

## Kinship Care to Ensure Safe Childhood in Gujarat- Meenal's Story

Meenal's aunt lives with her grandparents and is a primary caregiver of Meenal and her sisters. Her aunt ensures that Meenal is involved in daily routine activities and studying well and loves Meenal and her sisters like her own children. Over a period of time, she has been able to develop a friendship-like bond with Meenal and her sisters. The members of the Village Child Protection Committee, who live near their home, have also been assigned the responsibility of looking after the siblings. Meenal, now 11-year-old is studying in class 6<sup>th</sup> and is one of the brightest students in her class.

[Watch the case documentary here :](#)



### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> The duties of a talati include maintaining village crop and land records and collecting taxes and irrigation dues. Among the administration, the talati has the closest connection with the villagers.

<sup>2</sup> Names have been changed to protect the identity of the child and her family members.

## Family-based Care Solutions through Foster Care

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Foster Care Society's primary mission is to establish and model best practices for foster care organisations seeking to help foster youth and their parents throughout India. The society was registered in Udaipur, Rajasthan in January 2017 as a non-governmental organization (NGO). Building on previous work done by Foster Care India, the Foster Care Society set out to move children from Child Care Institutions (CCIs) to individual families. Foster Care Society believes that "Every Child deserves a family that can provide love and support."

Currently, the society is working with 28 foster families and children in Udaipur and the surrounding districts. The Foster Care Society works directly with government stakeholders in the effective implementation of the foster care process. Major services provided by the society are awareness, identification, orientation, assistance in the placement process, pre-service and post-service training, matching,

monitoring, counselling, and documentation. It also provides case monitoring and support for behavioural, educational, and other transitional concerns after the placement of the child into the foster family. It ensures that the transition process is a positive and life-changing experience for the child and the family. While placing the child into the family, society fully ensures the best interest of the child.

Some of the best practices followed by the society are:

- Ensuring that the potential families understand the difference between adoption and foster care before submitting the application form.
- Pre-placement training (preparing families to deliver the best parenting skills during fostering a child).
- Developing a tool kit for the foster families (tool kit helps families to understand the child and helps in better adjustment).
- Focussing on the process of matching (where the child and potential families are counselled for foster care).
- Taking consent of the child above 7 years.

The below case studies reflect how these practices are aligned with the best interest of a child principle, while placing them in foster care arrangements.

### Case Study- Rohan<sup>1</sup>

#### Introduction

At the tender age of three, a child named Rohan was reported to Childline as he was found begging on the streets. The police department registered the child on the missing children's portal. When this case came to the notice of the Child Welfare Committee(CWC), they asked the police and Childline team to locate the child's biological parents. Subsequent investigations confirmed that the child met the eligibility for foster care.

A couple from Udaipur got to know about the Foster Care Programme through the CCIs and reached out to the Foster Care Society for more information about the programme and the process.

The couple thought of raising a child under foster care (*Vatsalya Yojana*<sup>2</sup>). The potential father, aged 61, has retired from a government department and has consistently been engaged in social work within the community. The potential mother, aged 54, explains her previous experiences in raising multiple children within the neighbourhood, further expressing her desire to improve the life of a single child now. The couple believes that their instilled values will contribute to the holistic development of the foster child.

The couple approached the Foster Care Society to understand the *Vatsalya Yojana*. Once their doubts were cleared, they promptly started preparing their documents with the help of the Foster Care Society, which provided support throughout the process. The foster family diligently completed all documentation within one month. Subsequently, the Foster Care Society started identifying a suitable match for them.

#### Matching Day

On the day of matching, the potential father felt emotional upon laying eyes on Rohan and decided to take him home. He enquired if Rohan would consider him a father. To his delight, Rohan responded affirmatively, addressing him as 'father'. This heartfelt interaction fostered a sense of affection and attachment in the potential father in the first meeting itself. The potential mother was emotional as well. Prior to the official placement, the potential foster parents undertook three separate visits to Rohan, during which they brought along numerous gifts and chocolates in an effort to establish a sense of comfort and familiarity with him.

#### Life in Foster Care

Before welcoming Rohan into their home, the foster family took him for visits to temples and made prior arrangements within their home environment like stocking biscuits, chocolates, chips, etc. to ensure the child's comfort and provide a welcoming atmosphere.

Following Rohan's transition from the CCI, where he had been enrolled in the first grade, the foster parents enrolled him in Arena English Medium School. However, after a few days, they understood that Rohan was weak in academics, lacking fundamental knowledge. To address this, the foster parents made the informed choice to have him repeat classes, necessitating his admission to a lower class. In order to improve Rohan's knowledge, the foster parents adopted various techniques. They affixed chart papers to the walls of their home and utilised them to facilitate everyday learning. They also started tuition classes for Rohan nearby their house.

Rohan is very fond of outdoor playing and cycling. During the evenings, he plays with other children within the colony. The foster father thoughtfully bought a bicycle for him, so that he can play alongside his friends in the colony. Rohan's foster mother keeps regular check on his health, providing him with nutritious food every two hours. She believes it is crucial to offer fulfilling and nourishing food at frequent intervals as children burn lots of energy.

The Foster Care Society conducts monthly monitoring and supervision to ensure the well-being of both the foster family and Rohan. Regular communication is held by the Foster Care Society with the foster family and Rohan, as per their requirements. Foster Care Society further extends support through effective counselling sessions to the foster family. The foster family is taking good care of Rohan, providing him with an abundance of love, care, and attention.

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### Case Study- Akshay<sup>3</sup>

#### Introduction

Akshay was about 1 year and 2 months old when his biological mother died due to some physical ailment. After the death of his mother, Akshay stayed with his biological father. In the next 6 months, the father observed some physical and mental issues in Akshay.

The biological father was not able to take care of Akshay properly, so he presented Akshay to the CWC, which placed Akshay in a CCI. Officials at the CCI got Akshay's check-up done and he was diagnosed with developmental delay and hearing impairment issues. On further diagnosis, Akshay was diagnosed with Cerebral Palsy.

#### Journey from CCI to Foster Care

From the first day onwards, a health worker at the same CCI started taking care of Akshay and the child also got very attached to the health worker. The health worker and her biological daughter started liking Akshay and developed a soft corner for him. Since there weren't any proper homes for cerebral palsy children in the city, the CWC of Banswara decided to shift Akshay to Jaipur. The health worker accompanied Akshay to Jaipur, but he was reluctant in leaving her when she was returning and started crying. So, the health worker bought him back with her. The health worker decided to take Akshay to her home and thus contacted the CWC who suggested that she take Akshay in Foster Care. She contacted the Foster Care Society and with their support, started preparing her documents and within a month's time, she completed all the requirements. With the technical support of the Foster Care Society and in the presence of the CWC and the Protection Officer of the District Child Protection Unit (DCPU), Akshay was placed with his health worker.

#### Life in Foster Care

The foster mother is a single mother and she has a 12 years old biological daughter. Initially, Akshay was not able to move by himself, he lay on the bed, and all his routine activities were done only on the bed. He was not able to make any movement. But the care and love given by the foster mother and her daughter brought so many improvements in the foster child.

During the monthly monitoring, the Foster Care Society saw many changes in the foster child. Gradually, the foster child got adjusted into the family and learned so many novel things in a short time. He can grasp things, walk with the help of a walker and eat small bites by himself. He knows everyone in the family and becomes silent in the presence of an outsider. He walks through a walker in the house. The foster child started expressing himself through various movements. When he goes out, he waves his hand to everyone. He slowly gets down from the bed. Akshay can also speak a few words now, like *Jija* (Sister). His tongue trembles if he tries to speak something, but he understands good, bad, right and wrong things.

The Foster Care Society is very attentive towards monitoring and supervision of the foster child. The foster parents give all the details about the child's development and also discuss the future plan monthly. Living with this foster family is in the best interest of Akshay, and his foster mother is trying every possible step to help the foster child in improving his health. The Foster Care Society visits the family and takes counselling sessions as per the need of the foster mother, her daughter and the foster child. Foster Care Society connected the foster families with the benefits of the *Vatsalya Yojana* as well as with sponsorships.

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Name changed

<sup>2</sup> The implementation of the Rajasthan Government Vatsalya Yojana was started by the District Child Protection Unit, Jaipur to ensure upbringing and care in a family environment to the children in need of care and protection in Jaipur.

<sup>3</sup> Name changed