

Rural Development and Panchayati Raj Department

Government of Rajasthan

Child Friendly Panchayat Initiative

Handbook



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States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child

For this purpose, the child shall in particular be provided the opportunity to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting the child, either directly, or through a representative or an appropriate body, in a manner consistent with the procedural rules of national law consistent with the procedural rules of national law

Article 12, Convention on the Rights of the Child

Preface

The Ministry of Panchayati Raj (MoPR), Government of India, acknowledging the role of Panchayati Raj Institutions in creating a conducive environment for the healthy growth and development of children issued directions for the constitution of a 'Child Friendly Panchayat Award' in 2019.

On 20th November 2019, the Rural Development and Panchayati Raj Department (RDPR), Government of Rajasthan, committing to institutionalize children's participation in local governance launched the Child Friendly Panchayat Initiative (CFPI) in the State. Constitution of Bal Panchayats and holding bi-annual Bal Sabhas was made mandatory and so was the constitution of Panchayat level Child Protection Committees (PLCPC) in each of the gram panchayats. The State Government also identified 12 Indicators to measure the child friendliness of a gram panchayat.

This handbook is a summary of the concept of Child Friendly Panchayat Initiative and offers a step-by-step guide for making institutions of local self-governance sensitive and responsive towards the rights of all children as enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Child (UNCRC) and further reiterated through the National Policy for Children 2013. The handbook builds upon the best practices in the implementation of child friendly initiatives in various parts of the country. It is a dynamic document and would be updated from time to time based on the lessons learnt from the practioners of this concept.

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List of Abbreviations

CFPI	Child Friendly Panchayat Initiative
CSO	Civil Society Organizations
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
GOI	Government of India
GOR	Government of Rajasthan
GPDP	Gram Panchayat Development Plan
MoPR	Ministry of Panchayati Raj
NPC	National Policy for Children
PLCPC	Panchayat Level Child Protection Committee
PIP	Project Implementation Plan
PRI	Panchayati Raj Institutions
RDPR	Rural Development and Panchayati Raj department
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child



Introduction

Child Friendly Panchayat Initiative

Background and Context

Creating a conducive atmosphere for the healthy growth and development of children has been identified as one of the core components of social development. Research has shown that one of the best means for improving a country's development status is through engagement with all dimensions of child development. It is aptly said that the well-being of children is the ultimate indicator of a safe, healthy and democratic society as well as on the quality of governance.

India, as a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Child (UNCRC), is committed to ensure that all children enjoy their right to survival, development, protection and participation. The National Policy for Children (NPC) adopted by the Government of India on 26th April 2013 re-affirms the government's commitment to the realization of the rights of all children in the country and recognizes every person below the age of eighteen years as a child. The Policy recognizes the need for strengthening child rights governance and reiterates that the realization of the prescribed rights of children depends on the response of the local governments in understanding and managing the child governance issues.

The Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) at the Gram Panchayat level are the first unit of governance that is closest to children and therefore their actions can support upholding the rights of children. Child friendly local governance therefore is a principle and practice wherein local governments play an important role in ensuring that all rights of children as prescribed in the UNCRC are progressively realized so that every child can enjoy their rights for survival, development, participation and protection. It is an approach to guarantee children's rights to all their rightful entitlements such as health, nutrition, education, safe drinking water, sanitation, protection from abuse and exploitation, social protection, etc.

In 2019, the Ministry of Panchayati Raj (MoPR), Government of India, issued directions for recognizing the efforts of Panchayati Raj Institutions in this direction through creation of 'Child Friendly Panchayat Award'. This decision is in a way positive testimony of the relevance and effectiveness of various child friendly panchayat initiatives being piloted in different parts of the country.

Following this the Rural Development and Panchayati Raj department, Government of Rajasthan, took a pioneering decision to launch an institutional process of mandating all Panchavati Raj Institutions to strive towards creating a child friendly environment in their gram panchayats ensuring that children also have an active voice and role to play in the process. Accordingly, the event on the occasion of World Children's Day on 20th November 2019 witnessed the launch of Child Friendly Panchayat Initiative (CFPI) across the state. A set of twelve indicators, which included both process and results indicators, were also identified to monitor and measure the child friendliness of gram panchayats. This important initiative is expected to create a positive environment for adopting child sensitive and responsive measures across the state.

What is Child Participation and Why It Matters in Local Governance?

Child participation can be defined as opportunities that empower children to express their views and opinions freely regarding issues and matters that affect their wellbeing. A true child participation is a transformative process wherein the power shifts from adults to children and alleviates children from the status of being passive recipients to active stakeholders having power to influence decisions that have an implication on their wellbeing. Participation is also an essence of Sustainable Development Goals; SDG 16.7 in particular emphasizes to 'ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision making at all levels.' Therefore, child participation in matters and functioning of local selfgovernance is a right in itself that would lead to the realization of other rights of children.

Rationale for the Handbook

Several good practices have emerged as a result of various stakeholders working on the issue of children both at state and national level. However, with the Panchayati Raj department deciding to establish an institutional framework for child friendly approaches at gram panchayat level it becomes imperative that a harmonized approach with a common set of actions is developed to guide the actions of concerned stakeholders. The handbook, therefore, without being prescriptive, offers a common minimum framework for supporting gram panchayats become truly child friendly. In short, the objective of the handbook is to:

- Clarify the concept and process of creating child friendly panchayats
- Mainstream Child Friendly Panchayat Initiative through a clear articulation of goals and results
- Reinforce and firmly establish the component of child participation in local governance throughout the planning, implementation and monitoring cycle of gram panchayat functioning
- Provide a clear framework for monitoring and evaluation of Child Friendly Panchayat Initiative

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By 2030, Rajasthan will be a child friendly state through establishing child responsive local self-governance processes and practices ensuring that every child, whether boy or girl, enjoys their childhood and reaches their full potential through active participation in local governance and thereby progressive realization of their rights

> - Vision of Child Friendly Panchayat Initiative

Vision

By 2030, Rajasthan will be a child friendly state through establishing child responsive local self-governance processes and practices ensuring every child, whether boy or girl, enjoys their childhood and reach their full potential through progressive realization of their rights.

Guiding Principles

The Child Friendly Panchayat Initiative (CFPI) in Rajasthan would be guided by the following five overarching principles enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Child UNCRC):

1. Non-discrimination (Article 2): It needs to be ensured that rights of all children are respected no matter who they are, where they live, what their parents do, what language they speak, what their religion is, whether they are boy or girl, what their culture is, whether they have a disability, whether they are rich or poor. Child Friendly Panchayat Initiative is all about giving each child a fair chance in life and therefore concerted efforts will be the cornerstone of the work in identifying who are the most vulnerable and marginalized children and assessing how best they can be reached and included in the development and local governance processes

2. Best interests of the child (Article 3): In the objective sense, the term "best interests of the child" pertains to the principles that are used to determine what will be best for a child in a particular circumstance. In general terms, the best interests of the child assessment is used to determine which services and orders will best serve the child. UNCRC extends this principle to cover all decisions affecting the child, i.e. the best interest of the child should be the primary consideration in all actions concerning children – not just the actions taken by the state authorities, parliamentary assemblies, and judicial bodies but also those taken by the local authorities, communities and relevant private institutions. The initiative would ensure that the best interests of the

child are a primary consideration in all actions that concern the interest of children at the local level

- 3. **Right to life, survival and development (Article 6):** Children have the right to life, survival and healthy development. The Child Friendly Panchayat Initiative would ensure that children have equitable access to all essential social services including access to social protection measures
- 4. Respect for the views of the child (Article 12): Children have the right to voice their opinions and have their opinions considered in decisions that affect them. As part of the Child Friendly Panchayat Initiative, children will be mobilized to form 'Bal Panchayat (child parliament)' and organize bi-annual 'Bal Sabhas (children assembly)'. An activity toolkit/ resource kit would ensure that children have the necessary tools that will help them assess their environment and influence local governance processes and issues affecting their well-being

5. Right to play, rest and leisure (Article 31): Children have right to relax, play and take part in wide range of cultural and artistic activities. Child Friendly Panchayat Initiative would work towards creating safe spaces for children within their communities including open spaces for play and other recreational activities

Expected Outcomes

In pursuit of above-mentioned Goal/ Vision, the Child Friendly Panchayat Initiative aspires towards the realization of the following five outcome areas:

Every child has access to quality essential services and entitlements, including social protection services

2 Every child lives in a safe, secure and clean environment

3

Every child has their voice, needs and priorities heard and taken into consideration

4 Every child has a fair chance in life

5 Every child enjoys family life, play and leisure

Linkages with Sustainable Development Goals

The Sustainable Development Goals adopted by the World in 2016 have local implications and therefore the panchayats are expected to play a crucial role in achieving these goals. Children are affected by all of these seventeen goals whether it is no poverty, quality education, reduced inequalities or climate action. Though the SDGs focus on sustainable development, they are inextricably linked to human rights in general and rights of children in particular. UNICEF highlights that the rights of children enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of Child cut across the Sustainable Development Goals and therefore the realization of these goals must consider the corresponding rights of children.

'Leaving no one behind' is the essence of SDGs and a local level governance process, if carried out with a child lens, would ensure that every child benefit and gets an opportunity to develop to its full potential. SDG 16, in particular, covers the child related responsibilities of local self-governance institutions.

The CFPI framework for action takes into account that the relevant Sustainable Development Goals, Targets and Indicators that a panchayat must aspire to achieve and accordingly would support PRIs in effectively implementing the 2030 Agenda through holistically addressing the issues related to the well-being of children.

Key Stakeholders

The Child Friendly Panchayat Initiative is led by the Panchayati Raj department, however, as it is a multisectoral initiative therefore partnerships and network building would be crucial for the success of this initiative.

For the effective implementation of the Child Friendly Panchayat Initiative the State Panchayati Raj department aims to bring together various stakeholders such as UN Agencies, Academia, Private Sector, Media, Children and child-centric organizations, etc.

The purpose of building this collaboration would be to provide necessary handholding and mentoring support to the gram panchayats for striving towards establishing child friendly policies and processes.







Process

Child Friendly Panchayat Initiative

Framework for Action

Poor developmental outcomes, lack of dedicated forum for child participation, the lop-sided focus of GPDPs on infrastructure development, lack of children's participation in local governance and inadequate coverage and quality of services including low priority accorded to child protection are some of the key issues affecting children in a typical rural setup. The proposed framework for action builds upon these five challenging problems and strives to work towards ten enabling components that are expected to accelerate progress towards realizing the five established objectives and ultimately reaching the goal of Child Friendly Panchayat Initiative. These enablers are:

- Capacity Building of PRIs on the concept and process of child participation in local governance
- Institutionalizing child participation through constituting Bal Panchayats and organizing at least bi-annual Bal Sabhas
- Development of appropriate resources of PRIs and children to meaningfully engage in the governance processes

- 4) Outreach activities by members of Bal Panchayat to understand issues and concerns of all children
- 5) Putting in place a performance-based recognition system for Gram Panchayats, which could act as an incentive and motivation to perform better
- 6) Carrying out periodic situation analysis from child lens
- 7) Participation of children in local governance
- 8) Integration of children's issues in GPDP
- 9) Creation of an enabling environment through Panchayat Level Child Protection Committee
- 10) Creating an accountability mechanism at PRI level for ensuring equitable coverage of services and entitlements for children

The framework is pictorially depicted as follows:

By 2030, Rajasthan will be a child friendly State through establishing child responsive local self-governance processes and practices ensuring that every child, whether girl or boy, enjoys their full childhood and reaches their potential through progressive realization of their rights

Goal



Step 1: Child Friendly Governance Framework and Policies

Panchayati Raj Institutions need to ensure that all aspects of their governance frameworks and policies under their control promote and protect child rights. For instance, the Gram Panchayat after review of existing labour practices may resolve to ensure that all economic as well as non-economic activities are free from child labour.

Therefore, the first step in working towards CFPI is to thoroughly review the existing processes which fall under the governance purview of PRIs and all the policies that have a local bearing and ensure that they are friendly and responsive to the needs and concerns of children.

Step 2: Constitution of Panchayat Level Child Protection Committee (PLCPC)

Rural Development and Panchayati Raj department, Government of Rajasthan, in its letter reference F22/DCR/ICPS/2017/2193 dated 18.4.2017 had ordered constitutions of Panchayat Level Child Protection Committees in all gram panchayats for creating a child friendly environment and effective implementation of child protection initiatives.

The second important step therefore would be to ensure the constitution of this committee in both letter and spirit through the identification of most suitable members. Immediately upon constitution of this committee it should be tasked to create an Action Plan and organize itself into smaller thematic groups with specific geographic responsibilities to ensure full coverage of the gram panchayat area, especially focusing on the most vulnerable pockets.

Step 3: Constitution of Bal Panchayat

The next and the most crucial step in the process is the constitution of Bal Panchayat or Children's Parliament. While adults do think and wish good for children, it is equally important to listen to children. It is therefore that a need is felt to have a dedicated forum for children to come together, discuss and place issues before adults.

Bal Panchayat is children's own space! It is a space where all children, irrespective of their age, sex, social

status could come together. As a collective, they could carry out different learning activities - to make sense of the world around them. They also learn a democratic way of functioning by selecting their Bal Panchayat representatives, who in turn would represent all the children of the village while interacting with the Gram Panchayat members. Thereby creating an opportunity for children to voice their issues and concerns, dreams and aspirations without any fear or hesitation. The Gram Panchayat in turn is expected to incorporate these in the Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP).

For this purpose, four children (two girls and two boys) aged 10-18 years will be selected from each of the wards belonging to different socio-economic backgrounds and could be school-going or out-of-school. It is important that the children are not pressurized to join the Bal Panchayat but should be eager and willing to take up the responsibilities. It is also important that the entire process in done by children themselves, with adults only facilitating the processes. The adults will in no way try to influence either the process or the outcome. The selected children from each ward will assemble at the gram

panchayat level and identify through a democratic process their Bal Sarpanch and Bal Up-Sarpanch.

The elected Bal Panchayat will also nominate, in accordance with the State Government guidelines, two of its members to be part of the Panchayat Level Child Protection Committee (PLCPC). The Bal Panchayat members will also be provided a resource toolkit for undertaking various activities that will help them become more aware about rights and entitlements as well as engage with other children residing in their respective communities.

Step 4: Situation Analysis

As part of CFPI, Panchayati Raj Institutions are expected to undertake a situation analysis from child rights perspective to identify the most pressing issues and concerns of children, their root causes and possible solutions.

A simplified checklist/ format would be provided to the Gram Panchayats for carrying out the child friendly situation analysis. It is expected that this process would

be led by the PLCPC and co-led by the members of the Bal Panchayat with support from other volunteers in the gram panchayat.

The situation analysis would not be a one-time exercise, rather it would be carried at different points of the year to ensure that vulnerabilities associated with seasonal patterns are also fully captured and accounted for.

Step 5: Awareness Raising, Advocacy & Communication

Based on the findings of the situation analysis the gram panchayat would undertake awareness generation activities with a focus on child rights and issues identified in the situation analysis. The awareness generation activities would also therefore double up as the avenue for dissemination of situation analysis findings.

The gram panchayat would also use the findings to advocate with the line departments for more attention to addressing the gaps identified in access to services and entitlements. A communication strategy on child friendly panchayat initiative would also be developed and shared with the gram panchayats to support them in their endeavor.

Step 6: Capacity Building

Gram Panchayat, with support from government functionaries and Civil Society Organizations, facilitate capacity building initiatives for the PLCPC and Bal Panchayat members on issues ranging from rights of children, services and entitlements, child friendly panchayat process, etc.

Step 7: Institutionalizing Child Participation

In accordance with the government orders, the Gram Panchayat will facilitate institutionalizing children's participation in the local governance processes through organizing bi-annual (March and November) Bal Sabhas.

The objective of the Bal Sabha would be to give floor to all children to participate and share their opinions, issues and concerns. The responsibility of the Gram Panchayats would be to necessarily incorporate the issues identified and recommendations given by the Bal Sabha in their annual plan and budgeting processes. The processes and procedures of the Bal Sabha would be similar to that of the adult Gram Sabha and minutes of the same will be maintained for wider dissemination.

In addition to the gram panchayat level Bal Sabhas, the Panchayati Raj department with support from the concerned stakeholders, will also facilitate organizing children's parliament at sub-district, district and state level.

Step 8: Integration of Children's Issues in the Gram Panchayat Development Plans

In accordance with the government orders, the Gram Panchayat will ensure that as per the CFPI framework and the issues identified by the Bal Panchayat and approved by the Bal Sabha and action plan is developed and integrated in the annual Gram Panchayat Development Plan.

In order to ensure synergy and harmony in line with onegram panchayat one holistic annual plan, it is being proposed that no separate action plan should be developed and instead the CFPI Action Plan becomes the sub-plan of the GPDP.

Step 9: Budgets for Children

It is important that aligned with the principles of GPDP, the CFPI Action Plan is also classified into a) Cost; b) Low Cost, and c) No Cost activities. The cost activities are budgeted using the central and state finance commission funds as well as from the flagship budgets. The gram panchayats may also mobilize CSR (corporate social responsibility funds) and other voluntary contributions to support the activities. Wherever possible the planned activities could be harmonized with the departments PIP (project implementation plan).



Role & Responsibilities Child Friendly Panchayat Initiative

State administration

- Providing overall direction and guidance on CFPI
- Defining a monitoring mechanism and addressing potential bottlenecks /challenges
- Establishing the mechanism for recognizing the best performing gram panchayats
- Allocating resources for the rollout of CFPI
- Forming a steering committee comprising of government/ non-government representatives for coordinating the CFPI initiative
- Holding periodic review meetings

District/ Sub-District Administration

- Creating an enabling environment and developing a positive attitude among line departments to support the processes
- Interact with Bal Panchayats during their field visits and participate in their meetings
- Monitoring progress against the set objectives
- Support cross-learning and exposure for Bal Panchayat members

Elected Representatives at State/ District/ Sub-District level

- During constituency visits attend Bal Panchayat meetings/ Bal Sabha or interact with representatives of Bal Panchayat
- Raise questions related to children's access to rights and entitlements during the Assembly Session to create an enabling environment for progressive realization of rights for every child
- Use MP/MLA funds for child friendly interventions such as parks, playgrounds, libraries, and other state of the art facilities for children
- Create a positive environment in the Assembly for bringing about changes in the State Panchayati Raj Act/ Rules to formally institutionalize child participation in local governance
- Pay specific attention to the progress on crucial indicators which will help in focusing on panchayats that are lagging behind and need more support/ supervision

Elected Representatives at Panchayat level

Handling the day-to-day management of CFPI

- Awareness raising and advocacy
- Identifying the needs for training and capacity building
- Integration of CFPI Action Plan with GPDP

UN Agencies

- Coordination with the State Government
- Convening role in brining together different partner organizations to support the processes
- Training and Capacity Building
- Conceptualization and sharing of regular insights and guidance

Civil Society Organizations

- On-field mentoring and handholding support to Gram Panchayats and Bal Panchayats
- Training and Capacity Building
- Facilitate development of CFPI Action Plan in the concerned gram panchayats

- Coordinate the activities with gram panchayats, line departments and other agencies
- Participate in review meetings at block/ district level

Private Sector

- Support CFPI activities in their CSR Activity areas
- Promote child rights throughout their business processes

Academic Institutions

- Undertake field research on child participation in local governance
- Include CFPI in the list of concurrent field work subjects

Media

• Promote Bal Panchayat and create an enabling environment in the State





Measuring Progress Child Friendly Panchayat Initiative

Introduction

The progress on the Child Friendly Panchayat Initiative needs to be measured both in terms of process and output/ outcome indicators. Although the State Government in the first phase of rollout has identified 12 core indicators, which are a mix of process and output indicators, yet a more comprehensive measure of progress is being presented in this handbook for gradual adoption as the work on the initiative progress and gains root in the State.

Process Milestones

Key Result Area	Indicators	Means of Verification
Positive social norms to enable child participation	Proportion of community stakeholders (frontline functionaries, community leaders, parents, etc.) express commitment to child participation in local governance	Rapid Survey
Enabling laws/ policies/ rules to facilitate and mandate child participation	State Panchayati Raj Act/ Rules reflect clause on child participation in local governance	Copy of modified State Panchayati Raj Act/ Rules
	A dedicated budget line item introduced in the State/ Local Government Budget	Budget Circular
Capacity Building for meaningful child participation	Children, PRIs and other stakeholders have their capacities developed over-time to meaningfully realize the objectives of CFPI	Resource Kit
Creating space and opportunities for child participation	State guidelines on child participation in local governance issues	Government Order

Key Result Area	Indicators	Means of Verification
	Proportion of gram panchayats that report following the guidelines on the frequency of Bal Panchayat and Gram Sabha meetings	Minutes of Meeting/ E- Panchayat MIS
	Proportion of children with special needs and those who are vulnerable (for example Palanhar) who are represented in the Bal Panchayat	Review of profile of Bal Panchayat members
	Proportion of children with special needs and those who are vulnerable (for example Palanhar) who actively participate in Bal Sabha and other forums of children	Review of meeting minutes
GPDPs are responsive to the issues and priorities of children	Proportion of gram panchayat annual budget allocated for child priorities	Review of GPDPs

Phase 1: 12 Indicators of Child Friendly Panchayat

S. No.	Indicators	Means of Verification
1.	Child Birth Registration & Issuing of Birth Certificate	Pehchan MIS
2.	Full Immunization	PCTS
3.	100% School Enrollment	Shala Darpan/ UDISE
4.	Zero dropout from School	Shala Darpan/ UDISE

S. No.	Indicators	Means of Verification
5.	Open Defecation Free Gram Panchayats	SBM MIS
6.	Availability of Sanitary Napkin for MHM	~TBD~
7.	Effective Implementation for Mid-Day Meal	Shala Darpan
8.	Malnutrition Free Gram Panchayat	ICDS MIS/ CAS
9.	Child Marriage Free Gram Panchayat	~TBD~
10.	Child Labour Free Gram Panchayat	~TBD~
11.	Functional Panchayat Level Child Protection Committee	~TBD~
12.	Constitution of Bal Panchayat & Bal Sabhas	~TBD~