

# WEAKEST *on* EARTH ORPHANS OF INDIA

**An Initiative of the Nyay Nyaaari Foundation**

# THE FORGOTTEN MILLIONS.

*Why we must fight for India's  
Orphan Children*

*Born Alone. Lived  
Invisible. Forgotten  
Forever?*

**25 million Orphans.  
More than the population of Sri  
Lanka, Australia.  
Yet no Rights!**



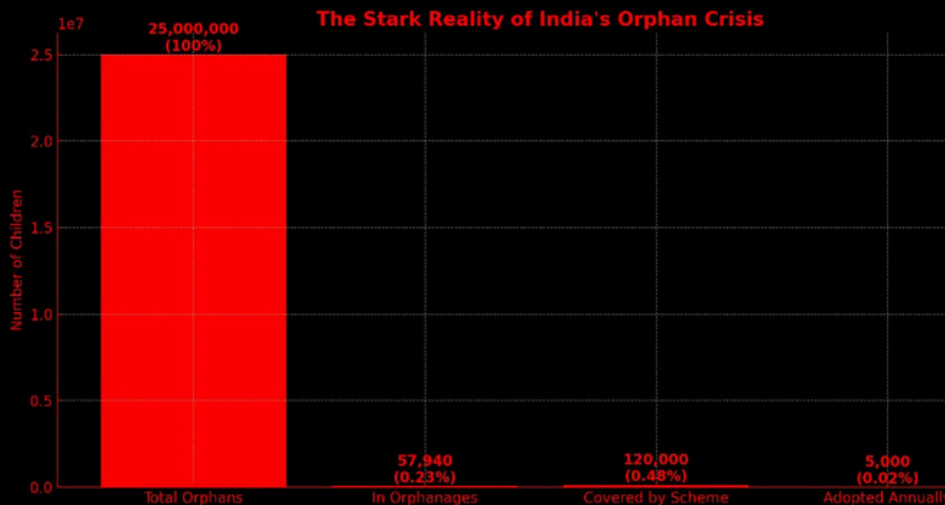


# *India- The nation that counts everything, but its Orphans!*



India has over 2.5 crore Orphan Children.  
More than the population of 140 countries of the world,  
including Australia and Sri Lanka.

Yet 99% of them are not covered in any scheme!



# Why this is a crisis?



## **Excluded from Education :**

*Not included in the Right to Education Act*

## **Excluded from welfare :**

*No inclusion in any welfare scheme, Pm Vishkarma, Ayushman Bharat, Ration card or any caste based scheme*

## **No Official Status :**

*No 'Orphan' Certificate exists - making it impossible to access any benefits.*

## **No Official Count :**

*Orphans have never been included or counted in Census or any study*

*No Legislation, No Count, No Rights!*



# The Reality...

*70% of India's children  
get reservation.*

INDICATOR	ORPHANS IN INDIA
Total number of orphans	25 million or 2.5 crore (World's largest orphan population (as per UNICEF, SOS Children's Vilage)
% receiving Government support	Less than 1%
Children in Institutions	Only 57,940 (<0.5%)
Annual Adoptions	Under 5000
Orphans with access to Identity Documents	Vast majority lack Aadhaar, Ration Cards, etc.
Orphaned/street children turning 18 yearly	Over 1 million
Orphaned girls' risk of trafficking	None – not in official Census or Economic Surveys data
Schemes or policy for higher education	None
Schemes for employment of orphans	None

**Orphans – the weakest – the most vulnerable –  
get nothing!**

# Invisible Children

*The National Child Policy does not mention Orphan*

*The NITI Aayog's plan India@75 does not contain the word Orphan*

Policy Document	SC/ST/OBC/MINORITY MENTIONS	ORPHAN MENTIONS
National Policy for Children	18+ mentions	1 generic mention
India@75 (NITI AAYOG)	Multiple (>20) mentions	0 mentions
India@47 : 100 years (draft plan)	Continued Protections, many mentions	0 mentions



# No protections, no priority

**Orphans don't have a single Act or legislation dedicated to them or their needs**

*—they are included in the juvenile justice act, which deals primarily with children criminals as an afterthought*

Issue	Status
Dedicated Law	None
Specific Policy	One, covering less than 1%
Official Data	Excluded from a census, Health and Welfare surveys
Dedicated Authority	None, No Ministry Cell, No Commissioner, No Dedicated Authority
Public Reporting	None

*Invisible in Policy, Invisible in Planning*

# ORPHANS: ABANDONED AGAIN AT 18

**Over 1 million orphans turn 18 each year.**

**Forced to leave orphanages overnight with:**

*No money*

*No higher education*

*No job skills*

*No shelter*

**Orphan girls specially face:**

*Early forced marriage*

*Human trafficking*

*Exploitation*

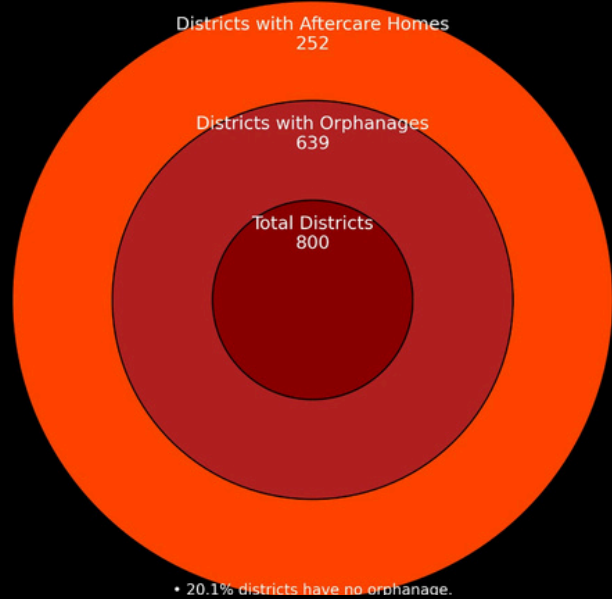
*Orphans of India: Orphaned Twice.  
Once abandoned by fate, then abandoned by the State*



# A country home to 1.2 billion people, yet orphans have no where to go



Total Districts: 800  
Districts with Orphanages: 639  
Districts with Aftercare Homes: 252



**68% districts have no aftercare homes**  
**20% have no orphanages.**

*Where do the children go?*  
*In jails & hospitals, left on streets,*  
*sleeping on railway platforms.*

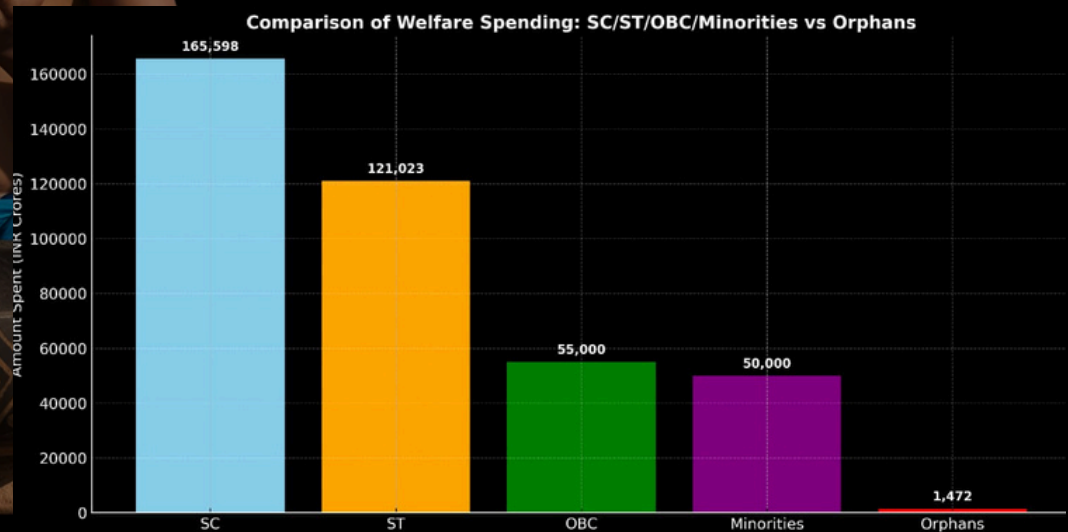
*No homes, no funding, no shelter, no safety, no security, no Right to Life.*

# Budget Disparity:

*Welfare for the weak, Neglect for the weakest*

*Mission Vatsalya gets less than 2% of the Budget earmarked for children, which is 3.5% of the total budget.*

*So if Rs 1000 was the budget of the country, more than 2 crore orphans would be allotted 58 paise*



**SC/ST/OBC/Minority Welfare Budget (2023-24): ₹2,92,000 crore**

**Mission Vatsalya for Orphans: ₹1,400 crore total (₹436 crore released in 2022-23)**



# The Injustice!

Category	Education schemes	Loan Scheme	Credit Scheme	Other Welfare schemes
SC	8	5	4	10
ST	7	4	3	8
OBC	6	4	3	6
Minorities	5	3	2	5
Orphans	0	0	0	1

*Of the welfare budget, and the schemes, 99% are for SC/ST/OBC/Minority.*

*for Orphans, nearly nothing!*

Group	Scholarship	Skill Development	RTE	Loan	Reservation
SC	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
ST	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
OBC/min.	✓	✓	✓	✓	some
Orphans	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗

A young child is sleeping peacefully on a light-colored, textured mat. The child is wearing a light-colored, short-sleeved shirt. The background is dark and out of focus, suggesting an indoor setting.

## **Mission Vatsalya:** *A Promise Undelivered*

*Covers less than 1% of orphans—millions remain outside the system, invisible and unsupported.*

*Pathetically low funding—barely ₹5 per day per child; over ₹300 crores of the meagre budget was surrendered unused.*

*No guaranteed schooling or higher education—not a single rupee reserved for college, coaching, or professional training.*

*At 18, they are cast out with ₹2000/month—meant to cover rent, food, education, and survival. For most, this is the age of abandonment, not adulthood.*

*Girls are left at extreme risk—without housing, identity, safety or protection from trafficking.*

*No national survey, no dashboard, no data—India doesn't even know how many orphans it has.*

*Not a single provision to protect or monitor property left behind by deceased parents. Land and inheritance are easily stolen.*

*Foster care and adoption are broken promises—with ₹2000 per month support, even willing families can't take a child in.*

*Children's homes are absent in over 100 districts, and most existing homes lack staff, space, or dignity.*



# The Greater Orphan vs the Lesser Orphan

Benefit	PM cares for children	Mission Vatsalya
CORPUS	10 lakh upon turning 18	None
stipend	Rs 4000 a month	None
Schooling	Free- both in pot or govt	No provision
higher education	Scholarship or skill development	No Provision
Heath Insurance	enrolment in Ayushman Bharat	None
Support	till age 23	till age 18
property protection	yes	no

*Their fate may be equally bad, but one is the lesser orphan.*

*If your parents died of COVID-19, you get more benefits. Because you come under PM Cares for Children.*

*If they died of Cholera, or Nipah, or a car accident, you don't get half the benefits. Because you come under Mission Vatsalya.*

# What we want

## **Orphan Certificate:**

*Legal identity for access to education, jobs, welfare – just like caste certificates.*

## **Reservation:**

*Recognize orphans as a distinct backward class eligible for education and job reservations.*

## **National Orphan Census:**

*Orphans to be included as a separate category for this census.*

## **Orphan Act:**

*A dedicated law for orphans – ensuring structured support, rights, and protection.*

## **Right to Education (RTE):**

*Explicitly include orphans; ensure compulsory school enrollment.*

## **Right to Higher Education:**

*Scholarships, free hostels, and vocational training pathways for orphans.*

## **Protection of Property:**

*Secure and monitor inherited assets against exploitation.*



*"These are not favors – they are justice."*



# What we want

## **MPLAD/MLALAD Allocation:**

*Reserve 1% funds for orphanage and aftercare infrastructure.*

## **Inclusion in Welfare Schemes:**

*Orphans must be automatic beneficiaries across all government schemes.*

## **Universal Identity:**

*Fast-track Aadhar, bank accounts, ration cards through institutional support.*

## **Healthcare for All:**

*Automatic enrollment under Ayushman Bharat and similar programs.*

## **Financial Independence:**

*Provide seed funding and entrepreneurship programs for aged-out orphans.*

## **Transition Support:**

*Structured help for shelter, education, and jobs after 18.*

## **Expanded Infrastructure:**

*Every district must have at least 3 orphanages (boys, girls, infants) and 2 aftercare homes.*



# Orphan Children Deserve Reservation

*They are the weakest, the most backward, the least educated and with no opportunity*

## **Denied Protections:**

*70% of India's children have some form of reservation. Orphans – the weakest – are excluded.*

## **Loss of Rights:**

*Orphans lose caste-based reservations once parental identity is lost – a cruel injustice.*

## **Arbitrary Identity:**

*Officers assign random surnames to orphans, breaking ancestral linkages and rights.*

## **Legal Grounds:**

*The Constitution allows affirmative action for "any socially and educationally backward class."*

## **Precedent Exists:**

*Supreme Court extended reservation to transgenders. Orphans deserve similar protection.*

## **Ignored Resolution:**

*The National Commission for Backward Classes recommended reservation for orphans in 2016 – still unimplemented.*

## **Denied Opportunities:**

*Orphans without caste certificates are locked out of scholarships, jobs, Army enlistment, and welfare programs.*



# Why Orphans Deserve Reservation

*Orphans meet all 11 Mandal Commission backwardness criteria – social, educational, economic.*

*The National commission of back classes recommended Orphans be included in Other Backward Classes in 2016*

Criteria (Mandal Commission)	Orphans	Yadavs (OBC Group 1)	Kurmis (OBC Group 2)
Social backwardness	✓	✓	✓
Educational backwardness	✓	✓	✓
Economic backwardness	✓	✓	✓
Low representation in government jobs	✓	✓	✓
Low representation in higher education	✓	✓	✓
Living in slum areas	✓	□	□
Manual labor / unskilled jobs	✓	✓	□
Dependence on casual labor	✓	✓	□
No land ownership	✓	□	□
Early marriage / child labor	✓	✓	✓
Marginalization / stigma	✓	□	□

*> "There is no one weaker than a child abandoned on a footpath.  
Affirmative action for orphans is not charity – it is justice delayed, and justice demanded."*



# Achievements

- Poulomi's P.T.L. asking for more budget and support for orphans, on which the Supreme Court issued notice in 2018, the Union Government's budget for orphans increased from Rs 750 crores in 2018-2019 to Rs 1500 crores in 2019-2020.
- Sh. Raghav Lakhanpal, Member of Parliament, mentioned the plight of orphans and Poulomi's book in the Parliament, thereby starting a discussion on the subject.
- The National Commission for OBCs has recommended that orphan children may be considered part of OBCs for educational and job opportunities.
- Uttarakhand has given 5 percent reservation to Orphan children in education and jobs
  - Maharashtra has given 1 percent reservation in education
  - Goa has also committed 1 percent reservation in Supreme Court
- Chattisgarh has made major policy changes, including expanding the network of orphanages in all districts and allocating additional budget
  - Punjab has extended the budget for orphan children
- Orphans have been given special provisions in government jobs in Himachal Pradesh.
- Telangana has provided reservation in education and jobs for orphans as a part of OBCs. (Has included them in OBC category)
- Tamil Nadu has given orphans reservation in Group-D jobs and seats in government ITIs (Industrial Training Institutes).
- Goa, through their Ladli Laxmi Scheme, financial assistance of Rs 1 lakh is also given to orphan girls.
  - Several States have included Orphans in RTE



# Achievements

## *Adopt an Orphanage Program*

*Mobilized businesses to support orphanages with donations, tuitions, supplies.  
Expanded partnerships to 7 cities across UP, Uttarakhand and Haryana for job and skill linkages.*

## *COVID-19 Digital Support:*

*Donated Smart TVs and internet access to 32 orphanages ensuring education continuity for over 1,000 orphans.*

## *Emotional Drives:*

*"Diwali with Orphans" and "Rakhi with Orphans" programs to foster emotional bonds between society and orphaned children.*

*Participation from celebrities like Dharmendra Deol, Anil Sharma, R.P. Singh, Swara Bhaskar, Satish Kaushik.*

## *Large-Scale Donation Drives:*

*"Diwali-daan with Orphans" provided essentials to over 1,000 children.*

*"Nau-Din, Nau-Anaathalaya" campaign focused on supporting girls' orphanages during Navratri.*



# RoadMap

## **Campaign for:**

*Issuance of a Separate Orphan Certificate.*

*District-wise orphanage establishment across India.*

*Reservation inclusion for orphans in education and jobs.*

## **Expand Legal Action:**

*Continue and broaden the ongoing PIL in the Supreme Court.*

*File fresh state-level interventions to secure orphans' inclusion in welfare programs.*

## **Public Awareness and Civic Engagement**

*Launch National Awareness Campaigns:*

*Target schools, colleges, and digital platforms.*

*Normalize the idea that caring for orphans is a civic duty, not charity.*



# Planned Programs

## **Expand Adopt an Orphanage' Nationwide:**

*Create direct linkages between businesses and orphanages for jobs, training, and financial security.*

## **Run Literacy Campaigns:**

*Focused on financial literacy, legal rights, and general education for orphans and street children.*

## **Launch National Scholarship Programs:**

*Support orphaned children's access to higher education and vocational training.*

## **Drive School Enrollments:**

*Ensure orphans' enrollment in schools under RTE and other government welfare programs.*

## **Deploy Teachers and Provide Free Coaching:**

*Place dedicated teachers inside orphanages and offer free academic coaching.*

## **Organize Semester Book Drives:**

*Book and stationery donation drives across colleges every semester.*

## **Initiate Self-Defense Training:**

*Self-defense classes for orphanage residents to ensure personal safety.*

## **Provide Vocational Skill Training:**

*Tailoring, carpentry, hospitality, retail – employment-oriented skills.*

## **Launch a Grievance Redressal Portal:**

*Create a digital platform offering legal aid access and complaint redressal for orphan youth.*



## **A Life Shaped by Labels**

**Two boys from the same orphanage were arbitrarily assigned caste surnames:**

**One, labeled "forward caste", was denied scholarships and benefits, and grew up a daily-wage carpenter rejected by society.**

**The other, labeled "backward caste", accessed scholarships and secured a government job.**

*A child's future decided by a random label, not by opportunity.*

## **Dying Without Care**

**In a children's home in Bihar, a 10-year-old boy died of an untreated infection.**

**No visiting doctor. No medicine. No accountability.**

## **Married Off, Dead at 19**

*In Haridwar, a girl was married off at 18 by the orphanage itself.*

*She died during childbirth at 19 – no legal action, no inquiry*

**At a neglected shelter, children scrawled a haunting message on the walls:**

> "Roti, Kapda, Makaan aur Padai –  
Hum Bachchon ki Ek Duhai."

> *These stories are not isolated incidents.  
They represent a national silence –  
and the forgotten millions."*



# The Harrowing Reality

## **Trafficked Instead of Adopted**

*In Uttar Pradesh, a police operation uncovered a trafficking ring selling orphaned children under the guise of illegal adoptions.*

## **Sexual Exploitation Under Protection**

*In Muzaffarnagar, 34 girls were sexually assaulted and trafficked by the director and staff of their own shelter home.*

## **Deoria Shelter Home Horror (Uttar Pradesh, 2018):**

*→ Girls were trafficked out at night from a government-funded shelter*

## **Tamil Nadu Trafficking Cases:**

*→ Fake orphanages illegally "recruiting" children to claim state grants.*

## **The Street's Silent Cry**

*Studies reveal that orphaned girls living on Indian streets face a 40% probability of sexual assault before the age of 16.*

## **NCRB Data:**

*Missing children reports show a disproportionately high number from orphanages and shelter homes.*





# *Poulomi Pavini Shukla*

**Advocate | Author | Policy Reformer**

**Poulomi Pavini Shukla is a Supreme Court lawyer, policy advocate, TEDx speaker, and author who has spent over a decade fighting for the rights of orphaned and abandoned children in India.**

**Co-authored *Weakest on Earth: Orphans of India* (Bloomsbury Publishers) — The first book to combine legal research with field insights highlighting systemic gaps in India's child protection.**

**Filed Public Interest Litigation (Writ Petition No. 503/2018) in the Supreme Court of India advocating for:**

**Nationwide enumeration of orphans  
Legal identity through an Orphan Certificate  
Reservation in education and employment  
Property protection and access to welfare schemes**

**Facilitated legal aid, documentation drives, and mental health initiatives for orphans.**

**Delivered talks at educational institutions, NGOs, and platforms like TEDx. Regularly published articles in national dailies like Times of India, Indian Express, Femina magazines.**

**Her work has been widely featured in national media, radio and podcasts for advocating for orphan welfare**



## **Recognitions and Awards**

*Forbes India "30 Under 30" (2021) – Education and Policy*

*Femina "Fab 40" List – Transformative Women of India*

*Cosmopolitan Disruptors List (2022)*

*FICCI FLO "Woman of the Year – Social Sector" (2020)*

## **Commendations and Endorsements**

*Justice Sirpurkar (Former Judge, Supreme Court of India)*

*Justice Vineet Saran (Judge, Supreme Court of India)*

*Justice Dileep Gupta (Former Judge, High Court of Allahabad)*

*Justice Iqbal Ansari (Former Chief Justice, Patna High Court)*

*Justice Rafat Alam (Former Chief Justice, Allahabad High Court)*

*Shri Bhupesh Baghel (Chief Minister, Chhattisgarh)*

*Shri Keshari Nath Tripathi (Former Governor, West Bengal and Bihar)*

*Shri Raghubar Das (Former Chief Minister, Jharkhand)*

*Ms. Rita Bahuguna Joshi (Member of Parliament, Ex-Minister of Women and Child Welfare, U.P.)*

*Shri Manpreet Badal (Former Finance Minister, Punjab)*

*Muzaffar Ali (Eminent filmmaker and Padma Shri awardee)*

*Javed Akhtar (Poet, Writer, Lyricist, and Padma Bhushan awardee)*

*Dr. Naresh Trehan (Chairman, Medanta Hospital, and Padma Bhushan awardee)*

## **MISSION:**

*To make every orphan in India an equal citizen – empowered, protected, and visible.*

## **VISION:**

*A just India where every orphan enjoys childhood, safety, dignity, education, and dreams – not as charity, but as a right*

*Join the Movement!*



### **Contact Details**

**Email:** [contact@weakestonearth.com](mailto:contact@weakestonearth.com)

**Phone:** +91-9696667126

**Office:** 4/34 Vikram Khand, Gomti Nagar, Lucknow – 226002

**Website:** [www.weakestonearth.in](http://www.weakestonearth.in)

**Instagram:** @weakestonearth1