

The Need



Since the late 1990s, greater openness to foreign investment and trade has created a surge in economic growth in India, significantly expanding its middle class – by some accounts to 400 million people. But in a country of 1.2 billion, that leaves an estimated 700 to 800 million people living in poverty. Many families continually struggle to support and educate their children and nearly half of all children in India are malnourished.

Sustaining the cycle of poverty in India are limited education and employment opportunities, inadequate social and physical infrastructures, and the legacy of a caste system that determines, at birth, one's rank in society. Though banned in 1976, caste discrimination remains a serious obstacle for many people.

Social stigmas against unwed mothers and increasing rates of HIV/AIDS place additional strain on families in India. With few social services and poor access to medical care, many parents feel compelled to abandon or relinquish children they lack the resources to support.

Holt's History in India

By the late 1970s, Holt had successfully developed child welfare programs throughout S.E. Asia. In 1979, Holt expanded services to children and families in India, first establishing a social services center and residential care facility in partnership with local leaders in Pune, Maharashtra, a state in West India. Here, our new partner agency – Bharatiya Samaj Seva Kendra (BSSK) – began to

provide care for homeless children. In Pune, Holt also forged a partnership with the Society of Friends of the Sassoon Hospitals (SOFOSH), a child care center within the Shreevatsa Hospital.

In 1982, Holt began assisting another care facility and outreach program in Navi Mumbai called Children of the World Bombay (CWB), and in 1988, helped establish a second full partner agency in Bangalore – Vathsalya Charitable Trust (VCT), or “Mother's Love.”

In the mid-1970s, as many as 70 percent of children in India's government-run institutions died before the age of two. At VCT and BSSK, Holt adapted the model of attentive, affectionate care Harry Holt developed in Korea, reducing infant mortality to almost zero. Aware that children are most likely to thrive in the nurturing care of a family, Holt went a step further in 1982 – introducing foster care for India's institutionalized children.

Although this family-like care model provided a temporary solution, our partners also sought permanent homes for children in care. In previous country programs, Holt cultivated a philosophy of “permanency planning” that emphasized the importance of keeping a child within his or her birth family and culture. In India, Holt's partners replicated this model – working to reunite children with their birth families or place children with families in India before pursuing international adoption. Although a rare occurrence when Holt began making inroads in the 1980s, domestic adoptions through our partners have exceeded ICA placements almost every year since 1990.

Current Projects

Today, the child welfare organizations Holt helped to

establish in India continue to grow and diversify their services, and remain a significant part of Holt's history and legacy. Holt also continues to serve struggling children and families in the region through local partnerships that promote family preservation, foster and child care, educational sponsorship, and domestic and international adoption.

With Holt support, our partner agencies continually work to keep families in crisis together, providing the basic nutritional, educational and medical support parents need to adequately



care for their children. In India, children often drop out of school to help earn the family's income. A central part of Holt's family preservation programs, educational sponsorship enables children to continue attending school, and ultimately provide a more lasting contribution to their family and society as adults. Children in sponsorship are primarily girls who would otherwise be engaged in domestic work.

With over half the children in Holt care relinquished by single mothers, the stigma of unwed motherhood continues to challenge Holt's efforts to keep families together in India. Denied the support of their families, many women lack the resources to care for themselves and their newborn. Programs for single parents help to remedy this problem – providing medical care, counseling and job support to help mothers become self-sufficient and able to support their children.

Despite the growing success of family preservation, many families in India continue to abandon or relinquish children. To address this need, we also support care centers for homeless children while they wait to transition into foster care, to reunite with their families or to join adoptive families. Over the years, many agencies have expanded the services they provide to children in their care, including everything from special infant care in neonatal nurseries to regular medical and dental checkups for older children to speech, physical and “play” therapy for children with special needs and monitoring of developmental progress by a clinical psychologist.

Although care centers provide a vital service in India, the vast majority of children who enter our partners' care are later placed in foster families. These temporary families give the children the individual attention they need to develop at a normal, healthy rate, enabling them to thrive when they join permanent families. Recognized for their exceptional foster care programs, a couple agencies we support have allied with the government to grow this alternative care model throughout India.

Although domestic adoption has grown substantially through the years, more and more, children entering care have needs and traits that make them difficult to place with Indian families. Often, for older children and children with special needs to have a permanent family, international adoption is the best option.

Strategic Directions

Over more than four decades in India, Holt has helped thousands of orphaned, abandoned and vulnerable children through enduring

partnerships with local child welfare agencies. In the coming years, Holt will work to broaden and strengthen our partners' work while also pursuing creative ways to provide services to more children throughout India.

Every year through 2014, Holt plans to increase family strengthening and preservation services in India. During the same time period, Holt projects the number of children in sponsorship to grow considerably, reaching 900 children by 2014. As our partners draw more children into educational sponsorship, increased revenue will further aid our efforts to expand family preservation services to children and families.



As the field of international adoption continues to change, Holt anticipates that a greater number of children in our programs will find permanent, stable homes through domestic adoption and family preservation – rather than ICA. Given significant, recent

transitions in India, the number of children Holt is likely to place through ICA in the coming years is also difficult to predict. In 2011, India's Central Adoption Resource Authority (CARA) released new guidelines that bring the country's adoption practices into closer alignment with the Hague Treaty on Intercountry Adoption. Dossiers are also now sent through Delhi, where CARA will do a first review and then refer each family's dossier to a local, registered Indian placement agency. As the new CARA guidelines distribute Holt's family dossiers to agencies across a wider region, CARA anticipates that Holt and other foreign agencies will be able to place more children – from more diverse regions – with loving families overseas. As Holt develops working relationships with these new placing agencies, we estimate that child assignment and placement numbers will eventually stabilize at 35 or more annually.

While growing our partnerships, Holt will continue providing support to children in the care of our partners in India. As more children with moderate to severe special needs enter care, Holt will seek additional funding for the children's long-term foster care and medical costs. New grants would also enable expansion of family preservation and child care as well as staff development, equipping our partners in India to serve more children, more effectively.