



Family Strengthening in India: Preventive and Re-integrative Aspects of Family Separation in India



The legal foundation behind the project

Promoting Families and Communities as the best place for children to grow

- Guidelines for Alternative Care of Children (2009)
- Resolution on the Promotion and Protection of Rights of Children, adopted by UN General Assembly (2019)
- Kigali Declaration on Child Care and Protection Reforms (2022)
- Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) (2015)
- Mission Vatsalya (2022)



FiT Families Together | At a Glance

2021

Initiated in partnership with *Martin James Foundation* as a community driven family strengthening initiative to follow up with families whose children were restored back to them from institutional care during the pandemic* in **South & Southeast District**

District

- 51 children of 26 families successfully reintegrated
- Reached to the phase focusing on phasing out of direct families and transition from high to low touch category
- Scaled up the initiative and expanded its reach to **East District** for greater impact with the support of Azim Premji Foundation

2022

Joined by *Children Emergency Relief International (CERI)* when the project expanded to include preventive aspects of separation of at-risk children from families

Developed a robust family strengthening model in Delhi at the district level that is integrated/weaved into existing child protection and government systems and the project gets a steady stream of referrals from *Child Welfare Committees*

2024

**145,788 children from institutions were sent back to their families, during COVID 19, following the Supreme Court's order*
Foundation

2023

The FiT Family Strengthening Model

Work with families and communities to make child care central to their agenda (against work for them)

Community-based engagement that customises the support needed for prevention and reintegration in an enabling approach

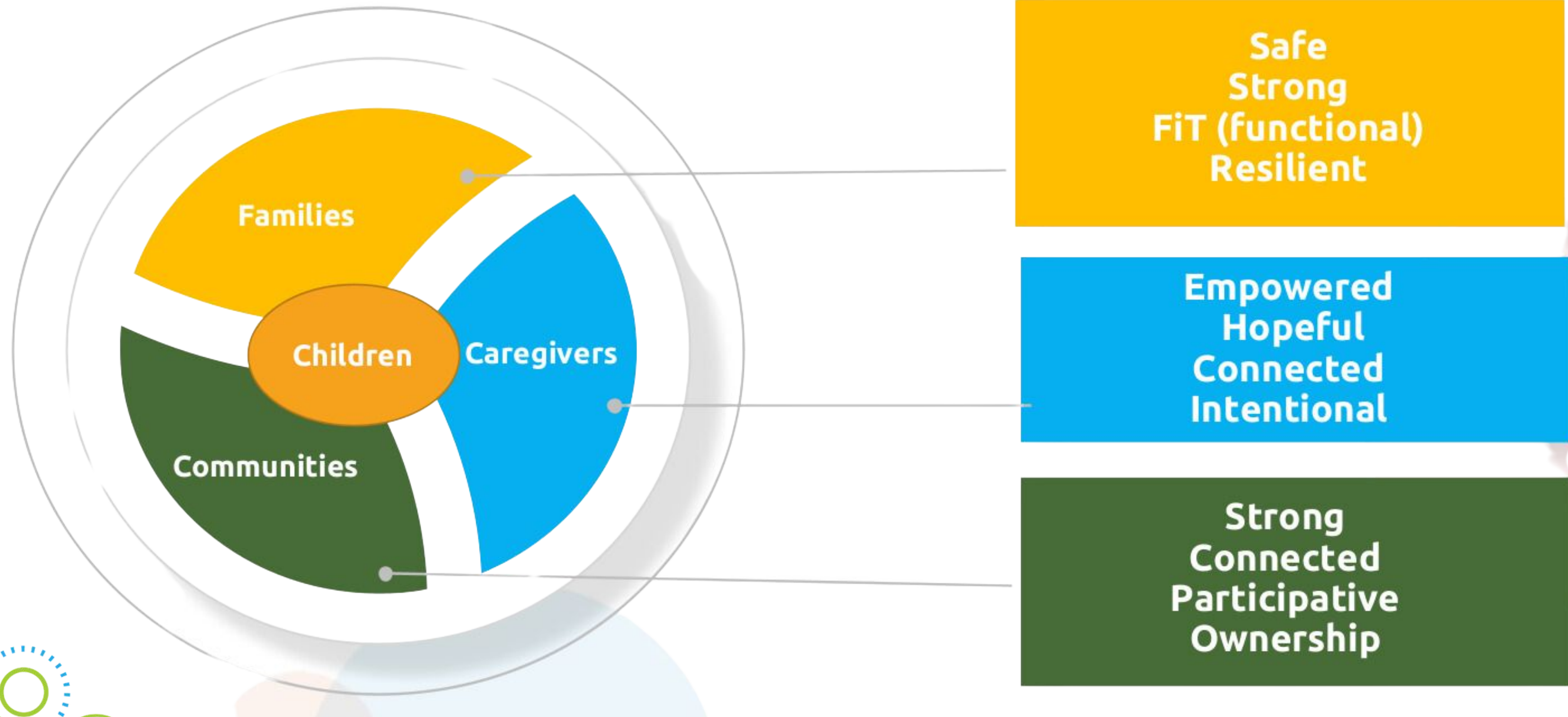
Family is the best place for children but vulnerable families need support and guidance to take care of their children to prevent separation and provide for their holistic development

Decision making process by the family always ensures keeping best interest of children in mind

Objectives

- Build evidence and practices that advocate that families are the best place for children to thrive in
- Ensure effective reintegration post restoration to ensure appropriate follow up with the children and the families to prevent relapses.
- Enable families and communities to ensure their skilling, enhance their capacities and ensure appropriate follow-up and linkages to social welfare schemes for family strengthening
- Create a demonstrable and scalable model of supporting families at risk of separation and those who have had their children reintegrated and need support to stay together

The Goals



Happy, Healthy Children in Thriving Communities

Inclusion Criteria for Families

- ✓ **Cases of restoration where the child is transitioning away from institutional care and needs to be reintegrated with families. (Child Welfare Committee order of restoration is documented)**
 - Partnership with Govt. of Delhi was secured

- ✓ Community based Survey (tools indigenously developed) to understand and identify families where children are at risk of separation and preventive measures are needed

- ✓ Cases referred by Child Welfare Committee for follow ups and directions on rehabilitation and reintegration
 - Till date, 18 cases have been referred with different nature of cases like missing category, POCSO, mainstreaming to formal education, linkages to social security schemes, substance abuse and family counselling



The Approach



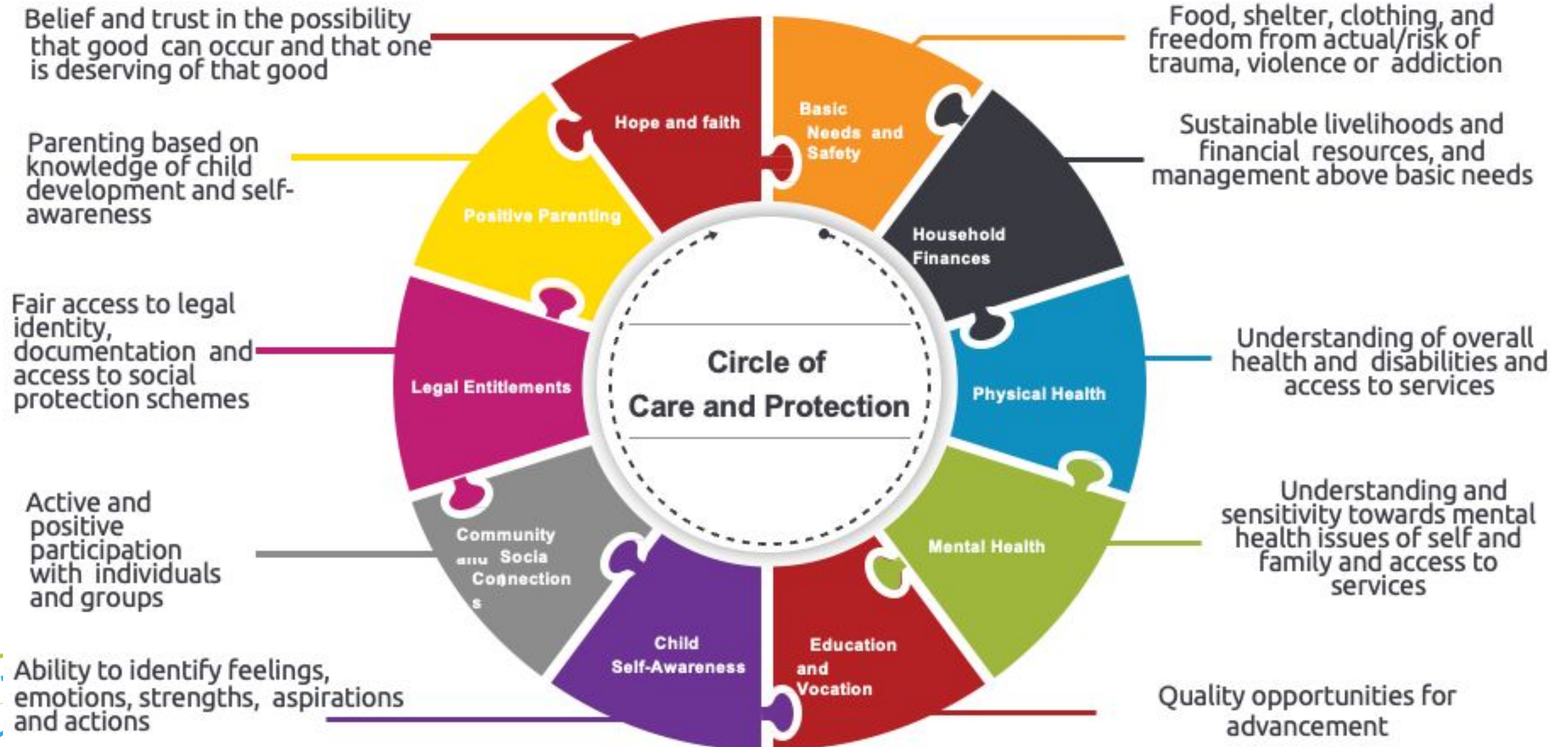
Designed intentionally after a literature review of some successful, promising practices and our own experience of programming in Udayan Ghars and in FIT Families :

- Family Assessment Form (FAF), Active Family Support (AFS),
- Nurturing Care Framework,
- Nurturing Family Resource Checklist (NFRC),
- North Carolina Family Assessment Scale for Reunification (NCFAS-R)
- The Thrive Scale™ by Miracle Foundation
- Udayan Care's 31 years of experience in caregiving
- And the first year's learnings in FiT Families

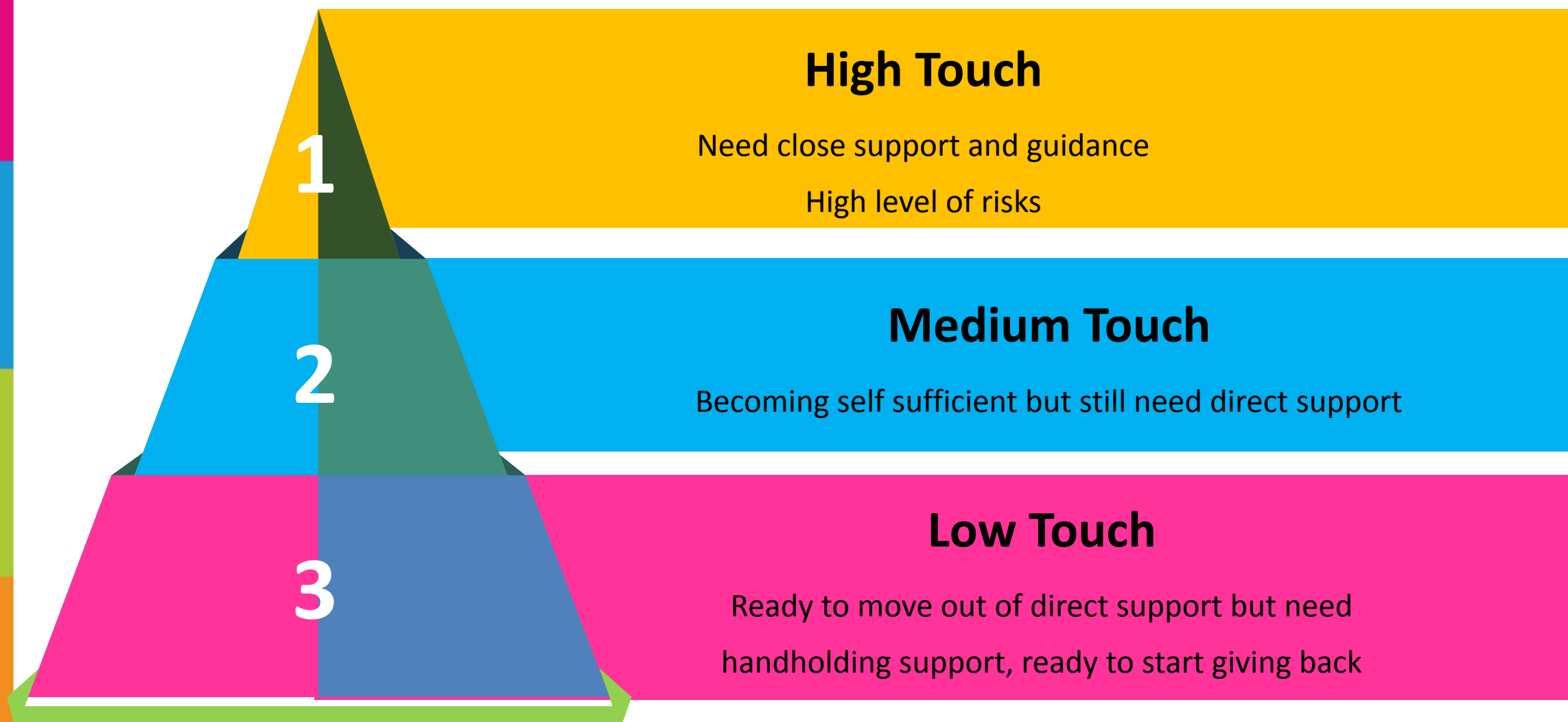
"Children grow up in families, not programs"

"We cannot achieve good outcomes for children without engaging their parents and community as partners"

The 10 Domains of Support



Family Graduation Plan



The Case Management Approach



Human Resources

- 1 Program Lead
- 2 Case Managers
- 2 Counsellors
- 1 Documentation Officer
- 3 Community Mobilisers

For every 25 families to be supported,
the team comprises of 1 case
manager, 1 counsellor and 1
community mobiliser



Indigenous tools, templates/documentation focus

- Community survey form
- Eligibility form
- Community resource mapping form
- NABS (Need Assessment Baseline Survey)
- MHCP I & II (Mental Health Care Performa)
- ICP (Individual Care Plan)
- FDP (Family Development Plan)
- YDP (Youth Development Plan)
- Genogram
- Evaluation form
- Support plan



Unique concepts

- Families & children as equal partners
- Collaborations with existing system and resources
- Community ambassadors to drive ownership
- Children's group to take leadership
- Focus on emotional well-being, hope and community connectedness
- Positive parenting skills
- Empowering and enabling approach to reduce dependency of families
- Advocacy & evidence documentation

**Care experienced youth have been engaged as team members consciously for improved project outcomes*

Project Interventions

Assessing Vulnerabilities

Data collection through govt. approval follow up by through intensive follow ups conducted with 280 restored children and a survey among 487 families across 5 pockets in South Delhi, aimed to grasping ground-level realities, evaluate vulnerabilities, and identify the specific needs.

Direct Family Support

Direct support to 60+ families (27 families where children were restored back in 1st year, 20 families from survey and 18 families from CWC referral).

Database Creation and Documentation

Developed a comprehensive family database with background reports and intensive documentation using standardized assessment templates. Evolving guidelines, tools for assessments and formats for planning, risk mitigation and support across all the domains of the 'Circle of Care and Protection' along with evaluation and monitoring matrix. Focus on quality documentation & advocacy



Care Plan Implementation

Utilized clear tools and formats to closely collaborate with families, implementing tailored care plans. Planning: Family Development Plan, Youth Development Plan and Children Development plans are indigenously developed tools and continually being evolved.

Empowerment Measures

Employed innovative approaches to empower families, fostering a deeper understanding of maintaining children within families.

Community Mechanisms and Partnerships

Established sustainable community mechanisms like Children's Groups, Community Ambassadors, and stakeholder meetings, employing case management for resource mobilization and fostering partnerships. Formation of Children's group, women groups formed and these work on participatory principles. Community Awareness programs helped engaged through conversations on menstrual hygiene, positive parenting, Health camps, Aadhaar - Identity documentation updation camps.



FiT Families Together Project Big Wins



Prevention & Rehabilitation Approach

- **78** children from 29 families prevented from family separation and linked with allied services
- **29** children saved from re-institutionalization (majorly Child Welfare Committee referred cases)

System Strengthening

What began as a periodic stakeholders' convergence meeting has grown into the Delhi Family Strengthening Network, now operating as a sub-working group under India Alternative Care Network

Collaborations & Partnerships

Fostered partnerships with **33** NGOs and child welfare entities



Reintegration Approach

- **51** children successfully reintegrated into their families (26 families)

Education

- **390** children improved academically and mainstream into formal education

Legal Aid & Entitlement

- Over **234** children, youth and caregiver have been supported in securing proper legal identity documents

Mental health

- Over **543** children, youth and caregiver have been supported in securing proper legal identity documents

**As of March 2025*

Consistent Efforts Towards Building The Model
(Oct, 2021-March, 2025)

234
children, youth, caregivers & community at large gained access to essential legal services, entitlements and available resources

Legal Entitlement

62
families fostered a positive environment and developed an optimistic outlook on life, believing in the possibility of good and recognizing that they are deserving of it

Hope & Faith

247
caregivers developed parenting skills, enhancing their emotional well-being, communication, and problem-solving abilities

Positive Parenting

543
children & parents have access to essential emotional support and coping skills

Mental Health

547
community members reached out and reinforced a strong gatekeeping mechanism, fostering a safe, child-friendly environment

Community & Social Connection

1703
children & youth have been empowered with awareness of their basic rights, fostering confidence, decision-making skills, and resilience

Child Self-Awareness

65
families & youth were empowered to achieve independence and sustain their livelihoods

Household Finances

390
children & youth improved academically and mainstreamed to formal education

Education & Vocation

446
families enhanced the safety and essential support for the wellbeing of children, child protection and strengthened community safety measures

Basic Needs & Safety

351
individuals have access to resources and importance of good health & received need-based assistance

Physical Health

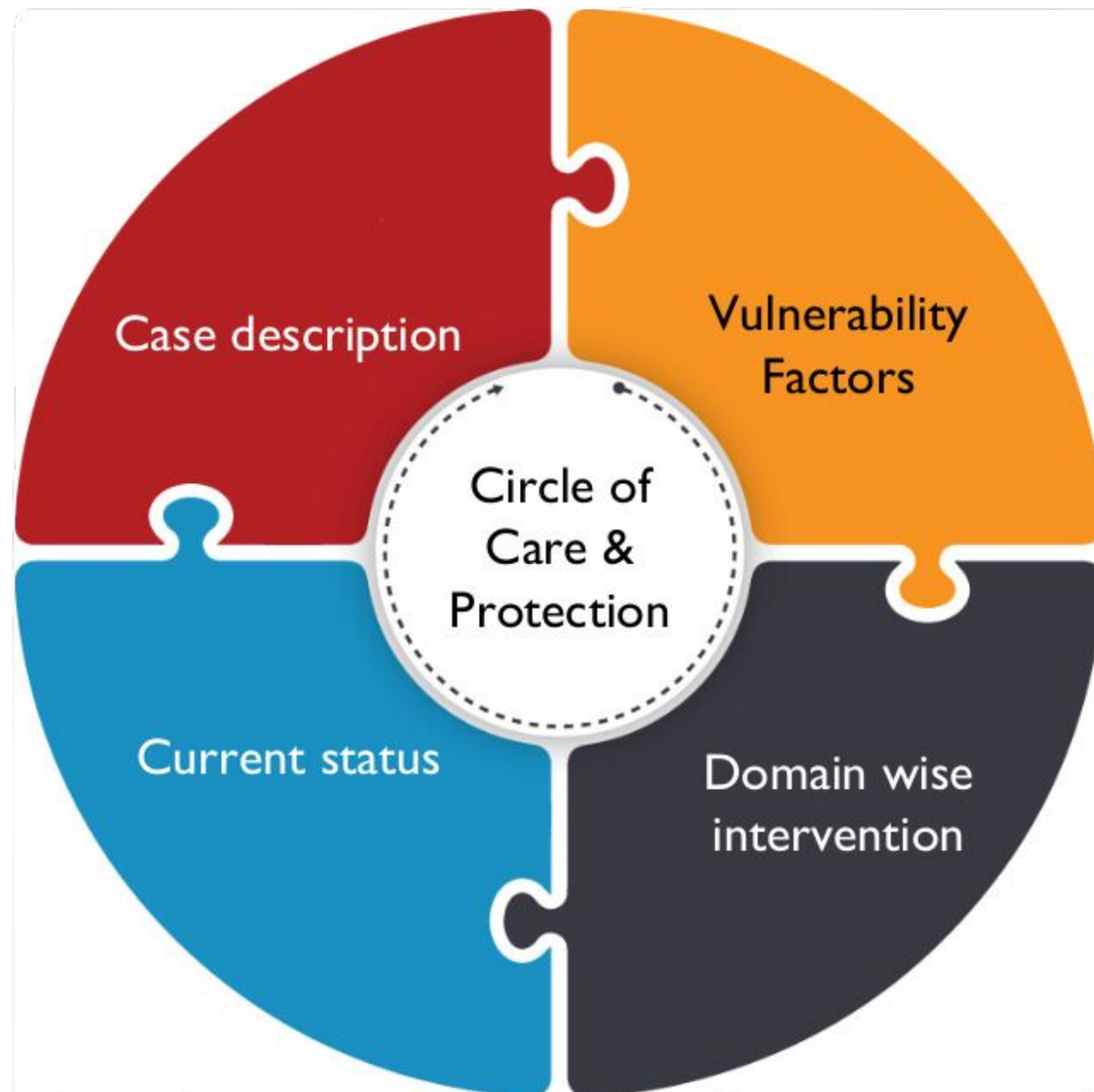


Consistent Efforts Towards Building The Model (Oct, 2021 onwards)

- ✓ Building a dedicated workforce of qualified case managers and psychologists trained and engaged in case management on family strengthening, including care experienced youth as team members
- ✓ Evolving guidelines, tools for assessments and formats for planning, risk mitigation and support across all the domains of the 'Circle of Care and Protection' along with evaluation and monitoring matrix
- ✓ Planning: Family Development Plan, Youth Development Plan and Children Development plans are indigenously developed tools and continually being evolved
- ✓ Close collaboration with DCPCR, CWC, DCPU, convergence with allied departments, CCIs, other CSOs and donors
- ✓ Understanding of schemes, SoPs for linkages and referrals integrating in the existing system of holistic child rights
- ✓ Citizenship entitlements and linkages to different services for education, health, nutrition, safety, protection and development
- ✓ Formation of Children's group, women groups formed and these work on participatory principles
- ✓ Focus on quality documentation & advocacy
- ✓ Community Awareness programs – Menstrual hygiene, positive parenting, Health camps, Aadhar - Identity documentation updationcamps



Case Study

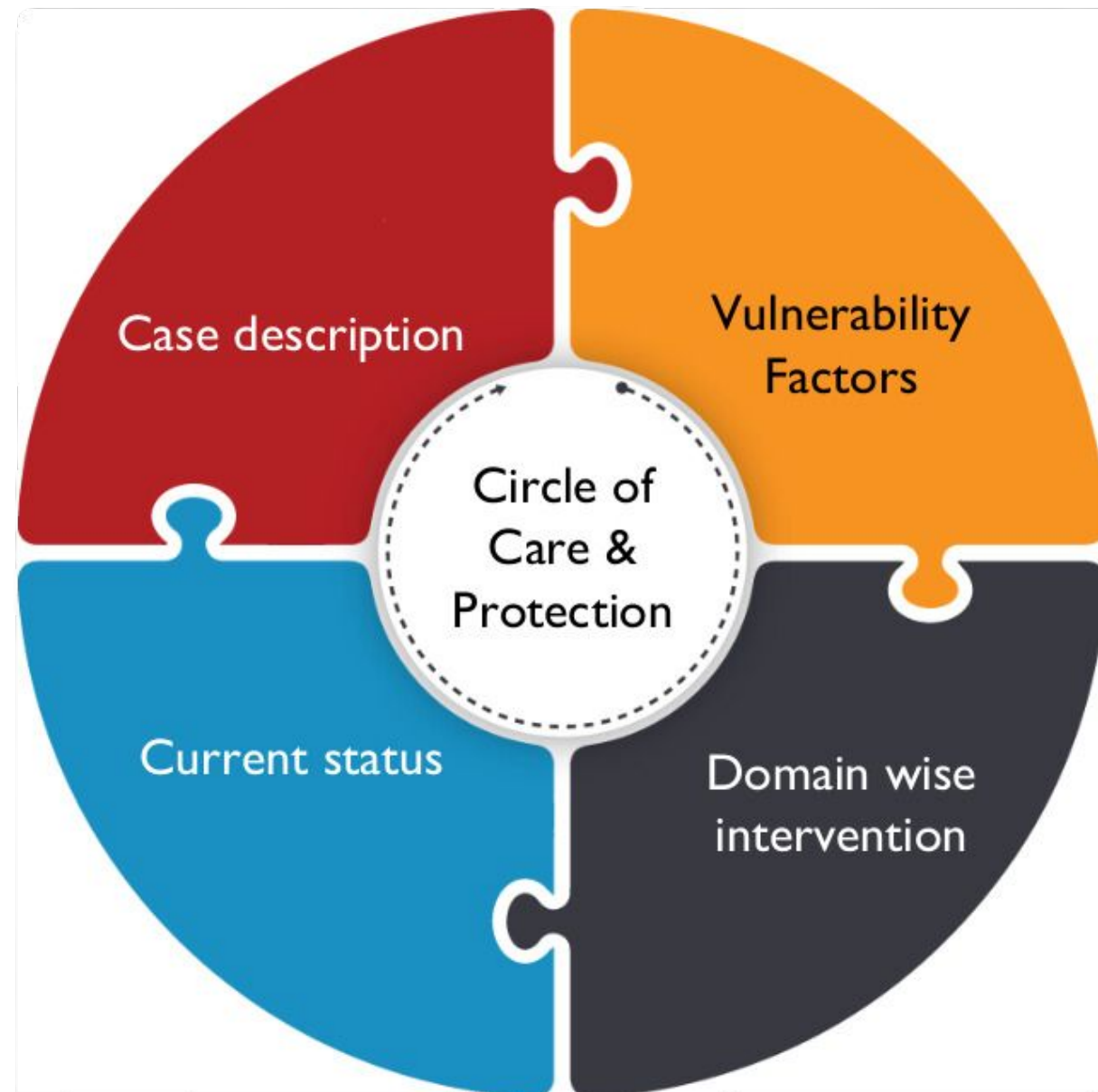


Case description:

- 6 children lives with their parents in a small rented house
- 3 of the children were restored back from CCI after more than 10 years of being in CCI and were dropped out of school
- Father is visually impaired
- The caregiver receives monthly disability pension and runs a small grocery store
- Post restoration, the eldest daughter fell ill, was diagnosed TB, became seriously unwell, was hospitalized and underwent multiple surgeries but could not survive



Case Study- Contd.



Vulnerability factors:

- No stable source of income
- Lack of guidance in improving family income
- Main earners visual impairment
- Lack of parenting skills
- Hopelessness and despair

Case Study- Contd.

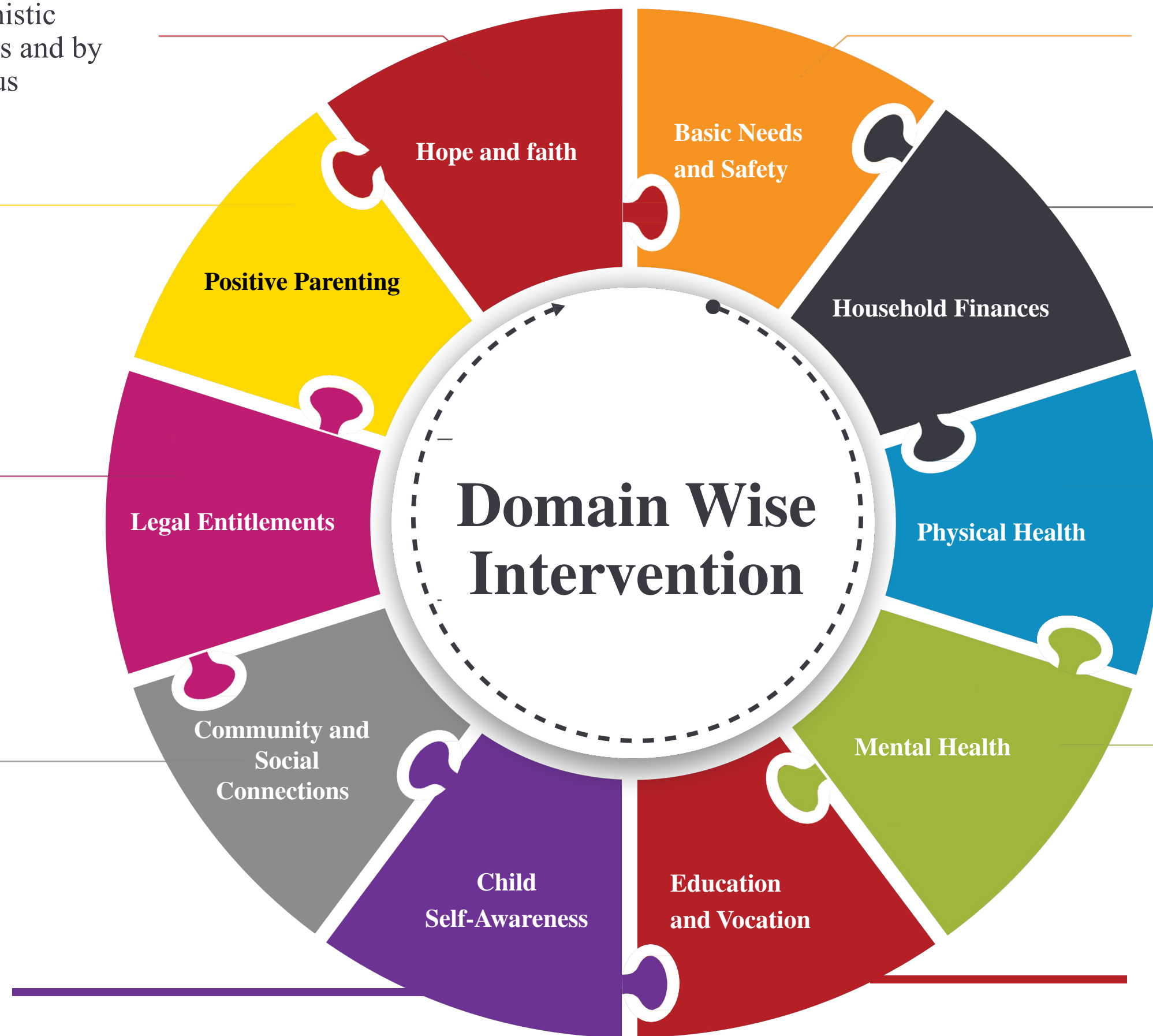
Raised hope and fostered an optimistic outlook on life through home visits and by connecting individuals with various organizations

Provided counseling and sessions on family planning and financial management for caregivers

- Linked with Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana for gas connection
- Updated Aadhar cards and bank accounts for all family members

- Linked with other community members through mosque visits
- Improved rapport with neighbors

Facilitated continuous life skills, understanding emotions through life skill and counselling session



Linked with Kilkari Rainbow Home, Al-Ansar Trust, and Railway Children for dry rations support

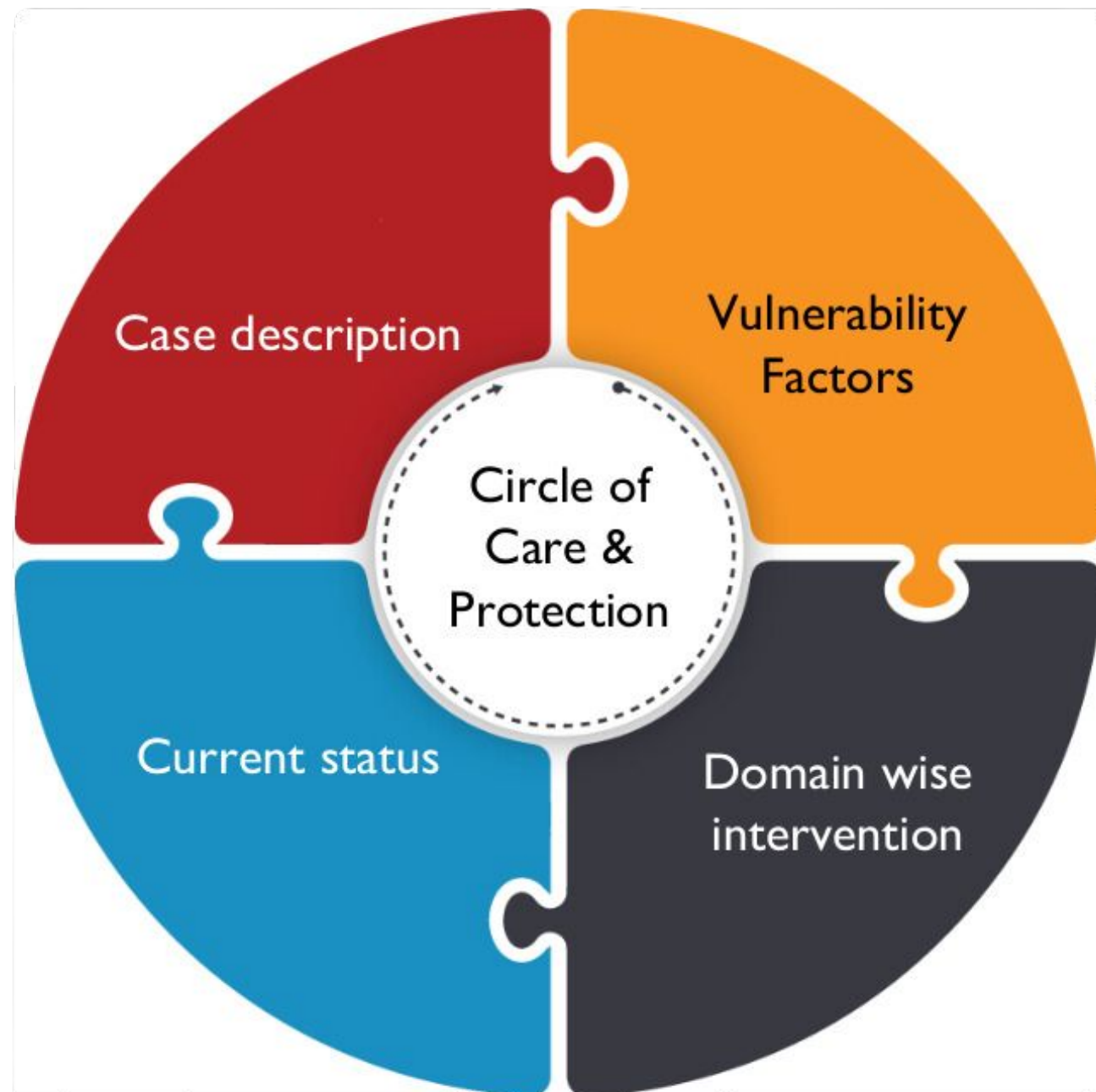
- Linked with FoD for soft loans
- Connected with local donors for material support (refrigerator, furniture)
- Secured one-time monetary support from a nearby mosque

- Provided a full-time support person for health-related documentation
- Covered CT scan cost for one child with project funds
- Ensured Kilkari Rainbow Home covers medical expenses for one child
- Linked with DoT Government Centre for TB treatment

Continuous counseling for all children and caregivers

- Applied for sponsorships for 2 children to CWC, Central Delhi
- Assisted with school transfer for 1 child
- Provided stationery for 3 children

Case Study- Contd.



Current status:

- Stable livelihood: expanded their ration shop through soft loan from an NGO
- Access to health services through DoT centre
- Continuity of education
- Improved access to nutritional food
- Ensured emotionally stability
- CWC is now closely monitoring the follow ups post restoration

Learnings

Participation



Children
and Families
engaged at every
stage of planning
and execution

Empower



Be aware and
skilled to act as
community
ambassadors and
child champions

Common Goal



Community led
ownership to keep
children in families
and communities

Collaborate



Engage service
providers
community
partners:
stakeholders'

Resources



Create resource
mobilization
opportunities
for families

*Strong families create strong communities,
and strong communities in turn, bolster family well-being*



Challenges

Resources scarcity

Shortages of speech therapists, special educators, and specialized centers for children with special needs presented significant barriers.

Funding uncertainty

The uncertainty in securing adequate funding poses a substantial hurdle, impacting the project's timelines and scope requiring constant adaptation to potential financial constraints and altering resource allocations.

Relapse management

Managing relapsed cases after rigorous intervention was challenging, particularly in ensuring the safety of children within a community marked by substance abuse and violence.

Documents hurdles

Difficulty persisted in collecting and rectifying erroneous legal and educational documents, demanding substantial time and effort resulting in delay of required interventions

Dependency

Encouraging family self-reliance was challenging as they heavily depended on the project team for most intervention tasks.

Timeline

Getting clearances and databases from Government and child protection functionalities takes its own time and that delays the cycle of work plan.



What we heard families say...

"In the future, I want to work in a social sector and change someone else who is in need of help and help create a space where everyone has a stable home, good food and happy coexistence"

"FiT Families Together Project isn't just providing assistance; it is fostering a sense of belonging and strengthening the community relationship. I'm proud to be part of such a transformative initiative"

"I feel more capable and resilient after I started working closely with the project team"

"Thanks to this project, I've found more support system that feels like family"

"I've learned valuable skills that have helped me navigate life's challenges with confidence and resilience"

"The parenting sessions and community meetings have helped me understand the importance of my presence in my children's lives. I want to learn more good things and take care of my children even better"

Going Forward

- Focus on education of children, especially girls and Children with Special Needs
- Meeting health (both physical and mental) needs of children and families
- Vocational skilling for children and youth
- Livelihood support through entrepreneurship and job opportunities
- Linking with various protection schemes/programs
- Positive parenting to develop hope and trust between children and parents
- Capacity building of community people on their rights, and entitlements by access of free legal aid and improved local governance
- Capacity building and handholding support to child protection functionaries on ensuring child friendly community
- Emphasize reintegration, effective case management, and community involvement through advocacy efforts. Prioritize family-centric care initiatives and foster collaboration among stakeholders for effective implementation.
- Involvement in District Meetings at District Magistrate Level to address essential concerns and forge partnerships.





“All children thrive in safe and nurturing families”

