

Management Review of Awareness And Coverage of Government of Rajasthan's Child Protection Schemes In Dungarpur District of Rajasthan, India

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Abstract: Government of Rajasthan implement 28 child protection schemes for the poor and vulnerable children in the state. Majority of these schemes are focused on providing Health, Nutrition and Education services to the children and their families. This paper reviewed the level of awareness among children & their parents (caregivers) on various child protection schemes of the government, and subsequent reasons for the low coverage of the selected schemes in the community. It also asks whether an exogenous increase in awareness level and availability of management staff at ground level has an impact on improving the access of child protection schemes by the targeted beneficiaries. The study looks at five major child protection schemes of Government of Rajasthan related to child Health, Nutrition & Education in Dungarpur district of Rajasthan, and uses household sample of 302 respondent including children and their caregivers. Using frequency table, the paper finds that there is good awareness among community on most of the child protection schemes but even though the access to schemes is very poor- only 50% beneficiaries who are eligible and aware are getting the benefits of the schemes. Poor targeting, limited understanding on schemes objectives and target groups, procedural difficulties, inadequate infrastructure, capacity gaps in human resource and attitude of the community have emerged as major disabling factors affecting the coverage of child protection schemes in the community. These results are important for Government of Rajasthan where indicators related to children wellbeing are very poor and low coverage of child protection schemes is a cause for concern.

Keywords: Child Protection, Child Welfare Schemes, Management Review, Dungarpur-Rajasthan, Orphan and vulnerable children

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I. Introduction

Social Protection is one of the useful component of poverty reduction and reduce household vulnerability to economic, social, natural and other issues. It has become an important part of government protection agenda and a substantial portion of government spending is going to provide safety net and protection to the poor and disadvantaged community². Social Protection is particularly important for children because of their higher levels of vulnerability compared to adults, and the role that social protection can play to promote household productivity by increasing income and supporting children's development through investments in their schooling, health and adequate nutrition. According to 2011 Census of India³, 41% (421 m) of India's population is below the age of 18 years. Many of such children are at a high risk of abuse, exploitation and negligence due to poverty, disability and absence of adequate parental care. There has been ample evidences available in India and globally⁴ showing positive impact of social protection scheme on the wellbeing of children. Government of Rajasthan has been proactive in launching schemes and services for the protection of the children. There is total 28 schemes aimed at directly benefiting children in the state⁵. Most of these schemes are aimed to benefit children of Below Poverty Line (BPL) families and some are exclusively meant for orphan. However, limited awareness about schemes provisions⁶ :- eligibility criteria, objective, benefits among the target beneficiaries & poor service delivery mechanism is one of the common reason behind the low offtake of these scheme in the state. This study has taken up at household level with an objective to understand the level of awareness of five major child protection schemes among the community as well as to gauge the coverage of these schemes among the parents and children benefiting from the schemes. This is an effort to rendered the opportunity to have an in depth interaction with identified households with regard to their understanding on schemes and factor affecting the access to schemes by the beneficiary at household levels. Total 70 villages with high concentration of tribal population were covered. 28 major social protection schemes were narrowed down to 5 schemes relevant to Health, Nutrition & Education support to the children.

This paper outlines awareness level of parents and children about the schemes and subsequent reasons for the low coverage of the selected schemes in the community.

II. Methodology

2.1 Area of the study

The study was carried out in 3 blocks of Dungarpur district of Rajasthan based on the high number of Orphan and Vulnerable Children (OVC) available across the district. Total 302 respondents from 150 households were selected for the study including applicants (Care Givers) and direct beneficiaries (Children) of the selected social protection schemes. Selection of villages for this assessment was a crucial factor in deepening the understanding on coverage of social protection schemes. Two- Third of the selected villages are remotely situated and tribal dominated and rest one- third villages are located on roadside and have heterogeneous population.

2.2 Research method

The study adopted a mixed methodology for undertaking data collection. Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected by administering in-depth interviews & focus group discussions. 302 In-Depth Interviews (IDIs) were conducted with identified individuals with set of questions on selected five child protection schemes. The IDIs elucidate upon the awareness level and access of respondent to child protection schemes and their overall experiences. 4 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) involving 45 respondents were conducted with children and their caregivers, with an objective to collect qualitative information on factors affecting the access to information and benefits of the child protection schemes by the respondents. In addition, reference were also taken from schools & Anganwadi Centres- Nutrition care centers of Government (AWC) to cross check the coverage of schemes. Information was also gathered on the implementation mechanism and usefulness of the schemes.

III. Results And Discussions

3.1 Social economic background of the beneficiaries

Identification of eligible beneficiary was a crucial step to collect appropriate information, therefore in each village mapping of the households with respect to eligibility of children for various social protection schemes was undertaken. The criteria for mapping was based on Below Poverty Line (BPL) families with children going to schools & eligible for various social protection schemes. In the Dungarpur district in Rajasthan, majority of the communities belong to schedule tribe and thus 86.75% respondents of the study belonged to schedule tribes. Looking at the sex status of the respondents, 67% of the respondents were females and 33% males in the study area. The economic condition of the respondent was also found very poor 90% of them are reported to belong to Below Poverty Line (BPL) category whereas just 10% were from the Above Poverty Line (APL). Their livelihood is mainly dependent on labour activities. The average family size of these households comes to 6. The FGDs conducted with 45 respondents showed that the overall status of the children of these families does not look very promising, due to acute and chronic poverty in the region they tend to miss school and support the family in livelihood activities⁷. Primary data showed that 34.21% children are engaged in child labor within and outside of the villages, 68.97% of these children missed schools while engaged in work. 40.35% children seasonally migrate to nearby state Gujrat for work. The other child development indicators⁸ like nutrition status, education performance is also very low in this region due to various socio-economic factors, which make children more vulnerable to the situation. ⁹Linking Orphan & Vulnerable Children (OVC) with various government protection scheme and cash transfer for health, education and nutrition has proven a successful strategy globally but this has its own challenges related to targeting, access and operation difficulties¹⁰ in Dungarpur district.

3.2 Overall awareness level of child protection schemes

Out of the 302 respondents in the study area, 88.41% were found to be aware of one or more (at least one) child protection schemes of Government of Rajasthan in their area. Only 11.59% respondent were either not aware or not responded to any government scheme. The awareness level of adults is slightly high (94.41%) than the children (86.84%) which is understandable due to the higher exposure of adults to various information sources. Not much difference found in the awareness level of respondent on the basis of their sex (Table-1). The respondents were found to be aware about the following schemes:-

1. Palanhaar Yojana (PY)
2. Mid Day Meal (MDM)
3. Scholarship Scheme (SS)

4. Aap ke Beti (AB)
5. Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS)

Category	Respondents			Total	
	Children	Parents	Total	Total Male	Total Female
Aware	86.84	94.41	88.41	89.69	90.91
Not Aware /Not answered	13.16	5.59	11.59	10.31	9.09

(Source: Field survey data 2017)

As regards to the awareness level of individual scheme knowledge is found high for Palanhaar Scheme (89.09%) , Mid Day Meal (MDM) (81.09%) , Scholarship (64.36%) , Aap ke Beti (54.18%) and Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS) (40.73%) in chronological order. All the five scheme reviewed under this study has awareness level more than 50% except ICDS (40.73%), The awareness on MDM is comparatively high due to daily distribution of hot cook meal in schools. Similarly awareness level of Scholarship Scheme is also high due to the direct cash transfer of scholarship amount to children bank accounts by schools. On the other side poor level of awareness on ICDS can be explained with non-functioning of Anganwadi Centre (AWCs)11 at many villages and increasing trend to send the children to school at a very early age of 3-4 years, where a child is expect to go to AWCs till the age of 6.

Category / Schemes	Palanhaar Yojna (PY)	Mid Day Meal (MDM)	Scholarship Scheme (SS)	Aap ki Beti (AB)	Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS)
Children	83.33	78.79	55.30	31.06	17.42
Parents (caregivers)	94.41	83.22	72.73	75.52	62.24
Total	89.09	81.09	64.36	54.18	40.73

Source: Field survey data 2017)

3.2 Awareness level on schemes provisions

The study further tried to attempt the awareness level of parents/caregivers on the different provisions under the selected child protection schemes including Eligibility Criteria, Schemes Benefits and Knowledge on Objectives/Purpose of the schemes. It revealed that most of the parents have very hasty knowledge of the child protection scheme and ignorant on detailed scheme provisions like-objectives, target group, benefits ect.

Schemes name	Fully		Partly		Not aware
	aware		aware		
Aap ki Beti		28.48		31.79	39.74
Mid Day Meal		59.60		17.22	23.18
ICDS		35.76		23.18	41.06
Scholarship		42.38		24.50	33.77
Palanhaar		48.00		16.67	35.23
Average		42.85		22.67	34.60

Source: Field survey data 2017)

3.2.1 Awareness on eligibility criteria

42.85% responded found fully aware on eligibility criteria on selected five child protection scheme, one forth (22.68%) were found partly aware whereas nearly one third of the respondent (34.60%) were found not aware on the question. The awareness level is highest for MDM (59.60%), followed by Palanhaar (48%). Aap ke Beti (28.48%) is found the least aware scheme in terms on the eligibility criteria in the study area.

3.2.2 Awareness on benefits provided under the schemes

34.51% respondent found fully aware on benefits of the selected schemes, 24.41% reported some knowledge on benefits under the schemes, whereas little less than half (40.81%) were reported not knowing on this question. Palanhaar (54.67%) & MDM (49.01%) are the top scheme where awareness on benefits are high. Surprisingly only 13.91% responded found fully aware about ICDS services, this finding is important as ICDS has AWCs in all villages.

Schemes name	Fully aware	Partly aware	Not aware
Aap ki Beti	21.85	32.45	45.03
Mid Day Meal	49.01	8.61	41.72
ICDS	13.91	30.46	55.63
Scholarship	33.11	21.85	45.03
Palanhaar	54.67	28.67	16.61
Average	34.51	24.41	40.81

Source: Field survey data 2017)

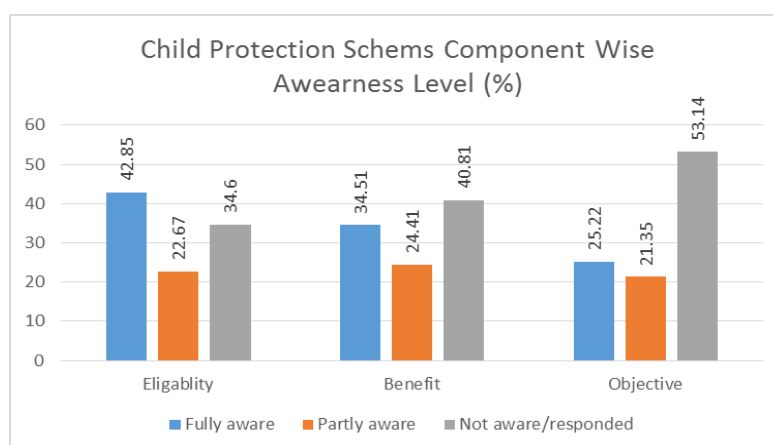
3.2.3 Awareness on Schemes Objectives

The awareness level on objectives of different schemes was found lowest among the three investigation areas- eligibility, benefits and objective. Only 25.22% respondent found fully aware on objectives of schemes, 21.35% were partly aware and nearly half 53.14% were not aware on the question.

Schemes name	Fully aware	Partly aware	Not aware
Aap ki Beti	16.56	25.83	56.95
Mid Day Meal	30.46	18.54	50.99
ICDS	16.56	13.91	69.54
Scholarship	20.53	25.83	52.98
Palanhaar	42.00	22.67	35.21
Average	25.22	21.35	53.14

(Source: Field Survey data 2017)

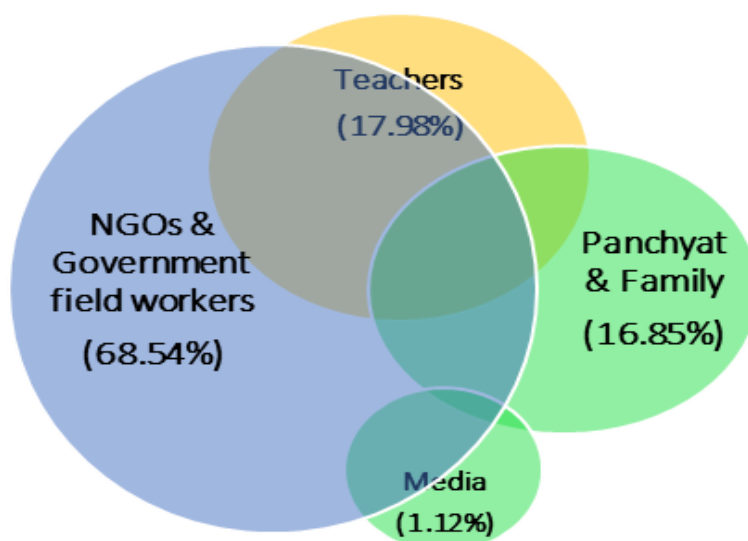
The above mentioned data revealed that while overall awareness on child protection schemes is high in parents (94.41%) , their understanding on specific components on child protection schemes like objective of the schemes (42.85% fully aware) , kind of benefits (34.51% fully aware), targeting & eligibility criteria (25.22% fully aware) is much low(Fig-1). The gap in complete knowledge & understanding on various child protection schemes in community is found one of the major reason behind the poor access & coverage of child protection schemes in study area, the focal group discussion with community members also revalidated this statement where most of the participants showed ignorance on different components of child protection schemes.



(Figure-1: Component wise awareness level child protection schemes among beneficiaries.)

3.3 Source of information

Awareness level of the schemes is largely attributed by the NGO staff and Frontline Government Workers (FGW) in the study area. Of the 267 respondents 68.54% stated that they received schemes information either by NGOs or Government field workers , nearly 18% cited school teachers as the main source of information for the social protection schemes.(Fig-2) Hence a total of 86.84% of the respondents in the study area own the source of awareness to NGO or government functionaries of different departments. People who received information from panchayat and family members was less than 17%. Surprisingly only 1.12% people reported media as the main source of information on social protection schemes.



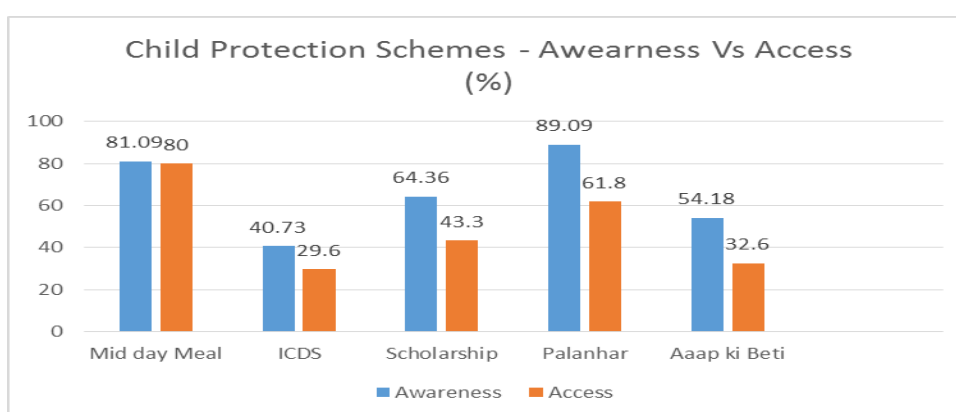
(Figure-2: Source of information for child protection schemes among beneficiaries.)

3.3 Access to schemes

As regard to the access to schemes, majority of eligible children reported to avail the MDM (80%) and Palanhaar (61.8%) schemes, whereas coverage of other three schemes ICDS (29.6%), Scholarship (43.4%) and Aap ke Beti (32.6%) was below 50%. The respondents were found to have availed the following schemes in chronological order:- MDM (80%) , Palanhaar (61.8%) , Scholarship (43.2%) , Aap ke Beti (32,6%) , ICDS (29.6%) and others (3.9%) including Immunization , disable pension etc.(Fig-3)

3.4 Relationship between awareness and access to schemes by beneficiaries

Mid Day Meal is found to be the most popular social protection scheme in the study area, more that 80% respondent found aware about this scheme and confirm availing the MDM facility at schools . The second popular scheme is Palanhaar where 89.09% respondent found to be aware about the Palanhaar scheme and 61.8% confirmed availing the benefit by the children in their family. ICDS has been found least popular scheme with only (40.73%) awareness and (29.6%) call up level. The common reasons cited by the families for not sending their children to ICDS is nonfunctioning of AWCs and irregularity of AWWs. In village Nawagarha the ill temperament of AWW pushes children away from the center.



(Figure-3: Access to child protection schemes among beneficiaries.)

Based on this analysis it can be concluded that the top two schemes with high level of awareness and around 60% coverage are MDM and Palanhaar and the least popular schemes are ICDS and to an extent Aap ke Beti Yojana. (Fig-3)

3.5 Reasons for gaps in awareness and access to child protection schemes in the study area

During the interaction with the respondent it came out very clearly that there is no consistent & reliable source of information on child protection scheme is available at village level. A large number of people who are eligible under the different schemes are not enrolled due to the lack of complete information about the schemes & procedures for enrollment. Majority of people come to know about child protection schemes through Government front line functionaries- Anganwadi workers (AWW) , school teachers or NGO staff working in the area. The Panchayats play least role to make community aware and linking people with SP schemes based on their eligibility. This is a matter of serious concern as Panchayat is the main apex body to implement all Government child protection scheme in villages. One of the major reason behind panchayat not taking active role is lack of awareness on various schemes at Panchayat level. The Social Justice & Empowerment (SJE) department who is responsible for Aap ke Beti and Palanhaar schemes has no departmental functionary places at panchayat level and one has to go to district for any support required on these schemes. Inadequate knowledge and pro-activeness of the family are the crucial factors to get the information & access to schemes benefits and improving the status of the children in the family. Inadequate information many times leads to confusion and made community furious and critical about the scheme. For instance MDM general opinion is that all children going to government schools are entitled for MDM, whereas this scheme is actually for the children from class 1-8th only. Teachers have to face resentment of the parents of the students of higher classes (9-12th) who are not at all eligible for the benefit MDM under the scheme. During the FGDs with the respondent it came out very clearly that lack of knowledge on necessary documentations is one of the major constraining factor for community to avail the benefits of the child protection schemes .It has been found that many children are unable to process their applications in absence of birth certificate, family BPL cards and death certificate of parents. In most of the identity card the name and age of the children is missing and it creates difficulty in accessing the benefits of the schemes. The schemes which are easily available at beneficiaries' door steps have better informed & access like in the case of MDM and scholarship where services are available at school level and no additional efforts are required to make by parents to get the information/access of the benefit of the schemes. In case of Palanhaar, the Social Justice & Empowerment (SJE) department and local NGOs have conducted the village level camps to inform beneficiaries' about the scheme and facilitate linkage with the schemes therefore coverage and awareness on Palanhaar is also high. It has also been observed that people are more aware & keen towards the schemes providing direct cash transfers (such as Palanhaar , Scholarship and Aap ke beti) but any attention is hardly paid to schemes like MDM & ICDS (supplementary and Immunization) despite of good awareness on these schemes at community level.

IV. Conclusion

This research work has certainly led to better understanding to know the awareness level, coverage and gaps in awareness & coverage of child protection schemes in Rajasthan. It has also given some pointers to policy makers and programme managers for the future programming of social protection for children in Rajasthan. Consolidation of the collected information, observation and data leads to following conclusions

4.1 It became clear that people want to avail the benefit of child protection schemes and it would add a substantial amount to their annual income. But lack of complete information, poor targeting , inadequate infrastructure, procedural difficulties, capacity gaps in human resource and attitude of the community have emerged as major constraining factors affecting the knowledge & coverage of child protection schemes in community. It is also evident that limited information on scheme provisions to elected representative - ward members & Sarpanchs keep them away and non-influence towards the process. The efforts towards change in attitude of the families, making them assertive, persistent and demand driven, accessibility to adequate and correct information, facilitating the process of targeting and to an extent working with government to provide inputs in dealing with the capacity gaps of frontline workers, panchayat and other stakeholders is required to better access and coverage of social protection measures in the area.

4.2 Improve Accessibility to information: - Increase in accessibility to information is a key factor in increasing the coverage of schemes. The study showed that almost half of the respondent are not aware about the scheme objectives. Complete information would not only encourage the families to proactively demand for it but also helpful in putting aside the involvement of agents. The way of communication of information and medium is also important, there is need to use traditional medium like fold media, village level awareness camps to increase the awareness on Child Protection schemes. It's also equally crucial that information on Child Protection schemes should be easy to understand and regular. Proper facilitation to the families is also required to make them understand the process in accessing the information.

4.3 Strengthening the existing structures:-There is need to build the capacity of village level functionaries like school teachers, AWW, panchayat secretaries on the provision of various child protection schemes. These grass root workers would be an important link to increase the coverage. The Social Justice and Empowerment Department (SJED) also need to create a structure of block and panchayat level functionaries to facilitate the schemes roll out and help targeted families to link with the schemes.

4.5 Prevailing myths distrust and disinterest: - It is also important to train the government service provider to explain the scheme correctly to the community, inadequate information may lead to confusion, which may create distrust and non-cooperation by the community. For instance MDM is only for children from class 1 to 8th, this lead lot of dissatisfaction and discontent among the parents of elder children due to lack of awareness about the scheme provisions. It is quite evident from the responses of community that there are lots of myths prevailing in the community for instance the mothers are apprehensive about getting ICDS food considering it inferior and not good for their children.

4.6 Support system:-A strong support system needs to be in place which can provide support to the families in accessing the schemes, provide supportive supervision to the frontline workers and also technically equipped with relevant information.

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