



## National Consultation on ‘Innovating for Children’



### *A Concept Note*

#### **Background:**

Children constitute over 39 per cent of India’s population—the highest such percentage in the world. The Constitution of India mandates that the State shall direct its policy towards ensuring “that children are given opportunities and facilities to develop in a healthy manner and in conditions of freedom and dignity and that childhood and youth are protected against exploitation and against moral and material abandonment”[Article 39(f)].

India has taken up several legislative initiatives to ensure safe, protected, nourished and enabling environment for children such as “Juvenile Justice Care and Protection Act” (2015), Right of Children to “Free and Compulsory Education Act” (2009), “Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act”, (2012) etc., and has also been implementing schemes and programmes in the interest of children -Integrated Child Development Scheme, Sarva Siksha Abhiyan, Swachh Bharat Mission, National Health Mission, Integrated Child Protection Scheme to list a few - all of which contribute and have made significant strides towards holistic development of children. India is also a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child; and is committed to meet all the entitlements of every child in the country.

Children are vulnerable in terms of the risks to their right to survival, development, protection and participation. The need to protect some children is even more challenging, where their specific socio-economic and political circumstances are difficult to cope with even for adults. Lack of access to communities, lack of basic infrastructure, dearth of human resource, inactive local governance in tribal and violence affected areas makes delivery of basic health care and development programmes a challenge. The challenge continues to worsen the vulnerability of children by pushing communities to further deprivation particularly in tribal and rural areas.

The Government of India in the National Plan of Action (2015) following the National Policy for Children in 2013 aims to keep children safe and ensure happy childhood. The action plan aims to further strengthen implementation of policies for children and uphold constitutional obligation and UN Convention on Rights of the Children. State Government of Chhattisgarh has also prepared a draft Plan of Action for Children, which is currently under process of approval.

The action plan is aligned with Sustainable Development Goals which aim to end preventable deaths, hunger, ensure children's access to nutrition, promote learning and ensure children live without fear of violence.

While there is a constitutional responsibility of the State to ensure children's rights are realized and all their entitlements are met, the needs of the children haven't been met. The State needs to put in place concrete actions to ensure welfare schemes reach children in need especially belonging to marginalized and tribal communities. A concerted and out of the box effort is needed to address concerns of implementation of children excluded by socio-political and cultural barriers. Innovations which are inclusive and can overcome challenges of poverty and under development can be drivers to meet the challenge ahead of the State.

In order to improve development indicators of children and adolescents in the tribal and violence affected areas, innovative strategies in the implementation and newer policy or policy change is prerogative to close the ever widening disparities in education, health, nutrition and other child development indicators.

### **Why innovate for children?**

As governments are elaborating on the Sustainable Development Goals and targets for the new development agenda, innovation and the role of partnerships across sectors are increasingly important to accelerate progress on the most pressing issues especially related to children. Reaching the children is the right and fair thing to do. In adapting to the growing complexity of the 21st century, the State needs dynamic solutions to ensure it remains relevant and responsive. Children who are given a fair start in life – nurturing care, access to nutrition and basic health services, an education, protection from violence and exploitation – are more likely to fulfil their potential as adults and make their societies richer in every sense. 'Leaving no child behind', is both a moral imperative and a strategic priority for the development of inclusive, sustainable and stable societies. An obvious role of adults, such as parents and caregivers, is the corner stone to achieve positive results for children. Our journey towards building a just and equitable societies for children starts at home and is the responsibility of the adults to provide favorable conditions at home for children to excel and prosper.

### **Defining Innovations:**

Innovations are out of the box ideas, which lead to a positive change in the communities. Innovation is nothing but introducing a new application for an existing development process to

attain desired outcome or a new solution for an age-old problem. The rapid growth of technology, and its access especially to children is posing new challenges and threats to society. The emerging new issues related to children need newer strategies to address them, and, hence, innovations.

The urgency to cater to the needs of the children calls for innovative approaches in governance, as well in terms of implementation and service delivery. There are many examples of innovations in governance which have significantly contributed to the effectiveness of implementation and service delivery initiated by Governments. Several innovative ideas, involving communities and civil society organizations in village planning, decentralization and community development, have also been successful and complement governmental efforts. To cite an example, Adarsh Gram is an innovation initiated where planning and implementation is led by community participation utilizing government funds and allocations for specific development activities in the village.

Chhattisgarh has many innovations, which have positively impacted children especially those living in difficult circumstances. The Public Distribution System in the state has won many accolades by digitalizing Fair Price Shops, door step delivery with the help of GPS enabled trucks. Centralized monitoring and grievance mechanism has contributed to food security. The model system has ensured every BPL family received its share of entitlement. The innovative '*Mitanin*' model, which builds knowledge and capacities of village women, for addressing first level of community health care, has evolved at present into a voluntary workforce of 60,000 village women, spanning all 54,000 hamlets catering to rural health care needs. The initiative had almost halved infant mortality, radically improved childcare practices, and forced the health system to improve. ICDS Leadership Program for the midlevel functionaries of DWCD has changed the face of Anganwadi centers in the state. They have ceased to be just feeding centers and have evolved as centers of early learning and development of the child. Motorbike Ambulance in Narayanpur district has been saving lives of women and children by providing crucial referral transport.

There are equally useful leanings from other States as well. For example, 'Janswasth' which uses 'Tablets' for identification, classification, communication and monitoring, leading to preventive and promotive care by ANMs in Rajasthan. 'Janswasth'. Rajasthan was also successful in educating women and adolescent girls through its 'E-Sakshar' program, in which computers were used to ensure literacy of mothers and adolescent sisters of school going children. Innovative partnerships which seem unlikely have immensely contributed to

development processes. There are similar success stories of the engagement with women self-help groups and farmers, to reduce prevalence of malnutrition among children, using local solutions.

There are learnings from across the world, as well- to cite an international example, Nigeria has used ‘RapidSMS’, a decentralized monitoring using a mobile-phone based platform, to identify in real-time, centre-by-centre birth registration disparities, and prompt appropriate action towards improving birth registration.

***The Consultation:***

The Department of Women & Child Development, Government of Chhattisgarh, in partnership with UNICEF Chhattisgarh and State Planning Commission of Chhattisgarh, proposes to organize a two-day consultation on ‘Innovating for Children’ to explore and showcase innovative ideas, solutions for the wellbeing of children and initiate dialogue towards enhancing access to children’s entitlements particularly in health, nutrition, education, child protection, water and sanitation, Skills and Early Childhood Development.

The Organizers seek to invite individuals, agencies, NGOs, technical experts with proven record of exemplary commitment and passion towards building child-friendly ambience enabling exercise of child rights, using new and innovative ideas and solutions. The consultation will provide an opportunity to participants to explore various child centric innovations which could be adopted to address issues related to children.

***Rationale of the proposed consultation -***

Towards building an enabling environment for children using innovative models, while ensuring equity and inclusion for their right to Survival, Development, Protection and Participation

***Objectives:***

1. To explore and identify innovative solutions for vulnerable children excluded by socio-political and economic factors in the areas of early child development, education, health, nutrition, water and sanitation, child protection and skills

2. To provide a platform to showcase, share, adopt and advocate proven models for well-being of children with a focus on ‘hard to reach’ areas ensuring equity and inclusion.

The proposed national consultation aims to provide a platform for dialogue and showcase innovations which have contributed immensely for the well-being of children belonging to marginalized communities including tribal. Individuals, civil society organizations, governments, innovators and other contributors will make presentations to showcase their respective innovations. The consultation will be an opportunity to ideate and deliberate innovations which could be ideal for replication for children across the country. The consultation will end with a road map to experiment innovations which have potential to save and better lives of women and children, especially those belonging to marginalized communities.

The consultation will feature innovations,

- - which have brought positive changes, are sustainable, and work efficiently in everyday practice;
- - which have visibly added advantage over existing practices, through cost- effectiveness and other benefits evident to its users;
- - which are compatible with beneficiaries, and do not undermine locally established social norms and practices;
- - which have economic value in terms of reduced costs, labor, increased productivity or even financial betterment
- - which have been embraced and led by the community from its beginning to enjoying its benefits; and,
- - Which have the potential to be replicated and up-scaled.

***Outcomes:***

- - A ‘declaration’ identifying the essential ingredients for successfully innovating for children everywhere, particularly those from ‘hard to reach’ areas and difficult circumstances.

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