

# Putting Child Sensitive Social Protection into Practice in Dungarpur, India

## APPROACH PAPER





Child Sensitive Social Protection is a Save the Children initiative in South Asia aiming to reduce vulnerability and poverty of children by ensuring that social protection measures lead to meaningful investment in children. Currently the programme is being implemented in Bangladesh, India and Nepal. This paper is a part of a series of working papers being developed on the programme with the purpose of sharing practical approaches for implementing CSSP.

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Cover photo: The photo shows two girls from Surata village in Dungarpur who, along with their parents, are taking part of the CSSP project activities.

Cover photo credit: Harish Chanderiya

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The names of people have been changed to protect their identity.

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Photo: Harish Chanderiya

## 1 WHY WORK WITH CHILD SENSITIVE SOCIAL PROTECTION?

Dungarpur is a predominantly tribal district located in the Aravalli hills in the southernmost part of the state of Rajasthan. In terms of human development indicators, Dungarpur is the poorest performing district in the state<sup>1</sup>. Low agricultural productivity, coupled with negligible economic growth and few local livelihood opportunities, has led to high scale migration of the tribal population to adjoining states. High incidence of household stress and shock originating in ill health, accidents, marital breakdown and a poor asset base is resulting in further impoverishment of poor households. Children face the brunt of poverty, which is aggravated by adults compromising on expenditures and re-allocating resources to cope with the situation. Consequently, children are deprived of education, nutrition, health and appropriate care, which in turn has a negative effect on their long-term development opportunities and rights.

Prevalence of child labour is high in Dungarpur. There are reports accounting for as many as 40,000 children annually being brought across the border to the state of Gujarat to work in the cotton fields, where all forms of exploitation and neglect are common<sup>2</sup>. Malnourishment plagues children of

Dungarpur; it is believed that every third child in the district is malnourished<sup>3</sup>. The district is home to a large number of orphaned children, as parents have passed away due to ill health, or have abandoned their children in accordance with the locally accepted custom of 'nata'<sup>4</sup>.

While to a great extent, the situation of children in Dungarpur can be related to poverty, vulnerability, and lack of comprehensive services and programmes by the government to respond to the situation, it is also clear that parents' attitudes, behaviour and practices play a key role in shaping the lives of children<sup>5</sup>.

Recognising that social protection<sup>6</sup> is increasingly perceived as a key area that has the potential to reduce child poverty<sup>7</sup>, Save the Children initiated the Child Sensitive Social Protection (CSSP) project in Dungarpur in 2011. CSSP is based on the understanding that many of the vulnerabilities faced by poor children can be curbed by improving access to and delivery of social protection programmes for children and their households, while simultaneously working towards enhancing sensitivity towards children's needs and rights among parents and other adults responsible for children's well-being.

<sup>1</sup> District Human Development Report, 2009, IDS/Government of Rajasthan. Dungarpur District Human Development Profile

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/weak-laws-allow-child-labour-in-agriculture/article3517461.ece>

<sup>3</sup> Rajasthan Patrika, 2012

<sup>4</sup> A woman leaving her husband to live with another man

<sup>5</sup> see e.g. S Gupta, 2012, Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices Study of Child Labour in Dungarpur

<sup>6</sup> Social protection programmes is generally understood as - social assistance (cash or kind transfers), social insurance (e.g. health, disability or accident insurance) and measures designed to promote and protect employment (e.g. unemployment insurance, maternity cover).

<sup>7</sup> see e.g. Unicef, 2012 [http://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/iwp\\_2012\\_06.pdf](http://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/iwp_2012_06.pdf)



## 2 OVERVIEW OF THE CSSP PROJECT

The CSSP project in Dungarpur is based on a set of interventions that are closely interlinked to achieve the project objectives, which are to:

- Reduce child labour and increase school attendance and retention;
- Improve care for orphans and other vulnerable children; and
- Reduce malnutrition.

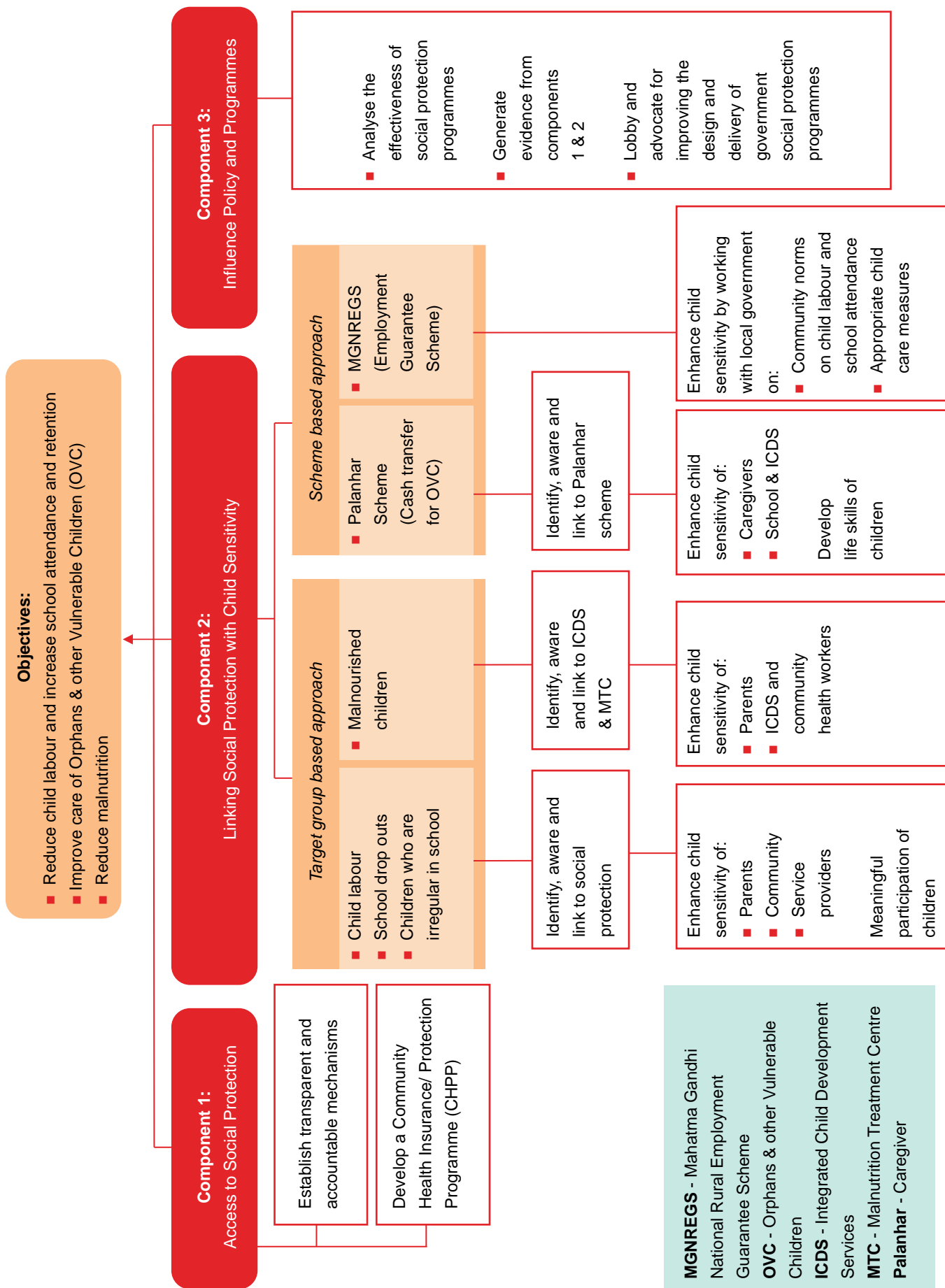
The Dungarpur CSSP project covers 20 gram panchayats<sup>8</sup> comprising 87 villages.

The interventions are presented in the figure on the next page, and are subsequently described in detail in different sections of the paper.



Photo: Harish Chanderiya

<sup>8</sup> Gram Panchayat (village council) is the lowest tier of local government in India



## 3

## ACCESS TO SOCIAL PROTECTION PROGRAMMES

### Social protection in Dungarpur

There are a fair amount of government social protection programmes available in Dungarpur for adults as well as children. The programmes can broadly be grouped into four categories, i.e. 1) social assistance (cash and kind transfers) 2) social insurance (accident, health and life insurance schemes) 3) targeted social services (e.g Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) and Malnutrition Treatment Centre (MTC)) and 4) public work / employment generation programmes. The bulk of social protection is made up of social assistance, mostly in the form of cash transfers. Different departments manage the programmes and there is no single department in the Government of Rajasthan (GoR) that has overall responsibility for social protection. At times, this leads to overlap in programmes and confusion at the local level. While the panchayat<sup>9</sup> has not been given a formal role with regard to the channelling of social protection programmes, in practise they act as a link between the applicants, beneficiaries and the departments.

Although eligibility to programmes is based on well-defined criteria<sup>10</sup>, limited and inconsistent access to information hinders many eligible people from claiming their entitlement. Lack of exclusive human resources, adequately trained to handle information and application process at the village level is also a main cause of this problem. The system is further fraught with poor upkeep of data and there is no formal mechanism through which the status of

an application for a scheme can be tracked. The paperwork is extensive and complicated for people with limited education. Once an application is approved, there are problems with channelling payments to the beneficiary, from the point of starting with difficulties in opening a bank account to receiving cash on a regular basis.

While Save the Children is not in a position to address all problems related to access, design and delivery of social protection, a cornerstone of the CSSP project is to improve access for poor children and adults to applicable social protection programmes. Below is an overview of the key activities of the project in this regard. In addition, the project staff are also advocating with the government of Rajasthan for improvements in the existing set of schemes (see section 5).

### Linking eligible people to social protection

In the initial stages of the CSSP project, it was felt that there was a need to directly facilitate eligible people to access social protection programmes. Besides helping people to claim their entitlements, this would also help the project staff to gain an understanding of the requirements for obtaining social protection benefits. A mapping was undertaken in the project villages to identify people eligible for different programmes. Subsequently, two main interventions followed.

<sup>9</sup> Gram Panchayat is a local self-government institution at the village or small town level in India and has a Sarpanch as its elected head. See [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grampanchayat](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grampanchayat)

<sup>10</sup> Such as age, widow, orphan, tribal, or classification as a BPL (Below Poverty Line) which is based on economic benchmarks.



Social protection camps were organized to reach out to the community in partnership with the panchayat. The focus of the camps has been to render support to people in completing necessary procedures and submit forms to relevant departments. Staff of the Social Justice and Empowerment (SJE) Department (where most of the cash transfer schemes are housed) have been attending the camps to provide technical inputs for the applications and clarify requirements in complicated cases. After the camp, there is rigorous follow up by the CSSP staff with the departments on the sanctioning process.

At times, it is seen that there is a need to support individuals more intensively to get through the application process, as they are not in a position to understand the supporting documents required. A quick assessment of the available documents that need to be annexed with an application form is made during a household visit. In case the necessary

documents are not available, project staff guides the applicant on how to procure the papers.

### **Promoting transparency and accountability through the panchayat**

Eventually, a system of transparency and accountability will have to become operational and effective at the local government level if poor people are to be in a position to access social protection programmes in a sustained manner. The CSSP project is gradually entering this area of work by reducing information gaps and utilizing existing statutory platforms and provisions. At this juncture, the interventions are organised around three sub-components.

Although the authority to sanction a scheme to a beneficiary rests with the concerned department, the panchayat plays a key role in identification,



Photo: Harish Chanderiya

	Sub-components	Key activities
1.	Develop the Panchayat (village council) as a one stop shop for access to social protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Develop a Management Information System (MIS) - Regular data collection on eligibility and uptake of schemes</li> <li>■ Develop a grievance redressal mechanism</li> <li>■ Capacitate Lower Divisional Clerks (LDCs) on MIS and handling of applications</li> <li>■ Capacitate Ward Panch (elected member) on schemes and applications</li> <li>■ Capacitate the Panchayat to hold social protection camps</li> </ul>
2.	Strengthen Panchayat platforms (Ward Sabha, Gram Sabha, Gram Swaraj) to promote transparency & accountability (these are different mandatory meetings)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Awareness on existing accountability provisions and existing social protection schemes</li> <li>■ Regularize panchayat platforms</li> <li>■ Use of key resource persons - people who offer free support to the activities</li> </ul>
3.	Supporting activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Develop Information Education Communication (IEC) materials on social protection and access</li> <li>■ Awareness of government frontline workers on social protection schemes &amp; eligibility</li> <li>■ Coordination meetings with relevant departments</li> <li>■ Liaise with the district and block authorities to endorse the activities</li> </ul>

awareness and signing off applications and hence also transparency. Therefore, the aim of the project is to develop the Panchayat (village council) as a one-stop shop for access to social protection. People should be able to visit the panchayat and receive information on schemes and be supported through the application process. To take on this responsibility in an organised manner, the project is capacitating the elected members as well as the official government staff at the panchayat on handling the application process. To systematize information on schemes, a comprehensive Management Information System is being developed by the project for the panchayat in collaboration with the district administration.

In accordance with the decentralised system of self-governance in India, there are certain mandatory meetings to be held in the villages in which everyone

can participate. These meetings provide opportunities for information, follow up and grievance redressal on a regular basis. They are also occasions for collecting and updating data on eligibility for schemes and for initiating application processes. Hence, the project aims to strengthen the Ward Sabha (hamlet/ward meeting), Gram Sabha (village general assembly) and Gram Swaraj (formal village meeting) to become more regular.

In order to ensure that the community can exercise their right to public services and to make the government system more accountable, a set of statutory measures have been launched by the state government that hold great promise if applied in practice. The Public Service Guarantee Act and the Public Hearing Act have been introduced to ensure that complaints from the public are heard within a

stipulated time frame and that public services are delivered within a set time period. Mechanisms are provided to punish public servants who are deficient in delivering the services. The CSSP project aims to make people aware of these instruments and monitor the frequency, process and outcomes of the use of these provisions.

Finally, the project is also undertaking a set of supporting activities to further the work on transparency & accountability. An important aspect of this is to liaise with various departments and the district government to ensure there is overall acceptance of and support for the interventions.

## **The Community Health Protection Programme**

While the CSSP project was being outlined, Save the Children undertook several studies to better understand the main causes for children being out of school, placed into work, and generally not adequately cared for by their parents. It was found that household stress and shock caused by ill-health is very high in the area and a key factor contributing to vulnerability of children as parents try to cope with the situation. The government health care system is not adequately responding to the situation. Consequently, it was decided that it would be advantageous to introduce a community-based health insurance programme to understand whether this could help households to better withstand a health shock or stress.

The Community Health Protection Programme (CHPP) is a combination of preventive health care and community-based health insurance. The idea is to minimize health incidences at household level and also set up a support system so that people do not resort to negative coping mechanisms that will have an adverse impact on children (particularly resulting in child labour) and impoverish the household more generally. The basis of CHPP is three pronged:

**Right information for right treatment** – A team of para health workers handle the 24X7 helpline to refer the enrolled members to an empanelled hospital where they get quality and cost effective treatment.

**Reducing out of pocket expenses** – This includes the community-based health insurance product in which the enrolled members pay a premium of Rs.120 per person and can avail of a maximum of Rs.12000 coverage for the family.

**Preventive health care** – A series of activities such as guidance centres for primary health check ups, referrals, health-check up camps and health talks are organized on a regular basis.

The Community Health Protection Programme is carried out in partnership with PEDO (Peoples' Education and Development Organisation). This NGO has a strong presence in the community and has developed an extensive network of federated Self Help Groups (SHGs) across the district, which forms the base for CHPP. Technical support is provided by Uplift, a Pune based organisation experienced in community-based health protection.

CHPP is a community-based health insurance-cum-health service initiative that provides comprehensive health protection and support to its members and is also owned by them. The initiative is gradually picking up with more members enrolling. There is growing local ownership and the aim is to gradually work towards CHPP becoming a financially sustainable programme, wholly managed by the SHG federations. Viable strategies for enrolling non-SHG members in the programme are being analysed and considered.



## 4

## LINKING SOCIAL PROTECTION WITH CHILD SENSITIVITY

It is evident that gaining access to a social protection programme is not enough to ensure that parents and other caregivers take care of the well-being of their children. Locally enforced perceptions and trends, coupled with limited understanding by parents on child development issues, play a major role in promoting practices and decisions that adversely impact children's lives. A series of internal and external studies in the community resulted in a comprehensive understanding of the need for combining improved access to social protection with enhanced sensitivity among parents and other key adults towards children's development needs and rights.

The CSSP project in Dungarpur has adopted a two-pronged approach for promoting child sensitivity related to social protection. One approach is based on targeting specific groups of deprived or vulnerable children and the other approach is to work with child sensitivity linked to selected social protection schemes. The two approaches are explained in more detail below.

### 4.1 Target group based approach to CSSP

A target group based approach to CSSP means that the work is designed as a package of interventions based on social protection and child sensitivity to improve the situation of specific target groups of children.

#### Child labour, school drop outs and children who are irregular in school

Dungarpur has a large number of children who engage temporarily or permanently in labour, instead

of attending school. Household economics, parental attitudes, pull factors as well as peer pressure, all add up to reinforce the trend of child labour. The focus of the CSSP project is to work with children who have recently become child labourers with the objective of getting them back to school, as well as work with children who are at risk of becoming subsumed into this group; primarily this includes children who are irregular in school and children who engage in seasonal labour.

Parents and other caregivers are the key decision-makers when it comes to child labour and education. Therefore, intensive efforts are required to influence their perceptions and behaviour to deal with this phenomenon. The project undertakes group discussions on a hamlet or neighbourhood basis and has also introduced a set of parenting sessions with selected parents from the target group. In some cases, a series of household visits and regular follow-ups are required to have closer interactions with parents and children. The sensitisation work is focused on the rights and needs of children, the importance of education, and the ill-effects of child labour. A key argument among parents is to rationalize child labour as stemming from their vulnerable economic condition. To counter argue this, the CSSP project has developed a simple cost benefit analysis calculation of sending children for labour vs. keeping them in school and accessing various social protection programmes that are available for school going children. The economic calculation has proven to be an effective tool in communication with parents. The staff also supports eligible parents and children to access social protection that they are entitled to, by referring them to the concerned department or Panchayat.

Besides working with the above mentioned key stakeholders, the project also undertakes a set of complementary activities aimed at raising awareness and changing practices related to child labour and school attendance more broadly. Some of the activities are linked to the school, as it can play a key role in retaining children and preventing labour - annual enrolment drive to promote children to join school; sensitization sessions in the school; promoting teacher-household interactions; and summer camps and other sessions for children outside the school. There is a partnership with the Department of Education, which has issued letters to all schools to collaborate with the CSSP project. Collaboration with the Department of Police has resulted in the setting up of check posts at critical places along the border of Rajasthan and Gujarat to prevent middlemen from transporting children across the border at night. An Anti-Child Labour Campaign was organized by Save the Children in

2013 in Dungarpur to identify children who were not in school, but working. With the help of the panchayat, parents were pressurized to bring back their working children to school. Several departments supported the campaign.

### Malnourished children

Child malnutrition is rampant in Dungarpur due to a range of reasons including lack of knowledge on nutrition, parental neglect, harmful traditional practices, non-availability of nutritious food and poor quality of the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS), which is the government department set up to promote early childhood care and development through a combination of food transfers, health and referral services.

CSSP adopts a multipronged approach to address the issue of malnourishment. Firstly, the capacity of



Photo: Harish Chanderiya

ICDS workers is developed on malnutrition, its causes and remedies. There is regular onsite support by the CSSP team at the centre, especially during the Mother and Child Health and Nutrition Day. Secondly, the project supports behaviour change communication interventions with parents, especially mothers, with the help of a set of communication tools.

Save the Children also supports the ICDS department to carry out screening of children for malnutrition. Subsequently, children identified as SAM (Severely Acutely Malnourished) are referred to the Malnutrition Treatment Centre (MTC) in Dungarpur. The purpose of this initiative is to improve the identification of malnutrition and the functioning of related referral and follow up services. Close collaboration with the Health and ICDS departments is necessary to achieve systemic change to combat malnutrition.

## 4.2 Scheme-based approach to CSSP

Besides working with social protection and child-sensitivity based on the target groups discussed above, the CSSP project is also working directly with two government social protection programmes to enable them to better respond to children's development needs and rights. Palanhar Yojana and the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) are programmes that can both make sizable contributions to reduce vulnerability of children and realise children's rights, if designed and delivered in a child-sensitive manner. The CSSP project in Dungarpur has initiated this work recently and is in the process of testing different approaches.

### Palanhar Yojana – Caregiver scheme

The Government of Rajasthan has introduced the cash transfer programme 'Palanhar Yojana' with an objective of supporting orphans and other vulnerable children to grow up in a family setting.

Based on substantial interactions with children as well as adults who are part of the scheme, it became clear to Save the Children that simply providing cash is not enough to ensure improved well-being of the targeted children. Save the Children is therefore in the process of trying to demonstrate to the government how the scheme can have a greater impact by introducing caregiver strengthening and developing life skills of children, together with engagement of the school and other institutions that are responsible for orphans and vulnerable children. The work is based on a series of steps that are needed to develop an approach that can eventually be replicated across, as well as beyond the district.

- A brief assessment of the well-being of selected orphans whose caregivers are receiving Palanhar Yojana was carried out in 2011 by Save the Children. The findings suggested that many orphans live in a state of social, emotional and physical deprivation.
- A needs assessment of caregivers and a broad framework for implementing caregiver strengthening was conducted in 2013.
- Draft manuals were developed in 2013 for enhancing the role of caregivers as well as for developing the overall well-being of Palanhar children.
- The CSSP project engaged a set of dedicated social workers in 2014 to take the sessions forward with the help of an experienced facilitator. The different sessions of the manuals are being tested and refined and will be finalised by the end of 2014.
- A system to monitor the well-being of Palanhar children will be developed by the CSSP project with key institutions involved with the programme at village level, i.e the school and Integrated Child Development Services.



## Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA)

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) is one of the largest social protection programmes in the world. It aims to provide the rural poor with 100 days of guaranteed wage employment in a financial year<sup>11</sup>. Although it is generally agreed that MGNREGA has contributed towards reducing vulnerability and increasing purchasing power of the poor in many parts of rural India, the scheme is also fraught with multiple problems; the most notable being lack of comprehensive understanding among the poor about their entitlements, corruption, delays in implementation, and absence of worksite facilities.

In Dungarpur, however, MGNREGA has performed exceedingly well – most of the households have job cards and employment opportunities are more or less being provided to households in accordance with the Act. Unfortunately, the scheme falters on addressing appropriate care for children while parents (mostly mothers) are at the worksite. This has resulted in small children being left unattended at home or in siblings dropping out of school to take on the childcare role. Instances of child labour have also been found at the MGNREGA work sites. To combat this trend, Save the Children has initiated collaboration with the district administration and selected Panchayats to make MGNREGA more child-sensitive. To date, the work has involved the following:

- Planning with the district administration to use MGNREGA funds to develop a crèche facility at selected ICDS centres, as extensive discussions have revealed that women do not want to take their children to the work site crèches. These have not been provided as yet but are stipulated under the scheme.
- Another suggestion, which is being discussed with the district government, is to introduce maternity leave benefits to mothers so that they can stay at home to take care of infants.
- A participatory planning process has been adopted as part of the CSSP project to explore how panchayats can be involved in ensuring that there is no child labour at the MGNREGA sites along with how child labour can be prevented more broadly in the villages. A few panchayats have evolved norms against child labour, which they are introducing in the community and around which they are building consensus. Save the Children is facilitating this and aims to gradually recommend how the learnings can be scaled up as part of the MGNREGA programme.
- Linked to the initiative above, Save the Children is introducing child sensitivity sessions at selected work sites: these are related to child labour, education and promotion of ICDS services. The idea is to see how and what types of communication can be effective in ensuring that MGNREGA has a positive impact on children's education, nutrition and health.
- Save the Children has prepared a policy paper on how to make MGNREGA more child sensitive. The recommendations are being discussed with the state government.

<sup>11</sup> [http://nrega.nic.in/netnrega/WriteReaddata/Circulars/Operational\\_guidelines\\_4thEdition\\_eng\\_2013.pdf](http://nrega.nic.in/netnrega/WriteReaddata/Circulars/Operational_guidelines_4thEdition_eng_2013.pdf)

## 5

## INFLUENCING GOVERNMENT SOCIAL PROTECTION PROGRAMMING

The CSSP project is and will be using experiences and learnings emerging from specific initiatives and observations in the field to advocate with the state government to improve social protection for the benefit of poor children.

To give an example, in the initial stages of the project, the team prepared a study on child poverty in the district that led to the plight of child headed households being highlighted by media. The state government then approached Save the Children to seek more information on child headed households to consider how they can be included in the Palanhar scheme. Another advocacy initiative of the project is the preparation of a paper on the limitations in the design and delivery of 10 child focused social protection schemes with recommendations for improvement. The observations and recommendations were

presented at a district level workshop in April 2014 that included the participation of Government departments, NGOs and media. The conclusions of the workshop will be presented to different departments in the state capital later this year.

As the work with MGNREGA, Palanhar Yojana and other specific initiatives progresses, the project will prepare short briefing notes with experiences, evidence and recommendations to the state government on how the programmes can be improved to ensure better impact on poor and vulnerable children.

The CSSP project has close linkages with local and state level media. Case studies are submitted by the project to newspapers on a regular basis and people working for newspapers and radio also visit the project.

## 6 HOW DOES IT ADD UP FOR CHILDREN?

Positive results are streaming in to show that CSSP could be a key strategy to combat child poverty and vulnerability in Dungarpur. Below are a few examples of impact on children. Numbers demonstrating achievements are given in other documents<sup>12</sup>.



### Addressing malnutrition

**BHARAT** is a one and half year old boy who was identified by the project staff as severely and acutely malnourished. His parents had been spending a large amount of money on consulting faith healers to improve his condition, which only worsened. He has now been treated at the Malnutrition Treatment Centre and a community health worker (ASHA) is regularly following up with Bharat and his family.

Photo: Swati Barla

<sup>12</sup> Quarterly and Annual Reports of the projects



## Improving lives of orphaned children



**REKHA** was 7 years old when her father succumbed to Tuberculosis. Rekha's mother married another man, but while delivering her third child she died in childbirth. Rekha and her younger sister came to live with their paternal grandparents. Although Rekha was enrolled in school she was irregular as various chores were expected of her. CSSP field staff identified the sisters as orphaned children, irregular in school, during a child vulnerability mapping exercise

The field staff began sensitising the grandparents, i.e. the caregivers, about the need for the girls to be in school and that they could avail of the Palanhar cash transfer scheme. The girls now attend school regularly and their Palanhar application has been sanctioned.

Photo: Asha Damor



Photo: Swati Baria

## Reducing child labour

**SUMAN** is a 13-year-old girl who has been working in the infamous BT cotton fields in Gujarat where exploitation and abuse is a part of everyday life for children. Suman has also been substituting for her mother at the MGNREGA site in Dungarpur, when she has been ill or had to stay at home to take care of younger children.

With concerted effort, the CSSP field staff has been able to convince Suman's mother that Suman will benefit from school in the long run and that the value of the social protection schemes that can be availed of when Suman is in school is not much less than what she would earn through child labour.



Photo: Harish Chanderiya





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