

PM CARES for Children Portal

Ensuring Successful Implementation of PM CARES for Children Scheme

Edited by MOHAN DAS VISWAM

PM CARES for Children was launched to support children who had lost their both parents / guardians to COVID-19 pandemic. The objective of this scheme is to ensure comprehensive care and protection of such vulnerable children in a sustained manner. The scheme is being operational through an online portal (<https://pmcaresforchildren.in>) as a single window system which facilitates registration of such children, approval process of their application and integration / assimilation of all other assistance provided to them.



Madhuri Sharma
Dy. Director General
madhuri@nic.in



Anubha Goyal
Sr. Technical Director
anubhag@nic.in



Iha Jain
Scientist-C
iha.jain@nic.in

PM CARES for Children portal was envisaged as a one-stop-solution for bringing all the aspects of child welfare covered under PM CARES for Children scheme at one place viz. financial assistance, boarding & lodging, healthcare, scholarship & educational support. The platform was designed to act as a single window system for monitoring the progress of scheme implementation and tracking the development trajectory of each child. Several Central and State Govt. level schemes catering to child development and welfare have been onboarded onto the portal, so that a comprehensive picture of all benefits that are provided to the children can be obtained.

NIC was entrusted with the task to design and develop the portal for receiving applications from the public. This portal was envisaged as a one stop solution for bringing all the aspects of child welfare in one place. As the portal had to be an all-encompassing solution with integration with several external systems and programmes, it was conceptualised to act as a novel solution that addressed a range of benefits and services viz. financial assistance, boarding & lodging, healthcare, scholarship and education support.

Salient Features

- **Citizen-centric approach:** Empowering citizens to register children on the portal on their own without need to approach any government functionary or authority.
- **Transparent process flow:** Paperless workflow where each level of scrutiny is done and eligibility is confirmed only after due approvals have been recorded on the portal.
- **Child Profile:** Complete profile of children covered under the scheme have been captured with deduplication using Aadhaar data such as age, educational qualifications, category, and residential details. There is a provision in the portal for regular updating of photographs, educational details, and health profile of the child. The profile is to be updated periodically so that real time information about the whereabouts and progress of the child can be attained.
- **Convergence of schemes:** Several Central and State Government schemes catering to welfare of children affected by COVID-19 have been onboarded on the portal and each child has been

linked to the schemes under which he / she is eligible to receive benefits. This will help in getting a consolidated view for effective supervision and monitoring alongside synchronisation in implementation of initiatives.

- **Child Dashboard:** Each child has been given a set of credentials to access their dashboard which enlist all the benefits for which he / she is eligible. The dashboard also includes the directory of nodal officers who are stakeholders in this scheme whom the child can contact when in need of assistance or emergency.

- **Grievance redressal:** Children constitute a vulnerable section of the society and are largely unaware of their rights and entitlements. As true empowerment stems from awareness, PM CARES for children scheme enunciates making the children covered under the scheme aware of their rights.

Thus, a grievance redressal mechanism with an escalation matrix has been provided that allows for raising and addressing grievances on the child dashboard. Any child who feels that he / she is not receiving the benefits promised under the PM CARES of Children scheme may raise a grievance reporting this gap. The portal has been designed to allow end-to-end tracking of resolution provided for each grievance reported.

This mechanism acts as a key performance metric to evaluate the service delivery. The learning obtained from the grievances can help in designing actionable improvements and shaping long term service design approaches.

- **Identification and Verification:** The Child Dashboard includes a unique QR code issued for each child registered on the portal. This code on scanning gives the details of that child. This can help when the child is asked to furnish proof of being covered under the scheme. The code is available only on the child dashboard so as to ensure privacy of the child.

- **API Integration:** Various eGovernance systems such as National Health Authority (NHA) are

integrated through APIs for data exchange and dynamic data retrieval.

- **Provision for Migration within the Country:** Modules for movement of children to new places for better opportunities and avenues has been provided so that the child can be traced through their lifecycle till they turn 23 years of age and the consistency of information is guaranteed.

- **Data analytics:** Drill down reports till the last level of granularity for monitoring and analysis according to age, gender, educational status, and residency can be generated through the portal.

Technologies and Innovations


PM CARES for Children portal has been completely developed in Open Source technologies such as Laravel Framework, Postgres, JQuery, Bootstrap technologies present the benefit of being flexible, scalable and cost-effective. These are community driven which is an additional advantage as in times of crisis, there is an extensive community to fall back upon to help out. This aids in continuous innovation and improvement over the existing features and functionality. (Refer 8.1)

Challenges Faced while Designing and Implementing the System

- **Presence of multiple sources of information:** Due to the nature of the scheme, child's details were subjected to frequent changes & updation which made the task of maintaining the data consistency and integrity a difficult process.

Analysis and reconciliation of the information fed by various sources were done so that the true picture could be obtained by tracing a child's progress by key information fed by these stakeholders, e.g., a child getting promoted to next class in the time elapsed between two entries.

Our children are the future of the country whose lives were irreversibly altered by the COVID pandemic. Some of them lost both their parents / guardians to this deadly disease, making these children extremely vulnerable. PM CARES for children scheme has been instrumental in providing care and support for proper development and growth of these children. PM CARES for children portal has emerged as a one stop platform that provides services like health, education, scholarship, financial assistance etc to all the children covered under the scheme and has a channel for receiving feedback from the children. It is a unique example of IT driven service delivery that brings together the various dimensions of child care in one place.



Indevar Pandey

Secretary, Women and Child Development Government of India

- **Lack of ICT enabled solutions:** Some of the departments involved in release of benefits to the children did not have robust ICT systems in place which made the integration process very difficult.

- **Lack of synergies between various departments:** Several line ministries had similar schemes for the children, but with disparate non-ICT systems led to possible duplicate and non-standardised data models due to dispersed sources.

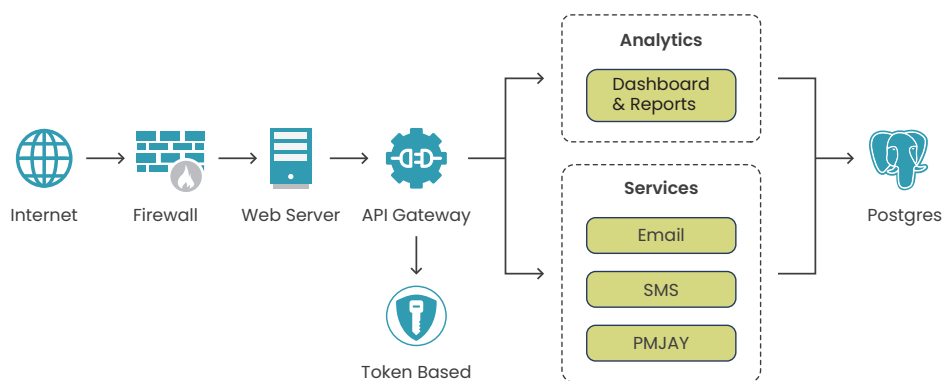
- **Non-uniformity across States:** Many states had their respective schemes where they were providing support and assistance in some form to COVID affected children. These schemes were diverse in their approach and criterion.

- **Frequent changes in requirements and information to be captured:** As the system evolved and progressed, several new fields were introduced that convoluted the monitoring process.

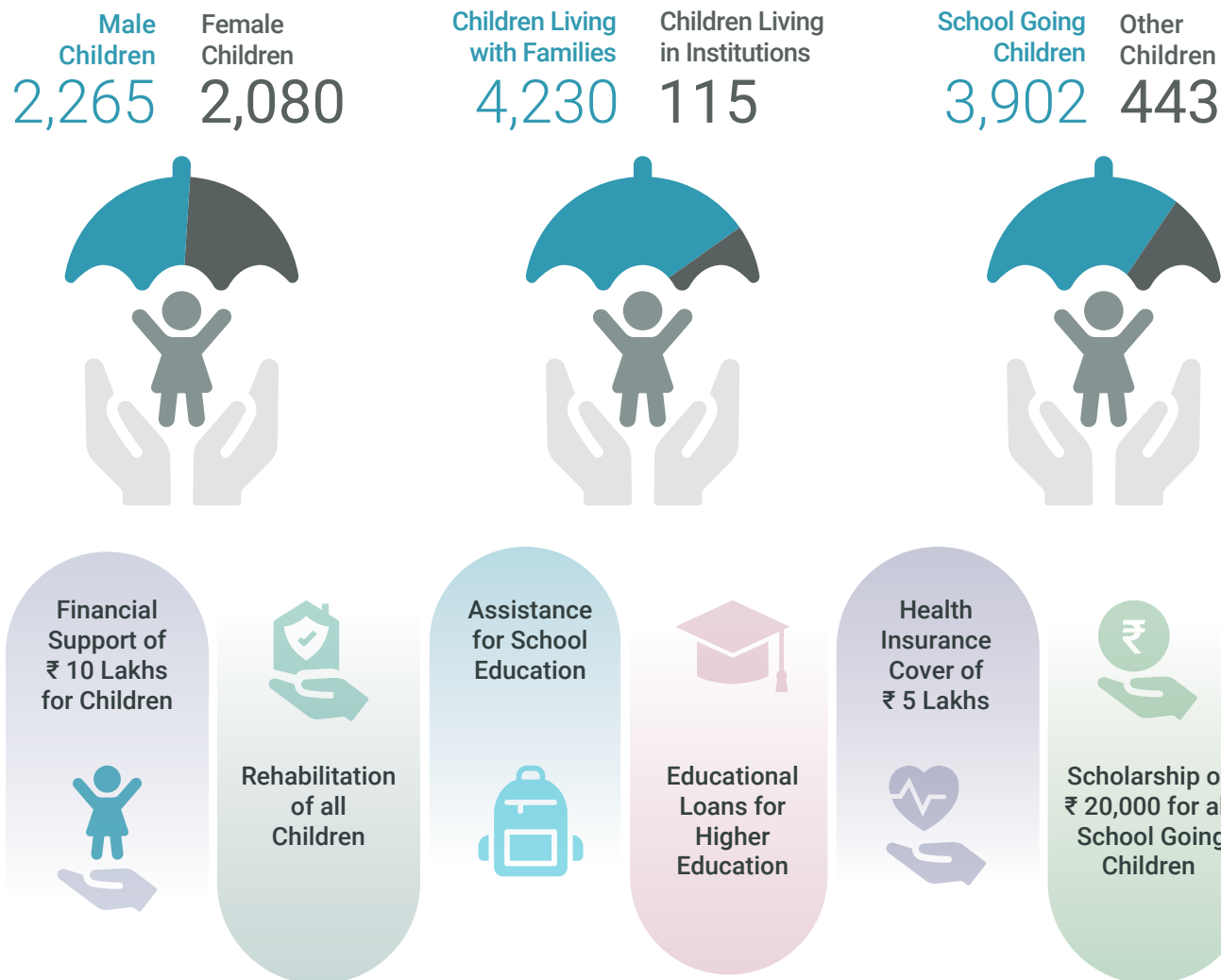
Benefits

COVID-19 has caused insurmountable problems to various sections of society and disrupted lives of several children who lost their parents / guardians to this deadly disease. A major challenge was to identify such children and bring them under the ambit of the scheme and simultaneously ensure that they receive well

▼ Fig. 8.1: Technology architecture behind PM CARES for Children portal



PM CARES for Children



▲ Fig. 8.2: An Overview of PM CARES for Children Scheme

rounded care and protection that they need to achieve their true potential. In a country of our size and proportion, this became a monumental task.

A total of 9042 applications were received on portal from across the country. Out of which, 4345 applications have been approved after rigorous scrutiny and verification. (Refer Fig. 8.2) The entire process of recommendation and approval was online to ensure transparency and traceability.

Regular consultations with stakeholders alongside iterative and dynamic redesign of the process flows resulted in a seamless user experience. A technical helpdesk was instituted from the beginning to troubleshoot any issues reported from the citizens efficiently.

Furthermore, several functionalities were to be brought on board and provided with their

respective dashboards so that they were in a position to monitor the real time progress.

The information that was to be captured was coming from multiple sources, thus, it had to be sanitised to ensure the data integrity, consistency and continuity.

Way Forward

PM CARES for Children portal was a result of a long enriching learning experience. The insights discussed may serve as a model solution where child-centric systems need to be developed. The system offers various dimensions of child welfare in one place so that complete tracking can be done.

This portal offers a unique solution to the problem of data in silos that is plaguing many of

the information systems aimed at public service delivery. Various types of public services were brought onto one single platform so as to give holistic coverage to the intended beneficiaries. Thus, this approach can help in addressing the complexities and challenges in designing a similar multidimensional system that can aid in data-driven decision making and citizen centric governance.

Contact for more details

Anubha Goyal
 Sr. Technical Director
 625, A Wing, Shastri Bhawan
 New Delhi - 110001
 Email: anubhag@nic.in, Phone: 011-23388939