A single mother, Uzma moved back with her parents after her husband left her over a year ago. She has three children.

A helper at a local hospital, Rizwana works erratic, 12-hour shifts. A single mother, she lost her husband three years ago and is now bringing up three

Every day, both women face the dilemma of leaving their children unsupervised when they go to work. It’s a thought that terrifies them as they’ve seen the violence all around, and know what could happen.

They’ve grappled with sending their children away to the village. Or out to work—the extra money would be a great help.
Unsupervised and alone, children are vulnerable to violence, abuse, being trafficked or pushed into hazardous work. Confronted by impossible choices, they are sometimes abandoned by families who can’t take care of them.

• In India, a child goes missing every eight minutes, according to data from the National Crime Records Bureau

• In 2011, crimes against children reported a 24 percent increase from the previous year with a total of 33,098 cases
  (Source: Ministry of Statistics and Program Implementation, Government of India, Children in India 2012 - A Statistical Appraisal)

• As per the 2011 census, the number of working children in the age group of 5-14 years is 43.53 lakh (Source: Ministry of Labour and Employment, Government of India)

Recognising this, community child protection workers (volunteers with Aangan's PACT program) realised that linking families like Uzma’s and Rizwana’s to social protection schemes is key to children's safety.
At a weekly meeting, PACT workers from Mumbai's Reay Road and Wadala communities, discussed how children can be safer if families can access government social protection schemes.
They identified orphaned children being raised by relatives, and single parent, women-headed families. They realised that monetary support for these children could help in ensuring that children remain in the care of the family, under their protection.
Through the Aangan facilitator, they learnt about the foster care scheme under the government of Maharashtra’s *Bal Sangopan Yojana*. Under this scheme, each child receives Rs 425 per month until they turn 18 years old.
PACT workers then invited the Indian Association for Promotion of Adoption and Child Welfare (IAPA), the implementing partner of the scheme, for a monthly parents meeting. Here, details and benefits of the scheme were shared with community adults.
A community help desk (held once a month for community members to directly interface with government authorities) was then organised. PACT workers identified families from their communities and helped them enrol their children in this scheme.
Since October 2014, 28 children from Mumbai’s Reay Road and Wadala communities have accessed funds under this scheme.
Families like Uzma and Rizwana are now supported to keep their children safe. For others like 15-year old Priyanka, whose parents have disabilities, it allows her to remain in school, and in the protection of her family.
Across four states – Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh – over 150 children have been linked to the government’s foster care schemes through PACT workers.