbours. These feelings,

she added, have bottled up her helplessness and she feels stuck. Opening up about her aspirations with us, she shared that she wishes to study but is unable to focus due to these factors affecting her well-being. After multiple interactions with Kavita, we noted that the vulnerabilities that she is exposed to might lead her to fall through the cracks, and enter the Juvenile Justice (JJ) System as a child in need of care and protection. We have been working closely with Kavita to understand situations bothering her, make her feel heard and understand her aspiration. Through our community centre, we also aim to provide her with access to an inclusive space to express her distress, and communicate her emotions openly.

**After multiple interactions with Kavita, we noted that the vulnerabilities that she's exposed to might lead her to fall through the cracks, and enter the Juvenile Justice (JJ) System as a child in need of care and protection.**

Based on all interactions, we are working on a care plan to ensure that Kavita receives adequate social and emotional support. Every child should grow in a conducive and nurturing environment, and family and community strengthening plays a crucial role in ensuring it.

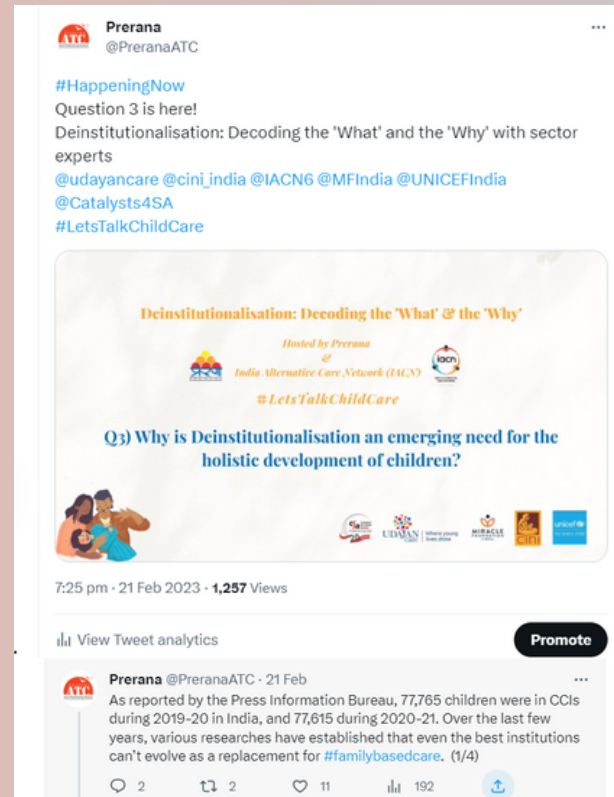
The past six months of our involvement with Kavita have reinforced the need for family and community strengthening for a child's well-being, and their holistic development. We continue to lead with this belief, and our interventions shall be led by the child's best interests. ♦

# Communications

## Twitter Chat on Deinstitutionalisation

On 21st February, **Prerana in collaboration with IACN** hosted a Twitter Chat on **Deinstitutionalisation: Decoding the 'What' & the 'Why'** with the objective to build and share an understanding on Deinstitutionalisation (DI), demystify it, and facilitate knowledge sharing around it. Sector experts including Catalysts for Social Action (CSA), Child in Need Institute (CINI), Miracle Foundation India, Udayan Care, and UNICEF India, who are all working towards Deinstitutionalisation and family-based care, partnered for the event.

The platform emerged as a collective voice towards Deinstitutionalisation and family-based alternative care under the campaign **#LetsTalkChildCare**, and it fostered cross-learning between diverse voices in the sector.



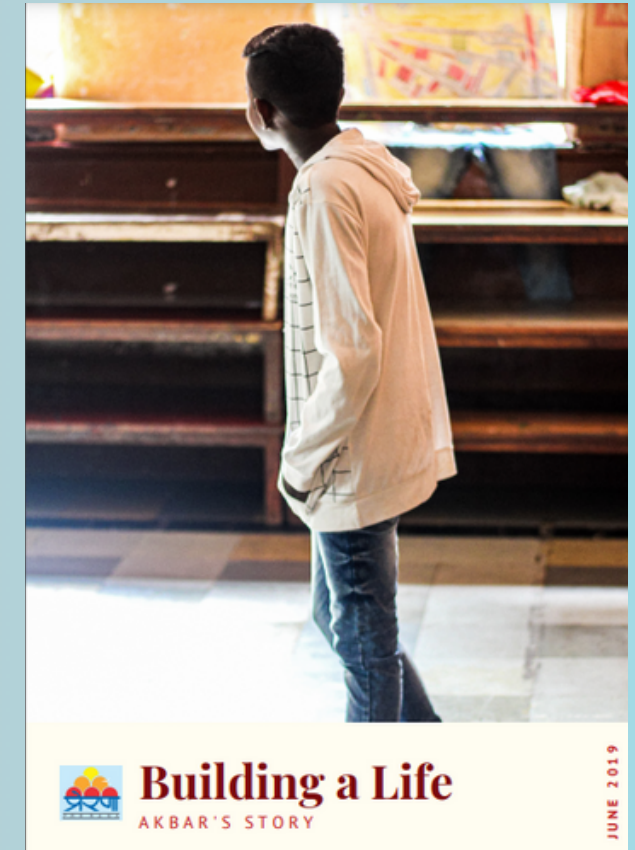
## Instagram Live on 'Unpacking Mrs. Chatterjee Vs. Norway with Child Rights Practitioners'

Following the release of the movie 'Mrs. Chatterjee vs. Norway' which highlights how an immigrant mother fights the Norwegian foster care system and legal machinery to win back custody of her children, we conducted an Instagram Live session to discuss the nuances of the film and its representation of the foster care system.

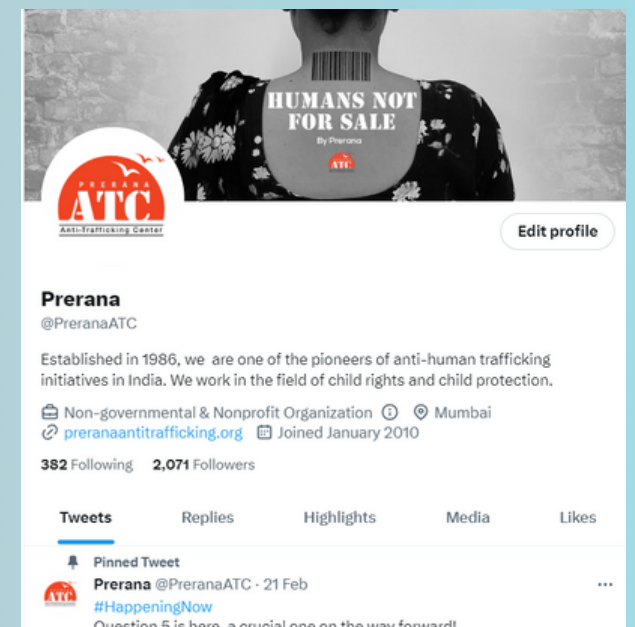
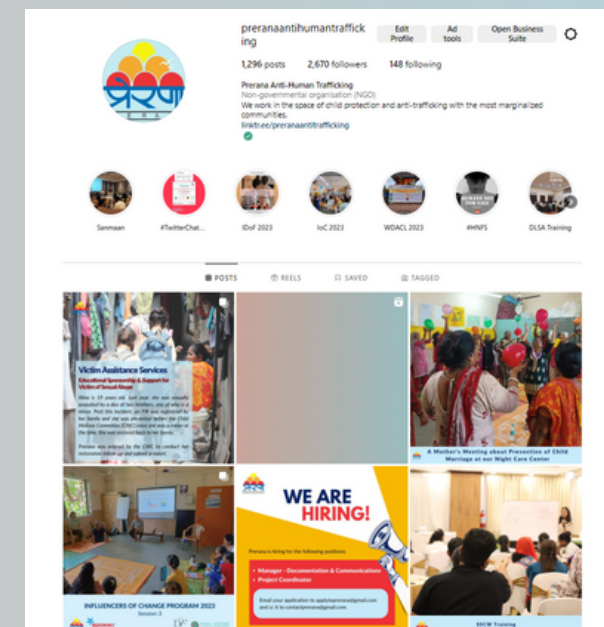
This Instagram Live aimed to **highlight the need to prevent parent-child separation and the importance for family strengthening interventions**. Ms. Priti Patkar hosted the discussion. Dr. Pravin Patkar, Ms. Kashina Kareem and Ms. Geetarani Lourembam from Prerana were the speakers of this session. The session was joined by around 30 Instagram handles of individuals and organisations interested in the subject.



## Our Contributions to India Alternate Care Network (IACN's) Newsletter and Compendium



## Our Social Media Handles





**Protecting Rights.  
Creating Choices.  
Restoring Dignity.**

प्रेरणा पत्रिका

Building Stronger Communities,  
Echoing Voices from the Field

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