At present, more than 31 million children in India are either orphaned or abandoned, deprived of their first line of protection-their parents. Udayan Ghars - Sunshine Homes for children who are orphaned and abandoned, to be nurtured into responsible citizens- were initiated to make sure that they do not remain ‘no body’s’ children, but enjoy childhood in a simulated family environment.

Fifteen years ago, Udayan Ghars was one of the first indigenous Group Foster Care models introduced to civil society, when foster care was not even practiced in India. Mentor Parents, a unique volunteering concept, creates the strong foundation of Udayan Ghars. Support of local communities and re-integration of children is possible as Ghars are consciously located in busy neighbourhoods. A first-of-its-kind well-researched mental health framework helps children emerge from their initial trauma and develop a positive outlook.

From the single Udayan Ghar with 3 children in 1996, to 12 Ghars, home to 250 children in Delhi, UP, Rajasthan and Haryana. Presently, there are 178 children across all homes. With a vision to expand the programme to more children, 2 new homes are in the offing. From one life-long Mentor to 28 Mentor Parents among which 25 are mentor mothers and 3 of them are mentor fathers; from opening the doors of one public school to admit our children across the Ghars to more than 37 schools.

Each of our 12 Udayan Ghars is located in a popular neighborhood, with children attending private, English medium schools. Children have access to play areas where they play cricket, football and cycle. Children regularly attend educational and recreational workshops. Conscious efforts are made for children to participate in seasonal camps that offer sports, games, songs and create a sense of belonging. The children enjoy celebrations on birthdays and holidays!

Today, all our Ghars are being initiated and managed by civil society members with guidance of Udayan Care. Children like Salma, Gurmeet, Richa and many others who makes us proud every day.

**Transforming Lives Permanently**

When most children her age depend on their parents for protection, Salma stood up for herself, even when no one else did. She came to Udayan Ghar-Mehrauli, in 2007, from a shelter she refused to call home. It was only her sheer spirit and strong resolve which made her change the course of her destiny. A brilliant painter and a mesmerizing dancer, Salma is a girl of many talents. In 2010, she was invited to be a part of the Women’s Conference 2010, held at Long Beach, California. Salma, a member of Children’s Advisory Board, Plan India, was present as the Key Note Speaker for a session on Plan International’s “Because I am a Girl” campaign. She spoke about her experiences of growing up in India as a girl and how investing in girls is important to end generational poverty. Inspired and impressed by her speech, she was requested to speak at the MMC corporate office in New York where she went after the conference.

Losing her mother at the tender age of 11, Gurmeet came to Udayan Care in high trauma. At an age when love and protection of a family is most needed, she had to face this ordeal on her own, having no one to care for her. Her future might have been as bleak as her past, had it not been for her mentor parents at Udayan Ghar.
but her smile: it was her confidence, which helped her secure admission in Delhi’s Sanskriti School. Gurmeet, a class 12th student, was recently the compere for her school’s Annual Day celebrations, captivating the audience with her charm, impeccable speech delivery and bubbly spirit. A born actor, Gurmeet has a natural flair for making everyone feel at ease: a quality which endears her to all.

23 year old Ruchi, who has been with us at Udayan Ghar for 9 nine years, now works at Hotel Marriott in Pune. Something she could never have imagined when she came to Udayan Ghar at the tender age of 14 years. Having lost her mother and her father unable to take care of her, Ruchi had lost all hope. With love and care of her Udayan family, Ruchi worked hard at her academics. Her sincerity helped her secure admission in a prestigious institute for hotel management. Recognising her potential during on-campus placements the team from Hotel Marriott, quickly appointed her. As Ruchi adds, “I can’t wait to begin as Manager (Trainee) in July!”

Jagpal, Suraj, Chandni and Sheela was near starvation when found by a group of artists at Garhi Studios, in Delhi. The artists immediately brought them to Udayan Care whom they had partnered in an art exhibition, and hence were aware the organisation worked with children who are orphaned and abandoned. Jagpal was 13 and Suraj only 6, when they came to the boys’ Udayan Ghar, the Satkrishna Udayan Ghar in Narsinghpur, Gurgaon, while Chandni then 14 and Sheela about 8, were taken in at Jagshanti Udayan Ghar, in Greater Noida.

With schooling from open school, and training in the kitchen of Hotel Crowne Plaza, Jagpal today at 20, to our great pride, is a working independent adult; Chandni is happily married with a baby, Sheela is studying at DPS Greater Noida in class VII, and Suraj at age 13, is studying in Class 5 in Roseland Public School, Gurgaon.