

## Press Release

### **\*\* High Level Learning Exchange in Child Protection between Sri Lankan Government and Rajasthan Government in Udaipur \*\***

August 26, 2022. Udaipur, Rajasthan. In a first-of-its-kind interaction on family-based child protection, the Secretary of the Ministry of Women & Child Affairs and Social Empowerment, Government of Sri Lanka joined the District Collector of Udaipur, Government of Rajasthan and their teams, for a learning exchange on family strengthening, sponsorship, foster care, and group foster care.

8 out of 10 children in institutions (orphanages) around the world are not orphans; these children have at least one existing family. They are separated from the love and protection of family often simply due to poverty. Mr. Neel Bandara Hapuhinne, Secretary, Ministry of Women & Child Affairs and Social Empowerment, cast the vision for the exchange, "Our main goal is to learn from your experience and to share our experience; this will be a great opportunity to implement family-based care concepts back in Sri Lanka. All of us here wish to have a better future for children and families. We sacrifice our lives for this important work."

The learning exchange group focused on Rajasthan's innovative work on family-based care models (foster care, sponsorship, group foster care, palanhar yojana); concepts still new to be realized safely at scale in Sri Lanka or India. Mr. Tara Chandra Meena, IAS, Udaipur's District Collector, Udaipur, Rajasthan, India summarized the Indian delegation's intent, "I hope that our work will benefit the Government of Sri Lanka and hope that we will learn also from their experience"

Mr. Sanjay Nirala, UNICEF Child Protection Specialist summarized the innovative family-based care work in Rajasthan and in Udaipur. His presentation outlined the schemes in Rajasthan including Vatsalaya Yojana - Foster Care (2021), Goradhay - Group Foster Care (2021), Samarth Yojana - Aftercare (2021), Utkarsh Yojana - Sponsorship (2021) and Palanhar Yojana - Family Support (2015) with a over 650,000 children benefited by the schemes.

Mr. Shailendra Pandya, Member- The Rajasthan State Commission for Protection of Child Rights explained that Rajasthan is a pioneer state in the demonstration of family-based care program. He explained that the state is preparing a comprehensive database of children in need of care and protection and there is a need to develop a website of evidence-based information on children.



Mr. Devashish Mishra, National India Consultant for Children's Emergency Relief International (CERI) reflected on the relevance of Rajasthan's experience for the entire country of India. These innovative family-based care practices, weaved into the state budget, actually produce a more efficient, kind, empowering and cost-effective way to care for children. These schemes center on the scientifically proven fact that a safe and supported family is the best option for every child.

Dr. Shilpa Mehta, Founder & President of Foster Care Society and Udaipur Child Welfare Committee member presented on foster care and group foster care in Udaipur. She explained the 8 years of challenges and successes in realizing the 24 foster homes and 1 group foster home.

The event concluded with a beautiful summary the Udaipur Deputy Superintendent of Police, Ms. Chetna Bhati, "I, myself, am from a poor and small village but was able to stay with my family and succeed. My work is to defend and protect every woman and child. We care about each person, no matter their economic condition, history, or differences. Just due to poverty, children and families should we able to stay together. Children should not go for child marriage, child labor or any suffering. My hope is that we can learn from each other and do quality work."

The entire event was anchored by Foster Care Society's Executive Board Member, Ms. Anuradha Rai. The trip was hosted by Children's Emergency Relief International (CERI), in partnership with UNICEF Sri Lanka and UNICEF India to support the Ministry of Women & Child Affairs and Social Empowerment, Government of Sri Lanka, Department of Probation and Child Care Services, Government of Sri Lanka, National Child Protection Authority, Government of Sri Lanka and the Government of Rajasthan.

At a critical time for Sri Lanka, this Delegation are considering promising practices for their child protection system that must respond to the increased needs for children and families.

Contact Mr. Devashish Mishra at +91-9929188450 or [Devashish.Mishra@cerikids.org](mailto:Devashish.Mishra@cerikids.org) for any additional information.

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In attendance:

#### Sri Lanka

- Neel Bandara Hapuhinne - Ministry of Women & Child Affairs and Social Empowerment, Secretary
- Gunarath Bandara Mapa Hamillage - Ministry of Women & Child Affairs and Social Empowerment, Additional Secretary
- Sulari Sandareka Gammana Liyanage - Department of Probation and Child Care Services, Assistant Commissioner
- Nirmalee Dammika Perera, Bastiyanlage - Department of Probation and Child Care Services, Sr. Probation Officer
- Sujatha Alahapperuma - National Child Protection Authority, Deputy Chairperson
- Preethi Anoma Ranasinghe, Siriwardena - National Child Protection Authority, Director General
- Sudath Rohana Ranasinghe Ranhawadi - National Child Protection Authority, Program Manager
- Ebenezer Dharshan Vijayaretnam - CERI National Director
- Sohani Adarika Fernando - CERI National Child Protection Consultant
- Mary Vijitha Tisseverasinghe - CERI Lead Case Manager
- Sarmili Sathes - UNICEF Child Protection Officer

#### India

- Tara Chand Meena, IAS- Udaipur District Collector
- Chetna Bhati - Udaipur Deputy Superintendent of Police
- Mr. Shailendra Pandya - Member- The Rajasthan State Commission for Protection of Child Rights (RSCPCR)
- Meena Sharma - Udaipur Department of Child Rights, Additional Director
- Dhruv Kumar - Child Welfare Committee, Chairperson
- Devashish Mishra - CERI, National Child Protection Consultant
- Sanjay Nirala - UNICEF, Rajasthan Child Protection Specialist
- Manna Biswas - UNICEF, Rajasthan Child Protection Officer
- Sindhu Benujeeth - UNICEF, Udaipur Division Child Protection Consultant
- Dr. Shilpa Mehta - Foster Care Society, Founder & President
- Anuradha Rai - Executive Board Member
- Anurag Mehta - Foster Care Society, Project Director
- Kusum Paliwal - Foster Care Society, Project Associate
- Mohan Lohar - Foster Care Society, Outreach Worker
- Pranav Sharma - Foster Care Society, Outreach Worker
- BK Gupta - President of State Child Protection Network