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Policy and Legal Framework for an Integrated Child Protection Scheme in Haryana

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Abstract

Integrated Child Protection Scheme initially a centrally sponsored program, is configured in order to offer a holistic, rights-based child protection intervention, including preventive, protective, rehabilitative and reintegration services, under essential legislations like the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 and the POCSO Act, 2012. The Paper examines the policy and legal framework of the Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS) in Haryana. By applying the analytical “Theory of Change” (ToC) the research used secondary data sources such as state-level adaptations and government reports, policy documents and scholarly literature to evaluate national provisions and state-level adaptations within Haryana. The study maps the implementation structure of ICPS in Haryana where institutions are identified, including the Haryana State Child Protection Society (HSCPS), the District Child Protection Units (DCPUs), the Child Welfare Committee’s (CWCs), and the Child Care Institutions (CCIs). Through the Theory of Change framework, it follows the pathway of policy- legal inputs to the desired results including child rehabilitation and long-term safety. Although the findings reveal that there have been improvement’s in the establishment of institutions, creation of awareness campaigns and service delivery, there are still large gaps in human resources, poor monitoring systems, rural-urban gap, and inadequate evaluation of outcome based basis. The paper contends that

such loopholes interfere with the causal premises of the Theory of Change, which leads to a lack of correlation between policy formulation and its real effect. It ends with some evidence-based reforms, such as enhancing surveillance, working on institutional capacity, better inter-sectoral coordination, and rural outreach.

Keywords: *Integrated Child Protection Scheme, ICPS Haryana, Theory of Change, Juvenile Justice Act 2015, Child Welfare Committees, POCSO Act, 2012, DCPU Capacity*

Introduction

Situation on child protection in India has had long-standing vulnerable points, especially in such states as Haryana, where socioeconomic conditions worsen the conditions of abuse and neglect and exploitation against children. A multi-faceted rights-based approach to these challenges, the Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS) introduced in 2009-10 as a flagship centrally sponsored program under the Ministry of Women and Child Development, includes a national response to these challenges. The ICPS is operationalised under the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 (as an amendment to the Juvenile Justice Act, 2000), to convert the welfare-based custodial approach to a comprehensive model that focuses on preventing, protecting, rehabilitating, and reintegrating juveniles. Haryana has its own adaptations in the form of Haryana State Child Protection Society (HSCPS), District Child Protection Units (DCPUs) in every district of the state (21 districts), and

78 registered Child Care Institutions (CCIs) that cater to around 4000 children per year (State Government of Haryana, 2009).

The program incorporates the complementary laws, including Protection of Children against Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012, requiring fast-track courts and reporting systems, and is consistent with the obligations of India regarding the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Institutional care (e.g. Observation Homes in Ambala and Hisar, Special Homes in Sonapat) and non-institutional care such as foster care, sponsorship and adoption through the State Adoption Resource Agency (SARA) are financed by ICPS of which 90% is central and 40% state. Inventory of secondary reporting has seen Haryana run the first state-wide POCSO sensitization training targeting 263,148 individuals and address 1,122 cases in 2016 and regular inspections (126 state-level) to guarantee compliance. However, continued implementation lapses

compromise this architecture: human resource gaps in CWCs/JJBs cause delays in the case process; rural/urban disparities inhibit the DCPU outreach; and ineffective monitoring systems conceal the outcome tracking (Sharma, 2014).

It is this fundamental issue of the gap between the high-stakes policy- legal standards and the efficacy of ground-level performance that this paper will adopt the Theory of Change as its analytical approach to this issue. One strategic planning and evaluation tool, Theory of Change follows the cause and effect pattern of inputs (e.g., JJ Act mandates, Rs. 2,000 monthly maintenance grants per child) to activities (e.g., CWC dispositions, vocational training) to outputs (e.g., CCI covering), short-term outcomes (e.g., family restoration), and long-term effects (e.g., safer child environments) (Ministry of Law and Justice, 2015). Theory of Change in ICPS-Haryana presents assumptions such as the inter-sectoral convergence (with ICDS, NGOs) and community strengthening and contains gaps such as unverifiable results caused by the lack of data. Methodology is based on earlier policy analysis and systems theory application in work, and it would allow looking at the decentralized implementation through a prism. The Objective of the study is analyzing the child protection system of Haryana under

ICPS and examine the policy-legal mapping, Theory of Change model and critical secondary analysis to consider gaps such as Human Resources shortages and rural disparities. Such structure is in support of evidence-friendly policy recommendations, while being aligned on social policy evaluation in India.

Scope and Methodology

This review paper based on secondary sources including official documents (e.g., Haryana WCD portal, national ICPS framework), policy review (e.g., Sharma 2014), institutional reports and theoretical literature (e.g., World Vision Theory of change). The Haryana spotlight sheds light on the disparities between states in the federal system of child protection in India with a focus on the decentralized forms such as block-based DCPUs and 24 open shelters of street children. The paper is able to assess structural robustness as well as map evidence-based reforms pathways by using Theory of Change, as part of the scholarly body of research on child rights in India in the realm of public policy.

Literature Review

In the literature on Indian child protective system, the development was marked with a gradual, or gradual and disjointed, transformation, and ICPS was the backbone of major legislation. This review summarizes the secondary data to

put national laws, studies specific to Haryana, and the use of theories into perspective, which implies that the Theory of Change bridges intention and outcomes of policy.

National Context

The child protection regime of India is based on Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 (JJ Act) which supplanted the 2000 one to prioritize restorative justice over punishment. It classifies children into Need of Care and Protection (CNCP) as orphans, abused, or abandoned, and Conflict with Law (CCL) which requires Child Welfare Committees (CWCs) in the former and Juvenile Justice Boards (JJBs) in the latter. These are funded by ICPS through institutional (CCIs) and non-institutional (foster care) services with a monthly treatment of Rs. 2,000 per child (Ministry of Law and Justice, 2015). In complement to this is the Protection of Children against Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012, which criminalizes sexual abuse, with child friendly procedures, fast track courts and mandatory reporting being mandated within ICPS as part of the awareness and support requirements (MWCD, 2009).

These are in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989) which was ratified by India in 1992 and in its focus on the rights

to survival, protection and participation (UNICEF, 1989). UNCRC principles are specifically incorporated into ICPS guidelines and seek to strengthen families and deinstitutionalize orphanages (BalRakshaBharat, 2024). Secondary assessment, as of national mappings, reports on successes, e.g. nationwide CWC/JJB arrangements, but criticizes the lack of sufficient funds and timeliness, with 60-70 percent case disposition rates (MWCD, 2009).

Haryana Studies

The implementation of the ICPS in Haryana, through Haryana State Child Protection Society (HSCPS) and District Child Protection Unit (DCPU) adjusts the national models to the local requirements. There are 78 CCIs (government, semi-government, NGO-run) and an approximately equal number of children (4,000) in 21 districts/47 blocks, 4 Observation Homes (Ambala, Hisar, Faridabad boys, Karnal girls), 1 Special Home (Sonapat, functional 2016) and 24 open shelters of street/working children. Among the services are adoption through the State Adoption Resource Agency (SARA), Juvenile Justice Fund, and POCSO camps (1,871 events, 263,148 people by 2017) (State Government of Haryana, 2009).

An SSRN-published review by Sharma (2014) explores the topic of ICPS

in the context of socioeconomic vulnerability, as it complements the strengths of government-civil society relations as long as children have homes (such as Children/Observation/Special Homes), but ICPS does not cover vulnerable children (e.g., laborers, victims of trafficking, etc.). The institutional analysis of WCD Haryana focuses on monitoring (126 state, 385 district) and training (NIPCCD programs), but reports provisional registrations of four CCIs and HR shortages (Sharma, 2014).

Theoretical Lens

ICPS can be considered through Theory of Change, which can be described as a causal process: legal inputs (JJ/POCSO Acts) → activities (CWC/JJB operations, camps) → outputs (CCI services) → outcomes (reintegration) → impacts (child safety). It is used to overcome assumptions such as convergence of stakeholders to expose Theory of Change data verification gaps and scalability. This is connected with the existing systems theory applications, in which ICPS-Haryana is an input-output system (funding input → DCPUs input protections) and feedback through inspections - which fits your thesis of policy evaluation (WorldVision, 2014). In general, the literature confirms the comprehensive nature of ICPS but demands Theory of Change-based changes

to resolve the evidentiary gaps, which preconditions Haryana-driven analysis.

Theoretical Framework: Theory of Change

The Theory of Change (ToC) is the analytical clarifying tool of this review paper, providing a stringent evidence-based prism through which the manner in which the Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS) in Haryana converts legal-policy inputs into practical child safety outputs can be assessed. Theory of Change is a rational, broad-based model which states the causal mechanisms between interventions and impacts and explicitly creates an assumption, precondition, and situational mapping. In contrast to linear assessments, Theory of Change puts focus on testable assumptions, which makes it possible to criticize the reasons policies fail or work, which is essential to secondary-data assessment of decentralized programs such as ICPS (Taplin & Clark, 2012).

Theory of Change in child protection is not about isolated actions (e.g. institutional placements), but systemic change, which is congruent with the principles of UNCRC prevention over cure. In the case of ICPS-Haryana, it breaks down the black box of implementation by identifying the manner in which national requirements are aligned

to state realities within the limits of available resources (WorldVision, 2014).

Definition and Core Logic

Theory of Change refers to a specific model of pathways of activities within the ICPS where the children are taken to the Child Welfare Committee (CWC) to obtain the Children in Need of Care and Protection (CNCP) dispositions, which are then connected to long-term outcomes such as reintegrating the family and making them less vulnerable (Singh, 2024). It assumes: When inputs are fixed and the activities well implemented then the outputs will follow resulting in quantifiable results with given assumptions. This is a response to typical traps in policy, such as excessive use of custodial care without rehabilitation follow-up.

Application of ICPS in Haryana

Theory of Change maps national ICPS to state adaptations: The flow of JJ Act inputs to HSCPS/DCPUs (47 blocks) to local outputs such as Observation Homes (Ambala, Hisar). Secondary data validates improvements (e.g., all CCIs JJ-registered) but opens up weaknesses, that is, uneven rural application breaks the results, and state-specific adjustments should be made, e.g., Juvenile Justice Fund scaling. This is a complement to the previous systems theory interconnections, where ICPS is an adaptive input-output-

feedback system, where ICPS inputs are (legal) laws processed through activities (services) to provide protections, and inspections are corrective loops (Wilkinson, Hills, Johnson, & Penn, 2021). The paper focuses on Theory of Change by evaluating the logic of the framework along with Haryana evidence and proposes the reforms based on the evidence: such practices as data-driven monitoring to determine verifiable impacts.

Policy and Legal Framework

The child protection system in India has a strong statutory basis that is demonstrated through the Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS), which seeks to operationalise the major laws by being able to provide specific funding and service delivery. This part outlines national pillars and the contextual adaptations of Haryana which solely relies on secondary policy documents, guidelines, and reviews to highlight the design of the framework and its implementation (Bordoloi, Farooqui, & Kapur, 2021).

National Foundations

The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act of 2015 (JJ Act) is its foundation and it re-categorizes children as Children in Need of Care and Protection (CNCP) and Children in Conflict with Law (CCL) with a focus on

rehabilitation and not retribution. It requires CNCP (disposition) and Juvenile Justice Boards (JJBs) (inquiry) requiring the cases of heinous offenses to exclude children below 16 years of age. ICPS is the major source of funds, as it receives 60 percent of central and 40 percent state funding on institutional care (Child Care Institutions, CCIs), non-institutional options (foster care, sponsorship), emergency outreach, and capacity strengthening. Supplementary laws such as the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012, align through the obligatory reporting and support connections, and assure an entitlement-based spectrum in regard to UNCRC requirements (NJA, 2018; Sadiq & Rai, 2025).

Haryana Specifics

Haryana does this through state specific institutions: the Haryana State Child Protection Society (HSCPS) is a body that coordinates the state wide implementation; the State Adoption Resource Agency (SARA) is an entity that facilitates track able adoptions; and the District Child Protection Units (DCPUs) are units in all 21 districts which deal with local vulnerabilities such as child labor in brick kilns. Funding will contain Rs. 2,000 maintenance grants of each child monthly in CCIs, a Juvenile Justice Fund in emergencies and infrastructure. They

bifurcate the services into institutional (CCIS in residential care) and non-institutional (aftercare, foster care, sponsorship programs) with the family reintegration given priority according to JJ Act standards (Khaira, 2016; MWCD, 2009).

Institutional Structure

The decentralized structure of Haryana resembles that of national ICPS, but fits the area demographics at the level of urban centre and rural blocks.

State Level: HSCPS offers supervision, policy development and training through NIPCCD modules; CWCs and JJBs operate in all the districts which are headed by the top level officials. District/Block Level: DCPUs are in charge of service planning; inter-departmental convergence (e.g. with police, health) is enforced by a committee headed by the Deputy Commissioner. Some of the key facilities are Observation Homes (Ambala, Hisar (boys); Karnal (girls); Special Homes (Sonipat, active since 2016); and aftercare facilities. Coverage 78 CCIs (government, NGO-managed) have 47 blocks, and cover some 4,000 children; 24 open shelters are aimed at street and working children (State Government of Haryana, 2009 (GOH, 2020)). This hierarchy helps in Theory of Change advancement of state inputs to block level outputs.

According to secondary reports, there has been actual improvement: Institutionalization: 78 CCIs registered under JJ Act, 2015; all functional homes such as Sonipat Special Home operationalised. Awareness: Haryana was the first state to hold POCSO campaigns throughout the state (1,871 events, 263,148 participants as of 2017). Capacity: Processed 1,122 POCSO cases in 2016; 126 state-level audits and 385 district audits were conducted to make sure that all were in compliance (Ministry of Law and Justice, 2015).

Challenges and Gaps

Nevertheless, despite improvements, it has been revealed in reviews that there are structural weaknesses in the system:

Implementation

Case delays are due to human resource shortages (e.g. unoccupied CWC/JJB posts); and rural-urban distances restrict access of DCPU to remote blocks. Theory of Change Critique: Poor connections between outputs (CCI beds) and outcomes (abuse reduction), which are manifested in the monitoring deficit and unconfirmed reintegration data. Funding/Coordination: underutilization of grants, haphazard NGO-government relationships are barriers to convergence (Chakraborty, Yadav, B, & Kaur, 2023; Sharma, 2014). Such gaps break the

assumptions of Theory of Change, highlighting the necessity of the evidentiary reforms in your thesis background.

Suggestions

Evidence-based monitoring with digitised case-tracking systems of CWCs/JJBs is a priority area that the policymakers of Haryana ICPS should undergo to bolster the Theory of Change with real-time confirmation of outputs (e.g. CCI occupancy) to outcomes (e.g. reintegration success rates). This deals with pathway disturbances such as unsolicited family restorations, expansion on secondary criticism of insufficiency of data. Meanwhile, DCPU capacity building (through compulsory NIPCCD training of the entire staff and hiring of social work specialists) would enhance operations like POCSO case management, which would counter HR shortages that were seen in 2016.

Policy-wise, it is necessary to raise the amount of funding over Rs. 2,000/child/month, aiming at increasing Juvenile Justice Fund by half to expand open shelters in rural blocks. The incorporation of the NGOs through formalized agreements with HSCPS would improve non-institutional services such as foster care, which would cause convergence of sectors as postulated in Theory of Change. Disparities are reduced

with rural focus - mobile DCPUs are deployed to high-risk locations such as Hisar and Sirsa, which is in accordance with the requirements of the JJ Act of equitable access.

This study ought to be preceded by future research, which will include post-2020 evaluations, using the revised WCD reports to challenge Theory of Change assumptions in the context of COVID-19 disruptions. Abuse reductions in longitudinal studies on the outcomes of deinstitutionalization,

Conclusion

The ICPS framework of Haryana portrays a strong Theory of Change oriented design based on the JJ Act foundations, HSCPS/DCPU structure and services to 4,000 children but remains behind the curve in HR, monitoring and rural equity as has been continuously noted by Sharma (2014) using secondary data and state reports. Such loopholes undermine causal connections between the inputs and impacts highlighting the importance of the evidentiary reforms instead of the symbolic expansions. The implications are unparalleled: Theory of Change driven improvements would take Haryana ICPS to the next level of being a prototype of child rights realisation where preventative and family-based protective measures are undertaken as mandated by UNCRC. This helps close the policy

practice gaps to enhance the effectiveness of the public policy, which directly contributes to your thesis of ICPS effectiveness in vulnerable settings.

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