Pilot Programme for Protection of Child Rights (PPPCR) in J&K

Annual Report: 2012-13

National Commission for Protection of Child Rights, New Delhi
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PILOT PROGRAMME FOR PROTECTION OF CHILD RIGHTS (PPPCR) IN J&K

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1. Preface

The ‘Pilot Program for Protection of Children’s Rights (PPPCR)’ is a pilot program of the National Commission of Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) initiated in November 2011, in Rajwar education zone of Kupwara district, and in Sumbal education zone of Bandipora District with support from the Prime Minister’s Relief Fund (PMRF). It is a simple objective of enabling all children in the 0-18 years of age group access their entitlements through public institutions. Yet, it involves complex processes of tracking every child through community mobilisation and participation giving them the skills and confidence to engage with the functionaries in a systematic manner, grounded in facts. It is also simultaneously a process of preparation of the various departments and its functionaries to listen to the community and take their petitions seriously. It is thus a program of building an environment of trust and faith between the community and the system with the hope that together they can make a difference in the lives of children. All of this in the context of a society that has been fractured due to tensions, violence and instability.

Within one year and five months of its inception, 624 out of school children have been enrolled into schools, 385 children under 6 years have been enrolled into ICDS centres, 11 bridge course centres have been arranged for older children to get into age appropriate classes, school teachers including those who initially resisted have started to participate in the program, medical examination was facilitated for 94 children with disabilities, 142 orphans were identified for scholarships, 23 Child Recreational Clubs have been set-up which are attended by more than 1320 children regularly, 12 winter schools were organised which were attended by more than 1200 children, anganwadi workers have shown empathy and compassion for children and so on. Community participation was institutionalised with the formation of Child Rights Protection Forums. More than anything else the program coincided with the election to gram panchayats and it was so heartening to several of them reaching out to children, schools and anganwadi centres.

The involvement of District Administration, its officials from all departments, their ownership of the program and wholehearted support has been immense. The contribution of the Child Rights Activists (CRAs) who were drawn from local youth and the District Project Coordinators under the guidance of the State Coordinator is noteworthy. I also wish to thank the Chief Secretary and all the senior officials who extended full support to the program. It was conceptualised by Ms. Dipa Dixit, Member, NCPCR and given all support by Mr. Lov Verma, Member Secretary of the Commission who was willing to encourage a program that thought out of the box. All of this was possible due to the trust and faith the Government of J&K, under the leadership of Mr. Omar Abdullah and his colleagues reposed in the Pilot and of course the PMO.

Shantha Sinha
Chairperson, NCPCR
2. INTRODUCTION

The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) was set up in March 2007 under the Commission for Protection of Child Rights Act, 2005, an Act of Parliament. The Commission's mandate is to ensure that all laws, policies, programmes, and administrative mechanisms are in consonance with the child rights perspective as enshrined in the Constitution of India and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Commission aims at developing a healthy, safe and free environment for every child.

In consonance with its mandate, the Commission seeks a deeper penetration into communities and households in order to touch every child. It expects that ground experiences inform the policy interventions and the field receives support from authorities at the higher level.

As part of its mandate to ensure the realization of rights by all children in different socio-economic and political situations, the Commission conceptualized a special programme called *Pilot Programme for Protection of Child Rights (PPPCR) in J&K* to be implemented on a pilot basis in J&K. The project is being implemented directly by Commission in collaboration with the Government of Jammu & Kashmir, beginning in November 2011.

2.1 Objectives:

More than two decades of conflict have had severe implications for the predicament of children in Kashmir, resulting in school dropouts, children entering the labour force at a premature age, exploitation, high levels of malnutrition and anaemia, poor health and hygiene conditions and lack of psychological well being. Schools, ICDS centres, scholarship schemes, health facilities, etc. to become accessible and within children’s reach, PPPCR initiative aims at making the system responsive towards the needs of the children, to build trust and dialogue between the system and the society just so that every child is taken care of in an environment of love and understanding.

*The primary goal of PPPCR is to protect and promote rights of children in J&K focusing attention on mobilization of communities with support from local institutions such as gram panchayats, village education committees, SHGs and local youth volunteers; to link the community and local institutions with district and block administration and prepare the*
system to respond to the demands of the community and provide timely delivery of services while a child’s well-being becomes the focus of all action in the area; and to bring stability in the lives of children in the process of ensuring that all their entitlements to protection, health, nutrition, sanitation, education, recreation, and safety are fulfilled through government action.

2.2. Annual Report: 2012-13

The PPPCR project is being implemented in two education zones in Kashmir with effect from November 2011. While a half yearly report and some other documents were written documenting the activities undertaken as part of PPPCR project in Kashmir, the present report is the first annual report under the project. This annual report covers the activities undertaken during the period of 2012-13 (April ’12 to March’13) as well as the activities that were undertaken during the initial months of November 2011 to March 2012.

Within a short span of time of one year and five months, considerable community mobilisation and support, and improved access to schools, ICDS centres, scholarships and fun and recreation have been seen towards ensuring realisation of children’s rights in the areas where PPPCR project has been rolled down during this period.

The report presents a summary of the processes of community mobilisation for creating an enabling and supporting environment for the protection and development of children and building a systematic dialogue between the community and system on issues of children’s rights. It also presents a picture of making entitlements accessible to children with the aim of facilitating their enrolment in ICDS centres and schools, and providing them opportunities for fun and recreation in their local communities itself.

The report also presents a summary of the processes of building up of an active and committed team to pursue the mandate of PPPCR in Kashmir. Finally, the report also looks at immediate future-plans and the process of enlarging the effort of building a campaign for protection and promotion of child rights in J&K.
3. Socio-Economic Context and the Predicament of Children

The macro data about the socio-economic conditions of the people in the state of J&K provide a better picture, as compared to India as a whole. The macro data sets, like NFHS, also suggest that Jammu and Kashmir provides a better picture on many of the health indicators as compared to India. For instance, the Neo-Natal Mortality rate in J&K was 29.8 (39 in India), Infant Mortality rate was 44.7 (57 in India), Child Mortality rate was 6.8 (18.4 in India) and Under-five Mortality rate was 51.2 (74.3 in India) in 2005-06. Similarly, the proportion of under-weight children less than three years was 29.4 percent, as compared to 40 percent in India; children in the age group of 6-35 months who are anaemic were 68.1 percent, as against 78.9 percent in India; women whose Body Mass Index is below normal were 21.3 percent, as against 33 percent in India; and men whose Body Mass Index is below normal were 19.9 percent, as against 28.1 percent in India (IIPS & Macro International, 2007).

Kashmir has been historically a more egalitarian society, and subsequently, the proportion of population living below the poverty line is much lower than the aggregate in India as a whole, the officially estimated level of 5.4 percent in J&K, as compared to 27.5 percent in India as a whole, in 2004-05 (Saxena, 2009). The implementation of land reforms extensively in the state have became one primary factor for reducing the poverty in the state. As the health status of the population is largely determined by the socio-economic factors, the reasons for J&K to achieve relatively better health outcomes than India as a whole, may be because of the better socio-economic conditions of the people in the state.

However, the reduction in poverty does not necessarily imply the general prosperity of the state and its people, as the state lags behind on many of the development indicators, as compared with India as a whole. For instance, in 2001, J&K had only 55.52% literacy rate, a 9.3% difference with the Indian level, which stood at 64.84% (RGI, 2001), and ranked at the fourth lowest after Bihar, Jharkhand and Arunachal Pradesh, with a gender gap as high as

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1 There was a change in reference standards after the NFHS data was released and the adjusted figure adds up to 46 percent for India, but the revised figure was not available for J&K.

2 However, the J&K state government through its own survey using a different methodology estimated 21.6 percent population as poor.
23.6 percent. Recent provisional figures from the 2011 Census continue to show this pattern. A 5.3% difference remains between J&K (68.7%) and India (74%) in literacy rates (RGI, 2011). Further, almost 70 per cent of the population of the state is dependent on agriculture directly or indirectly (Govt of J&K, 2008-09). But 94 per cent of the farmers are small or marginal farmers with an average land holding of 0.67 hectares (Govt of J&K, 2008-09). The per capita income of the state at Rs. 20604 in 2007-08, is only three fourth of the national average of Rs 27442 in India taken as a whole (Govt of J&K, 2008-09). The unemployment rate in the state is 5.21 per cent against a national rate in India of 3.09 per cent (Govt of J&K, 2008-09). The road length per 100 sq km area in the state was 37.15 kms as against 104.64 kms in India in 2006-07 (Govt of J&K, 2008-09). There has been a worrying deceleration of agricultural production in the state. The valley suffers from more than 40 per cent deficit in food grain production, more than 30 per cent in vegetables and more than 65 per cent in oilseeds, all of which are imported into the state from the rest of India (Dar, 2009).

On the other hand, the state of J&K was ridden by a different set of problems, as the state has been witness to different phases of violence and conflict over the last two decades. The reports show that tens of thousands lost life directly to conflict, and many more became victims of mental trauma, stress, anxiety and depression. The conflict has resulted into many structural constraints and has created many barriers that shape the access of people to employment, livelihood and essential services. Many people lost jobs, especially those working in the tourism sector, handicrafts and livestock. The killing of thousands of people has resulted into new marginalised groups in the society who lives in destitution. The other important impact of conflict has been on the governance and implementation of public health and other development programmes of government. Many development programmes do not perform well in Kashmir, which is partly because of the different socio-economic, cultural and ecological factors in Kashmir and the incompatible design of policies, and partly because of the misgovernance.

With respect to children, the situation has also not been very favorable. With already compromised performance on many of the indicators of the development of children, more than two decades of conflict have had severe implications for the predicament of children in Kashmir, resulting in school dropouts, children entering the labour force at a premature age, exploitation, high levels of malnutrition and anaemia, poor health and hygiene conditions and lack of psychological well being. Although some of indicators on the health of children show
a relatively good picture, the situation is very bleak in terms of mental health, with the impact of conflict on every aspect of child development. There is prevalence of anxiety, depression, fear and other mental health problems among significant proportion of population as well as children, and the research has shown that the exposure to traumatic events is very high, thereby affecting the mental well being of the children. A study by MSF (Medicines Sans Frontier) in 2006 reported that 33.3 % of the general population in Kashmir is suffering from psychological distress. Nearly half of the respondents indicated that they feel never or only occasionally safe (MSF, 2006). Mental stress, anxiety and depression have a direct effect on children’s ability to attend school regularly and to perform well in their studies. The study by MSF has also revealed that there is a high impact of ongoing violence on children. According to the study 24.6% of children had developed fear because of armed conflict. School related problems also scored highly, including being unable to attend the school (15.5%) and having problem with studying (16.3%) [MSF, 2006].

The access of children to their rights and entitlements including education, nutrition and health services, and fun and recreation has been compromising; as a result, the status of different aspects of their development has been low. The NFHS-3 data shows that almost one third of children (37 %) in the age group of 12-23 months had not received all recommended vaccines (MoFHW, 2005-06). The MoWCD data shows that a majority of the children under 6 years of age, though eligible, don’t have access to ICDS services. As per the AWC Survey register the number of children in the age group of 0 to 6 years were 1143905 as on March 2008 (the latest available figures), however, the number of beneficiaries were only 442597, a total of 38.7 coverage by government’s own data (MoWCD, 2012). The 2011 Census of India shows that 2008642 children are in the age group of 0-6 years in J&K. The ICDS coverage against census figures would amount to only 22 percent. Further, the recent joint review mission of the MDMS led by MoHRD in 2012 highlighted severe irregularities in serving meals in schools in J&K, with very limited coverage of children under health check-ups. Although there are many scholarship schemes for children in the state, a majority of people report that they don’t have access to scholarships for their children, which is partly because of ceilings on quota.

The dropout rate up to 10th class was very high at 53.75 percent in 2004-05 (Govt of J&K, 2008). While the state claims that the out of school children in the state have considerably reduced to mere 1.96 in the age group of 6-11 years and 3.87 in the age group of 11-14 years
(an average of 2.58% in age group of 6-14 years) [Govt of J&K, n.d], the comparison of total estimated children in the age group of 6-14 years (which stood at 21.64 lakhs) and total enrolled (which was only 19.30 lakhs) in all primary and middle schools of both government and private schools shows that the out of school children were likely to be almost 10.8 percent (Govt. of J&K, 2008-09). The out of school children rates are still high especially among poor sections, disabled children, orphans and ST population and in the far off areas. Even the state launched a new survey under the name of TALAASH in 2012 to compile a more authentic data base of out-of-school children.

On the other hand, the data shows a significant increase in the prevalence of child labour over the last thirty years. The state had 70,489 child labourers in 1971, which increased to 1,75,630 in 2001, an increase of 149%. Comparable figures for the whole of India show that there were 1,07,53,985 child labourers in 1971 and that this increased to 1,26,66,377 in 2001, an increase of just 17.7% (Dar and Khaki, 2011). Unofficial sources give even higher estimates.

3.1: PPPCR Project Area:
The PPPCR project is being implemented in two education zones in J&K on pilot basis, and includes Sumbal in Bandipora district and Rajwar in Kupwara district. The two districts in which PPPCR is being implemented have diverse socio-economic and political conditions. Both Kupwara and Bandipora districts count low on human development as well as economic indicators in the state.

The Sumbal and Rajwar education zones are included in educationally backward blocks by the government. A significant section of the population is poor and for many of them even to bear small expenses in the government schools (education in J&K is not absolutely free) become a difficult choice. One of the main occupations for the people in these two zones is agriculture but the land holdings are, on average, small and the productivity is compromising.

The Rajwar zone is hilly area with few villages localized in the forest area, which affected the accessibility of children to schools, especially the disabled and girls. The area has seen tremendous impact of conflict. As a border area, has had huge presence of security forces across. Even the data indicates the impact of violence on the area has been high. In the
PPPCR pilot area (9 panchayats), in which the project has been already rolled down, among 243 orphans, 88 were those whose father had died in any conflict related incident (almost 36 percent of orphans). The area has also significant proportion of ST population, mostly gujjars, and as across state, their access to education, health, nutrition and social security schemes is limited.

On the other hand, the Sumbal zone has mixed populations of Shia and Sunni muslims, but no ST population. The area is relatively plain in topography. However, the Sumbal area is also backward area, with a higher out-of-school rate among children than even Rajwar. The PPPCR baseline survey in 16 villages had indicated almost 12 percent out-of-school children in 6 to 14 years age. The Sumbal zone had also suffered due to conflict; especially during the renegades’ period, as reported by the people.

As part of the PPPCR project, a baseline survey is being carried out in all panchayats initially for mapping of children in different age groups and to examine the access to children to their entitlements and government programmes. The baseline survey under PPPCR on access of children to their entitlements in 19 panchayats and 2 municipal wards (33 villages), covering 6891 households, including ST population, in plain and hilly areas of Sumbal (Bandipora district) and Rajwar (Kupwara) educations zones reveals a similar picture of inaccessibility of significant portion of children to government programmes, as was reflected by the macro-level state data. This covered almost 18050 children in the age group of 0 to 18 years, including 4980 children in the age group of 0 to 6 years and 8747 children in the age group of 6 to 14 years. The survey has indicated a total of 1826 children out of school in 6 to 18 years, which amounts to 13.97 percent out-of-school rate, with almost 9.88 percent rate in 6 to 14 age group (never enrolled are almost two times more than dropouts).

Similarly, the ICDS records show that within the jurisdiction of 64 Anganwadi centres (in 11 panchayats and 3 municipal wards), a total of 3296 children have been surveyed and identified by Anganwadi workers. However, only 1739 children were enrolled in these centres, which amount to almost 53 percent coverage of eligible and identified children in

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3 The data presented here is only provisional.
4 Any attempt to generalise any result/ findings of the PPPCR baseline survey has to be done very cautiously.
places with a functional Anganwadi centre. There are also hamlets/habitations in these panchayats which are presently not being covered by any Anganwadi centre, adding those children would further reduce the coverage of Anganwadi centres in these areas.

Further, officially, the SNP is served only for 7 months in a year, as against the Supreme Court orders in the right to food case, which direct States to provide nutrition for a minimum of 300 days in a year. The survey indicated that supplies are delayed and people reported that there are intermittent irregularities in serving of SNP to children.

The survey has indicated 435 orphan children (lost father or both parents) in the age group of 0-18 years, which amounts to a percentage of 2.41 percent orphans among children. The out-of-school rate among orphans in the age group of 6-14 years is reported to be 10.73 percent (22 out of 205), with 0.85 higher out-of-school rate than children in the same age group as a whole.

Further, the survey has identified 401 children with any level of disability in the age group of 0 to 18 years, which amounts to 2.2 percent disability among children in the same age group (the identification is based simply on people’s reporting and not on examination of any medical records). Among children in 6 -14 age group, almost 36.5 percent of children with disability (83 out of 227) were out of school. Further, as the children with disability are entitled for disability pensions (there is state as well as central scheme), however, it requires disability certificate to claim disability pension or any other entitlement provided under disability related legislations. The survey has indicated that only 38 percent (153 out of 401) in the age group of 0-18 years had disability certificates, and only almost 20 percent of children (80 out of 401) in the age group of 0-18 years had reported to have access to disability pension.

The survey has also shown that the health checkups in schools are very irregular and many schools don’t get even a single health check-up throughout the academic year. The people also reported irregularities in serving meals in schools under MDMS, especially during exams and periods between final exams and winter vacations. However, still the MDMS has

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5 Information was available for Anganwadi centres in only PPPCR first phase and is in process of being compiled for another 9 panchayats.
been found most popular scheme and run better as compared to other child related programmes.

As was assumed considering the socio-economic and ecological conditions of the two education zones and reflections of macro-data at the state level, the baseline survey indicated that a significant portion of the children are not able to access their entitlements for the realisation of their rights. This creates more expectations for PPPCR initiative to ensure that schools, ICDS centres, scholarship schemes, health facilities, etc. become accessible and within children’s reach, and for making the system responsive towards the needs of the children so that every child is taken care of in an environment of love and understanding.
4. Project Team

4.1: Project Offices:
The programme was officially started in November 2011. The project is being coordinated from two offices in the Kashmir valley, in Handwara (Kupwara) and Sumbal (Bandipora).

4.2. Project Team:
The programme was being facilitated and supervised by the Chairperson (Dr. Shantha Sinha), Member in-charge (Ms. Dipa Dixit), Member Secretary (Mr. Asheem Srivastav) and Senior Consultant (Mr. Sanjay Tiwari) at NCPCR.

Within J&K, the project was being coordinated by the State Project Coordinator (SPC) and three District Project Coordinators (DPCs). In addition, 23 community workers (called as Child Rights Activists) were working at the field level; who were inducted into the programme at different times. CRAs are the main pillars of the project; every panchayat where PPPCR is implemented has an active CRA working and is in constant and direct touch with the community. The role of the CRA is to:

- Work closely with the community.
- Monitor enrolment of children in school.
- Visiting parents of out of schoolchildren and motivating them to send the children back to school. In case of a younger child to send her/him back to ICDS centres.
- Verify attendance of children in schools & AWCs as well as absenteeism with the help of community.
- Work with grassroots level functionaries like school teachers, AWWs, ANMs and ASHAs to facilitate timely delivery of services to children.
- Develop a bond with all children through consistent meetings, play, recreation, etc.
- Set-up child club for children, thus, providing a platform to children to discuss their experiences and to boost their self-esteem.

In brief, the CRA will evolve as a Child Defender (Muhafiz-e-Atfal) in his/her panchayat.
In addition to the above team, the PPPCR project is being supported by 51 Community Support Groups, which includes more than 500 members, and almost 200 teachers and 100 anganwadi workers, who actively participate in the activities of the programme and form supportive wings of the organisation at the gross root level.

4.3. Programme Advisory Committee:

A programme advisory committee has been setup that has representation from different departments of J&K government (Commissioner Secretaries and/or Directors) including Chief Secretary, and NCPCR including Chairperson. The Committee has also representation from academicians and social work practitioners of Kashmir. The role of the committee is to review the progress of the program and address the issues/ concerns raised by the Commission and to assist in facilitating timely response by the respective departments at the State and District levels.

_This system aims at addressing any form of child right challenges, right from addressing immediate issues pertaining to a single child in the panchayat to larger persisting policy challenges causing hindrance in development._

4.4. Training and Development:

The strongest resource is our dedicated team. In an effort to develop and sensitise the team further to various existing norms and fast shaping developments in the field of Child Rights, we have been investing in various forms of training and development of the team. This is being done not just in an effort to keep upbeat with various developments but also to understand “what has worked” in other areas, thereby, incorporating it within our initiative keeping the local context in mind. Further, there are monthly review meetings of the team with the SPC to monitor progress and areas of challenges, and support sessions are being held for CRAs to regularly sharpen their skills of community work. There are also
weekly/fortnightly progress meetings with the DPCs to outline a work plan for every panchayat. Some of the exposure and training held have been:

- An orientation of the DPCs and the SPC was organised in New Delhi with a rights based perspective at the national and international level. The team was exposed to Bal Bandhus programme on the protection of child rights implemented in five states affected by civil unrest across India.

- The team visited the child homes for street children in Delhi being run as part of the Dil se campaign of Aman Biradari organisation.

- The team also went to Andhra Pradesh to develop insights into the work of MV Foundation on the community mobilisation around issues of children.

- Two trainings/orientations for the CRAs were organised. The aim of the training was to develop an insight into rights based perspective and to train them in conducting the baseline survey.

- A special 4 day training program, *play for peace*, was organized for the team as well as the volunteers. Training included instruction of 30 cooperative and non-competitive games for children. CRAs and volunteers have been using these games extensively for the purpose of engaging children, team building and of course some fun.

- A 3-day extensive residential training course was organised. This training covered not just aspects such as building capacity on Child Rights, child issues, different entitlements and government schemes for children but also mental health issues, UNCRC, children in need of care and protection, children with disability, individual difference and varying capacity of children. Sessions were taken by some of the most prominent names in the field.

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**Acceptance and Trust on CRAs**

The strength of CRAs is their acceptance in the communities and the trust people have on them. There are many examples that indicate the strong acceptance of CRAs in the community and the trust people repose on them and are identified as *Child Friends*, that any problem related to children should brought to the notice of CRA. There is a case of one child
who has speech and hearing disability in Inderkoot (sumbal). He went to local CRA and showed him with sign language that he wants to go to school and would buy uniform and books at his own if CRA would get him enrolled in 7th class. In another community Zalpora (Sumbal), parents have been really trying to motivate their children to send them to school and would tell their children what they will tell to CRA who has been repeatedly visiting them and taking hard efforts for their children’s education.

The work of CRAs has received acceptance and importance even among teachers and ICDS Supervisors, who sometimes have a bitter exchange of words with CRA for any negligence or irresponsibility towards children. There are many teachers who call District Coordinators and inform them if CRA has not visited their area or school and if any of the newly re-enrolled out-of-school children or any regular child has been absent and needs home visit. There are also instances that PCO officers (paying centre officers) and Zonal officers have encouraged District Coordinators to monitor timely arrival of teachers in schools and regular serving of MDM. Further, the Supervisors (ICDS), have asked for visiting ICDS centres in certain areas to ensure that the Anganwadi workers attend their duties.

In growing acceptance, recently there were protests in few places in Sumbal and Rajwar against education department and in a few places they sought prior advices of District Coordinators and CRAs on the issue and sought their support for the demands.

As many of the issues community and schools raised were resolved through the interventions of PPPCR team, people started putting petitions/demands to PPPCR directly. Even some of the schools have put up formal demands to PPPCR team for certain items because they felt that there was more assurance of getting issues resolved through PPPCR on immediate basis. As a result, requests for uniform, stationery, sports material, relief, winter schooling and other help was sought.

There were also cases that community even demanded that PPPCR team should conduct a probe at their own into construction of toilet in a school. As in Rajwar for the first time, the applications for minority scholarship didn’t involve paying charges and the process was very simplified, which lead to submission of more than 22 hundred applications, people have sought that the PPPCR team should consistently follow-up of scholarships at their own rather than keeping it on government workers.

The work and trust that the CRAs have developed in their communities, it seems very likely that the CRAs will evolve as Child Rights Defenders in their communities.
5. Activities and their Impact

The programme was officially started in November 2011. The following paras highlight briefly the activities undertaken under PPPCR programme in the two education zones- Sumbal and Rajwar from November 2011 to March 2013.

5.1. Coverage of PPPCR Project:

As a pilot, the PPPCR programme is being implemented in two education zones – Rajwar (Zachaldara) Education Zone of Kupwara district and Sumbal Education Zone of Bandipora district in J&K.

Under the programme, 11 panchayats and 2 municipal wards were selected in its first phase in both education zones and the work was also been extended to another set of 10 panchayats in its second phase (making it a total of 21 panchayats and 2 municipal wards). This adds up to 37 villages. The first phase panchayats included Wadipora ‘A’, Wadipora ‘B’, Changimulla, Bakhaker and Bowan Watsar in Rajwar zone, and Nowgam ‘A’, Nowgam ‘B’, Gadakhud, Trigam, Ganastan, Rakhi Sultan Pora and Inderkote in Sumbal zone. The second phase panchayats included Behnipora, Satkoji, Baderkal, Yemlar and Turkepora in Rajwar zone, and Shilvath, Rakhi Shilvath, Gundi Nowgam, Dangerpora and Gundi Khalil in Sumbal zone. Every panchayat where the PPPCR initiative is launched has an active CRA working and take up all the issues children face in his/her panchayat.

As the Commission seeks to extend its work under this programme in all the areas of these education zones in the subsequent phases, preparations have also been made to roll down the programme in third phase in next 8 panchayats, where volunteers have been identified to be inducted into the PPPCR project as Child Rights Activists (community workers) and initial community meetings to flow the idea and gather support from panchayats and other people have also been held. This will add up to 29 panchayats and 2 municipal wards, as the present coverage under the project. The next phase will universalise the project in entire two zones.

As the project was rolled down in phases, there has been a consistent demand from the neighbouring panchayats as well as neighbouring blocks, that the project should be implemented in their respective areas as well, which is a prime facie indication that the
community had perceived that the work being undertaken under PPPCR project was very helpful for children. The team received many representations from community members as well as teachers about extending the work to their areas as well. There has been a demand from the community people as well as a few teachers from Hajin education zone, a neighbouring zone to Sumbal, who had enquired many times about why the PPPCR project is not being implemented in their zone and why can’t it be still rolled down in their zone. Further, they were also very curious about the circulars and orders passed in Sumbal zone whether they could be implemented in their zone and could they be shown to their concerned Zonal Education Office. The team has also received calls from teachers of far off zones, for instance Rafiabad in Baramulla and Magam in Budgam, seeking advices about how they could enable out-of school children to re-enrol in schools.

5.2. Survey on Mapping of Children and their Access to Entitlements:

Due to the severe gaps in the availability of data related to children at panchayat and block levels, a comprehensive household level survey of all children in the age group of 0 -18 years is being conducted in the project areas. This is being done to create a data bank of the number of children in different age groups, number of school dropouts, number of children involved in labour, access to schools & ICDS centres, access to scholarship schemes, access to health facilities and other related issues. Thus leading to creation of an efficient data bank, which may help the government and other non-government organizations in planning and implementation of many government programmes related to children in the state. It will further enable developing efficient and sustainable methods to address the needs, requirements and challenges faced by children in the state.

The survey in itself is carried in a way that it becomes a process of social mobilisation, and attempts are made to involve other volunteers from the community and the information of the results is shared with community so that they become aware that the survey is not just an ongoing process of data compilation but forms a base for developing strategies for leading a child-centered work in their panchayats. During the survey, it is ensured that the questions raised by the community are addressed to their full satisfaction before moving ahead. And this process has gained appreciations from the community in few places that the team has been told that in all the earlier surveys they have participated enquiries were not made in-depth and patiently unlike done by PPPCR. When the results were shared with community, it
was surprising to many that they had never realised that the situation in their own area would be worse than they had perceived and many were happy that a database was being built up at panchayat level with such an accuracy, probably the only database at panchayat level accessible to people easily. So this trust during the survey created a curiosity among the people of getting involved in this work.

There has been a good feedback from the government itself. The administration in Sumbal asked the PPPCR team to provide them data about a village, which was being considered for notifying as RBA (Resident of Backward Area) area. The survey also became a basis for sanction of 14 NRBC centres in both zones.

The survey has covered 6891 households until now in 19 panchayats and 2 municipal wards (which covers almost 33 villages) in Sumbal and Rajwar education zones, and is in process in another 2 panchayats. The preparations are also made to carry out the survey in another 8 panchayats.

The process of collating and analyzing the data is in the process. However, some of the preliminary results from the survey are already helping us develop a road map and focusing our attention to areas where immediate action can be taken. A brief analysis of the findings of the survey is mentioned in the chapter-4 on the ‘Predicament of Children’ of this report; however, some of the points are highlighted below:

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**Survey Results (provisional figures):**

- **6891** household were surveyed in 19 panchayats and 2 municipal wards.

- **864** out-of-school children were identified in the age group of 6 to 14 years, thereby amounting to 9.88 percent out-of-school children.

- **435** orphan children in the age group of 0-18 were identified, adding to almost 2.4 percent out of total children in this age group.

- **401** children with any level of disability were identified in the age group of 0 to 18 years, which amounts to 2.2 percent disability among children in the same age group.

- **More than 60 percent** children with disability didn’t have disability certificates, a pre-requisite for accessing any entitlement meant for persons with disability.

- **Almost 36.5 percent** children with disability in the 6-14 years were out of school.

- **More than 45 percent** children in the age group of 0 to 6 years were not enrolled in AWCs in 11 panchayats and 3 municipal wards, as per ICDS records.
High number of out-of-school children in the age group of 6 to 14. The survey has indicated 864 children were out of school in this age group in 19 panchayats and 2 municipal wards in Sumbal and Rajwar education zones (the list is being verified again to bring as accuracy as possible and compared to State Govt.’s TALAASH survey on out of school children).

The numbers of children out of school in the age group of 6 to 18 are much higher (almost 1826) in these panchayats.

Higher percentage of out-of-school children is from low socio-economic background and among girls.

A significant portion of children in the age group of 6 months to 6 years are not enrolled in Anganwadi centres.

A majority of children in the age group of 6 month to 6 years had not been to anganwadi centres in the 3 months preceding the survey.

Anganwadi Centres have irregular supplies and no growth monitoring is being done in many cases.

Children have occasional pre-schooling in anganwadi centres.

Even though mid day meals are being given in most schools there are certain challenges in the delivery. There are irregularities during exams and period between exams and winter vacation. There are huge delays in reimbursement of funds to teachers; as a result the quality of meals is compromised.

There are no health checkups in most schools.

Selection process for scholarship is very vague and procedures for application complicated.
5.3. Community Participation/ Child Rights Protection Forums:

The team has been working closely with the community towards building their capacity and developing independent local groups that are able to identify problems and address them at their own level or seek redressal at appropriate forums with government. Thus bringing together many varied but valuable actions and efforts to realize and deliver the full spectrum of child rights.

Regular meetings and discussions are held with community including panchayat, women, parents, youth, teachers, AHSAs and AWWs regarding challenges faced by children, their rights and entitlements. More than 220 such community meetings have been held and the participation of people has increased over the time. The regular meetings have resulted in increased participation of the community, panchayat and grassroots level workers for protection of child rights. The meetings have become so much important and interesting for the support groups members that they ask for the regular participation of District Project Coordinators and State Coordinator in these meetings.

Consequently, the following Active Support Groups have emerged to follow up on the issues in an institutionalized fashion and form supportive wings of the PPPCR project:

- Angandwadi Support Group.

**Impact/Outcome:**

- More than 220 community meetings
- 51 Community Support Groups
- 548 Support Group Members
- Almost 2 hundred school teachers and 1 hundred angawadi workers support the PPPCR work.
- Panchayat level and Zonal level Child Rights Protection Forums are being formed.
- 285 community petitions submitted to government.
- School Support Group.
- Child Recreational Club Support Group.
- Child Grievance Committee
- Youth Support Group

A total of 51 such community support groups have been formed with a total membership of 548 people in these groups. The Sarpanchs and other panchayat members are active participants in these groups, in addition to teachers, Anganwadi workers, health workers, parents and other community leaders. Support sessions for these groups are regularly held. The purpose of these groups is to monitor delivery of timely services, quality issues, infrastructure and other deficits, and resolve institutional challenges, which affect the delivery of services and access of children to services in their areas. These groups have also helped substantially in bringing back out-of-school children to schools, creating access to AWC and various scholarship schemes. Many of the volunteers have participated in various initiatives including teaching students through winter vacation in winter schools, investigators for the grassroots survey, and in organising rallies and child clubs. The members of these groups have shown enormous dedication to be part of campaign to protect and promote rights of children in their own capacities and areas.

These groups have a fixed schedule of meeting once in a month to discuss issues that children face and take a decision on the action to be undertaken to resolve such issues. As a result, they have filed 285 petitions to government raising the issues of violations of children’s rights and untimely or no delivery of services to children. The petitions also include demand for ICDS centres in uncovered areas, appointment of extra cooks as per norms, child labour issues, development of infrastructure in schools, complaints about teachers/AWWs absence, applications for enrolment of children in ICDS centres, etc.

In addition to these groups, the PPPCR team has also tried to reach out to grassroots level functionaries like school teachers and anganwadi workers in order to make the changes more sustainable with their support and institutionalize developments in the area of child protection and development. Some of the teachers and anganwadi workers have been trained on certain issues and some are part of community support groups. This has resulted to build a strong network of almost 200 school teachers and 100 anganwadi workers, who lend their hand to be part of the campaign for protection of children’s rights in PPPCR pilot area.
As it was envisaged that these community support groups along with CRAs come together as a Child Rights Protection Forum transcending class, caste, community and political affiliations to raise the issues with the government institutions and seek redressal for their demands at block and district levels. Thus helping to create a society sensitized towards every single child, regardless of gender, caste, ethnicity, class or political affiliation. The process of building up of Panchayat level Child Rights Protection Forum has started, and as result, each panchayat where PPPCR project is being implemented will have a Panchayat level Child Rights Protection Forum.

Further, in order to strength the campaign these Panchayat level forums (which are called community support groups)
at initial stage) are amalgamated into a Block Level Child Protection Forum, with representatives of all the Panchayat Child Protection Forums/ community support groups. A start has already been initiated at Sumbal with Community Support Groups agreeing to build up a Sumbal Child Protection Forum. While the State Coordinator discussed the formation of Zonal level Child Protection Forum, consisting of members from community support groups, some of the members said that the forum would be very useful towards protection and promotion of child rights in the zone. A few wanted it independent of government officials so that they could freely voice their concerns in the forum. In the same meeting the forum decided to carry an infrastructural survey as its first activity jointly with PPPCR team in schools and ICDS centres to find gaps in existing facilities and whether facilities provided to schools are made available to children. A future meeting was also planned to discuss the organizational pattern and nature of functioning of the forum in Sumbal. A preliminary list of members has also been compiled in consultation with the community support groups, who will constitute the Sumbal Child Protection Forum with representation of Sarpanchs/ Deputy Sarpanchs, ward members, other active local people including women. On similar pattern, a forum is also in process of formation in Rajwar zone.

A training module is also being developed for the members of Zonal Level Child Protection Forums on child rights, child development programmes and how to conduct regular social audits at panchayat level.

Collaborative and Participative Approach--Breaking the Barriers:
There are many instances that the teachers (including head teachers), Anganwadi workers, PPPCR Support Group members and panchayat members conducted joint visits with our CRAs to mobilize out-of-school children and out-of-anagwandi children back to schools and ICDS centres, especially in Behnipora, Satkoji, Changimulla, Bakihakar, Trigam, Nowgam-A, Nowgam-B, Ganastan, Rakhi-Sultanpora and Inderkoot. There are also noteworthy efforts taken by some Sarpanchs and religious leaders in mobilizing children to schools.

Sarpanch Gadakhud (Sumbal) issued a public notice in the panchayat that the children who don’t attend ICDS centres should participate regularly in the anagwandi activities, rather than their relatives’ collecting nutrition from the centers. The Sarpanch further announced in a public meeting that if any parent is not able to support his/her child for education or is not able to provide treatment for children when ill, he will support them from his own, and in response to a demand for matting and furniture in a school, he made arrangements of Rs 50,000 through government for the school.
Sarpanch Wadipora –A (Rajwar) asked support group members that he will issue explanation if they don’t attend monthly meetings on child issues. He also issued a public notice on behalf of panchayat about Child clubs being set-up by PPPCR and urged parents to send their out-of-school children to schools. He has been monitoring and visiting schools and ICDS centers regularly. Deputy Sarpanch Bakihakar issued a poster about Child Recreational Clubs set-up under PPPCR and urged people to send their children to school, young children to ICDS centers and all children to attend the child clubs for recreation. Sarpanch, Bowan Watsar (Rajwar) also issued a public notice in the panchayat and urged parents to send children to school and publicized dates for regular meetings of Support Groups on child issues.

Deputy Sarpanch Trigam (Sumbal) has been regularly visiting out-of-school children who were enrolled to know if they are facing any problem in school. He accompanied children many times to school if they complained of problem faced at school. Because of his and other community youth and teacher’s efforts this panchayat has achieved universalization in education and every child under 14 years is in school.

There are a few places that teachers purchased uniform for all re-enrolled out-of-school children to support them to continue their education.

Further, in many instances that announcements were made in public rallies and in mosques during friday prayers by local religious leaders and/ or panchayat and urged parents to send children (especially girls) to school, rather than engaging them in child labour, particularly in Bowan, Changimulla, Wadipora-A, Nowgam-A and Nowgam-B. Some of the local religious leaders even participated in rallies and regularly take part in PPPCR support group meetings on issues of children. Once a religious leader said to people during prayers that should now Commission also track community yards/ wetlands to bring children back to schools that are send to collect fuel wood and miss school. An important case worth mentioning is that one leader has been continuously monitoring if any child missed school and would look around some common places where children work or collect fuel wood. If he found any child who has missed school he would call their parents at the same time to find why they haven’t send their child to school. This consistence persistence of a few religious leaders on the importance of education of children made it a priority for many parents, who later did sent their children back to school.

Importantly, such public notices and announcements created an enabling environment of learning and education and made children’s issues important in the affairs of panchayat and community.
5.4. Campaign for Enrolment of Out-of-school children:

PPPCR team has undertaken a re-enrolment drive in the 21 panchayats and 2 municipal wards where the project is being implemented to mobilise children, who were identified as out of school, back to schools.

After the baseline survey to identify all dropout/never enrolled children in each village and panchayat was completed and lists were prepared, the CRAs started meeting parents of each such child. They also undertook home visits, and spoke to children to motivate them to come back to school again. More than 3300 home visits have been undertaken by the CRAs. Some families were visited many times. In many cases where CRAs felt difficult to motivate parents, the District Coordinators visited the families to make more influence. The District Coordinators have made more than 170 home visits.

Further, in order to sensitise community at large, community meetings were held and rallies were organised in many panchayats. The CRAs also took help of support group members, panchayat and religious leaders to motivate parents, in

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<th>Impact/Outcome:</th>
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<tr>
<td>More than 3300 home visits were made by the CRAs and more than 170 home visits were made by District Coordinators.</td>
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<td>More than 2400 visits have been made to service providing institutions including schools and anganwadi centres, in relation to facilitating enrolment, monitoring, coordination, etc.</td>
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<td>District Coordinators have also made almost 300 visits to service providing institutions.</td>
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<td>19 rallies were organised</td>
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<td>624 out-of-school children have joined schools (178 in Rajwar and 446 in Sumbal).</td>
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<td>Most of the children were exempted admission fee by the Education department</td>
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<tr>
<td>11 Non-Residential Bridge Course centres were sanctioned by Education department in order to facilitate learning of out-of-school children who have joined schools.</td>
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<tr>
<td>538 stationery sets were provided to children who joined schools (stationery was provided two times and therefore many children received two times)</td>
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<tr>
<td>218 children were also provided uniforms, last academic year.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Because of the petitions forwarded by community, 10 cooks were engaged in Rajwar and 49 are in process in different schools in Sumbal and Rajwar under MDMS (as second cooks).</td>
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many cases, to send their out-of-school children to school. In many places, anganwadi workers and teachers started undertaking joint visits with CRAs to some families to motivate them. In many cases, religious leaders and panchayats have been very helpful in making an impact on the willingness of parents to send their out-of-school children to schools.

At the institutional level, the District Project Coordinators worked out a way in collaboration with teachers to facilitate the admission of any out-of-school children who wishes to come back.

As a result of this consistent campaigning, it became possible to mobilise 624 children to schools, who had either dropped out or were never enrolled in schools. These all children are presently in schools and do not include other 27 children who re-dropped out due to multiple reasons. Among them, more than 300 children have sustained in schools from last academic session.

However, in the process of bringing back the out-of-school children to schools, many institutional issues had emerged, some of which needed policy intervention, but a majority were resolved at the zonal and district level, therefore, making it possible for any dropout/never-enrolled children in these two zones to join school back at any point of time.

The important issues that have come up as blockades for drop-out/never enrolled children to move back to schools included the requirement of depositing admission fee, obligation of school uniforms, stationery, school bags, shoes, requirements of documents (like date of birth certificates, academic certificates of last class attended) and more importantly age inappropriateness of dropout/never enrolled children to their classes in which they are allowed to re-enroll. Besides, the corporal punishment and harassment faced by students in schools in many cases discourage the dropout/never-enrolled children to attend schools again. The corporal punishment is one of the reasons for school dropouts.

To resolve some of these issues, the ZEOs (Zonal Education Officers) issued circulars to all schools for not demanding any admission fee from dropout/never-enrolled children up to 8th class who wish to join schools again. Further, that these children may not be asked for any documents like admission records, date of birth, etc. The dropout/never enrolled children can join schools anytime throughout the academic session. The ZEOs also directed the teachers
not to harass or beat any child for any reason, which will discourage them from coming back to school.

These circulars have really helped PPPCR team to be able to get back many of the out-of-school children to school. The schools provided free books to these children and the PPPCR team made arrangements of uniform and stationery for these children under PPPCR programme. This facilitated their enrolment and retention in schools in these two zones.

The PPPCR baseline survey has indicated a total of 864 out of school children in the age group of 6-14 years, which amounts to 9.88 percent rate in 6-14 age group. As 513 children out of them have already joined the schools through the PPPCR enrollment drive, the out of school rate has reduced to 4 percent, which includes almost 67 children with some level of disability (almost 19 percent among present out-of-school children). Therefore, the universalisation of education is possible only when efforts are taken to create ways of inclusion of children with disability into the education.

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An Imaginative Approach – Going Beyond:

There are various socio-economic reasons due to which children are not able to continue schooling. Unaffordable education even in government schools, herding livestock, compulsion to earn, and work at home are a few invisible factors that are sometimes difficult to challenge. One of the local CRA in an effort to enrol dropout children back in school came across one such boy, Habib (name changed). Habib had dropped out when he was in 3rd standard for reasons unknown to parents. After left school, he started tending animals for full day. The local CRA met the family who were willing to send Habib to school but he was not ready to join school again. The parents said that Habib doesn’t open up with them. The local CRA went to meet Habib in the fields only where he was grazing animals and started playing with him in the same place. It took lot of time for the local CRA to make Habib to share his reason for not going to school, who later said that he was not able to cope up with education demands and was getting beaten up in the school, and one day he was beaten up very badly and he left school. The local CRA spent lot of time to develop a strong rapport with Habib and assured him that nobody will beat him in the school even if he is weak in studies and also assured him that he will be provided remedial classes if he feels the need. As a friend of CRA, Habib decided to join school again and was re-enrolled in 4th standard after three years of gap. Habib is a regular student now.

Shamima (name changed) had left school in 4th standard only and was working at family’s baker’s shop. The local CRA met her family and explained to them that she should re-join school but they refused to send her school and said that her other four younger siblings are studying and if she also goes to school, they will have loss in their business, which they can’t
afford. Shamima, however, was ready to go to school if parents would be willing. After a few visits to family, the District Coordinator also visited the family and offered them they the local CRA and District Coordinator would help the family in their work at shop if they let Shamima to go to school. The father wished to go to jail than sending her school. The CRA and District Coordinator left the family with a word that from tomorrow they will come to help them at shop, and the next day the local CRA went to his shop and was told that the family had re-enrolled the child. Shamima attended her school regularly and passed her annual exam as well. She has been a regular student from then.

Junaid (name changed) had left his school in 4th standard for almost a year. The local CRA after her survey in the panchayat found that Junaid was grazing their cattle in the fields and didn’t go to school. She went to see Junaid in the grazing field and offered him if he wishes to go to school. Junaid said that he can’t go to school. Who will tend their family’s cattle, was the question raised by Junaid? The local CRA offered him and his parents if they can’t send Junaid to school just for the reasons that someone has to graze their cattle, she can do it for them provided they send Junaid to school. A day later the local CRA went to the field and released Junaid to go to school and told him that she would look after his cattle. Junaid reached home and told his parents. The father of Junaid went to meet local CRA and assured her that he will send Junaid to school after a few days. Later, the Junaid was re-enrolled in school and is a regular student now.

These are amongst the many success stories where the CRAs using childlike imagination and going beyond routine explanations have managed to convince families and/ or children to go back to school.

The other important issue with out-of-school children is bringing them up to age-appropriate classes. This is important that most of the drop-out/never-enrolled children who have dropped out and have joined schools back, after a few years, are enrolled in classes they attended last time, which has resulted that they feel ashamed in sitting in classes with other children much younger to them. A special training is also needed for them to help them cope up with education demands and to improve their ability. Therefore, it was necessary that a bridge course be started within the schools to help the dropout/never-enrolled children to move up to higher classes appropriate to their age. This issue was raised with the education department and a proposal was moved for the sanction of NRBC (non-residential bridge course) centres on demand. The idea was that the drop-out/never enrolled children would be trained on a special course using a special pedagogy. The DIET (District Institute of Education and Training) would train the teachers who would be engaged in these bridge course centres before they start taking up the classes with dropout/never-enrolled children. The district administration agreed in principle to open such centres in the panchayats PPPCR has
launched its enrolment campaign and as a result, four such NRBC centres were run in Rajwar and 7 were further sanctioned in Sumbal.

However, a few of the issues need immediate attention from district and state administration, including the regular provisions of school uniforms, stationery and school bags for dropout/never-enrolled children, and if not given attention, the dropout/never-enrolled children who have moved back to schools, are vulnerable to drop out from schools again. Further, a campaign has to be launched to strictly ban corporal punishment in schools.

NCPCR has raised both these issues with the State government and urged the state that in general the teachers should be sensitized about the corporal punishment and dropout/never-enrolled children, and a campaign against corporal should be launched in the state. The NCPCR was assured of taking an immediate action on both the issues.

Alternatively, the PPPCR team has also decided to plan a training/orientation for the teachers in the two pilot zones during the next year (2013-14) on the corporal punishment in order to sensitise them on the issue and its implication on the children attending school.

If provided chance, they can prove

The enrolment drive of out-of-school children resulted into enrolment of 624 children into schools. Although there were apprehensions among teachers at the initial stage whether the drop out or never enrolled child can cope up with education demands, most of them did well in studies, and was told by many teachers in joint and individual meetings. Some of the children have really done very good in exams. One such example comes from jabeena (name changed). Jabeena, a girl child had left school in 5th class. She was mobilized to school and was readmitted in 7th class after 3 years of gap. Jabeena not only passed the annual examination but secured fourth position in her upper primary school. She proved her caliber in another event as well. During the Children’s Day celebration in Sumbal, she spoke at length very boldly in front of more than a thousand audiences including Chief Minister of J&K and shared her experience of journey to school.

Another example of becoming a role model comes from another child, Kabir (name changed) who had dropped out in 10th class from a private school for the reason that the school wanted him to appear as a private candidate in exams. His mother who is an anganwadi worker knew the PPPCR work, though was initially not supportive of the idea, and asked District Coordinator if they could help the child in resuming studies. She had tried all her efforts but had given up and the last hope was the PPPCR team. The CRA of the panchayat met the child and tried to motivate him. Later the District Coordinator met him, his parents and went to his school to understand the problem in depth. The CRA and District Coordinator could motivate
Kabir to appear in exams and he could finally pass his 10th exams. The story doesn’t end here. Kabir after a few months went to his another friend, who had also dropped out (re-dropped out after CRA had enrolled him and he passed 8th class and then left studies again). Kabir simply asked this friend that they have got the opportunity to study again after the Commission started working in the area and they should not lose this opportunity. Kabir purchased books and uniform for his friend after he got motivated to go to school again and finally sent him to school.

More than 300 children who were sent to school last academic sustained in school and passed their exams as well. What they needed was just a chance?

### 5.5. Integrated Child Development Centres (ICDS):

The baseline survey revealed that many children under 6 years of age, who are though eligible, were not enrolled in ICDS centres. This was also because some of the hamlets were devoid of AWCs in their locality.

An ICDS mapping was done to identify uncovered areas without ICDS centres and community groups and panchayat have forwarded 21 applications/petitions to Social Welfare department for sanction of ICDS centres in hamlets without AWCs for improving the access of children to ICDS services. The District Administrations of Bandipora and Kuwpara have assured that the Social Welfare department will look into each of these applications to provide new ICDS centres in uncovered areas in pilot area.

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<tr>
<td><strong>Community Support Groups forwarded 21 applications for sanction of new AWCs.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>385 out-of-anganwadi children were enrolled in AWCS (210 in Rajwar and 175 in Sumbal).</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Processes for enrolment of 186 children out of anganwadi have been completed and are likely to be enrolled soon.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Audits of ICDS centres are done regularly to monitor and verify attendance of children. 238 audits of ICDS centres have been undertaken until now.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>45 Anganwadi workers from Sumbal and Rajwar were trained on ‘ICDS and Growth Monitoring’</strong></td>
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Further, as was found that even in covered areas (by ICDS centres), there were many children under six years of age, who were not enrolled in ICDS centres. A mobilization campaign was started, as a result of which, 385 children, that were not enrolled, have been enrolled in ICDS centres. On similar pattern, processes for another 186 children have been completed for enrolment in ICDS centres, which the district administration has assured that all such children will be enrolled.

In order to make ICDS centres look better, joint efforts with Anganwadi workers are being taken to decorate ICDS centres by putting up charts on walls in ICDS centres.

Initial survey and community discussions had also revealed that there were large gaps between what was officially reported and people’s perception about functioning of government programmes for children. Efforts are being undertaken to make audits of the ICDS centres in these panchayats, with the help of panchayat and community groups, to monitor and verify attendance and delivery of services to children. Such audits cover many ICDS centres every month on regular basis. The preliminary observations have shown that attendance has improved over the time because of these audits. Until now, a total of 238 individual audits of ICDS centres (many centres were covered couple of times) have been done in Rajwar and Sumbal pilot area. It is anticipated that this initiative of undertaking audits in a systematic manner with the help of panchayats and local people would eventually make ICDS centres more transparent and accountable.

In addition to this, a need was felt for strengthening the knowledge and skills of Anganwadi workers (AWWs). There was also a demand for training from the Anganwadi workers as well as the community and panchayat. Therefore, a two days training was organised for Anganwadi workers from PPPCR pilot area of Rajwar and Sumbal zones at Handwara. 45 AWWs attended the training. The training was aimed to enable the AWWs develop a perspective on child issues and the linkage of ICDS and other child rights. The training was designed to enhance understanding of AWWs about different aspects of Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS), particularly the programmatic aspects of ICDS. The training covered knowledge of Supreme Court Orders; pre-school activities, home visits; and growth monitoring. Amongst the expected outcomes was capacity building of the AWWs to ensure better delivery of ICDS through improved knowledge and understanding; thereby aiming at
holistic development of the children. The training was facilitated by an Advisor to Supreme Court Commissioners on the Right to Food.

**From Confrontation to Friends**

At the onset of the work, most of the Anganwadi workers started confrontations with CRAs and didn’t cooperate with them. A few even complained against CRAs for continuously asking them for data, monitoring their work and even asking them to attend duties on time. But as the work unfolded and the anganwadi workers observed the approach of CRAs, many of them took initiatives to work together with CRAs and some of them prepared charts jointly with CRAs for the decoration of anganwadi centres and demanded that CRAs should facilitate PLAY for PEACE sessions (games) in anganwadi centres as well. Some of the anganwadi workers became part of the Support Groups set-up under PPPCR and attended meetings regularly. A few started undertaking joint home visits with CRAs to mobilise out-of-school children and out-of-anganwadi children to schools and ICDS centres.

In the meantime, 45 of them from Sumbal and Rajwar participated in two days training at Handwara on ‘ICDS and Growth Monitoring’. They also prepared common action plans to improve the services provided by them at ICDS centres and including diverse innovative activities in the list. They further demanded PPPCR to organise training on pre-schooling as well. Most of them also attended joint meetings with State Coordinator as a follow-up to training and assured that they will undertake activities proposed by them in common action plans during training. In another meeting they did precise planning of rallies and community meetings to be undertaken in different panchayats regularly. Such an interest in the work by the Anganwadi workers was even surprising for the PPPCR team to observe. Even a few ICDS Supervisors call PPPCR team in their meetings with Anganwadi workers and ask District Coordinators to monitor the opening of centres in some areas. The journey of almost one and half year has led to many workers joining supportive hands with PPPCR team, and at present there are almost a hundred Anganwadi workers in the supportive list of PPPCR team. In many panchayats the CRAs and Anganwadi workers jointly organised mother’s meetings, perhaps first time in the memory of local people. The trust has increased to the extent that they even call for support if they face problems in running centres.

There are almost similar stories with school teachers, many of them were complaining to Zonal education officers about the CRAs and other PPPCR team but as the work unfolded many joined hands in the work itself. There are many examples of undertaking joint home visits with CRAs to mobilise children back to schools. After the PPPCR started first two winter schools, there have also been demands by the teachers during the recent winter vacations to start such initiative at large level, and some of them volunteered in the winter schools.

This coming together of diverse supportive hands strengthen the work under PPPCR and helped to resolve many issues at field level in the best interests of children.
5.6. School Health Programme:

The health visits to schools don’t happen systematically and other components of school health programme like identifying weak and malnourished children in schools for further follow-up, provisions of safe drinking water and toilet facilities in all schools are also not been rigorously followed-up. It has been decided in collaboration with Education department that in each school, one teacher will be nominated and trained on school health programme for effective coordination with Health department to ensure that health visits are undertaken in schools, and other components of school health programme are also persisted. In both Sumbal and Rajwar zones, circulars were issued by concerned ZEOs to the schools for same and a list of teachers has been compiled.

It was decided during last academic year that a Health Calendar will be prepared for the next academic session (2013-14) by the Health department, Education department and PPPCR team for each school in PPPCR pilot area in Sumbal and Rajwar for ensuring regular and systematic health visits. In each school, a school health register will be maintained for recording health assessment of students by the health team on regular basis.

Further, in Rajwar and Sumbal, the PHE department has agreed to extend their support to provide drinking water facilities in schools, which don’t have facilities at present. Although, they had agreed this in principle during the meetings with Additional Deputy Commissioners, nothing concrete has been done until now, and would require a rigorous follow-up during the present year.

Additionally, the Health Department has also organised health visits to winter schools, which were run under PPPCR, and have covered more than 450 children under health visits until now.

In general, this has been a limitation in PPPCR to

Impact/Outcome:

- Health Department covered more than 450 children under health visits in winter schools run by PPPCR.
- Each School has nominated one teacher to be in-charge of school health programme.
- A school health calendar has been decided to be prepared for the entire zones.
- School health registers will be maintained to record the observations of health team on the register for every child over time and for further follow-up.
make a significant impact on this programme. Further, no major imitative was undertaken under PPPCR to improve the access to children to health services. However, as the programme has been started very recently, it was very difficult to cover each area, but it is expected that considerable work will be undertaken in this area during the next years.

5.7. Children in need of Care and Protection:

5.7.1 Children with Disability:
The baseline survey has identified many children who reported any disability, and out of them many didn’t had disability certificates and access to disability pension scheme. In an attempt to facilitate medical examination of all the children with disability in these areas, 94 such children have already been examined in the District and State level hospitals (including CRC Bemina, SMHS, Psychiatric Hospital and Children’s Hospital, Srinagar), and 45 out of them have been issued disability certificates (24 are in process). A few of them were provided treatment as well. For others, the health department in Bandipora has agreed to organise medical board in Sumbal only to make the process of medical examination easier for such children. Further, for 47 children with disability, applications have been submitted to the Social Welfare department for disability pensions.

Further, it has been planned already for the next year (2013-14) that all such children will be assessed by the experts to explore if they could be helped with assistive and supportive devices and by any other corrective measure, and subsequently such steps will be taken.

The fact that a majority of children with disability didn’t had even been examined for level of disability they live with shows the kind of neglect and exclusion they suffer through, which is partly because of complicated/hectic procedures for applying and getting medical examination done. Only at district head quarters, the medical boards are constituted, which also sits once a week. Therefore, for many of parents who are wage workers, accompanying their children for examination is a tough choice of losing wages for few days against medical examination of their children.
It was important that not simply facilitating medical examinations, disability certificates and pensions but also to create ways for these children to participate in school, ICDS centres and are able to play with other children of their communities. In a little effort, 17 children with disability have been enrolled in schools and a few more in ICDS centres. However, this even small effort was important to craft a new hope for community that ways are possible for such children to participate in development. Efforts are also being taken to mobilize these children with disability to participate in Child Recreational Clubs, organized under PPPCR team.

In order to sanitize community and officials towards children with disability and their needs, the issue has been continuously discussed in the community meetings and a block level meeting was called in Sumbal where most of block level officials from health, education, social welfare and rural development participated in addition to community support groups. The meeting was also attended by some of the parents of the children with disability, and the discussion on issues was facilitated by a disability rights activist (well known in this field).

**There are ready, just a way has to be created**

In a way to visit to school in Shilvat (Sumbal), the CRA observed a young girl child of 5 years old helping another elder child (boy) to walk to school. The CRA played with them for a while and became a friend to them. The children were very articulate and said to CRA that the elder child had visual disability in both eyes and can’t see, but is very keen to study and wants to play with his friends. As he needs assistance in reaching school the younger child, who is a cousin sister to him, help him in reaching to school. Both attend the school and then return together. The teachers also spoke of the child being very enthusiastic about education.

There was another case of one child who has speech and hearing disability in Inderkoot (Sumbal). He had left school for a year and was working at blacksmith’s shop. He at his own met the local CRA, showed him with sign language that he wants to go to school and would buy uniform and books at his own if CRA would get him enrolled in 7th class because his friends were in 7th class.

Although there is special component of providing education to children with disability under SSA, and if needed home based education could also be arranged, but most of the children are still waiting for that single chance.
5.7.2. Orphan Children:
The survey has also identified many orphan children. For 121 such children, applications have been submitted to the Social Welfare department for helping them with any financial assistance. Further, among conflict-affected orphans, for 21 children applications have been submitted for NFCH/RMV scholarships (which will entitle them Rs. 1000 per month up to 25 years of age).

5.7.3. Children in need of Emergency Support:
There are different types of incidents (natural as well as manmade) that may create varying levels of distress for families, and in that distress the children become among the most vulnerable, which affects their access to education, fun, recreation, nutrition, etc. and may result into children dropping out of schools and fall prey to illness. Therefore, in such distress when families are unable to cope up, it is important that there is support to families to help them cope up in distress. There is a relief protocol, but that hardly takes care of the needs of children, and therefore, even if help is provided, the children are affected.

There were some incidents that occurred in the PPPCR pilot area and the team tried to reach to them to help children affected in such incidents.

In a village in Rajwar (Shatigam), six houses, which housed eight families, were gutted in a fire during an encounter and these families lost almost everything as the houses were largely made of wood. In view of the harsh winter approaching most families were hurrying with construction of their homes. However, owing

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### Impact/Outcome:

- **Medical examination was facilitated for 94 children with disability.**
- **45 children with disability were issued disability certificates (and 24 are in process).**
- Applications for 47 children with disability were submitted for disability pensions.
- Applications for 21 orphan children (of conflict affected) were submitted for NFCH scholarship.
- Applications for 121 orphan children (of natural reasons) were submitted for scholarship with Social welfare department.
- 40 children were provided relief during different fire incidents.
- Applications for more than 2200 students in entire Rajwar zone have been submitted for minority scholarships.
- Applications for more than 430 students in PPPCR pilot area in Sumbal have been submitted for minority scholarships.
to the physical and financial damage caused few were able to complete a room or two at maximum. Families were living in a small one-room shed which was causing substantial problems for schooling children. Children suffered silently much more than adults. There were 25 children in these families. The fire burnt all their valuable things, like cloths, books, uniform, toys etc, which gave a meaning to their social environment.

In an effort to provide relief and protection to ensure that such children are able to cope up with distress and continue their schooling, a proposal was submitted to the District Administration, and they provided extra relief of Rs 5000 to each family for taking care of children. Secondly, free textbooks were made available to them. Thirdly, education department also provided assistance for uniform and stationery to enable them to continue their studies. Social welfare department also received their applications to provide them scholarship. The Health department did a health check-up of all such children.

Similarly, during another such incident in another panchayat in Rajwar (Bowan panchayat), three houses were damaged, and 9 children lost everything including their clothes, books, stationery, playing items, etc. The education department provided books and some monetary assistance to such children, in addition to school bags, uniform and stationery provided under PPCR to help them continue their schooling. Further their applications for scholarship were submitted to Social Welfare Department. A health check-up was also done of all children by the Health Department.

In another panchayat in Sumbal (Nowgam ‘B’), during a fire incident a family lost everything and children became vulnerable. The Community Support Group of that panchayat filed a demand to PPCR for some of the immediate requirements for children and provisions of clothes, stationery and books were made to 6 children accordingly.

In another episode at Bowan, many children had fallen ill. There was an outbreak of fever, among almost 60 children. The District Coordinator visited the area and explored that people were much worried because there had been an earlier such episode in the village as well, 12 years before, which had taken 9 lives of children. Therefore, on immediate basis he spoke to concerned health officials and requested for arranging a health visit to this panchayat, which was done by the health department on immediate basis.
It was felt in all these occasions that just a visit gives a relief to people and they feel encouraged that someone has come to pay heed to their problems. In Bowan during a fire incident (encounter) the people when met the District Coordinator expressed that they don’t anything, they felt overwhelming by his immediate visit to the area to know what has happened, and this human concern is what is needed most.

5.7.4. Access to Scholarships:

There are different scholarship schemes implemented by the Social welfare department to provide financial assistance to children, especially from the disadvantaged classes, to help them to continue their education.

However, with the scholarships the procedures are very complicated and involve running around government offices with no assurance that even after applying, the scholarship will be actually sanctioned because of the ceilings on quota at district level (which partly arises that the quota sanctioned for a district or a block is not based on any proper estimate). Further, with some scholarships like minority scholarship, inter-departmental coordination is much needed but lacks. The application forms are to be submitted by the teachers to zonal offices, which are supposed to make entries and forward a copy to Social welfare. However, in this process the teachers who facilitate application forms at the field level are hardly oriented about the procedures of eligibilities and requirements. They are not even informed about the number of applications at maximum or minimum they should forward. Further, as the scholarships are sanctioned, there is no communication back to the grassroots level why some applications were approved and others not. This creates an information gap and ultimately discourages teachers and parents in spending energy. There were many examples that teachers reported not a single scholarship was sanctioned for the entire school. Similarly, there were examples that teachers had forwarded applications for most of the students in their school (partly because they find it difficult to justify to people why few and not others). Last academic year (2012), there were instances that applications forms (which was 4 pages) were not available at all (form read as ‘free of cost’) and to apply would require teachers or children to make photocopies at their own cost.

Therefore, to link school going children to government scholarships, efforts were taken to coordinate between Education and Social Welfare Departments to enable more numbers of children to submit timely application for scholarships to enable them to meet education
related expenses. In Rajwar, survey and discussions had revealed very limited coverage of minority scholarship scheme, and therefore, extensive focus was placed in Rajwar. PPPCR team and Social Welfare office, Kupwara worked out how to improve communication to the field and increase chances of applications and sanction. The Social Welfare officer worked out a separate format for applications (which was much simplified) and gave a rough idea of number of scholarships that could be sanctioned for a zone out of the district quota. An orientation was organised by the PPPCR team and ZEO of all the head-teachers in the zone and were oriented about the application requirements and the process they should follow for applications. A continuous follow-up was made with most of the schools about applications of students, and in many cases community and panchayat was informed and involved in the process, who followed it up also at their level with schools. This follow-up has resulted into most of the schools of education zone forwarding applications of their students for Minority scholarship scheme.

In Sumbal, as not much coordination could happen between Social Welfare Department, Education Department and PPPCR team, focus was placed only on panchayats in PPPCR pilot area and not on entire zone, thereby resulting into forwarding applications of more than 430 students in the PPPCR pilot area (and more than 1000 in entire zone).

This system of simplification, orientation, involvement and follow-up ensured that the applications submitted to Social welfare office increased to 2229 in the Rajwar zone, and almost all of them will get sanctioned. This has demonstrated how the process of applications to other scholarship schemes could be improved in the best interests of children.

5.8. Child Recreational Clubs for overall Learning and Development:

Holistic development includes psychological wellbeing; emotional stability; social wellbeing; physical development to his / her full potential; developing a sense of security; self-esteem and confidence. Education is one such process for helping children to develop to

SMILE TO LAST A WHILE...
A simple game of football produces sufficient serotonin, the happy hormone, to last for a week!!

Therefore, sports and other recreational activities could be an effective tool for keeping children happy and for their physical, social and mental development.
the full potential. However, even the education in present society has become a source of stress for many children with societal pressure to gain edge over increasing competition. Adding to this, more than two decadal conflict has severely affected the mental wellbeing of the children in Kashmir. Therefore, it is important children have opportunities for fun and recreation, alongside their education.

In an attempt to break this stressful cycle and provide children with an opportunity to simply enjoy themselves, Child Recreational Clubs have been set up to provide opportunities to children for developing every aspect of their personality, beyond “schoolish” learning and race for grades, through fun, recreation, sports and learning in a friendly atmosphere.

The local CRAs facilitate participation of children through cooperative and non-competitive games, and sports. Children are free to join any sport or game that they might wish too. There is only one simple criterion for membership to the club that a person should be below 18 years of age. These activities are aimed at increasing participation, team building, developing self-esteem and providing opportunity of learning.

At present, there are 23 child recreational clubs, with regular participation of more than 1320 children in such clubs. The attendance of children is given in the table 1 below. An activities calendar have been prepared for all these clubs in consultation.

**Impact/Outcome:**

- 23 Child Recreational Clubs have been set-up, which are facilitated by our community workers.
- All these clubs have activities calendar, including games, drama, debates, drawing and painting, storytelling, sports, etc.
- More than 1320 children, including girls, participate in these child clubs with almost 66 percent annual attendance for last year.
with children, including games, drama, debates, drawing and painting, storytelling, sports, etc. All these child clubs have been provided sports material for providing facilities of indoor and outdoor games to children after school hours.

All these child clubs were started with one session in a week, however, in most clubs, there has been a huge demand by the children for organising second sessions and presently the sessions have increased to twice a week in each club. In order to better manage the affairs in these clubs on sustainable basis, the CRAs have set-up Child Recreational Committees, including mostly youth who had shown interest in such initiative, and help the CRAs in organising child clubs. As a result, in a few places, CRAs and local youth organized inter-child club sports contest. For the next year (2013-14) the PPPCR team is planning for organising a larger sports festival for child clubs.

### Table 1: Performance of Child Recreational Clubs in Sumbal and Rajwar for 2012-13*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>No of Child Clubs</th>
<th>Sessions Organised</th>
<th>Boys Attendance</th>
<th>Girls Attendance</th>
<th>Total Attendance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Attendance</td>
<td>Attendance</td>
<td>Attendance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>in Percent</td>
<td>in Percent</td>
<td>in Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sumbal</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>297</td>
<td>7489</td>
<td>4418</td>
<td>11875</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>65.64</td>
<td>67.64</td>
<td>66.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rajwar</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>338</td>
<td>9533</td>
<td>3309</td>
<td>12842</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>65.86</td>
<td>66.86</td>
<td>66.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>635</td>
<td>17022</td>
<td>7727</td>
<td>24717</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>65.76</td>
<td>67.30</td>
<td>66.24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: The attendance has been derived by adding up of attendance of children in different session over the time and the percentage of attendance represents the annual attendance of children in these clubs.*

*In most cases the child clubs were started during June and July, 12 and have continued afterwards.*

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**Child Clubs -A Simple Way to Connect to Children & Make them Happy**

The CRAs who facilitate the Child Clubs under PPPCR are very confident of these child clubs serving as an important platform for children to come out of fear and shyness and become bold and confident because of their participation in different activities in a friendly atmosphere in Child Clubs. One CRA observed that initially when children joined these clubs many of them were carrying fear, probably felt it was to be another school, but as they participated in the activities, the fear went away, and they started even giving suggestions how to improve the functioning of the clubs. Another CRA feels that the children enjoy freedom provided in these clubs. They wanted to play, talk and sometimes to make noise. They share their ideas, opinions and sometimes their personal problems. The Child Clubs
have become freedom zones for children where a child can play, talk, and share his opinions and problems. Importantly, the children made friends that they have never engaged with in their own panchayats. The child clubs have also become a platform for out-of-school children and school going children to play together, which even became a means to motivate out-of-school children to join school. Many out-of-school children take leadership roles in many activities. Many CRAs felt that out-of-school children who attended child clubs were easy to be motivated to join schools back, and therefore, the Child Clubs have become a bridge for many to move to school.

CRAs also observed that some of the children were taking proud of being part of child clubs and would very proudly say to others that their child club has a water jug, chess board, carom board, rings, cricket material, etc. and they undertake many activities. The importance of child clubs could be understood by the fact that many parents do accompany their younger children to drop them at child clubs (some watch their children playing).

Simply to put it that children enjoy coming to these child clubs and these clubs provide a platform to children to play, talk, listen, share and to develop. The Child Clubs in turn helped CRAs to come close to children. One of the CRAs narrated when he initiated Child Club children started connecting him and his relationship became strong with children.

5.9. Winter Schools:

It is a well known practice that students take private tuitions to cope with home work and syllabi and gain competitive advantage during winter vacations. However, students from disadvantaged households cannot afford such a luxury and end up working as labour or at home and often get left behind. There has been a huge demand from community to make arrangements for schooling (combined with fun and recreation) during the winters. In an attempt to promote equal opportunity for all, two winter schools (one each in Sumbal and Rajwar education zone) were run in government premises on a pilot basis in Jan-Feb 2012, in collaboration with district administration. These schools provided free education (including debates and games) and medical checkups for all those who wished to join. The response was overwhelming. 192 students in Gadakhud panchayat in Sumbal and 160 students in Changimulla panchayat in Rajwar attended these winter schools through the winter vacations.
The basic idea of his initiative was to provide assistance to willing and needy children with learning through the winter months. Keeping the harsh winter in mind "winter school" timing was regulated to keep, there was additional matting provided and windows were covered with plastic to insulate the cold. The functioning of the school was overlooked by PPPCR, while the teaching was done by volunteers from the youth groups and local teachers. These winter schools carried out not just academic activities but also focused on various recreational activities.

As communities observed that the initiative has worked well and gave access to many children to education, the demand grew to start such an initiative in all areas where PPPCR is implemented. With that demand, the issue was discussed with district administration in Bandipora and Kupwara, and they agreed to support this initiative. As a result, 6 winter schools in Sumbal and 4 winter schools in Rajwar were run with the support of District Administration and Education Department (Jan-Feb 2013), with participation of 840 children in these winter schools.

Although the official policy of state is to close the schools during winters because of the severe winter, in reality most of the students do take tuitions and many children are left because they can’t afford. The relevance of these winter schools was very well articulated by Sarpanch, Changimulla, during the closing ceremony of a winter school on the onset of opening of regular schools, and said that such initiatives are important as they help in mitigating the gap in access to education between rich and poor, otherwise only those who afford tuitions access education in winters.

Parents also found the initiative very helpful, as it did not increase financial pressures on parents and felt difference in quality of learning and its impact on the ability of their children. As the winter schools were run for children in the 3rd to 8th classes and not for those below 3rd standard (for the reason that severe cold may have implications for younger children), there was a demand for making arrangements for younger children as well. The state coordinator recalled one incident that during a field visit at

**Impact/Outcome:**
- 12 winter schools were run in collaboration with education department during 2012 and 2013 winters.
- More than 1200 children attended winter schools.
- More than 450 children were covered under health visits in these winter schools.
Shatigam, one parent met him and said “I have never seen my child study so happily, I also want you to start this initiative for my younger child. Since we cannot afford tuitions this is a great help in providing learning opportunity for my children”. There were also incidents that parents from neighboring panchayats urged to enroll their children in these schools, and in one case the parent assured that he would accompany her girl child on each day as the approaching road was terrain. In another case, a child was coming down the hill from another panchayat, which was becoming risky for him in the freezing snow, and later the District Coordinator made arrangements for his tuition in his panchayat only.

Successful winter schooling has raised many policy level questions, such as the need and requirement of extraordinarily long winter break and provisions for winter schooling. In order to take this initiate at a larger level, the Commission decided to work out a conceptual note on winter schooling considering the climatic conditions in Kashmir and infrastructural availability in government schools for a further debate in the state. A draft report has been prepared on this, but required more consultation with people, civil society, experts and government before taking any call on this.

5.10. Children’s Day Celebration:

In the backdrop of implementation of PPPCR project in Sumbal and Rajwar zones for the protection of children, the District Administration Bandipora organised a Children’s Day Celebration on 14th November, 2012 in Sumbal, on the occasion of National Children’s Day, being celebrated every year on 14th November. This celebration was organized to encourage many of the out-of-school children who were brought back to school through PPPCR for their education, and to renew commitment towards the protection and development of children, to celebrate what has been achieved and to reflect on weaknesses to improve towards ensuring that each child is safe and protected and all children are provided with all facilities for their development.
As the PPPCR project is also implemented in Rajwar education zone in Kupwara district, the District Administration Bandipora also invited the district, block and local officials who are involved with children in Rajwar, Kupwara as well. The function was attended by almost 1500 people including children, who were out-of-school and have now joined schools, teachers, anganwadi workers and health workers, along with many district and block level officials from Bandipora and Kupwara.

The idea of Children’s Day celebration in Sumbal was well taken by the state government also, and the Chief Minister of J&K, Mr. Omar Abdullah; Minister for Social Welfare, Ms Sakina Itoo; and Speaker of J&K Assembly, Mr. Mohd Akbar Lone, also attended the function as Chief guests, in addition to Dr. Shantha Sinha Chairperson, NCPCR and Ms. Dipa Dixit, Member, NCPCR. The function was also attended by the Deputy Commissioner Bandipora; Deputy Commissioner, Kupwara; Director Education, Kashmir; and Director Social Welfare, Kashmir.

The panchayat members and other community leaders, who have been part of PPPCR community support groups, were also invited. However, due to announcement of Model Code of Conduct in the state, the panchayat members, who are elected members, couldn’t participate in the function, as obligations under the Model Code of Conduct.

Mr. Omar Abdullah, the Chief Minister of J&K, while speaking on the occasion, mentioned that during the last two decades of conflict in J&K, children have suffered most, and pointed out that while the government has improved implementation of many programmes there is still much more to be done and requires dedication and commitment. He further mentioned that the government is putting special focus on the education sector and brought improvements in infrastructure in schools and attempted to make the atmosphere more conducive and attractive for children. He further mentioned that the government is working to reduce drop-out rate among children so that all children can complete their schooling. Giving reference to other problems children face, he appealed to all religious, political, social and non-governmental institutions to work together to eradicate the problems, and help in the development of children in the state. The Chief Minister expressed satisfaction and mentioned that he may have liked to make some policy announcements for children but because of the Model Code of Conduct in the state, he is obliged not to make any policy announcement.
The Children’s Day celebration was important in highlighting the importance of child programmes and encouraged the grass roots level workers – teachers, anganwadi workers and health workers – and community members who have been involved in the PPPCR’s work on child rights in Sumbal and Rajwar to enable children to realise their rights. This celebration also encouraged the children who joined schools to continue their education with Chief Minister speaking to them on the importance of education for them and assured all support from the government for their education.

5.11. Interface with Government -- Institutionalising the Changes:

One of the components of PPPCR programme is to establish a mechanism to review the developments of children at the block and district levels regularly; to ensure that the field level workers of government receive support from block and district officials; to prepare the government to respond to the community demands and petitions speedily and provide timely delivery of services; and the grass root level experiences inform the policies. Further, to build a system of dialogue between government and community. In addition to this, it is important that as a pilot, if successful, should be taken on a scale by the government, therefore, necessities the continuous engagement of local officials who could later take on the project at their own.

This is being done through a multi-tier system in different ways. Since its inception it has been a continuous effort of the PPPCR to consult and communicate to the officials at block and district about the developments of the project and the issues that emerge from the field. Firstly, regular meetings are conducted with grass root level functionaries including school teachers and anganwadi workers to resolve issues that emerge locally. It has been observed that many of the issues are resolved through the support of grass root level functionaries only. The regular meetings with them have in turn strengthened the work under PPPCR project. As a result, there are almost two hundred teachers and a hundred anganwadi workers who have shown enormous interest and support this work towards ensuring delivering of services to children.

At the second level, the PPPCR team conduct meetings as and when required with the zonal, block and district officials. In addition to this, interface meetings are being organized at block level, in which the PPPCR community support groups interact with block level officials, and
raise concerns related to children in their panchayats/villages. The block level officials respond to their issues of concern and sort out how their issues could be dealt with immediate redressal. Until now, three block level interface meetings have been organised. Such efforts are developing a dialogue between the community and the government, and enabling a child friendly atmosphere.

At the third level, in both the districts, *Joint Review Meetings* are being conducted regularly with district and block level officials, under the Chairmanship of Deputy Commissioner or Additional Deputy Commissioner/Additional Deputy Developmental Commissioner, to review the progress of work and improvements on the demands of the community. District Social Welfare Officer, CDPO, Chief Education Officer, Zonal Education Officer, Chief Medical Officer, Block Level Medical Officer and Block Development Officer also attend these district level review meetings on regular basis. Such meetings have resulted into initiating many actions in the areas of children and have strengthened the PPPCR programme. These meetings have been strength of this project and because of the willingness and interest of the block and district officials, the project has made a ground.

Until now more than a hundred meetings, individually and joint meetings, have been held with block and district officials in these two districts. These meetings have resulted not only into addressing individual issues but also made some systematic changes in the implementations of the child related programmes. Some of the circulars issued by the officials at zonal levels in order to make easy way for children who were out of school to join schools are mentioned below. These circulars have had huge impact in facilitating enrollment of out-of-school children in schools.

**Government Circulars and orders issued in PPPCR Project area:**

- Exemption of fee for out-of-school children, if they wish to join schools.

- Provision of text books for out-of-school children, without any requirement for depositing school fee.

- No denial of admission for any reasons, on the lines of RTE (2009). Therefore, no requirement for submitting documents like date of birth certificate, previous certificates or registration records, or any document explaining the gap in schooling, etc.

- Banning of corporal punishment in schools.
- No pressure for purchasing school uniform, so that it doesn’t become a hurdle for children from disadvantaged classes to continue their schooling.

- Children can be enrolled in age-appropriate classes.

- Admission process open for out-of-school children throughout academic year.

- Uniform dress codes across schools in education zone, which made the process of purchasing uniform for parents much easier and convenient.

- Nomination of teachers from each school as in-charge of school health programme in order to coordinate for school health checkups.

- Sanctioning of Non-residential bridge course centers (NRBCs) in schools for enabling out-of-school children, who were re-enrolled, to move to age-appropriate classes and to facilitate their learning.

- Sanctioning of winter schools as remedial coaching for children.

The circulars and regular review meetings not only helped in getting support from grassroots level functionaries but also generated support to the field functionaries itself, in addition to regular follow-up of many of the issues that community had raised through petitions and meetings. The circulars/orders also helped in creating a feeling among community that system was moving to their demands and it encouraged them to write to government on other issues as well. This is the reason that the community petitions have ever been increasing. Until now the community has filed 285 petitions/applications to government.

5.11.1: Issues raised with the State government:
To make a larger impact and to reach out to all children, there needs to be an intervention at the policy level. There are issues of policy implementation in certain cases that are pertaining to certain panchayats or zones and /or districts or sometimes even at the state level, while in others there is a problem of lack of policy or scheme addressing Child Rights. The NCPCR has been visiting regularly to J&K to review the developments of the PPPCR project and to interact with community about the issues children faced. Through identifying areas of need and deficit, NCPCR has been consistently engaging with the state government on some of the policy level issues in order to ensure that the basic rights are delivered to every child within the state. Some of the issues that were raised by the Commission regularly with the State government since December, 2009, and were assured that the state government was taking
steps towards some of the institutional developments and smoothening functioning of child programmes, included:

a) **Infrastructural problems in schools**: A large number of schools are being located in rented buildings, which pose a problem of not only inadequate spaces for children but also restrict state government for up-gradation of infrastructure like toilets, kitchen shed, compound walls, etc. This problem also arises because of unavailability of community land (or at appropriate places) in many villages for construction of schools. Further, there are many schools without the facilities of toilets and drinking water.

*It was recommended that the State government should evolve a comprehensive strategy for procurement of land for school buildings in areas where community or State land is not available and for construction of school buildings in a time bound manner. Further, an exercise must be undertaken for mapping of schools without toilets and safe drinking water, and convergence with rural development programmes to provide for such facilities to schools should be worked out.*

b) **Obligation of fee for admission/exams/excursion**: Children are obliged to pay for admission fee, printing charges biannually for exams, and excursion fee. The waiver of admission fee in Sumbal and Rajwar education zones by the district administration and education department was very helpful and encouraged hundreds of out-of-school children to move back to schools. *Therefore, any school fee, whether it is admission fee or printing charges, should be waived off to pave way for free education to children as matter of their right.*

c) **Uniform and Stationery**: There are no provisions for providing stationery and uniforms to children (or poor children) to enable them continue their education smoothly. Further, no standard uniform code is being followed in deciding the colour/texture of uniforms for children in government schools. As a result, it is up to discretion of teachers to decide on the colour and type of uniform in their schools, which has created diversity in uniforms across schools and importantly there are incidences that some schools keep changing uniforms over the years. This sometimes creates huge problems for parents in purchasing uniforms in local markets and at feasible rates.
Although it was encouraging to hear that the State government has approved providing free uniforms from next academic session (2013) in government schools, it is important that a circular should be issued to all districts to make provisions of standard uniforms at district level or zonal levels, which will even smoothen the process of procurement of uniforms for government itself for providing uniforms for children.

d) **Mid-day Meals Scheme:** The reimbursement of cooking cost to teachers is delayed a lot, which compromises the quality of meal being served to children. Secondly, there were incidences of unavailability of food grains in many schools during July and August, 2012. Therefore, it is important that the State government maintains a buffer stock for almost three months in each school to ensure that MDM is provided smoothly in all schools throughout the year, without any disruption. Further, it is important, that the teachers are provided advances for preparing meals, which would be settled against the utilisation bills or arrangements must be put to place to provide them reimbursement regularly without delays.

e) **Corporal Punishment:** It was found that the corporal punishment is used widely in schools, which has emerged as one of the prime reasons for children dropping out of schools. NCPCR felt that passing any circular for banning corporal punishment (as has been done) will not work till the time a wider campaign is launched in the State for banning corporal punishment involving wall writings in villages and schools, essay competitions, radio/TV programmes, sanitization programmes for teachers and poster campaigning, etc. These coupled with a government circular banning corporal punishment in schools is likely to have a larger impact. *Therefore, NCPCR suggested to the state for launching a wider campaign against corporal punishment in the state.*

f) **School Health Programme:** A majority of schools are not being covered under school health programme and there is no systematic planning in conducting regular health visits in schools. *It was, therefore, recommended that a Health Calendar is prepared for each school and each concerned PHC is provided a list of schools in its area with Health Calendars to ensure that they cover their schools within stipulated time, and are made accountable for follow-up and/ or other gaps in the target. Health cards are provided to all children and a record is maintained in all schools about the visit of health team and*
information about the children for follow-up and referrals. Medicines, iron tablets, calcium and other tonics are made available to children during health visits.

g) **Children with Disability:** It has been observed at the grass roots level that the children with disability find it very difficult to access schools and ICDS centres due to infrastructural problems and institutional incapability of helping them. SSA scheme includes many provisions for enabling children with disability to access education. However, the grass root level observations have revealed that most of these provisions remain on paper only, and not many concerned government officials at block level and downwards are aware of these provisions. *Therefore, it is recommended that a special campaign for enabling such children to access education must be launched in the State, which would involve undertaking a mapping exercise by all schools of identifying children with disability in their catchment area, and then making individual plans for each child to enable them to access education. Further, an orientation programme needs to be organised for block level officials and head teachers on the provisions for ramps, escorts, medical help, resource centers, aids, etc. to enable children with disability to access schools, and especially how to plan for providing these facilities to such children.*

h) **Supplementary Nutrition under ICDS:** There are intermittent irregularities in food supplies to ICDS centers. As a result, the supplementary nutrition served at ICDS centres to children is irregular. There were also reports of supply being of poor quality or not stored properly. *It is important that the procurement and distribution process of nutrition items is smoothened and made hassle free so that there is timely supply to ICDS centres.*

i) **Non-nutritional Items under ICDS:** In many ICDS centres the growth charts, weighing machines, storage bins, matting, charts and playing items are not available, which has affected the quality of services dramatically. Importantly, the growth monitoring could not be done without proper arrangements of weighing machines and growth registers. Although such items are provided to ICDS centres the provision is not regular, timely and need based. *There has to be a system of undertaking an exercise of mapping of requirements regularly (preferably biannually) much ahead of planning process starts in the State and district, so that adequate money is allocated for such requirements.*
Further, there is also scope of convergence with SSA for procurement of items for pre- school activities, and this has to explored and reflected in the plans made at the district level.

j) **Anganwadi Buildings:** Most of ICDS centres are placed in rented buildings in Anganwadi helper’s house with inadequate spacing. *The provisions of pucca and government buildings for AWCs should be explored.*

k) **Beneficiary Norms under ICDS:** The State government has not yet saturated all areas/hamlets with Anganwadi centres (AWC) and would have to sanction AWCs in uncovered areas on a priority basis. Further, it has been observed that the present norm of allowing only 40 beneficiaries in each ICDS centre has restricted coverage of many children, though eligible under ICDS norms, even in areas of already being covered with a functional ICDS centre. For example, the ICDS records in many panchayats in Sumbal showed that a majority of the surveyed children under 6 years (who were all eligible for ICDS services) were not enrolled in ICDS centres, because they counted over and above of the norm of 40 beneficiaries per AWC. *It would require sanctioning of many AWCs to cover such children, going by this norm. However, until that is done, the left out children should not be barred from accessing present ICDS centres and a circular must be issued asking for enrolment of all children in the catchment area of AWCs and provisions for supply are also made based on actual enrolment records. Once the new AWCs are created such extra children should be shifted to their nearby AWCs.*

l) **Convergence:** Considering that SSA provides for pre-school activities, for children with disability, and for many other activities; Total Sanitation Campaign (TSG) provides for toilets and drinking water; education department has also provisions for toilets and drinking water; NRHM has provisions for School Health Programme; etc. *The NCPCR recommended that a convergence meeting should be organized in both Kupwara and Bandipora districts to explore all possibilities of providing support to out-of-school children, children with disability, pre-school children in ICDS centres; and provisions of toilets and drinking water in all schools under different programmes in Rajwar and Sumbal Education Zones.*
m) **Training of Panchayat on Child Rights:** The NCPCR had also proposed to the state as the state government was making preparations for training of panchayat representatives, a session on child protection, rights and entitlements and ways of dealing with child issues at the community level should be included in the training module.

n) **Mapping of Children:** A data collection and mapping exercise, which would identify children with different vulnerabilities, would be very useful as it would help programmes, schemes and institutions to address vulnerable groups of children more effectively.

o) **Juvenile Justice Act:** Although the J&K had its own Juvenile Justice Act, there was an urgent need for a stronger juvenile justice system in the state. The State Act needed to be updated, perhaps to bring in line with the Juvenile Justice Act, 2006. There are no specialized agencies like the Child Welfare Committees or Juvenile Justice Boards available for children. A revised legislation, if implemented effectively, would contribute greatly, towards the protection and welfare of children. This matter was taken with the state many times to be given priority. *The NCPCR was encouraged by the State Governments’ response to work towards a juvenile justice framework that incorporates national and international best practice.*

p) **SCPCR:** The NCPCR has also been proposing to the state for setting up of State Commission for Protection of Child Rights (SCPCR) in J&K.

q) **Right to Education Act:** Although the J&K has its own legislation, J & K School Education Act 2002, it needs to be revised to pave way for free education in the state. *The NCPCR also suggested to the state for a comparison between the J & K School Education Act 2002 and the recent Right to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 to ensure that the State law meets national standards.*

r) **State Child Policy:** The NCPCR had felt and also recommended to the state that there is an urgent need to have a State Child Policy, which will address all children. The said policy would need some flexibility in order to address child related issues district-wise. Currently, there are several cash-rich programmes for children that involve cash transfers. Over the longer-term, a State Child Policy could incorporate strategies for cash transfers to evolve into capacity building, allowing families who have lost breadwinners to support themselves, strengthening institutions and better service delivery.
6. The Way Ahead

Through the work under PPPCR a systematic way has been carved out to make schools accessible to all dropout/never-enrolled children in these two zones where PPPCR is implemented. At present, dropout/never enrolled children enjoy the privilege to join schools back at any time through the year and without any fee, with free books. This will develop into a model of bringing all dropout/never enrolled children back to schools in the state.

The PPPCR project has to some significant extent been able to put in place many such process as necessary for ensuring participation of community in the child programmes; creating conducive environment to make discussions on children and their well-being a focal point in the area; ensuring that the demands of community and children find systematic ways of being heard and redressed; and advocating for many policy changes. In addition, the project has touched almost 8000\(^6\) children directly under the programme in terms of their enrolment in school and ICDS centres; facilitating their applications for scholarships and other financial assistance schemes; facilitating their health checkups; providing them uniform and stationery; other relief measures; providing facilities for tuition through winter schools; providing means for fun and recreation; etc.

The PPPCR project has already been rolled down into 29 panchayats and 2 municipal wards (adding a total of 51 villages) including the recent 8 panchayats where initial ground work has been done and volunteers were recently identified to be inducted into the PPPCR programme. The team seeks to universalise the programme soon and looks forward to strengthen the enrolment campaign in all panchayats to ensure that each out-of-school child is mobilised back to school. The following are some other concerns for the team in Kashmir:

- Making social auditing of ICDS and MDM a regular process in the panchayats.
- Wall writings/posters on children’s entitlements.
- Campaign on banning corporal punishment in schools.
- Building a stronger campaign on child marriages and child labour.

\(^6\) Many children were beneficiaries under different components and were added up in all components of the programme.
- Improving the services of Anganwadi and ensuring that all eligible children are enrolled in ICDS centres.
- Facilitating linkages of each orphan child to any of the different scholarship schemes.
- Facilitating medical examinations and delivery of disability certificates to children with disability, linking them to pension and scholarship schemes, and their inclusion in child clubs, schools and ICDS centres.
- Organise training for PPPCR community support groups on children’s rights and entitlements and government programmes for children.
- Follow-up with government on many policy issues in the best interests of children.

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ANNEXURE I: OTHERS DOCUMENTS/ REPORTS AVAILABLE

1. PPPCR Brochure
2. Half yearly Report
3. Report on Children’s Day Celebration in Sumbal, Bandipora
4. Report on training of Anganwadi workers on ‘ICDS and Growth Monitoring’
5. Report on training of PPPCR team in ‘PLAY for PEACE’ games
6. A paper on winter schooling (draft).
7. Twenty different formats/tools for field surveys, monitoring of child programmes, follow-up and reviewing progress of work on children, etc.
Pilot Programme for Protection of Child Rights (PPPCR) project is being implemented in Rajwar and Sumbal education zones by the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights, a statutory body of the Government of India.

The primary goal of PPPCR is to protect and promote rights of children in J&K focusing attention on mobilization of communities; to link the community and local institutions with district and block administration and prepare the system to respond to the demands of the community and provide timely delivery of services while a child’s well-being becomes the focus of all action in the area; and to bring stability in the lives of children in the process of ensuring that all their entitlements to protection, health, nutrition, sanitation, education, recreation, and safety are fulfilled through government action.

The PPPCR programme is presently being run from two offices in J&K - Handwara (Kupwara district) and Sumbal (Bandipora district). For any information, drop at Handwara office or call on 01955-262099.

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