



FY 2023-2024

ANNUAL REPORT

**REGISTERED AS
CHILD WELFARE AND ACTION FOUNDATION**

WAIC.IN
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Table of Contents



01

Introduction

02

Champions of
Change and
Founders Corner

03

What We do

04

Technology

05

Fieldwork

06

Capacity
Building

07

Research,
Advocacy &
Campaigns

08

Working with
the Government

09

Measuring
Impact &
Success
Stories

10

Stakeholder
Speak

Introduction

According to United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), India has 3 crore orphaned and abandoned children. The number of children in Child Care Institutions (CCIs, a.k.a child shelters) is estimated to be between 3.5 – 4 lakhs. The number of children that are in the legal adoption pool at any point is barely 2100.

So it begs the question, Where Are India's Children?

As of September 2024, over 35,000 prospective parents in India await adoption referrals, yet only about 2,100 children are legally available for adoption.

With the support of State WCD (Women and Child Development) departments, Where Are India's Children (WAIC) is working to address this gap, ensuring every child in need is accounted for and ultimately finds a safe and loving family.

To achieve this, WAIC has adopted a 3-Pronged Approach:

1. **Humanising through Digitisation:** We are digitising the records of children in Child Care Institutions (CCIs), identifying eligible children for adoption, and making them visible to authorities. This system aims to ensure no child falls through the cracks in the adoption process.
2. **Training and Sensitisation:** By training and sensitising the WCD stakeholders—including CCI staff, and district-level authorities—WAIC is building a supportive ecosystem that prioritises the child's best interest.
3. **Research, Advocacy, Campaigns:** Through in-depth research, active representation, and public awareness, WAIC advocates for policy improvements within the adoption mechanism, supporting each child's right to a family.

Together with the government, WAIC is dedicated to ensuring every child's fundamental right to grow up in a family.

Champions of Change



Sanjay Shetty



Premalatha Gade



Kavya Nallacheruvu



Rohit Kamble



Gauri Warkar



Purender Naidu



Ann Mary



Amit Deshmukh



Shahadev Kamble



Kamlesh Waghmare



Vishwas Waghmare



Pradnya Bhagat



Santhosh Keshetty



Akshay Raut



Prasanna Pedhapuram



Ramesh Botla



Amritha



Chalapathi V



Ravi



Basanagouda R



Shreyas Devadiga



Shivaraja



Altamash Khazi

WAIC team is passionate, dedicated and are an asset and pride of the organization. Fieldwork is particularly challenging, as it involves working with multiple stakeholders, changing mindsets, and adhering to a thorough legal process. Most importantly, we must ensure we respect everyone's roles and boundaries.

The team possesses skills that go beyond what's typically listed on paper—social skills, presentation skills, argumentative skills, persuasive abilities, and in-depth knowledge of the process involved -NO small feat.

Founders Corner



MEERA MARTHI
CEO & CO-FOUNDER



PROTIMA SHARMA
DIRECTOR & CO-FOUNDER



SMRITI GUPTA
CO-FOUNDER

We are excited to share that FY 2023-2024 was a landmark year for WAIC - Child Welfare and Action Foundation. Our efforts led to two key MoUs with the Central Adoption Resource Authority (CARA) and the Directorate of Child Protection, Karnataka. These partnerships enable us to leverage our technology and fieldwork to ensure more eligible children enter the legal adoption pool and find their forever families.

This year we grew in both headcount and impact, thanks to our exceptional team. We owe much of this progress to The Nudge Institute, whose mentoring and funding in FY 2023-2024 were pivotal. Our partnership with the Azim Premji Foundation bolstered our mission to work in Maharashtra. Dr. Reddy's Laboratories enabled us to train Child Care Institutions in three states, earning appreciation from WCD authorities. We are also grateful to CSRs, EFC, Expert Global, and Linkwell Telesystems for supporting our on-ground efforts. We are grateful to Tarachand Ramnath Seva Trust for their support.

Over **250** children have been made legally adoptable by the Child Welfare Committee and over **160** children have moved into the legal adoption pool.

65 have found their forever families.

As we embark on the new financial year, we are filled with hope, enthusiasm, and confidence. We will work tirelessly to continue making a positive impact on the lives of children in shelters!

What we do

WAIC is working for a child's right to a family to give an opportunity of a #Family4EveryChild. WAIC works in 3 States of Maharashtra, Telangana, and Karnataka.

WAIC works closely with the State Women and Child Development Authorities and at the district level with the District Child Protection Unit, Child Welfare Committee, and the Child Care Institutions.

WAIC's approach consists of the following pillars of intervention:

- **Technology** - Humanising children by digitising records of children in Child Care Institutions (CCIs), ensuring that children are visible to decision-makers.
- **Fieldwork** - Leveraging the data the WAIC team actively works on cases of children eligible for adoption on the field
- **Capacity Building & Training** - Empowering CCIs, District Child Protection Units (DCPUs), and Child Welfare Committees (CWCs) with training on the Juvenile Justice Act, pre-adoption processes, and adoption regulations to strengthen their role in child protection specifically the adoption eco-system.
- **Research, Advocacy, & Campaigns** - Serving as the voice of vulnerable children and advocates to bring policy reforms for a #childsright2family.
 - Conducting awareness campaigns on the Safe Surrender Law and adoption opportunities for older children, fostering community understanding and support for older child adoption.

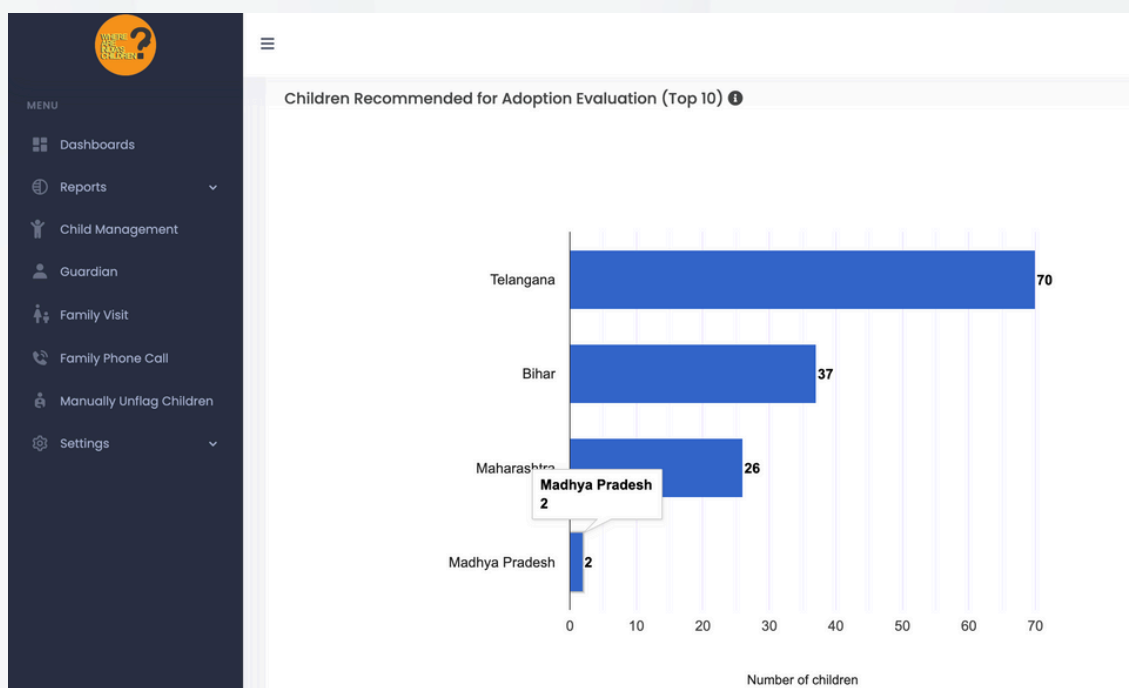
Technology

WAIC's technology solution, Child Lifecycle Management Solution (CLMS) was developed to solve challenges of human failure points. CLMS is used to digitize, manage, track, and audit the ground-level processes of children in CCIs.

Developed as an Open Source technology solution CLMS can be used by CCIs and relevant government authorities, to manage the status of all vulnerable children who reach CCIs, and to ensure the movement of children into the legal adoption pool where applicable, giving all children a chance to reach their forever family.

The WAIC team uses CLMS to enter data, update data, and track the children's cases till they reach the National database of adoptable children in the CARINGS portal. Over 12,000+ children's records have been digitised.

Categories of Children in Child Care Institutions (CCIs) ⓘ									
	State	Total No. of Children	Abandoned / Family not traceable	Orphaned - No Guardians	Orphaned - Unfit Guardians	Surrendered	Children with Unfit Parents	Children with Financially Distressed or Single Parents	Trafficked
1	Bihar	51	11	2	11	2	10	15	0
2	Maharashtra	29	5	8	8	3	4	1	0
3	Telangana	137	15	6	24	8	26	56	2
4	Tamilnadu	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
5	Madhya Pradesh	2	1	0	1	0	0	0	0



Fieldwork



A dedicated team of 16 field members, supported by 3 project managers and overseen by 1 Chief Program Officer, leads WAIC's on-the-ground efforts.

Our team visits all Child Care Institutions (CCIs) within their assigned districts, entering each child's data into CLMS. They then present children identified for adoption evaluation to local Women and Child Development (WCD) authorities, collaborating closely to move eligible children into the legal adoption pool.

Beyond helping children enter the adoption pool, WAIC's work has facilitated family tracing, sibling reunions, and, when necessary, safe surrenders for children whose parents or guardians are unfit or unwilling to provide care. Through these efforts, WAIC is actively ensuring that each child they work with has a greater chance of finding a safe, loving family.

Capacity Building

Training CCI, DCPUs, and CWCs

Training Sessions in Maharashtra



Training Sessions in Telangana



Training Sessions in Karnataka



In 2023-2024, WAIC received approval to train Child Care Institutions (CCIs), District Child Protection Units (DCPUs), and Child Welfare Committees (CWCs) across Telangana, Maharashtra, and Karnataka.

Our team successfully trained over 1,500 social workers and district stakeholders on identifying children for adoption, pre-adoption steps, and the adoption process. The training was well-received and appreciated.

Research, Advocacy & Campaigns

Research

CARA awarded WAIC a 3-month Study Project to improve adoption of children with special needs in India. The study aimed to find the challenges, and recommendations to improve adoptions of children with Special Needs in India. The Study Report has been submitted by WAIC to CARA and is currently under review.

Advocacy

After a series of meeting with the Central WCD Secretary and the CARA team in Delhi:

- Two rules have been added to JJ Model rules to indicate that we are working in the right direction.
- CARA added two new categories
 - Children who have not visited by parents/guardians for a year or more.
 - Children who have parents who are terminally ill/mentally challenged/or are unable to raise the children
- The Honourable Supreme Court in November, 2023 issued an order in reply to a PIL No. 1003/2021 to identify children for adoption evaluation living in CCIs at the earliest.

These are definitely important steps and in alignment with our work, but more needs to be done, and WAIC will continue to push for policy reforms for a child's right to family to become a fundamental right in India.

Campaigns

We continue to conduct Safe Surrender awareness campaigns.

- Our volunteers presented the Safe Surrender Dance Drama at the induction ceremony of another NGO, Udayan Care at the Microsoft Campus in Hyderabad.
- We will continue to spread awareness about Safe Surrender law and prevention of unsafe abandonment of children.

Working with the Government

Central Adoption Resource Authority (CARA)



As a knowledge partner, WAIC collaborates closely with CARA

- Work on data analysis and provide insights on the categories of children, age, gender etc. given by CARA from different states.
- Hosted a well-received webinar with CARA's CEO, Smt. Tripti Gurha, on Accelerating Adoptions in India through People, Process, and Policy, which drew nearly 100 participants.
- Meera is the resource person for online refresher training for DCPUs, CWCs, and SARAs across regions each quarter.

We will continue working with CARA, offering on-ground feedback to strengthen the implementation of pre-adoption processes and drive positive change in the adoption landscape.

State WCD Departments

WAIC remains actively engaged with State WCD Departments to provide training and raise awareness about challenges within the adoption ecosystem, working collaboratively toward systemic change.

- The Telangana team, conducted multiple sessions for the WCD, sharing data insights, analysis, and adoption processes with District Child Protection Units (DCPUs) and Child Care Institutions (CCIs).
- In December 2023, Meera, was invited by the Karnataka Directorate of Child Protection to present on the adoption of children above age 5 and the identification process.

Measuring Impact

In Numbers

Children Visible to the Authorities through Digitization:
12,000+ - more than 50% of the children are not eligible
for adoption because of the laws

Children declared legally adoptable
after due process by the Child Welfare
Committee: 253

Children's records uploaded
to the CARINGS portal:
190

Children who reached their forever
families:
74

Capacity Building /Training on the pre-adoption process and
identification of children for adoption evaluation in all the 3
States: 1600+

Note: Children who are eligible for adoption evaluation:

- Abandoned, Orphaned, and Surrendered
- Children who have not been visited for a year or more
- Children with Unfit Guardians/Parents
 - Substance abuse (alcoholics and drug addicts)
 - Criminal background
 - Beg for a living and make the child beg (child abuse and neglect)
 - Child abuse
 - Need in care of themselves (grandparents or terminally ill parents)
 - Unwilling to raise the child (for example: parents separate and remarry and abandon the child in the CCI etc.
 - Children with mentally challenged parents/guardians

Important Note: Not all children living in CCIs are eligible for adoption. The following category children are also admitted to the CCIs. Options can be explored as per policies for this children and WAIC can support that with the data.

- Children with financially distressed parents/single parents
- Children whose parents visit the child regularly
- Orphaned children with relatives who visit them regularly and neither want to raise them or surrender them.

Success Stories

Long wait to reach their forever families!

In 2017, *Anshi (name changed)* was admitted to a CCI in one district but was soon transferred as she identified her hometown elsewhere. Unfortunately, her case was overlooked during the transition, and she remained in the CCI for seven years without further processing.

In 2024, WAIC's team flagged Anshi for adoption evaluation, and by February, she entered the legal adoption pool and by August 2024, Anshi, then 13, joined her forever family who are OCIs living in India.

Anshi's journey reflects the critical need for timely action in adoption cases to prevent children from languishing without a family.



Agastya (name changed), lost contact with her parents—who begged for a living—after she went missing at a railway station at age 8. In February 2017, she was placed in CCI, where she remained without being reviewed for seven long years.

In May 2023, WAIC staff intervened, identifying Agastya as eligible for adoption and presenting her case to the CWC and after due process declared her legally free for adoption in October 2023.

Finally, in April 2024, after years of waiting, 14-year-old Agastya was joyfully adopted by a family—where, in a beautiful twist, her adoptive mother was also an adoptee.

Agastya should have reached a family earlier and she should not have languished for 6 long years in a CCI.

Success Stories



Diya's journey

In 2019, *Diya* (name changed) was brought to a police station by a passerby at age 4.

Unable to provide family information, she was placed in an adoption agency under the direction of the CWC. During a medical examination, Diya was diagnosed as HIV positive, and no further steps were taken regarding her adoption eligibility.

In 2023, WAIC reviewed her case at the Adoption Agency (SAA) and found that Diya, now 8, had no recorded family contacts or visits. WAIC worked with authorities to publish her details, leading the police to trace her uncle and grandmother, who declined to raise her. WAIC team had multiple discussions with them and they formally surrendered Diya for adoption in 2023.

Diya is now reserved for adoption by an inter-country family.

Had her case been processed earlier, Diya could have joined a family years ago and received timely support, love, care, and individual attention.



Sibling Reunion

Sila and Shiva (names changed) were separated after their parent's death.

Due to her financial issues their maternal aunt admitted them to different CCIs. There were no visits by the aunt and the siblings lost track of each other for the next 18 months despite knowing they had a sibling somewhere.

During fieldwork, a WAIC team member visited the CCIs where Sila and Shiva were placed. While reviewing Shiva's case with the CWC, the team member recalled a matching case history and checked the CLMS. They discovered Sila's records, which noted that the siblings were separated but didn't indicate their whereabouts.

An effort was made to reunite them, and soon after, Sila and Shiva were brought together in the presence of the CWC, DCPU, and CCI staff. It was a heartfelt moment as they finally had each other for support after so long apart. With WAIC's intervention, Sila and Shiva were reunited after more than 1.5 years.

This experience underscored the importance of the presence of mind and the power of using technology to track children.

Stakeholders Speak

Our immediate beneficiaries and stakeholders are the District Child Protection Unit, the Child Welfare Committees, and the CCIs. Their support helps us work better on the field and focus on bringing more children into the adoption pool.



Sagar, DCPO, Kolhapur District, Maharashtra

“Where Are India’s Children has supported us a lot in the Adoption process. They visited every CCI in Kolhapur and digitised the children’s data. After that they worked on the cases of the eligible children. From Kolhapur, 12 children have reached the legal adoption pool through their efforts and one child has reached their forever family. I would like to thank WAIC for working for these children and for supporting us!”



Neetha Vadkar, DCPO, Dharwad District, Karnataka

“WAIC aims to help the children to get a family environment and love and affection of the parents. Due to this work of WAIC, children who are eligible for adoption but left behind are able to come to the attention of the government and get forever families. I would like to express that WAIC is making a difference in the lives of children so that they have a chance to reach a permanent family!”

“Siblings have been separated from each other for years. We never thought of bringing siblings together until now. This happy moment took place between these children because of the efforts put in by the WAIC team”.

- CWC Chairperson, Sangareddy District, Telangana



As of today, we are supported by
Azim Premji Foundation
(May 2024 - ongoing).

4 dedicated Child Protection
Patrons have made the 5/5
commitment of donating 5 Lakhs
for 5 years.

We are also grateful for the
generosity of many individual
donors.

WAIC is registered as Child
Welfare and Action Foundation.
Donations to WAIC are eligible
for tax exemption under section
80G of the Income Tax Act.

Support Us!
Your Donation Has the Potential
to Transform The Lives Of
Thousands Of Children In India.

Donate at: <https://waic.in/donate/>

Every child needs and deserves a family!
#Family4EveryChild #ChildsRight2Family

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