

Report of the Release of the Research on accessibility and impact of Sponsorship (alternative care provision for children) in Karnataka under the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act 2000 on January 13th, Bangalore

A collaborative study by EveryChild India & Karnataka State Commission for Protection of Child Rights (KSCPCR) was released on January 13th 2012 at Bangalore. The study was undertaken to understand the accessibility and impact of sponsorship (alternative care provision in Juvenile Justice Act 2000) on children in Karnataka. Currently in Karnataka the Department of Women and Child is implementing a scheme (since 2006) focusing on this provision to de-institutionalise children and enable them to access education, health care while living with their families.

The study was conducted in 3 districts of Karnataka-Bagalkote, Mysore & Bangalore during 2010-11. The key findings and recommendations were shared on January 13th with distinguished chief guests namely Ms Nina Nayak, Chairperson-Karnataka State Commission for Protection of Rights of the Child (KSCPCR); Mr Vasudeva Sharma-Member KSCPCR; Ms Shashikala Shetty-Integrated Child Protection Scheme-Project Director (Karnataka Department of Women and Child Development-DWCD). The participants for the programme included Government Officials-Asstt. Deputy Director from DWCD (2), District-Special Juvenile Police Units (SJPU-2), Academic Institutions (2), Child Welfare Committees (CWCs) across 6 districts of Karnataka and around 25 Child Rights NGOs focusing on alternative care/strengthening JJ System in Karnataka.

During the study release programme we developed a plan of action in consultation with key stakeholders to take forward the key recommendations specifically towards increased budgetary allocations for the scheme, training and awareness to officials and enabling coordination between various departments.

The proposed recommendations from the research study and including the Participant's responses *(sub-points) consolidated from the January 13th discussions are as follows:

- ≡ Through this study EveryChild found that ***all sponsored children under this scheme did not drop out of schools due to the support provided to them.*** Hence it is an important support for the most vulnerable children to ensure children do not drop out of schools and do not end up being trafficked for labour or other forms of exploitation.
 - This scheme is important as it builds inroads for a detailed assessment of the situation of the vulnerable child and his/her family. This informs the social protection measures/interventions required apart from sponsorship which ensures holistic development for the child.
 - The criteria for the assessment of the family need to be reviewed and there is a need to reach out to more number of families and children living below poverty.
 - There needs to be a campaign in the districts to identify most vulnerable for sponsorship support. This campaign could be in collaboration with the Panchayats and NGOs in the districts. There is a need to prioritise the children

with disabilities. The children without parents need to be identified for community sponsorship. The campaign could also be led by the CWCs in the districts.

- The scheme visualises a support which aids the child to access health care, education and other basic services as also provides support to a family. While being supported, living in a caring and protective environment is most important for the children. This leads to their identity building and overall development. In many cases of children supported under this scheme, the children have been supported only for their education. However the support is even for health care, skill building, other basic requirements of a child and these also need to be assured.
- There needs to be large scale awareness in the schools and amongst school teachers and children on the scheme.
- ≡ Need for a **large scale awareness amongst families and children on sponsorship scheme** as an effective provision to support vulnerable children and their families in their districts.
- ≡ Sponsorship is an **enabling care and protection provision under Section 43 of JJA** and therefore, it needs to be **made available throughout the year for all vulnerable children upto the age of 18 years**.
 - There was consensus on the availability of the sponsorship scheme for all children upto 18 years.
 - The current scheme only supports two children per family and this need to be reviewed and made available for all children per family.
 - More children outside Bangalore from the North Karnataka districts need to be supported through this scheme.
- ≡ **Procedure to apply for sponsorship** to be simplified and documentation is non-burdensome for children and families
 - The existing procedures to apply for sponsorship are burdensome for families. There are many certificates (Death of parent if one of the parents is not alive; School going certificate, Income certificate etc) which are required. The current procedures and documentation required needs to be reviewed to make this process simple and child friendly.
- ≡ DWCD needs to **lead on initiatives to impart training on sponsorship** to its staff, from DD to CDPOs, Supervisors, and AWs who work in the villages at Block level.
 - Large scale awareness for DWCD officials and ICPS functionaries is required. The CWC members' capacity needs to be enhanced to ensure implementation of this scheme. CWCs need to focus on the best interests of the child while assessing the child's needs for care and protection and linkages to support like sponsorship.
 - The CWCs being the primary bodies for care and protection of children in the districts and for assessment for alternative care for children, need to own provisions like sponsorship to ensure children are guaranteed their basic fundamental rights while living with their families.
- ≡ The **budgetary allocation for the effective implementation of the scheme needs to be reviewed** and enhanced in view of the required increase in the quantum and duration of sponsorship for all needy children.
 - There needs to an increase in the budgetary allocations for sponsorship. At present the allocation is only **0.014%** of the total DWCD budget (2010-11). The resource allocations have been more for other programmes and the alternative care provisions like sponsorship are resourced less.

- The quantum of individual and group sponsorship should be increased. This needs to be based on child specific requirements with minimum limit of Rs. 1500/month.
- ≡ **Coordination with various departments** at the district level is essential to reach the needy children.
 - The coordination within the Departments (Deptt of Labour, education, Health) is essential to ensure the accessibility and positive impact of the scheme on children.
- ≡ Sponsorship should be **routed through schools** and the payment should be made from child's school with a view to make it more accessible for children and parents.
 - This Schools could ensure the timely cash transfers and become places for children and their families to discuss their problems in pursuing education.
- ≡ **CWCs should undertake initiatives to identify foster families** for foster care for which sponsorship support can be provided.
 - Alternative care provisions like sponsorship if linked with foster care programmes would enable the children to have quality care and access education for their holistic development.
- ≡ **NGOs and CBOs should liaise with CWCs and JJBs** in their concerned districts to ensure effective functioning of the sponsorship programmes and effective implementation of the JJ Act in their districts.
 - NGOs/CBOs can provide awareness on this scheme to the most vulnerable children in their area of work. They could also assist the Social workers in their assessment of the child for sponsorship.
 - Need for NGOs to play a monitoring role in reviewing the scheme and ensuring its effective implementation.
 - NGOs with technical expertise on the scheme could assist in trainings/capacity building of key stakeholders in their districts. This could be done in collaboration with DWCD and ICPS programme functionaries.
- ≡ **Effective monitoring and follow-up of sponsored children and parents provided guidance and support** to ensure benefits of the scheme for their children.
 - There is a provision for NGOs to be voluntary Probationary Officers within the JJ act. This provision needs to be explored for NGOs to undertake responsibilities of assessment and accessibility of the sponsorship scheme for vulnerable children. The Masters of Social Work students and other organisations like Child Lines can also be voluntary POs. These voluntary POs could be supported by DWCD with basic expenses of travel and documentation.
 - However there is also a need to have a cadre of skilled social workers to assist the CWCs and DWCD in the effective implementation and monitoring of the scheme on a permanent basis. Currently the CWCs and the DWCD is understaffed to strengthen this mechanism for alternative care for needy children. There is a dearth of data operators to consolidate and manage the data of the children who are sponsored under the scheme.
 - There are many applications which are received from the children and there is shortage of staff to process the applications. There was a suggestion to involve the existing Government Homes staff to support this work.
 - Additionally there needs to be a mechanism in place to assess the impact of the scheme on the sponsored children.