KAWACH Safe Childhoods for a Thriving India | British Asian Trust

MIRACLE FOUNDATION INDIA

Eleventh Edition of

Leadership Dialogues

Innovate. Collaborate. Strengthen.

Towards a Safer Future for Our Children.

THEME: Child-Friendly Local Governance for Family Strengthening

From Policy to Practice: Advancing Mission Vatsalya through State Leadership and Local Action

Frequently Asked and Most Important Questions

Jharkhand has made significant progress in constituting Child Welfare and Protection Committees (CWPCs). From the Department's perspective, what are the key priorities for ensuring these committees become active and effective platforms for child protection and family strengthening? Are there any upcoming initiatives or plans to further strengthen their functioning?

Preventive Measures and Child Vulnerability Mapping:

The first important tool available to Panchayat representatives is the Panchayat Advancement Index (PAI). Under the PAI, there are nine themes, and Child-Friendly Panchayat is a theme number 3, with a range of indicators that allow Panchayats to assess the situation of children and track their development. For example, under health and nutrition, the indicators look at timely vaccination, anaemia and malnutrition, the number of children identified as malnourished and whether they are receiving treatment, as well as child mortality. Similarly, there are indicators for early childhood care, such as the number of children registered at Anganwadi centres and their regular attendance, along with indicators on Anganwadi infrastructure. The PAI also includes school-related indicators, such as enrolment and dropout rates at the primary and upper-primary levels. From a child protection perspective, it looks at issues such as child marriage, harassment and trafficking. This gives Panchayats a way to assess where they are doing well and where they need to take corrective action.

One of the strengths of the PAI is that it provides a 'data-based system across Panchayats'. The data comes from the concerned departments and is vetted before it is finalised by the Panchayat. Each Panchayat also receives theme-wise rankings, allowing them to see where they are lagging and prioritise action. This is important for prevention because Panchayats can identify gaps and risks before they become serious protection concerns. This can also be complemented through Gram Sabha discussions, Anganwadi workers and Ward Members, who can help identify children requiring additional support—for example, children with disabilities, school dropouts, children without parental care or children at risk of child labour or child marriage.

Child Welfare and Protection Committee:

As per Mission Vatsalya there is also an opportunity for the Child Welfare and Protection Committee to use the 5% untied fund more strategically for child-centred interventions. While fewer Panchayats currently use this specifically for the Child-Friendly Panchayat theme, sensitisation over the last few years has started creating a shift. In some Panchayats, funds are being used for children's parks, better Anganwadi infrastructure and sanitation facilities. We need to increase these investments, alongside capacity building and community monitoring.

Funds allocation & Convergence:

At the same time, the funds are likely to be available with Gram Panchayats, and if we make coordinated efforts, there is a strong opportunity to advance both the Child-Friendly Panchayat and family-strengthening agenda. For example, Jharkhand State Livelihood Promotion Society (JSLPS), under the livelihoods mission, is a very large platform with more than 60 lakh women connected to it. We are exploring how this network can be used to sensitise communities and build greater community ownership around children's issues. Family strengthening is particularly important for children who may be orphaned, children in conflict with the law, or children facing other difficult circumstances. The aim is to ensure that communities understand their role in supporting these children rather than leaving the responsibility only to formal systems. There are also discussions and linkages being developed with the Department of WCD on how these initiatives

can be strengthened further. In my view, Jharkhand is currently at a very positive stage because there is both an institutional platform and increasing recognition of the importance of child-focused action at the Panchayat level.

Award & Recognition:

The State also has provisions to recognise best-performing Gram Panchayats, and when the guidelines for this award were developed, we ensured that child-specific interventions were included. These include measures such as transport support for children who are unable to travel to school, helping prevent school dropout. We have also included the idea of creating women- and child-friendly spaces within Panchayat Bhavans, particularly to support participation and facilities such as nursing spaces.

Child Participation:

In addition, the state budget has provided for libraries for children in Panchayat Bhavans, which we are currently in the process of finalising and rolling out. We are sensitising Gram Panchayats on these provisions because the Panchayati Raj system is a very large platform. If we can use this platform effectively for children's participation, awareness, protection and family strengthening, we can create a much stronger ecosystem for children.

Ultimately, the opportunity is to bring together PAI data, Panchayat planning, untied funds, JSLPS and women's collectives, relevant departments, community participation and convergence. If we can coordinate these efforts, Panchayats can move from simply responding to child protection concerns to preventing vulnerabilities, strengthening families and creating an environment where every child in Jharkhand has the opportunity for a safe and brighter future.

Reference:

- Panchayat Advancement Index | Webpage
- Jharkhand CWPC guidelines

From your experience at TRI, what has been most effective in building the capacity of Panchayat representatives to integrate child protection and family strengthening into the Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP)? Could you share examples from Jharkhand of what has worked and why?

Approach of Transform Rural India (TRI):

From TRI's experience, one of the most effective approaches to building the capacity of Panchayat representatives is our CBO–PRI–LA local compact. Here, CBO (Community Based Organisation) refers to women's collectives, PRI to Panchayati Raj Institutions, and LA to Local Administration. This is rooted in TRI's theory of change, which recognises that sustainable change in child protection and family strengthening cannot be achieved by the Panchayat alone. The three—community-based organisations, Panchayati Raj Institutions and local administration—need to work together as part of the local ecosystem. The idea is to ensure that Panchayats do not become only a part of planning, but an active part of governance. Capacity building therefore cannot be limited to training Panchayat representatives on child protection concepts. The real objective is to help them recognise children and families requiring support, understand the local situation, identify the relevant stakeholders and use the systems and resources available within the Panchayat.

Learning:

One of the key learnings from our work is that training needs to be situation-based rather than only issue-based. Every Panchayat has its own context. In Jharkhand, for example, human trafficking is an important issue, and women's collectives are already working on different aspects of it. So, rather than simply asking Panchayat representatives whether they understand child protection, we need to ask practical questions: Which children in your Panchayat are dropping out of school? Who is at risk of child marriage? Which families are facing difficulties? Why are these children and families facing these situations? The way we ask these questions is important. It helps Panchayat representatives understand that child protection is not the responsibility of one department alone; the Panchayat also has an important role to play. They need to see it as part of their governance responsibility, rather than simply another issue to be added to a plan.

Child protection from GPDP perspective:

The second aspect is looking at child protection from the GPDP planning perspective. Our approach is to connect the Panchayat with the local resources, stakeholders and community institutions that are already available and bring issues related to children and families into the planning process. We should not simply put a problem in the GPDP as a list of issues. For a particular issue, the entire planning cycle needs to be completed—what is the specific activity, who is responsible, what local resources are available, which scheme or fund can be leveraged, and what is the monitoring mechanism. For example, if a child has dropped out of school, the Panchayat cannot simply include an "education improvement programme" as an activity. It needs to identify which children have dropped out, why they have dropped out, which families they belong to, and whether those families require additional support. It then needs to look at the role that schools, Anganwadi centres, Self Help Groups (SHGs), Village Organizations (VOs), Cluster Level Forum/Federation (CLFs) and relevant departments can play. The Panchayat cannot do this alone; it has to leverage the wider ecosystem.

Convergence:

The third and very important element is convergence. A Panchayat cannot work on child protection by itself. It needs to work with schools, Anganwadi workers, health workers, SHGs and their federations such as VOs and CLFs, as well as other committees, institutions and relevant government departments. These issues need to be brought into the 'Gram Sabha'and discussed collectively. The GPDP should also not remain merely a Panchayat document—the community itself should own it and see it as 'their plan'. There is a significant opportunity to build on the existing women's collective ecosystem. Nationally, there are around 37,000 CLFs, and there is a strong SHG movement across villages. Each CLF also has access to its own Community Investment Fund (CIF), apart from government department funds and banking linkages. When we already have two large institutional systems that have financial and community strength—the Panchayat system and the women's collective ecosystem—the question is: why are we not bringing these resources and institutions together through convergence?

Context of Jharkhand:

In the Jharkhand context, TRI's work on the Village Poverty Reduction Plan (VPRP) is an important example of this approach. The VPRP is prepared through SHG members and is built around individual household and community needs. It includes four broad plans: the entitlement plan, livelihood plan, public goods and services/community plan, and social development plan. At the village level, there may be two or three VOs, and at the Panchayat level there may be seven or eight VOs. These plans can be consolidated at the Panchayat level into one consolidated plan, which can then be integrated into the GPDP. Our effort is to ensure that the VPRP and GPDP are connected so that issues identified at the individual household level can also find a place within Panchayat-level planning and action. This approach is particularly

important because we should not look at the issue only through the lens of a child-friendly Panchayat. We cannot create a child-safe Panchayat by treating child protection as one isolated activity. We need to look at women-friendly Panchayats, social security and family strengthening together, because a child's situation is often connected to the circumstances of the family.

Identification of children & families:

So, the first step is to identify children and families requiring additional care and support, understand the reasons behind their situation, and then connect them to the GPDP, schemes, resources and relevant institutions. We should not see these children and families merely as an activity in a plan. Ultimately, the outcome of capacity building should not be that a Panchayat representative can define child protection or explain the terminology after a training. The real outcome is when the representative can identify the children and families requiring support in their Panchayat, understand their needs, work in coordination with the relevant institutions, leverage available schemes and resources, and ensure that these children and families do not get missed by the system.

When Panchayats begin to develop this perspective and take collective action with CBOs and Local Administration, that is when we move beyond training towards a genuinely child-protective and family-strengthening Panchayat.

Could you share your experience of building a child-friendly Gram Panchayat? How has it helped strengthen families and reduce children's vulnerability? What challenges did you face, and how do you plan to utilize the 5% untied fund to further strengthen child protection?

Overview of our work:

Our Gram Panchayat works according to the Panchayati Raj framework, and under the GPDP we select themes and plan activities accordingly. Child-friendly Panchayat is one such theme we work with support from British Asian Trust and Child In Need Institute (CINI) under its KAWACH programme A key part of our approach is to work directly with children and listen to what they need. We organise Bal Sabhas, where children can share their concerns and priorities. Along with Anganwadi workers, teachers and other frontline workers, we identify these needs and try to include them in the GPDP with appropriate budget allocations. Our work focuses on both child development and protection—improving toilets and sanitation in Anganwadi centres and schools, providing spaces for play, strengthening safety measures such as school boundaries, and working to prevent child marriage and other protection concerns like child trafficking, child labour. We also identify and help eligible children and families access schemes such as disability support, sponsorship and pensions, particularly when families require additional support.

Family Strengthening:

Family strengthening is an important part of this. We conduct awareness activities with parents and communities on issues such as substance abuse, inform families about available schemes and services, and support livelihood opportunities based on their needs. Working directly with the community helps us understand local priorities and build greater ownership and sustainability. We use the 5% untied fund largely for children's needs, such as improving sanitation and facilities in Anganwadi centres and providing opportunities for play. Going forward, we want to use this additional allocation to further support children's physical and mental development through sports, games and other play-based activities.

Child Participation:

Our process starts with Bal Sabha and moves through Mahila Sabha and Gram Sabha, so that children's priorities become part of community discussions and the GPDP. We also regularly review progress with frontline workers and the GP Child Welfare and Protection committee and plan the next steps accordingly. For us, a child-friendly Panchayat is not just about creating facilities; it is about listening to children, involving families and the community, connecting them to available support, and ensuring that children are safe, supported and able to develop.

Reference:

- Training tool for CWPC members by BAT
- KAWACH CWPC key guidance notes by BAT

What is the current status of Child Welfare and Protection Committees (CWPCs) in your block? What strategies have been most effective in activating and motivating these committees to function as platforms for child protection and family strengthening?

Formation of CWPC:

In 2025, with the support of Miracle Foundation India and in collaboration with the Panchayati Raj Department, Government of Jharkhand, district administrations of Jamshedpur, West Singhbhum and Khunti, Bal Kalyan Sangh supported the formation of Child Welfare and Protection Committees in 49 Panchayats, along with 35 Gram-level committees. Initially, many Panchayat representatives saw their role primarily as working for overall village development and did not see child development and protection as a specific responsibility. We therefore had to engage with the committees through regular meetings and discussions. At first, participation was inconsistent. But as we used these meetings to explain the different schemes and services available for children, and members began seeing actual children benefit from these schemes, their interest and ownership increased. Today, out of the 49 Panchayats, around 35–36 committees have started conducting meetings on their own. More importantly, they are now proactively identifying children who need support and initiating the process of connecting them with relevant schemes and services. This shift from being formed as a committee to actively taking responsibility for child protection has been one of the key outcomes.

Child Participation:

At the village level, the Gram-level Child Protection Committees have also started playing an important role. In two Panchayats in Khunti, for example, we established Bal Manchs to ensure that children's voices reach the committee. If a child was not attending school, the issue could be raised through the Bal Manch and taken to the village-level committee, which would then discuss the matter and decide on the appropriate action, including engaging with the concerned stakeholders to ensure the child returned to school. The committees have also taken up wider community issues. In some villages, they have contributed to making the village substance-free, while Gram Sabhas have also seen greater participation from children. In addition, village-level committees have independently addressed around 12–13 trafficking cases, demonstrating that they are increasingly able to identify and respond to protection concerns themselves.

Ownership:

The key strategy has therefore been continuous engagement and demonstrating results. Rather than only telling committee members about their responsibilities, we helped them understand the available support mechanisms, identify

real cases and see the impact of their decisions. Once they saw that their actions could directly improve the lives of children, the committees became more motivated to take ownership. Jamshedpur is particularly significant in this journey because, in 2025, it became one of the first districts in Jharkhand where the Child Welfare and Protection Committees were constituted in line with the Panchayati Raj framework and work was initiated through these structures. The experience shows that when committees are supported to move from formation to regular functioning, they can become meaningful platforms for child protection and family strengthening at the local level.

"Beyond the 5% untied fund, what other financing mechanisms or own-source revenue models can help Panchayats invest more confidently in child protection?

Beyond the 5% untied fund, there are several opportunities to strengthen Panchayat financing for child protection and family strengthening.

One important opportunity is the 16th Finance Commission, where there are provisions that can potentially support Panchayat-level priorities. In addition, Jharkhand has introduced provisions through the State Finance Commission. Under this, around ₹1,000 crore is expected to be transferred to Panchayats annually. The intention is to encourage Panchayats to use these resources for the indicators where they are performing poorly. In Jharkhand, women- and child-friendly indicators are among the areas where Panchayats have significant gaps. Therefore, there is an opportunity for these funds to support improvements in these areas. We are advocating that at least 20% of the State Finance Commission allocation should be directed towards indicators where a Panchayat is lagging behind. The policy is currently at the final stage, and this could provide a significant financing opportunity for child-friendly Panchayats.

Own-source revenue (OSR) is another area with considerable potential, although it is still relatively limited in Jharkhand. The government is currently working on its policy framework. As Panchayats start undertaking activities that can generate revenue, they will have greater flexibility to decide how those resources are used. In the longer term, OSR could become an important source of independent financing for Panchayats. There is also scope to bring in CSR financing. Banks have a presence at the local level, and small enterprises are increasingly coming up in districts. CSR partners are already investing in areas such as sports, children's development and learning spaces. However, there is still a need for greater sensitisation to encourage CSR investments beyond infrastructure and towards a wider range of child-friendly and child protection initiatives that contribute to children's overall wellbeing. This will require district-level facilitation and convergence.

So, going forward, we see a combination of State Finance Commission resources, the 16th Finance Commission, own-source revenue and CSR as important financing avenues beyond the 5% untied fund. If these resources are aligned with the PAI indicators and Panchayat-level gaps, Panchayats will be in a much stronger position to invest systematically in child protection, family strengthening and child-friendly development. In particular, we see OSR becoming a much larger component of Panchayat financing in Jharkhand in the coming years.

Reference:

- Panchayat Advancement Index | State Dashboard

Is there anything like PAI to track ULBs (Urban Local Bodies)?

No, unlike Panchayats, there is currently no PAI-equivalent framework specifically for tracking ULB performance on child protection or family strengthening. However, NITI Aayog has developed the SDG Urban Index & Dashboard, which assesses urban centres using a set of indicators across areas such as poverty, health and nutrition, education, gender equality, urban services and governance. It is intended to strengthen SDG localisation and city-level monitoring.

Therefore, for ULBs, the opportunity is to use these existing urban monitoring frameworks and strengthen the inclusion of child protection, family strengthening and child wellbeing indicators within urban planning and monitoring.

Reference:

- https://www.niti.gov.in/divisions/division/managing-urbanisation

What convergence models between schools, Anganwadi centres, CWPCs, and police have worked best on the ground?

The most effective convergence model on the ground is one where the Panchayat's elected representative acts as the first responder, particularly for women- and child-related concerns. Since the elected representative is present in the village and accessible 24/7, they can play an important role in ensuring the immediate safety of a child or family and connecting them to the appropriate services.

There are also several platforms that enable different stakeholders to come together. For example, the Gram Panchayat/CWPC platform brings together Panchayat representatives and women's collectives to discuss concerns and take decisions. At the block level, the Block-level convergence committee (BLCC), under the Ministry of Panchayati Raj, brings together departments such as ICDS, women and child development, health and others. These platforms are important because child protection cannot be addressed by one department alone. At the district level, District Child Protection Units, One Stop Centres are other important mechanisms for women and children requiring support. They provide access to legal assistance, including support for cases where legal fees may be waived, and temporary accommodation for up to 15 days. These linkages become particularly important when Panchayat representatives or women's collectives identify a case requiring specialised support.

For this system to work effectively, Panchayat representatives and women's collectives need to know the local service map—who to contact, where to refer a case and what services are available. When a case comes to the first responder, particularly involving a girl child, the immediate priority should be safety, confidentiality and appropriate referral. The Panchayat therefore has a very important role in ensuring that the case moves through the right support system.

There is also significant scope for strengthening convergence in urban and peri-urban areas. Urban local bodies often have greater access to departments, CSOs and specialised services such as Child Protection Committees, Child Protection Centres, One Stop Centres and Gender Resource Centres. However, in peri-urban Panchayats, there is often a gap: facilities may be available in the city, but once you move a few kilometres beyond the city, access becomes much more limited.

This is an area where we see considerable potential for strengthening the convergence model further—ensuring that the same referral and protection ecosystem available in urban areas is accessible to children and families in peri-urban and rural Panchayats as well.

Any examples where the 5% untied funds have been used for child protection in ways other than infrastructure development?

The focus of the 5% untied fund should not be on infrastructure; it should be about how we can support children to move forward and create a safer environment for them. At the Panchayat level, we discuss several child protection concerns with the community and use rallies, meetings and awareness activities to address them. For example, we discuss substance abuse and its impact on children—such as what happens when parents consume substances and how this can affect the child and the family environment. The important thing is to make the community aware and collectively responsible. A safe village cannot be created by the Panchayat alone; it requires community participation. We therefore use existing platforms such as women's groups, community organisations and schools to discuss issues that negatively affect children.

These activities do not necessarily require significant financial resources. Even small investments in community awareness, discussions and mobilisation can help people recognise risks and take collective action. The aim is to use the available resources not only to create physical facilities, but also to build awareness, strengthen community participation and create an environment where children are safer and better supported.

"With ""child vulnerability"" not clearly defined in Mission Vatsalya, how are local governments interpreting it - and can JH PESA (Provisions of the Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Rules be integrated to strengthen community-based systems?

Context:
Mission Vatsalya does not clearly define "child vulnerability." It gives examples and asks for a vulnerability survey, but has no measurable definition. Because of this, local governments and frontline workers fall back on familiar signs: children who are out of school, from single-parent or migrant families, differently-abled, from very poor households, or already known to the child protection system.

As a result, vulnerability is often seen as visible poverty or an existing crisis. The original aim was to identify children at risk of separation or harm before a crisis happens. Hidden risks like neglect, early signs of family breakdown, or substance abuse at home may go unnoticed because there is no shared checklist for CWPCs and Panchayats.

In Jharkhand, almost half the state is covered under PESA. These areas are mostly tribal, and many are hard to reach with limited access to basic services. Children here face higher risks of trafficking and child marriage, so these communities are a key focus for us. These communities also have strong traditional systems of governance, collective decision-making and resolving local issues. Our approach is to use PESA as an opportunity to strengthen these community-based systems by bringing child protection concerns into them.

Challenges:
No shared way to identify vulnerability. Identification depends on individual judgment, and it tends to capture existing crisis rather than early risk.

Data versus self-governance. We want to bring indicators and data into communities that have their own ways of making decisions. PESA is built on autonomy, so outsiders should not simply tell communities what to do. We must balance saying

"these indicators are poor" with respecting the community's right to decide.

Early stage of PESA Rules. The Rules have only recently been implemented in the state, and we are still learning how they work in practice. Communities often ask why the administration should tell them what to do.

Focus on resources. When communities speak of independence, the conversation is usually about physical, natural and community resources, not children.

Opportunities:
A simple, locally adapted mapping tool. Even a basic checklist, used regularly by CWPCs and Anganwadi/ASHA workers, would reduce dependence on individual judgment. It should capture early risk, not just existing crisis.

Stronger Gram Sabhas. In PESA areas, Gram Sabhas have more power, so child protection issues raised there carry more weight and can influence local planning more directly.

Linking community structures with CWPCs. PESA respects customary systems. Informal protective mechanisms, such as community elders and women's collectives, can be formally linked with CWPCs rather than treated as separate from the formal system.

Community ownership. Because PESA is built on participation and consent, it supports communities identifying vulnerable children themselves, rather than a top-down approach.

Encouraging examples. The Social Welfare Department recently held a workshop with community leaders. They showed a strong sense of responsibility and took a collective pledge to work towards ending trafficking and child marriage.

Way Forward:
Focus on awareness, communication and sustained conversation with communities, rather than imposing solutions. This is mainly work on mindset and behaviour change.

Work with partner NGOs and other stakeholders to find communities that already have strong ownership, and start the conversation there. The aim is for community leaders themselves to discuss trafficking, child marriage and other risks to children.

Gradually bring in the idea that children are the community's future resource, and that their protection and wellbeing are essential to its future.

Use the Gram Sabha as the main platform. If child vulnerability and protection can be brought into it while respecting self-governance, PESA can become a strong base for community-led child protection and family strengthening in Jharkhand.

Communities are increasingly approaching us themselves, which is a positive sign. The task now is to bring child protection concerns into their existing conversations.

What preventive measures are being taken - any child vulnerability mapping done as mandated by Mission Vatsalya guidelines? While focussing on trafficking, child labor and child marriage is important but what steps are being taken to prevent even children experiencing this risk in the first place?

Preventive action begins with identifying children who may be at risk before a protection concern becomes a crisis . One important way of doing this is through the Gram Sabha, where the community can collectively identify children requiring additional support. Through the Gram Sabha, the Panchayat can identify how many children with disabilities are in the village, how many children have dropped out of school, children at risk of child labour or child marriage, and other children who may require additional care and support. This provides a starting point for understanding the vulnerability situation within the Panchayat. This mapping can also be strengthened through the support of Anganwadi workers and Ward Members, who are closely connected with families and communities and can help identify children who may otherwise be missed. By bringing information from these different sources together, the Panchayat can develop a better understanding of which children are at risk and what kind of support they need. The focus, therefore, should not only be on responding to cases of trafficking, child labour or child marriage after they occur. The priority is to identify risk early, understand the reasons behind it and connect children and families to appropriate schemes, services and support before the situation becomes more serious.

How can Gram Sabhas and Ward Committees be activated to take up child safety and rights issues?

Gram Sabhas and Ward Committees already have the mandate to take up child safety and rights — what's needed is priortising it and regular follow-through, not new structures.

1. Make it a standing agenda item. Child well-being indicators — school dropouts, immunization, cases referred to CWPC, children out of family care — should be discussed at every Gram Sabha, just like water or infrastructure updates, not only during special campaigns.
2. Strengthen the CWPC–Gram Sabha link. The VLCWPC is meant to report to the Gram Sabha. A short, regular update from the CWPC at each meeting builds accountability.
3. Include vulnerable groups and children directly. Representatives of vulnerable households, adolescents, or Bal Sansad members should be invited to speak on issues affecting them, not just be discussed about.
4. Connect it to fund allocation. Raising child protection needs in the Gram Sabha before the GPDP is finalized makes it easier to use part of the 5% untied fund for child-focused work.
5. Orient elected representatives on their role. Many Ward Members and Panchs don't know child protection falls under their responsibility via the Standing Committees on Women and Children. Basic orientation can fix this.
6. Use existing platforms. Anganwadi workers, ASHA workers, and teachers already engage with the Gram Sabha on health and education — the same channel can flag child protection issues, without needing a separate system.
7. The CWPC from district to Gram panchayat and Village level under mission vatsalya need to have a definite system of data sharing and reporting under the overall supervision and guidance of District Child Protection unit

How can local governance better respond to the needs of differently-abled, street-connected, migrant children, and children in conflict with law?

Local governance responds best to these groups by first ensuring they're identified and included in Panchayat-level planning — since these children often stay invisible in general child protection data.

1. Differently-abled children: Panchayats can maintain a simple local register (linked to the anganwadi/school) to track differently-abled children and ensure they're linked to disability certificates, entitlements, and inclusive education support. GPDP funds can support basic accessibility — ramps, accessible toilets — in anganwadis and schools.
2. Street-connected children: Since these children move across Panchayat and district boundaries, they need active linkage with the DCPU (District Child Protection Unit) and CWC (Child Welfare Committee) for rescue, rehabilitation, and family tracing — Panchayats can play a role by reporting cases and supporting reintegration once a child is connected back to a family or community.
3. Migrant children: Panchayats at both source and destination need better coordination — source Panchayats should track families migrating for work and flag children at risk of being left behind or trafficked, while destination areas need mechanisms to identify and enrol migrant children in local schools and services.
4. Children in conflict with law: The focus here is prevention and reintegration — Panchayats can support this through CWPCs identifying children at risk early (school dropout, substance use, family breakdown) and working with JJBs (Juvenile Justice Boards) and probation officers on reintegration support once a child returns to the community.

Common thread across all four: Local governance needs to move from a "one-size-fits-all" child protection approach to case-based tracking — where CWPCs and Panchayats maintain visibility on children who fall outside standard categories, and actively connect them to district-level systems (DCPU, CWC, JJB) rather than expecting these systems to find them. Maintaining vulnerability register at panchayat level is very important

Despite legal/schematic mandates, why have CWPCs not been prioritized across levels - and what role should the Panchayat Pradhan and political leadership play, especially amid local leadership transitions?

1. Child protection isn't seen as "core" Panchayat work. Roads, water, and sanitation are visible, deliverable priorities with clear timelines. Child protection outcomes are slower and less visible, so it naturally gets deprioritized when Panchayat leadership has limited time and many competing demands.
2. Lack of ownership, not lack of rules. CWPCs are often constituted on paper to meet compliance requirements, but there's no real sense of ownership — members aren't clear on their role, meetings aren't held regularly, and there's no one actively pushing for it to function.
3. No consequence for inaction. Unlike financial or infrastructure targets, there's rarely any accountability or monitoring if a CWPC doesn't meet or doesn't act — so it slips down the priority list.
4. Limited capacity and training. Many Panchayat members and CWPC members themselves don't fully understand what child protection involves, or how to identify and respond to cases — this makes the committee more symbolic than functional.

5. Political and administrative turnover. Each time there's a change in Panchayat leadership, momentum built with the previous Pradhan or committee often resets, since there's no institutional memory or handover process specifically for child protection work.

Role of the Panchayat Pradhan and political leadership:

1. Championing it visibly. When the Pradhan personally attends CWPC meetings or raises child protection issue in Gram Sabha, it signals that this is a real priority — not just an NGO or government department's job.
2. Ensuring regular meetings and follow-through. The Pradhan can institutionalize CWPC meetings as part of the regular Panchayat calendar, rather than leaving them ad hoc.
3. Priortising children's issues in GPDP: The Pradhan can mobilise support in priortising vulnerability assessment, awarness activities, life skill training, career counselling, sports/games, identifying structural barriers or hazards for children in the Panchayats and overall activities for creating a safe environment for children to be discussed and made a part of GPDP.
4. Linking it to resources. The Pradhan plays a key role in deciding how GPDP funds, including the 5% untied fund, are allocated — actively including child protection needs here makes a real difference.
5. Building continuity across leadership transitions. A simple handover practice — briefing the incoming Pradhan and committee on ongoing child protection cases, priorities, and commitments — can help prevent the reset that often happens with new leadership.
6. Modeling accountability. Political leadership can request periodic CWPC updates in Gram Sabha, creating a habit of transparency and follow-up that continues regardless of who is in office.

What accountability and follow-up mechanisms - with community participation - can ensure reported child protection cases receive timely action?

Timely action needs two things: a clear reporting-to-response pathway, and community involvement that keeps it accountable.

1. Case tracking at CWPC level. Every reported case should be logged with date, action taken, and status — this alone makes it visible if a case is sitting untouched.
2. Time-bound referral system. Serious cases beyond the Panchayat's scope need a clear, known pathway to the CWC or DCPU within a defined timeframe, so cases don't get stuck locally.
3. Regular reporting to Gram Sabha. A brief CWPC update — cases reported, resolved, pending — at each Gram Sabha keeps the community informed and creates local-level accountability.
4. Community-based monitors. Anganwadi workers, ASHA workers, teachers, and SHG members are often the first to notice a child at risk — involving them formally as reporting points speeds up detection and follow-up.
5. Feedback to the reporter. Informing the person who raised a case that some action was taken (without breaching confidentiality) builds trust and encourages future reporting.
6. Social audits. Similar to MGNREGA, child protection case handling can be periodically reviewed by community members to check whether cases were acted on, and within what time.

In short: Officials alone can't track everything — involving the Gram Sabha, frontline workers, and social audits ensures reported cases don't fall through the cracks.

Does the Gram sabha invite Vulnerable community representatives for discussion on the resources as well as on the child right issues to be addressed?

In principle, Gram Sabhas are open to all community members, including vulnerable groups — but in practice, this participation is often limited and needs deliberate effort to make it meaningful.

Current reality:
Vulnerable households — including those with children at risk, single-parent families, differently-abled members, or migrant families — often don't attend Gram Sabha meetings regularly. This is due to reasons like lack of awareness that their voice matters, social hesitation, work commitments, or simply not being specifically invited or informed about relevant agenda items.

What needs to change:

- Direct outreach, not just open invitation. A general announcement isn't enough — CWPC members, Anganwadi workers, or ASHA workers can proactively identify and personally inform vulnerable families when child rights or resource-related issues are on the agenda.
- Flagging relevant agenda items in advance. If a Gram Sabha is going to discuss GPDP resource allocation or child protection concerns, vulnerable community representatives should know beforehand, so they can prepare to speak, not just attend as silent observers.
- Creating a comfortable space to speak. Simply being present isn't the same as being heard. Facilitation matters — ensuring vulnerable representatives get a chance to speak, and that their input is noted and considered, not just symbolically included.
- Linking through existing local workers. Since Anganwadi workers, ASHA workers, and SHG members are already connected to vulnerable households, they can serve as a bridge — helping surface concerns even if the family itself doesn't attend.

The Gram Sabha structure allows for this participation, but it doesn't happen automatically — it requires intentional outreach and facilitation to ensure vulnerable voices are actually part of resource and child rights discussions, not just formally invited.

Additional Resources

- SNEH Compendium - Vol.2
- IACN June Quarterly
- Letter to Chief Secrataries by all Key Ministries Child Friendly Village Child Friendly Village
- Video by MoPR in Hindi on Child Friendly Village
- Film presented by UNICEF in English on Child Friendly Village