

POLICY  
BRIEF

## Bal Sangopan Yojana (BSY)

### ABSTRACT

This Policy Brief provides an analysis of the on-ground implementation of Bal Sangopan Yojana (BSY) in Maharashtra and presents key actionable recommendations to address the gaps that emerge from the analysis. The Brief is based on review of existing evidence and interviews with those who had tried to access these schemes, conducted at three different locations in Maharashtra - Panvel, Raigad district (urban, peri-urban), Kagal, Kolhapur district (rural) and Chikhaldara, Amravati district (tribal). Detailed Briefs on other schemes aimed at providing support and protection to children and women during pregnancy and a Summary Policy Brief form part of this 6 part series..

## BACKGROUND

Bal Sangopan Yojana is an innovative scheme launched by the Government of Maharashtra in the year 1995, aimed at children (up to 18 years of age) in crises including orphans, destitute, homeless, and children caught in other crises, as an alternative to institutional care, providing them nurturing family-like environment through foster care along with social assistance in the form of educational support. After 2009, the scheme was made part of the centrally-sponsored Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS). In 2013, the ambit of the scheme was expanded to include children of single parents or parents who are unable to take care of the children; children in crisis-ridden families and school-dropouts/child labour.<sup>1</sup> As per the revised norms (2021)<sup>2</sup> under the scheme and the additions made to it in the context of COVID-19 (2021),<sup>3</sup> **children orphaned (both parents not alive) due to COVID-19**, whether residing in care of relatives or institutions, are provided a lump sum term deposit of Rs. 5 lakhs (with interest on completion of 21 years of age); a monthly support grant of Rs. 1100; assistance for education up to 18 years of age. The term-deposit component has been effectively discontinued because of lack of funds, although it has not been officially withdrawn. **Children orphaned for other reasons** are provided a monthly support grant of Rs. 1100. The NGOs/voluntary organisations which bear the responsibility of monitoring the well-being of children placed in non-institutional care by making bi-monthly visits to children placed under non-institutional care are provided Rs. 125/- per child. The grants to the NGOs have been capped at 100 children. The number of children enrolled under BSY increased from 15,887 in 2011<sup>4</sup> to 18,000 in 2013<sup>5</sup> and then showed a decline to 17,394 in 2015-16 and 13,089 in 2017-18.<sup>6</sup> The income limit under the scheme limits it to those with annual income of less than Rs. 21,000 per annum.

## Present Challenges

### Non-Institutional Care

In terms of the non-institutional care component of the scheme, a review of the scheme undertaken in 2018 by UNICEF-Maharashtra and IIPS on behalf of the Government of Maharashtra identified the limited role given to the NGOs as a bottleneck in the slow take-up of the scheme. The review also noted considerable delay in transfer of the support amount as a serious shortcoming of the scheme. A recent review of implementation of the scheme in Mumbai conducted in the context of COVID-19 cited the restriction placed on the number of children for which the NGOs can receive grants and the inadequacy of the grant itself (in comparison with the tedious process of enrollment, verification and maintenance of records), as the reason why more NGOs are reluctant to become part of the scheme, and why the coverage of the scheme has not shown improvement.<sup>8</sup> YUVA's recent field experience indicates that even these grants are not being released on time.

Additionally, the review also revealed that the scheme also suffered from lack of attention and allocation of resources within the department. Moreover, in several districts the meetings of Child Welfare Committees' which examine the suitability of entrusting children in crisis to institutional or non-institutional care, are not held frequently, which leads to extreme delays in the process.

### Social Assistance

The caretakers we interviewed were all women, (mothers or grandmothers) who were struggling to make ends meet on their own because of low levels of their earnings. The death of the parent(s) of the child-in-care, in many instances had entailed not just loss of an earning member(s) but also heavy debt responsibilities. Amidst these challenges, the caretakers found the scheme very useful, since the monthly grant was being used for payment of school fees of the child in care.

But several challenges faced by the target groups in accessing the scheme were also highlighted during the

interviews. Firstly, the awareness about the scheme is limited, and in absence of facilitation by NGOs, most of the interviewees wouldn't have come to know about the scheme. Secondly, the applications for the scheme need to be submitted to the block offices or district offices and then the follow-up in case of delays or non-response is also required to be done at the district office, which makes it difficult as well as costly for the applicants (guardians or single parents in most instances) to track the status of applications. There is no digital system to manage these applications.

The delay in disbursements of entitlements, as highlighted by previous reviews, continues to undermine the objectives of the scheme. The average time taken for verification of documents, sanction of applications and commencement of monthly grants was reported to be 3 months. In some areas, for example in Amravati district, all the 50 applications filed between January-April 2022 under the scheme remained pending.

Certain parameters of the scheme also restrict the eligibility pool of the scheme too narrowly and are also perceived to be inadequate in comparison to the increasing needs of the child-in-care. The annual income limit for the scheme is observed to be too low (at INR 21,000 per year) which excludes several families who desperately need such support. With increase in the age of the child, the monthly grant amount becomes insufficient for meeting even basic educational expenses. Currently the monthly payment is made till the age of 18 years which means that the responsibility of higher education would have to be borne solely by the single parent or the guardians, which can be a challenge for most of them.

### Actionable Recommendations

1. It should be ensured that the meetings of Child Welfare Committees are held at regular intervals.
2. To ensure the involvement of a greater number of NGOs in the non-institutional care component of the scheme, the grants given to the NGOs should be increased, and timely release of grants should be ensured

3. Apart from creation of wider awareness about the programme through necessary IEC activities, periodic surveys can be conducted by AWW to identify potential families/children who can benefit from the scheme (and AWW can be suitably incentivized for this work) or the responsibility could also be given to the local panchayats as well as school teachers who can also provide awareness about the scheme, since they are the most- well placed to know about such children.
4. The average time taken for the process (verification, sanction and commencement) should be brought down to less than 1 month. In addition to the paper-based applications, an online system of accepting and tracking status of the application should be made available.
5. The monthly grant amount should be revised upwards with an increasing sum being fixed for increasing age brackets. The possibility of continuing the monthly payment till at least the undergraduate-level degree education of the child should be considered by the government.
6. The annual income limit for the scheme should be raised to INR 50,000 for children being raised by single parents and INR2,00,000 for children being raised by guardians.
7. For children who have lost both parents due to COVID-19, the components of Bal Sangopan Yojana should be dovetailed with the PM CARES for Children Scheme which has a much wider set of measures to ensure comprehensive care and protection of such children.

## Endnotes

- 1 | Department of Women and Child Development, Government Resolution No. BaalSan-2011/Pra.Kra.313/Ka-8 dated 9 Oct 2013.
- 2 | Department of Women and Child Development, Government Resolution No. RiTaPi-2018/Pra.Kra-210/Ka-06 dated 6 April 2021.
- 3 | Department of Women and Child Development, Government Resolution No. Anaathi-2021/Pra.Kra-49/Ka-03 dated 17 June 2021.
- 4 | Minutes of the 12th meeting of Project Approval Board for Integrated Child Protection Scheme held on 17th February, 2011, Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India.
- 5 | See, fn 1 above.
- 6 | International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS) and UNICEF, Maharashtra (2018). Mapping of Social Protection Schemes in Maharashtra: A Desk Review, Maharashtra, India.
- 7 | Ibid.
- 8 | All India Institute of Local Self-Governance, Regional Centre for Urban and Environmental Studies (RCUES)-Mumbai and UNICEF-Maharashtra. (2021). Exploring Urban Governance and Social Protection in light of Covid-19 in Mumbai, Part-1, Maharashtra, India.
- 9 | Ministry of Women and Child, Government of India (2021), PM CARES for Children, Scheme Guidelines (05.10.2021), New Delhi, India.



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