

Early Childhood Care and Education Experiences in India

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Introduction

Early childhood care and Education (ECCE) is assuming importance for the holistic development of very young child. Many would also attribute such an early childhood education as preparatory ground for schooling in the later years. When it comes to growth of ECCE activities, it can be seen that the situation is far from satisfactory, especially in terms of coverage, functioning, quality of care and support provided to children. Universalisation of child care services is still a distant dream especially for low income and poor families of rural and urban slum areas

Issues relating to ECCE have received considerable attention at the national level in the last two decades, since NPE (1986) and POA (1992) were adopted. Increasing early childhood participation including evidence of some preschool growth is encouraging, but fails to highlight the seriousness of children who missed out on early childhood services, who are under-served, or who attend poor quality early childhood services.

Importance of ECCE

The first 6 to 8 years of a child's life are globally acknowledged to be the most critical years for lifelong development since the pace of development in these years is extremely rapid. Recent research in the field of neuroscience, particularly on the brain, has provided convincing evidence of the 'critical periods' located within these early years for the forming of synaptic connections in the brain and for the full development of the brain's potential. Research has also indicated that if these early years are not supported by, or embedded in, a stimulating and enriching physical and psychosocial environment, the chances of the child's brain developing to its full potential are considerably, and often irreversibly, reduced. This stage in life is also important as a foundation for the inculcation of social values and personal habits, which are known to last a lifetime. What follows logically is the crucial importance of investing in these early years to ensure an enabling environment for every child, and thereby a sound foundation for life, which is not only the right of every child but which will also impact, in the long term, the quality of human capital available to a country. Early childhood care and education derives its importance from this rationale

Government Efforts

According to "ECCE: An Overview (MHRD 2003)", out of the total number of children in the 3-6 age group, barely 19.64 per cent children were covered under ECCE programs such as ICDS and ECE schemes, crèches and balwadis in the voluntary sector supported by DWCD in 1996-97. Since 1996-97, the coverage of children, especially under ICDS, has increased substantially.

As regards the other programmes of the Government, the expansion of ECE was not as large as that of ICDS. As against the target of 2 million ECE centres in 2000, only 0.55 million centres are operative at present. In programmes like the District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) and SSA, efforts have been made to fill the gaps left by ICDS. DPEP opened 10,000 ECE centres in the non-ICDS areas. As per the estimates of the Department of EE & L, the total number of children enrolled at the pre-primary level

is 46,23,168 Thus, from the above data it is clear that, despite the expansion of the ECCD programmes, the coverage of children (22 per cent) under the ECCE programmes is grossly inadequate.

Private Sector Participation

Since no survey has yet been undertaken, there are no accurate figures available for private-sector commercial ventures operating under various names. According to some estimates, the number of children enrolled in private-sector initiatives (including day-care centres, nurseries, kindergartens, and pre-primary classes) was about 1 Crore (2001), or about as many children as the number under ICDS at that time. Today the initiatives of the private sector may be as large as the programmes undertaken by the government sector, but the former caters to different classes. Though originally confined to the upper and middle classes in cities, today private sector initiatives have spread to small towns, villages, semi-urban areas, urban slums, etc., reflecting the unprecedented demand for and popularity of such services. Besides these, statutory crèches run under the provisions of the various Acts are estimated to cover not more than one lakh children.

NGO/CSO Involvement

The NGO sector is very small but vibrant. The spread and nature of the services provided by it are varied, ranging from some of the most innovative and high-quality programs in the country. There are no figures available for the number of children covered under ECCE services provided by the NGO sector, which is funded in various ways, by international and national donors, trusts, and denominational groups. Estimates vary from 3 million to 20 million children.

Need for Documentation

In spite of the constitutional directives and a plethora of laws, policies and programs announced from time to time, the gap between the need and the actual provision of ECCE services remains vast. There is no adequate information about the services existing on the ground. There are also critical gaps in services, which do not reach small and marginalized groups such as migrant workers, and nomads; people living in small and remote hamlets, and tribal and mountainous areas. In September 2006, Aide et Action conducted a consultation workshop on ECCE with researchers, academicians, institutions, practitioners, policy agencies and government. One of the objectives of the consultation was to discuss the importance of networks to promote sustainable model of ECCE centres in rural and urban areas. The participants recommended in order to promote it, there should be good documentation made available on ECCE practices based on evidence based research. From this point of view, Aide et Action tried to capture some of the innovative initiatives in ECCE for wider dissemination and replication of the programs in needy areas.

Aide et Action's Interest

The new country strategy for AeA India for 2006-2008 focuses on adoption of a much broader definition and scope of 'education' as a dynamic process of equipping individuals with abilities to exercise choices for better quality of life and human development. AeA India identified elements that are underlying causes for low education

status among children and communities. Its attempt would be to address education through an integrated approach, rather than symptomatic treatment through provisioning of educational services. Organizational vision, mission, objectives, program principles and strategies are derived from this perspective on education and development. The Country Strategy Paper of AeA also articulates the scope of ECCE interventions as to support cost effective models in the field, conduct research and advocacy to influence public policy.

AeA India is currently engaged in developing comprehensive understanding on various issues of ECCE and interventions through systematic study and documentation of practices and experiences of various organizations. This documentation is carried out in a systematic manner in terms of identifying organizations for documentation, development of tools for research, and documenting the results. This documentation would help in understanding cost effective and sustainable models and adoption of the same by AeA as well as other organizations involved in similar work.

Structure of the Booklet

This booklet is mainly divided into three sections and provides a comprehensive understanding on issues related to implementation of early childhood care and education programs, capacity building in early childhood care and education and policy issues. Section I describes the innovative programs that are being implemented for early childhood care and education. Section II deals with child care through capacity building and role of policy agencies in early childhood care and education was discussed in the third section.

Overview: ECCE in India

India has a wealth of traditional practices in Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) that date back almost 5000 years. ECCE initiatives in India have been documented formally in the latter half of the nineteenth century. The value of ECCE lies in the recognition and acceptance that ECCE is a vital development need of all children, and that every child has a right to ECCE of equitable quality. ECCE must be the first step in the educational ladder and should be part of EFA.

The Indian Context

India reached a population of one billion in 2001. It has the largest child population in the world. According to the 2001 census, India has a population of 170 million children between ages 0-6. The well-being of children has been an integral part of India's developmental planning since 1951. Basic to holistic child development have been survival, protection, equal opportunity, and participation. Early Childhood Care and Education involves the total development of children – physical, motor, cognitive, language, emotional, social and moral. ECCE is considered a significant input to compensate for early environmental deprivations at home by providing a stimulating environment to children.

The National Policy of Education 1986 has given great deal of importance to ECCE. It views E CCE as crucial input in the strategy of human resource development, as a feeder and support program for primary education and as a support service for working women of the disadvantaged sections of the society.

ECCE can play a very significant role in the context of the MDGs and EFA goals, to which India is a signatory and which include completion of primary education as an important goal.

The status of the young Indian child

Population 0-6 years	170 million (17.5% of the population)
Infant Mortality Rate	76/1000
Under Five Mortality Rate	98/1000 live births
Union budgetary allocation	2%
Malnourished Children	47%
Pre-school deaths associated with malnutrition	67%
Children under the age of 6 years with disability	5.2%
Children under 6 years with HIV/AIDS	2785
Pre-school attendance between 3-6 years	35% rural and 48% urban (of these 37% are in Anganwadis, 11% in Balwadis, 34% in private facilities and the remaining 19% in other Government facilities)
Source: India Human Development Report, 2004; Census, 2001	

Need and Demand for ECCE

Early Childhood Care and Education remains a privilege for many young children in India. Only 32% of the pre-primary age children are enrolled in education structures at this level.

We are aware that industrialization, urbanization, migration and increased participation of women in the workforce have transformed traditional family patterns. As a result, the quality of care available to young children has deteriorated. Members of the extended family are not available to assist in the caring of the children. The older siblings, particularly girls are often taking care of younger siblings, deprived of the opportunity to attend school. The socio-economic inequalities of society have pushed a large number of families into poverty, which has placed young children in risk. Young children in urban

disadvantaged environments are particularly vulnerable, because of overcrowding, lack of basic amenities, health hazards, and exposure to crime.

High infant mortality, morbidity, low attendance at school, and poor physical and nutritional status have all been the consequences of poor child care facilities. As population growth and fertility rates decrease, fewer children will be requiring ECCE services in India in future. This allows the governments in due course to devote attention to improving quality. Demand for ECCE services in urban centres is likely to increase, but where women work mainly in the informal sector, mothers will continue to have difficulty translating their needs into demands requiring government attention. The overall health and nutrition status of the child is improving, but they remain far from fulfilling their commitment to the “learning begins at birth” vision in terms of promoting early learning opportunities. Low literacy rate among women poses a particular challenge in mobilizing them as key care takers of young children.

The Challenge

At no time in the recent past has there been keen interest in early childhood education. Finally, the decades of research showing the benefits of strong, rich early education programs on children’s development and learning have captured the attention of many. Increasing early childhood participation including evidence of some preschool growth is encouraging, but fails to highlight the seriousness of children who missed out on early childhood services, who are under-served, or who attend poor quality early childhood services. To draw a future perspective on ECCE in terms of coverage and quality, keeping in view its significance for all round development of a child, it is important to address the challenges that exist today in ECCE.

A. Harnessing the Potential of ICDS

The universalisation of ICDS is an opportunity for the growing need of ECCE in the country. ICDS conceptually embodies a unique, integrated, cost-effective approach for holistic development, converging basic sectoral services, where child survival, growth and development go hand in hand. It also seeks to strengthen the capacity of mothers and communities for child care and early stimulation, by building upon local knowledge of child care practices. Unfortunately, despite its conceptual strengths, the implementation of ICDS has been far below the desired level. It is within the scope of ICDS to address socio-economic and gender inequalities by promoting the development of learning opportunities for the young child. To preserve the spirit of holistic and integrated approach, it requires integration of bureaucratic structures and cutting across various sectors of development and specialized compartmentalization in its process of implementation.

B. ECCE needs Recognition

There are many preschool institutions in the country run by private sector. These are estimated to cater to around 10 million children of the urban areas. These efforts have played an important role in introducing the ECCE concept in the beginning of the twentieth century. The private initiative has remained unrecognized by government and has not become an integral part of the educational system of the country.

C. Low Status of ECCE

The contemporary perception of ECCE is that it comprises some kind of services at the grassroots level to provide support for families in the care of their children and that it also intervenes in solving a range of other problems arising out of poverty such as malnutrition, disease, school drop-out rates etc. It is commonly believed that not much expertise or technical knowledge is required for planning, implementing and monitoring such programs. The general awareness of the professional and technical aspects of ECCE is rather poor. The public at large rarely understand the importance or need of ECCE services.

D. Access

Issues relating to ECCE have received considerable attention at the national level in the last two decades, since NPE (1986) and POA (1992) were adopted. Increasing early childhood participation including evidence of some preschool growth is encouraging, but fails to highlight the seriousness of children who missed out on early childhood services, who are under-served, or who attend poor quality early childhood services. Issues like who is accessing ECCE services, which communities do not have access to ECCE services, who is creating access – government, private sector or NGOs, and what are the factors determining access are the major concerns.

E. Capacity Building

Capacity building is needed to build a quality workforce. Alongside the government's tepid involvement in ECCE, training systems for early childhood educators are not well developed. Qualification requirements exist only for educators working in formal sector. Training, which is crucial, is hardly emphasized in ECCE programs. There is no demand for trained staff as no state government has laid down any norms for staff qualifications or remuneration, nor any guidelines for the recognition of ECCE staff as teachers. Training newcomers, duration of training, methodology, and exposure to theory and practice are some of the capacity building issues in ECCE.

F. Advocacy

Parents from all walks of life and at all levels, have little or no awareness about the significance of early years in the life of their children, or about how to promote their children's development. To sensitize the public, from parents to policymakers, an extensive and sustained campaign for advocacy involving the mass media is needed. This requires adequate resources and preparation of requisite materials in various forms. The advocacy campaign should convey the significance of early years in the life of children, the purpose, content, scope, and meaning of ECCE. Community participation is key to the advocacy as it empowers people and leads to sustainability.

Methodology

The methodology followed to capture the case studies included interviews with NGO chief functionary, and parents, FGDs with ECCE teachers and community. Other processes included were observation of material, infrastructure, developmental milestones of children, and case studies with parents. The ECCE centres visited were selected randomly following the criteria of first ECCE centre, recently opened ECCE centre, ECCE centre located in remote area, and ECCE centre located close to the main road. Checklists were prepared to conduct interviews and FGDs. The selection of organizations was based on the nature of their programs, e.g. implementing agencies or capacity building agencies. AeA staff in different states visited the organizations and collected the information to put it into a booklet form.

This document is about collection of various practices in ECCE ranging from implementation to capacity building, and advocacy. The aim is to share some of the best practices with the organizations/ agencies working in ECCE with regard to implementation of ECCE programs, how capacity building initiatives of the NGOs are having ripple effect, and the commendable work done by policy agencies with regard different aspects of early childhood.

PART I: Innovations in Early Childhood Care and Education

Caring for children means more than protecting their health and safety. It means being able to provide valuable learning experiences that promote children's physical, emotional, social, language, and intellectual development. This section discusses about various innovative ECCE programs implemented by NGOs as well as government such as community managed balwadis by Deccan Development Society, Mobile crèches that provides ECCE services to children of mothers engaged in construction activities and Tamil Nadu Integrated Child Development Services. Besides pre-primary education provided by various organizations, a variety of integrated health-related ECCE services are available. ICDS, the country's flagship ECCE services, offers not only nutritional and health care for children and their mothers, but also pre-school education for older children. In the rural areas, 88% of pre-school education is delivered through the ICDS scheme.

The Deccan Development Society (DDS) is a two-decade old grassroots organization working in about 75 villages with women's Sanghams (voluntary village level associations of the poor) in Medak District of Andhra Pradesh. Childcare is an important area of concern for DDS. Started fifteen years ago as simple childcare centres for the farm laboring women the balwadis of DDS have emerged as centres of creative learning and nutrition that have been appreciatively discussed in international fora like the Global 2000. The most commendable aspect of the Balwadi programme under the DDS was that the community "owned" it and therefore took responsibility for it....not only offering free labor and working collectively but also selecting the Balwadi workers and ensuring accountability was the task of the women in the community.

Mobile Crèches has experience in the sector of early child care since 1969. The core of Mobile Crèches work is the ECCE program which works at several levels and offers simple, low cost, local solutions for childcare. By its very nature the program, therefore, delineates the role of Mobile Crèches into two distinct categories – that of a service provider and that of a resource in ECCE. The dynamic relationship between these two functions, where each activity is the basis for the other, is a result of a well thought out strategy to facilitate wide reach of quality services.

Many community nutrition and health projects have led to big reductions in malnutrition in small areas. TINP, the nutrition program in Tamil Nadu state, is one of a very few programs around the world which have had a substantial impact on malnutrition on a large scale (more than 20,000 villages), and over a sustained period. In 1980 the pilot Tamil Nadu Integrated Nutrition Project was introduced with funding from the World Bank. TINP focused on educating the women and others in the household (e.g., mothers-in-law) regarding breast feeding, weaning, immunization, growth monitoring, and so on. Growth monitoring was an innovative feature, which attempted to make invisible malnutrition visible through plotting each child's weights against its age every month on chart which compared the actual growth to a norm. But not long after TINP's introduction, in 1982, the State also announced the massive Noon Meal Program (NMP), which did not have such targeting with the intention of economizing on food costs.

Chapter I: Community Managed Balwadis – Experience of Deccan Development Society

Introduction

The Deccan Development Society (DDS) is a two-decade old grassroots organization working in about 75 villages with women's Sanghams (voluntary village level associations of the poor) in Medak District of Andhra Pradesh. The 5000 women members of the Society represent the poorest of the poor in their village communities. Most of them are dalits, the lowest group in the Indian social hierarchy.

The programmes initiated by the Society have evolved over the years into a strong political force for rural women. What started off with the intention of ensuring the simple sustenance needs of the sangham members has become a tool of empowerment for them to address the larger issues of food security, natural resource enhancement, education and health needs of the region. The conscious integration of various activities the society has helped is intended to retrieve women's natural leadership positions in their communities, and to fight the lack of access and control over their own resources. These activities, alongside ensuring earth care, are also resulting in human care by giving the women a new-found dignity and profile in their village communities.

Philosophy

DDS started as the commitment of a group of professionals to the people of its present project region (Zaheerabad) to continue a rural development project which was abandoned by an industrial house due to its own politico-economic compulsions. The earliest objectives of DDS were to combine ecological and employment parameters to regenerate the livelihoods of the people in the area. It was also transfer of people-oriented technology. Gradually it has evolved into a programme which has three guiding principles: gender justice, environmental-soundness and people's knowledge.

DDS is a grassroots organization working with Sanghams (village level groups) of poor women most of them are dalits. The society has a vision of consolidating these village groups into strong and vibrant organs of primary civil society and federates them into a strong pressure lobby for women, poor and dalits. A host of continuing dialogues, debates, educational and training programmes facilitated by the Society with the people tries to translate this vision into a reality.

Alongside this ideological role the Society is also trying to reverse the historical process of degradation of the environment and people's livelihood system in this region through a string of land-related activities like permaculture, community grain fund, community green fund, community gene fund and collective cultivation through land lease etc. These activities, alongside taking on the role of earth care are also resulting in human care by giving the women a new-found dignity and profile in their village communities.

When DDS was founded in 1983, there were six founder members all of who were professionals in various fields : Development Economy, Social Science research, Management Sciences, Communication Technology, Social Anthropology and

Development Management. The vision of the society then was to give a leadership to the community groups from outside and facilitate a humane transfer of technology. As the Society grew more people joined from outside: agriculture engineers, permaculturists, foresters, environment scientists, psychologists and feminists, almost everyone from outside. Slowly as the fascination and curiosity of the outsiders for rural work waned, one after another they withdrew slowly and remained where they belonged : in urban settings, doing what they would do best : management, consultancies, teaching, networking and such other activities.

The gap left in the internal leadership of the Society is slowly being filled by the real stakeholders of the project: the rural people. A large team of farmers, artisans, barefoot agriculture scientists, foresters, watershed specialists, farm engineers, communicators and such other cadres has emerged in DDS. An overarching leadership of some extremely capable women has slowly taken over the day to day management of various activities. They are also acting as a Think Tank for the core management team of the Society.

Strategies

Community Participation as a Core Strategy

Behind each of the programmes is a basic philosophy, which ensures that all activities have the total participation of the community concerned, particularly the women. Using Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) methodologies as a basic tool, each of the DDS programmes ensures that the community starts with the understanding of their conditions and DDS only acts as a catalyst to guide the community into those activities that the community decides to pursue.

Activities

The Deccan Development society is projecting a working model for the people oriented participative development in the areas of food security, ecological agriculture, and alternate education. It is also trying to reverse the historical process of degradation of the environment and people's livelihood system in this region through a string of land related activities such as Perma-culture, Community Grain Bank, Community Gene Fund, Community Green Fund and Collective Cultivation through land Lease etc. These activities, along side taking on the role of Earth care is also resulting in Human Care, by giving the Women a new found dignity and profile in their village communities. The Society is trying to relocate the people's knowledge in the area of Health and Agriculture.

Balwadis

Childcare is an important area of concern. All the DDS women work during the day, spending nearly 8-10 hours every day in family farms or as hired labor in farms. Because of the taxing working hours these women have expressed a need for someone to take care of their children during their absence. The DDS Balwadis cater to this need.

Started fifteen years ago as simple childcare centres for the farm laboring women the balwadis of DDS have emerged as centres of creative learning and nutrition that have been appreciatively discussed in international fora like the Global 2000.

The 25 Balwadis run by DDS Sanghams cater to nearly 700 children, 60% of them are girls. The DDS communities manage their Balwadis through Mothers Committees. **In a telling metaphor they say that they keep a watch over the functioning of their Balwadis with thousand eyes!**

As part of the documentation, four Balwadis were visited. They are Pastapur, Potpalli, Mamidigi, Rechintal, and Mator. These Balwadis were selected based on the distance from Zaheerabad, First Balwadi started by DDS 15 years ago to most recent Balwadi that started eight years ago. Almost all the Balwadis have permanent buildings, and have uniform facilities irrespective of the location. There are two teachers in a Balwadi. One teacher will take care of the children aged one and half year to three years, and the other teacher will look after children of three to five years. The Balwadis start at 9:30 in the morning, and run up to 4:30 in the evening. Each Balwadi has an average of 25 – 30 children.

Children are neat and tidy in all the Balwadis. In an informal conversation, mothers said that their children don't want to go to Balwadi without taking bath and neatly washed cloths. It is amazing to see children healthy, happy and playful. There is no single malnourished child found in the Balwadis and it could be attributed to the diet and personal care taken by the teachers.

There is an enabling environment for children in the Balwadis to be creative and learn. The educational qualifications of Balwadi teachers range from 5th class to 10th class. Balwadi teachers undergo training two days in a month. The themes vary from month to month. They include vegetables, vehicles, fruits, Palm tree etc. Based on the themes, games, songs, stories, puzzles, riddles, creative work, casual talk and education material will be developed on the chosen theme. These monthly themes will be developed by 3 supervisors and two senior teachers, and copies will be given to all the teachers. The Balwadi teachers bring the children along with them, and take them while they go to home. They also take the children to picnic once in a week to show birds, animals, and nature walk. Balwadi teachers also hold exhibitions in the Sangham meetings to show children's creative work to the parents. All the Balwadis have facilities for drinking water and outdoor play... sand pits to play outside.

A trained health worker visits the Balwadi once in a week. She does health check ups and provide treatment for minor ailments. She uses herbal medicines for treatment. The health worker was trained by DDS, and grows medicinal plants in the land given to her by DDS.

The nutritious food in Balwadis is not exotic. It is made up of the crops grown in the same villages: sorghum, millets, a bit of wheat and a range of uncultivated greens. Being highly superior to rice, the millet-based meals provide a nutritional advantage to the children, meeting 70% of their nutritional requirement and helping their mental and physical growth. The food served in the Balwadis was tested by NIN for its nutritional benefits. Besides they also enable the children respect their own food culture by adapting to it at a very young age.

The range of creative methods used in the Balwadis to help the children's mental growth include songs, stories, sand and water play, theatre, conversations, puppets, card games and weekly outings. Some creative curriculum development efforts are being made to integrate the DDS concerns of biodiversity and local food culture into the consciousness of the small children.

After going through a crisis in 1996, the Balwadis of DDS have sprung back into action once again. The crisis in 1996 taught them how to cope with the absence of funding. And also a way to look for strengthening themselves in such a way that no stoppage of funding can affect either their nutritional or teaching programme.

During the one year of absence of funding, the Sangham members supported the Balwadis in a number of ways.

- Each member contributed one potful of grain per month
- Each member contributed five rupees per month
- Each mother of the Balwadi going child contributed Rs.15 per month along with what other members contributed
- All the sangham members who were getting benefited through DDS schemes contributed in various ways
- PDS participants contributed Rs.50 per acre of their land under PDS
- Land Lease participants contributed 5 Kgs per quintal of the produce they harvested
- SC Corporation land beneficiaries also contributed 5 Kgs for every quintal they harvested

In 1997, the Bernard von Leer Foundation funded the Balwadis and there have been resurgence in Balwadi activities. A total of 25 Balwadis are functioning now in full scale in the following villages: Algole, Basantpur, Bardipur, Boppanpally, Cheelamamidi, Chilukapally, Dhanwar, Edakulapally, Eedulapally, Ganeshpur, Gangwar, Kalmela, Kamalpally, Khasimpur, Krishnapur, Machnoor, Mamidigi, Mator, Metlakunta, Mortega, Pastapur, Potpalli, Ranjhol, Rechintal, and Sangapur.

The Balwadi is a combination of creative learning environment and nutrition input consisting of the local foods. The Balwadi food regime runs as follows:

Breakfast	Lunch	Evening Snack
Finger Millet porridge (twice a week)	Jowar roti with dal & vegetables (twice a week)	Roasted chickpea, Green Gram and other available pulses (all days of the week)
Wheat porridge (twice a week)	Rice Khichdi with pulses & vegetables(twice a week)	Fruits (once a week)
Jowar porridge (twice a week)	Wheat Khichdi (twice a week)	Eggs (once a fortnight)

In order to meet the costs of running this nutritional programme, DDS has made endowments of agricultural lands to the following Balwadis:

Algole	5 acres
Basantpur	5 acres
Boppanpally	7 acres
Cheelamamidi	2.75 acres
Edakulapally	7 acres
Eedulapally	5 acres
Kamalpally	5 acres
Kalmela	8 acres
Krishnapur	3 acres
Kuppanagar	5 acres
Machnoor	5 acres
Pastapur	2.5 acres
Potpalli	5 acres
Pyalaram	6 acres
Sangapur	3 acres
Yelgoi	5 acres

The community contribution continues to give the Balwadis basic support from the community that it badly needs. As usual each member pays Rs.5 and a potful of grain every month. Each mother pays Rs.10 per month alongside her contribution as a sangham member. A handful of grain every time some cooking is done in the house would be put in a pot, which at the end of the month would be given to the Balwadi. This made a fairly substantial contribution to the children's health.

The most commendable aspect of the Balwadi programme under the DDS was that the community "owned" it and therefore took responsibility for it...not only offering free labor and working collectively but also selecting the Balwadi workers and ensuring accountability was the task of the women in the community.

Since sustainability is always a concern of all funding agencies including the Government, the model developed by DDS deserves close consideration.

Jatras

The Balwadi staff conducts a series of Children's Fairs locally known as Jatras. There were three Jatras at three centres: Metlakunta, Jharasangam and Machnoor. Each jatra was attended by approximately two hundred and fifty children from eight Balwadis.

The children played, danced, sang, painted and ate together. It was a never-before experience for these children to come into an environment which offered them total freedom and total joy. The annual children's fairs will be a continuing pattern of DDS Balwadis.

Networking

- The Society has also been championing the cause of ecological and agro biodiversity with local, regional, national and international communities. It has founded the Andhra Pradesh Coalition in Defence of Diversity, a coalition of over 142 civil society organizations from all the 22 districts of Andhra Pradesh.
- In 2003 the Society was elected as the AP Convener of the Organic Farming Association of India, a national body on organic agriculture.
- DDS has also set the plan rolling in 2003 to form the Southern Alliance against Genetic Engineering.
- DDS is a leading member of the SANFEC (South Asian Network for Food, Ecology and Culture), a coalition of over 200 ecological groups from Bangladesh, Nepal, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.
- South Against Genetic Engineering (SAGE), a coalition of over 50 farmers groups, civil society organizations, consumer groups, scientists, academicians and media practitioners from the four Southern states of India have come together under one platform to wage a concerted fight against the forces of genetic engineering. Of which DDS is the founder-convener of this coalition.
- GRAIN is one of the most prominent civil society organizations in the world that has built up a scholarly advocacy for biodiversity in agriculture, works against genetic engineering, TRIPS and other such issues. Of which Mr. Satheesh, Director, DDS is the current chair
- DDS is also an active member of the Asia-wide network allied BASA-Asia, Biodiversity Action for Sustainable Agriculture – Asia

Training

The Balwadi teachers come together every month for training. The Balwadi teacher trainings are gradually turning into a self - managed activity. The teachers divide themselves into groups of 6-8 persons and share with each other their previous month's work report. They discuss whether they have covered the previous months work plan, problems they encountered, children's attendance etc. This ends up in a group discussion and all the sub groups report their discussion to the large group which then decides the next month's topic and activities.

The teachers then divide themselves into sub groups and discuss in greater detail activities like Oral and Writing work, Songs and Stories, Games and Arts etc. Then again all the groups come together for a final discussion and formulation of the plan for the next month.

A special committee of teachers selected each month is entrusted with the responsibility of bringing out the Balwadi magazine, The Balwadi Patrika. These teachers meet with each of the teachers in the training during the evenings and collect from them stories, riddles, songs, reports, drawings etc. This is later edited into a monthly Balwadi magazine. All the teachers also get together to prepare more teaching material like card

games etc. This self-inputting training process has not only decentralized the training process but also increased the self confidence of teachers.

ICDS Program

With the introduction of the ICDS programme in DDS operational area put them into a new dilemma. When the government has come up with a programme of its own, what shall DDS do? There were three options:

- Close down our Balwadis and send the children to their Anganwadis
- Not close down our Balwadis and run them like before
- Collaborate with the government to create facilities and work on cost sharing experiment.

On this issue DDS had several consultations with Sangham members, leaders and Balwadi committee members. Their opinion was unanimous: We will not close down our Balwadis.

But what should be the strategy and why are they not closing down their Balwadis? DDS reminded them that in running the Balwadis, Communities are going through an enormous amount of sacrifice:

- They are paying a contribution of Rs.5 per month
- They are contributing a potful of grain every month which is equivalent of Rs.6 to 10 depending on what grain they contribute
- The mothers have to pay a monthly fee of Rs.10
- All members contribute free labor of up to five days in a year
- The Balwadi Committee members contribute one day of free labor to collect ration every month in addition to all the above contributions

In contrast, the government Anganwadis came free of cost. Therefore, the question was, why would they prefer to continue their own Balwadis?

The issue for the Sangham members was simple. It was a question of accountability. In the government programme, there is no accountability, or at least that was how the community perceived their role in government Anganwadis. Where as the community perceived their own Balwadis as the place which was under their supervision. Therefore, they were insistent on retaining their own Balwadis. This way the Balwadis are likely to continue as a place where the dalit women can exercise control over the well being of their young children. A place which they can shape as their own.

Chapter II: Mobile Crèches

Background of the Organization

Mobile Crèches has experience in the sector of early child care since 1969. As more and more crèches were set up across construction sites and slums of Delhi, Mobile crèches became a trusted presence among the women who toiled for a living, building houses or selling vegetables. They left their young ones in the care of “didis” (older sisters) who fed, nurtured and tutored them, sowing the seeds of a secure childhood and a confident adulthood.

The day-care centre became the hub of the organization’s activities, and the launching pad to help spread its wings to take up larger issues: negotiating with builders for greater financial support and responsibility sharing, lobbying with policy makers for progressive laws and programmes, and advocacy among the community of parents to follow better childcare practices at home and demand better services outside. The first "mobile crèche" was set up in Delhi at a construction site in 1969. Thus began a movement linking issues of work, women and children. To quote the director’s words “We have come a long way – from childcare services at building sites to building platforms for lobbying for all marginalized young children” .The challenge today is to ensure that all children are born and raised in a safe, nurturing and stimulating environment and get every opportunity to learn and play and grow up healthy and confident, better equipped to pursue their dreams.

Mobile Crèches is a pioneer in Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD). What sets them apart is their dual focus on:

- ***The "young child" under 6 years:*** The early years of a child's life are normally a period of maximum growth, maximum vulnerability and maximum dependence on adults. Interventions at this stage - in the form of care by a trained, nurturing, responsible adult, in a clean, secure and stimulating environment - are critical to laying the foundations for health, learning capacities and personality.
- ***The "migrant child":*** The rural poor come to the city in search of work and their children move with them. The men and women often find work as daily-wage earners on a construction site. They live in shanties on the site, work under very harsh conditions, almost never get the legal minimum wage and have no skills. Their children, uprooted from their traditional habitat and thrown into an alien environment of urban poverty, are left to fend for themselves, with no secure home, health services, schools or playgrounds to go to.

Evolution of Mobile Crèches

March 12, 1969 - Pioneering a movement

Ms. Meera Mahadevan set up the first crèche in Delhi at the Gandhi Darshan site. Thus began a long journey of entering worksites, negotiating with contractors and building trust with worker parents to reach the children.

Mid 70s - Increasing reach

The web of day care centers spread from construction sites to slums and from Delhi to Mumbai and Pune. In house training in childcare extended to functionaries of non government agencies programmes

1974 - Impacting Policy

Mobile Crèches efforts resulted in the Scheme of assistance to crèches for working/ailing mothers. Impacting Policy is a continuous effort and an ongoing activity.

- Setting up of the National Crèche Fund
- Revision of the scheme for crèches
- Critical inputs and recommendations for ICDS for Ministry of WCD and Planning Commission.

70s/80s - Recognition for Mobile crèches

Sanskriti Parishad Award, Nathalie Masse International Prize, Manav Seva Gold Medal and National Award for Child Welfare

1989 - Networking with Other Organization

Mobile Crèche co-founded a national network Forum for crèche and childcare services (FORCES) – to lobby for childcare and maternity support for poor working women

1990s - New Models in the construction sector

The thrust was to train local women in childcare to provide a ready workforce, motivate builders for taking on more responsibilities and the community for greater ownership

Late 1990s - In the company of peers

Children's theatres added another dimension to children's participation through hobby clubs, libraries and kishor-kishori clubs

2001 - Decentralizing Childcare

Training for neighborhood crèches to make childcare affordable and accessible with grassroots advocacy to build public pressure for basic services like healthcare water and sanitation

2002 - Bottom to top advocacy

Mobile crèche co convenes the grassroot network of Delhi FORCES and inputs into government policy and planning processes

2005

The new Vision –Mission and logo reaffirms the commitment to the young child and the working mother and reflects the strategy to stay rooted in today's needs to realize our aspirations for tomorrow

Principles and values of organization

Vision

A just and caring world which enables young children of marginalized and mobile populations to develop into competent and confident individuals

Mission

- To ensure holistic development of young children with special focus on birth to 3 years
- To work with partners and communities to enable them to develop crèche and childcare arrangements
- To champion the cause of children's right at all levels of civil society

Geographical Operation

On an average the organization reaches out to 15, 000 children in a year, through their 65 plus centres in Delhi, Mumbai and Pune, and an equivalent number through their community outreach program which includes education and health campaigns, community meetings and grass root advocacy on the criticality of early care and crèches. The increasing thrust is towards training for and set up of neighborhood crèches and lobbying to make government services accessible to and functional for parents and children

Organizational Structure

Mobile Crèches has a general body with 39 members where membership is by invitation. Once every three years, the general body meets to elect members of the Governing Council. There are Managing Committees at the branch level in the different cities. Members of these various bodies deliberate on organizational policy and future directions. To carry on the day-to-day under the direction of the Executive Director, the staff of 135 (Delhi) comprising care-givers (didis), teachers, trainers and facilitators, constitute the pillars of beliefs and actions.

The role of volunteers continues to be central and critical in Mobile crèches' operations. Board members, including a handful, who provide management support and the fundraising volunteers, are the "regulars". There is also an active student and corporate volunteering.

Partners/stakeholders

Mobile Crèches primary stakeholders are builders and local community. Other than these governments, donors, partner agencies also play an important role. Facilitators, local crèche workers, community leaders also form the part of stakeholders.

Capacity building and training

The staff undergoes training on various topics every month. Workshops are conducted for ECCE teachers which include topics like teaching methodologies, community awareness, health of children, immunization etc. These trainings equip them with capacities to improve the overall condition and grooming of the children of the centers.

Implementation Challenges

Childcare is an unmet need for the 60 million children under the age of 6 years - living in poverty in rural and urban areas, on building sites and slums. It is not possible for a single organization to provide direct services even to a segment, say, the urban child. Mobile Crèches can run a few centres to demonstrate the feasibility and the operational challenges of running such programmes. The objective is to sensitize others - communities, governments, civil society groups - to create an environment that will enable and sustain. The key is to understand the criticality and take on the responsibility of providing such services. Mobile Crèches is working towards becoming a resource agency, which can provide training and consultancy to facilitate the process for others.

The most challenging task for the organization is assessing impact. A non-profit-organization (or a non-government-organization, NGO, in India) cannot measure it by its profits or sales figures. The organization is accountable, both to the target communities and the donors. Assessment is done on the basis of the following indicators:

- Number of children reached directly(at centers) and indirectly(health, education campaigns , training, crèche set up etc)
- Contribution of builders and the “local community”. Increased support from “direct stakeholders” is the most reliable indicator of impact.
- Tracking programme components – health (eg coverage of immunization program, the number of partner agencies), education (enrollment, retention in local schools), training (number of children reached, quality of initiatives).
- Assessing time bound projects funded by donors in terms of stated goals.
- Evaluating Mobile Crèches role in campaigns on the ground, in practice/policy.
- Assessing stakeholder participation: variety/quality of childcare models and by implication partnership models (with government, builders, community); quality of MC outreach in regions with/out a physical presence; number of Community Groups formed; ratio of MC staff to local crèche workers, facilitators and leaders readied by MC; functioning and access to government services.

Sustainability of program/organization

The sustainability of the program depends upon the number of construction sites available in the city of Delhi. Construction sites across the metro are booming due to increase in real estate projects. Areas around the capital (NCR) have come up as lucrative sites for commercial and housing projects. Due to this many construction workers are shifted from one place to another. This requires Mobile Crèches also to shift their location. This involves a lot of planning and negotiation with the contractor with respect to infrastructure, staff relocation etc.

Opportunity within the organization for learning and sharing of information and advocacy initiative in the field.

There is immense potential for inter organizational sharing especially of teaching methodology. Mobile crèches uses a variety of methods to include children in the day-to-day activities. The interested teaching matter dialogues conducted in a stress free environments enabling for different age groups in very difficult circumstances for mobile

populations are things that can be picked up by other organizations working in similar situations. The modules of teacher training which is used within the organization can be shared among others who are doing similar work in other areas.

FGD with ECCE Teachers

While conducting the FGD with teachers of the ECCE centers the following points were noted:

The ECCE center has different categories of children

0 – 3 years

3 – 6 years

Above 6 years

Different methodologies are adopted to suit the development of the particular age group.

- The smallest children are usually fed with nutritional food especially milk. The parents of the children can also ease their worries when they leave such small children in the care of the ECCE teachers. The parents visit the children for breast feeding twice a day. Most of the construction workers are migrants from Malwa region and Bilaspur.
- The children are accompanied by either of the parents in the morning to the center. At lunch time the children are again with the parents who drop them back by 2 in the afternoon. They then stay there till 5/6 till their parents come to pick them up.
- The most positive point of such centers is that these are located amidst the construction site; hence the parents do not have to travel long distances to leave their children at the center.
- The infrastructure, electricity, water etc are provided by the constructor every month.
- All the other equipment required to run a good programme for the children are provided by the organization. The children are fed 3 times during the day. The first meal they have usually at around 9:30 am and then at lunch time they are provided with food. At 4:00pm they are given snacks again. The food intake usually includes sooji/daliya/milk etc.
- Hygiene is maintained at all times at the center. Hygienic practices like keeping themselves clean, cutting nails, usage of toilets etc are taught at the center.
- Along with this through the play way method songs, alphabets and numbers are taught.
- The children who are above 5 years of age are streamlined with the government schools in the nearby locality. These children go to schools in the morning and then after lunch come to the center to be with the other toddlers.
- There are regular visits by doctors to these centers.
- Records are maintained by each center of each child. The records usually have the basic background profiles, and immunization details of the child etc.
- The teachers not only look after the children but conduct awareness drives throughout the community. Various interactive sessions are conducted with the

- parents of the children to involve them also in the whole process. They are kept up-to-date and informed about the development and progress of their children.
- The organization provides all centers with educational and recreational, books, materials that the child remains involved in activities which will interest them.
 - The teachers faced a lot of apprehension from the community in the beginning of the set up of the center. But after lot of interactions the parents started sending their children to such centers. Now the parents are very relieved because it gives them the satisfaction that their child is being looked after.
 - The centers conduct monthly meetings of parents and there are also regular site rounds so that each and every child is included in these centers.
 - The organization provides sponsorships for children who are not financially well off to continue education in the private as well as the government schools. The teachers themselves take care that they go talk to the officials for inclusion of such children.
 - Some of the materials which come from the organization are purchased while things like clothes etc are also given as donations.
 - The construction agent also helps by providing small gifts and sweets on important festivals. School bags, puzzles etc are also provided by them.
 - A chart is prepared weekly by the teachers listing out all the activities to be done by each for each teacher. Another chart lists out the food intake which has to be provided by the teachers to each category of children
 - Mobile Crèches has also collaborated with other organization and institutions to organize health checkups throughout the year.
 - A library is maintained at each center. This library has various books for children of all ages.

Case Study with parents

Name of parent: Sona Bai

Sona Bai hails from a place called Bilaspur. She migrated with her family to Delhi four years back. The cause of migration was poverty in her village. Since she was from the lowest strata of the society in her village there was no opportunity left for her family after the recent drought in the area. In these 4 years she has been associated with one construction agent. The construction involved her to settle across the city (Vasant Vihar, HUDCO, and Greater Noida) in this span. The construction agent has provided for accommodation wherever the construction work was taking place. This arrangement mainly consisted of temporary houses made of tin roof and kutcha walls.

Because of such migration within the city, Sona Bai could never send her children to proper schools. Since Mobile crèche center started in Greater Noida, She has been able to leave her children in the care of the ECCE teachers. She is happy with the care which has been provided by the center. The children were not used to leaving her and she used to take them with her to the construction site. This sometimes proved dangerous as the child could not be supervised at all times. After the starting of the MC center, she is relieved that not only her children are safe but the teachers provide nutritional food also which probably she could not have managed with her meager daily wage.

She visits the center once in a day during lunch time and spends time with her children. The children have also learnt basic hygiene which they in turn teach their mother. The MC center has been a boon in disguise to Sona Bai. But she is worried that it might end as soon as the construction agent starts work in another area. She will have to shift base and then her children will again be left alone without any support and help.

Chapter III: Integrated Child Development Services - Tamil Nadu

Introduction

The centrally sponsored ICDS was introduced in Tamil Nadu in 1976, starting small with just three projects: 2 rural and 1 urban. At present there are 113 general ICDS projects (69 rural, 44 in urban slums). An integrated package of health, supplementary nutrition, together with cognitive and psycho-social services was contemplated for children under 6. Their services are provided through a network of Anganwadis – one for around 1500 population. The norm is for a higher population in urban areas. Pregnant and lactating women are also covered. Specifically, 6 services are available: health check-ups, immunization, referral, education on health and nutrition, and supplementary nutrition. This last service is actually the noon meal under the NMP. While the cost of nutrition supplements alone is borne by the State Government, the Central Government bears all other costs, actually more than half the costs are on account of the food component alone. In 4 districts the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) provided additional resources for a limited period.

Tamil Nadu Integrated Nutrition Project

Many community nutrition and health projects have led to big reductions in malnutrition in small areas. TINP, the nutrition program in Tamil Nadu state, is one of a very few programs around the world which have had a substantial impact on malnutrition on a large scale (more than 20,000 villages), and over a sustained period. In 1980 the pilot Tamil Nadu Integrated Nutrition Project was introduced with funding from the World Bank. This was far more focused, with the under 36 months old being targeted with a smaller 'food bias'. TINP focused on educating the women and others in the household (e.g., mothers-in-law) regarding breast feeding, weaning, immunization, growth monitoring, and so on. Growth monitoring was an innovative feature, which attempted to make invisible malnutrition visible through plotting each child's weights against its age every month on chart which compared the actual growth to a norm. Mothers were taught how to interpret the chart which was suitably designed. Very selective supplementation that too for a fixed period based on recorded growth was undertaken. This helped control food costs. But not long after TINP's introduction, in 1982, the State also announced the massive Noon Meal Program (NMP), which did not have such targeting with the intention of economizing on food costs. The NMP had multiple objectives. This led to a problem of policy clarity.

By 1989 TINP-I operated in 173 rural blocks. Its successor, TINP-II expanded coverage to 316 blocks, eventually with 18,352 centres. This time round decision making had to take into account the reality of the massive NMP which had come to stay and which covered children up to 5+ years among pre-schoolers. So TINP-II took up non-ICDS areas, and put in place its integrated package of services, adding to it pre-school education for children over 3 years. As it began operations through the already established network of NMP centres it was possible to operationalize TINP-II in a very short period. From 1998 the TINP was renamed as the WB-ICDS-III in keeping with the standard nomenclature for the country for child development services, while retaining its distinct identity, indicating that it is supported under World Bank funding.

Thus, for the below six years old, between the general ICDS and WB-ICDS III (which is the renamed TINP), all rural blocks in the state have in place integrated services for child development and most urban areas are also covered under ICDS. In all this accounted for 30,445 preschool noon meal centres, 13, 98,064 children and 5, 35,502 adults. The ‘pure’ NMP centres (non TINP, non-ICDS) operate in a few urban pockets (718 centres with around 2, 93,457 children). Thus the NMP for the under six is integrated with either ICDS or TINP, providing the supplementary nutrition component.

Kancheepuram district was selected for documenting best practices in ICDS. The district has 140 rural and 100 urban ICDS centres. Four Anganwadi Centres were visited i.e., Musurawakkam – II, CVM Nagar, Damal – 1 and Ariya Perumbakkam.

Children attending these anganwadi centres have good language skills and in some AWCs, children are taught English rhymes and songs. Children are healthy and growth monitoring is done regularly. Children learnt the concepts such as fruits, flowers, vegetables, festivals through games, rhymes, songs, dominos, action songs, stories and other visual aids and identify different objects, shapes and colors.

Mothers’ meeting is held once in a month and individual development of children will be discussed. All the mothers are self group members. They contributed utensils, furniture, mats, and electrical equipment to the centre. They also provide some vegetables and greens everyday. These contributions are done voluntarily.

All the centres are running in permanent buildings that are fully equipped with the necessary material. What makes ICDS different in Tamil Nadu is the community participation in terms of constructing a permanent building for Anganwadi centre, contributions to purchase necessary material for the centre, celebration of special occasions such as Independence Day and sending children to anganwadi centres regularly.

The Anganwadi Centres are opened at 7.30 a.m by the helper, who cleans and cooks. Feeding time starts from 8 am and ends up at 9 am. 9 to 24 months old children are provided with 50 gms of nutritional diet and 24 to 60 months old children are provided with 100 gms of nutritional diets during this feed everyday. Parents bring their children to the center during this feeding time and teacher visit children’s home who are absent to center to feed them with the nutritional diet.

Menu followed in these ICDS centres

Morning Feeding	Lunch – mixed rice	Snacks (mostly provided along with lunch)
Nutritional diet everyday 6-24months children-50 gms 24-60 months children-100 gms	Rice with tomato and greens (Monday)	Egg
Tuesday	Rice with ladies finger and greens	

Wednesday	Rice with carrots and greens	Egg
Thursday	Rice with beetroot and greens	Green gram whole
Friday	Rice with potato and greens	Bengal gram
Saturday and Sunday	Rice with other vegetables	-

Kancheepuram district has a unique feature in its menu. Curry leaves powder is added to the meal for 11 days and drumstick powder is added to the meal for 11 days. These powders are enriched with Vitamin A

Between 9 to 10.30 am children come to the center for their daily activities which include

- Prayer
- Exercises
- Meditation
- Play way method of teaching (syllabus is followed)
- Lunch (12.30 to 1 pm)
- Sleeping hours (1 pm to 2 pm)
- Out door play and kids leave the centre at 3 pm

Every month a specific topic is chosen. Songs, rhymes, stories, puzzles, zigzags, flash cards, dominos, charts etc are prepared with related to the topic. The teacher also organizes interesting games based on the topic. At the end of the month, the child is expected to know about the information of the topic with respect to its color, shape and features.

FGD with AWWs

Mrs. Vijaya joined as a teacher in 1992 after completing her SSLC. She was placed in Musurawakkam – II Anganwadi centre and has rich experience in early childhood education. She said that the community did not recognize the centre at the time of its inception. But after her frequent home visits, door to door campaigns, the community felt the need of education in early childhood. She shared her view that child development is a continuous and cumulative process, in terms of programme. It is better to address the entire childhood continuum from prenatal to end of the primary rather than intervene in any sub-stage alone. With this view, she interacted with every pregnant women in that area on the importance of prenatal, postnatal and child care aspects.

Teacher attended on the job training for 72 days, which gave her a complete understanding on six services of ICDS. Apart from that, teacher participated in 13 other professional development training and executed the learnt methodologies in service.

Teacher said that she is able to perform the day-to-day activities for child development in a focused way by the encouragement and motivation provided by her superiors. She included that the trainings attended made to realize the need of the child, parents, and community and to cater those needs. She said that pre-primary is not merely an age-band,

it is also a period during which the child should be engaged in learning that which is preparatory to formal learning in a school system. The emphasis is thus on preparation, and the most important task of a pre primary teacher is to make sure the child is receiving this preparation. Pre-primary should not be considered simply as 'prior to regular schooling' but as 'preparatory' to regular schooling.

She works with commitment and also reaped the fruit by the way children when admitted in regular schools were keeping regular attendance and performing well, which was also witnessed by school teachers and parents.

Mrs.Saraswathy said that all the children in the area adopt hygienic practices. With the community participation, a kitchen gardening was raised in front of the centre. Ms. K.

Kala iarasi joined ICDS centre in Karupadithadai in 1993. She has completed her SSLC. She is looking care of the CVM centre from 2004. Based on her experience, she compares the community's contribution/role as a step-by-step growth process. She said that she thoroughly enjoy her work and has immense satisfaction. She prepares all teaching aids and teaches in play way method. All the children are made to sit in the circle during the learning hours to inculcate the habit of togetherness, teamwork and socialization.

Case study with mothers

Mothers: Dhanalakshmi, Pushpa, Kalpana, Valarmathy, Kalpana, Thenmozhi and Devi

These mothers work in agriculture farms as their children were taken care in anganwadi. Few mothers are helping their husbands in silk weaving and one is working in an NGO (Arivoliyakkam). They said, Anganwadi is a secured place and children also learn poems, songs along with English and Tamil alphabets. To ensure motor development of children physical exercises are taught and to inculcate creativity, they are provided with clay modeling puzzles organizing materials. Mothers were proud of their children who perform well when they start their formal schooling at the age of 5.

Mothers expressed that they were not provided with proper education in their own villages. ICDS center initiated learning practices along with provision of nutritional food and care.

Mothers regularly attend the Sangam meeting every month and the village panchayat leader had contributed for painting work, minor repairs and given fan, tube lights for the centre. The village people supported for an almairah to keep the play materials.

PART II: Child care through capacity building

This section of the booklet describes the capacity building efforts of two organizations namely, Centre for Learning Resources, Pune and State Resource Centre, Andhra Mahila Sabha, Hyderabad. Capacity building is the dire need in ECCE programs as not many focus on this issue including government. Capacity building is needed to build a quality workforce in ECCE. The case studies in this section reveal how process oriented training leads to both competence and confidence among the ECCE educators.

Centre for Learning Resources (CLR) is a non-profit, non-governmental organization located in Pune, India. It has been working in early childhood care and development and elementary education since 1984 in Maharashtra and other states in India. CLR undertakes projects to develop relevant programmes and materials in Early Childhood Care and Development and Elementary Education. As a technical support organization, they also provide on request a variety of inputs to government agencies and NGOs running pre-primary centres or elementary schools or alternative education programmes for out-of-school and working children. CLR also raises public awareness about the educational needs of disadvantaged children and their right to a good education. More specifically, they undertake their own projects or provide technical support services in trainings, development of training and teaching-learning materials, research and advocacy.

State Resource Centre (SRC), Andhra Mahila Sabha is an umbrella organization in the field of early child hood and care for the state of Andhra Pradesh providing training support, developing training material, conduct research studies, initiate advocacy and provide ongoing professional support to the different governmental and non governmental organization functioning in the state. Over a period of 20 years it has developed various teaching modules customized for children having various needs. It has been closely working with central government, state government and other international bodies like UNICEF for the cause. SRC has been doing the onerous task of capacity building for initiating various ECE programmes which is being done by giving required training to personnel at different levels on different components. The Centre works to enrich the learning process of children in the pre-primary and early primary years (from 3 to 8), and spearheads the cause of early childhood education.

Chapter IV: Centre for Learning Resources – Pune

Introduction

The CLR is a non-profit, non-governmental organization (NGO) located in Pune, India. It has been working in early childhood care and development and elementary education since 1984 in Maharashtra and other states in India. The CLR undertakes projects to develop relevant programmes and materials in Early Childhood Care and Development and Elementary Education. As a technical support organization, they also provide on request a variety of inputs to government agencies and NGOs running pre-primary centres or elementary schools or alternative education programmes for out-of-school and working children. CLR also raises public awareness about the educational needs of disadvantaged children and their right to a good education. More specifically, they undertake their own projects or provide technical support services in the following areas:

- Training
- Development of training and teaching-learning materials
- Research
- Advocacy
- Consultancy

Goal

The expansion of elementary education and early childhood education in India has often not been matched by a similar concern for the quality of teaching and learning. This has resulted in millions of primary school dropouts and unacceptably low levels of learning in our classrooms. The main goal of the CLR is to improve the quality of early childhood care and development and elementary education that rural and urban disadvantaged children receive in our country.

As a technical support organization in the field of Early Childhood Care and Development and Elementary Education, CLR are committed to work in collaboration with all those engaged in understanding and meeting this challenge.

Approach

The CLR is one of the few institutions in our country which attempts to design and deliver, on request, a range of technical support services to meet the educational needs of varied age-groups of children in varied cultural contexts.

Consequently, CLR does not conduct set training programmes or “refresher” courses for teachers and trainers. Instead, CLR first enters into a dialogue with and /or visit the organization that is requesting assistance, in order to assess its needs. Inputs are carefully planned after mutual discussion, to suit the needs of the specific field-based programme the organization is implementing. The training is participatory, addresses itself to actual problems in the field, invites feedback from participants between recurrent sessions, and adapts its focus according to such feedback.

The materials designed are based on the needs of varying educational programmes, and incorporate feedback based on the experience of teachers in the classroom. In designing these materials, as well as the developmental aspects of all our activities, we keep in mind their wider diffusion and application.

Activities

- In-service training of ECE and ECCD workers, school teachers, para-teachers, teacher-trainers and supervisory personnel
- Development of training materials and low-cost teaching-learning materials
- Capacity building programmes
- Consultancy in educational project design and academic inputs for government schools, NGOs, and international organizations
- Advocacy activities

Geographical Area of Activities

CLR has been working in the different districts of Maharashtra. At varying times, it has worked in Jharkhand, Uttaranchal, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Orissa, Andhra Pradesh and other states. It continues to work in various states in association with Government and different NGOs working in the districts.

Beneficiaries

The beneficiaries of CLR activities are poor urban and rural children in the birth to 14 years age-group. The CLR serves them mainly through the adults, who care for them, and those who are involved directly or indirectly in their education, including:

- Elementary school teachers and teachers in alternative education programmes.
- 'Balwadi'/pre-primary teachers and other workers in programmes for early childhood care and development.
- Teacher trainers and supervisory personnel
- Parents and other caregivers
- Development and community workers

Legal status

The Centre for Learning Resources (CLR) is the sole non-profit educational institution of The Society for Educational Improvement and Innovation (SEII). The SEII is the legal body registered as a society under the Indian Societies Registration Act of 1860, and registered as a public trust under the Bombay Public Trust Act of 1950. It is legally allowed to receive foreign funds as it is also registered under the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) of 1976.

Organizational Structure

Apart from the Director and Joint Director, CLR has an Assistant Director and Project Officers for different projects. It also has on its staff trainers, artists, DTP and professionals in audio- visual production.

Capacity Building and Training

CLR believes that training is a two way process, requiring maximum interaction between trainers and participants. CLR staff visit projects where their training is being implemented and also enriches their experience from the same. CLR staff also participated in seminars and training programmes conducted in related fields.

CLR Activities

Birth to 3 years Age group – Caregiver Education for Holistic Home based Child Care

Research has established that the development of intelligence, personality and social behavior occurs most rapidly in the earliest years of our lives. The brain responds most to very early stimulation, and the effects of deprivation during the earliest years often cannot be overcome later in life.

Another finding particularly significant for poorer countries like ours is that nutritional supplements alone do not have as great an impact on malnourished children's growth as when they are combined with psychosocial stimulation. Hence, there is a growing awareness that interventions for infant survival need to go hand in hand with programmes for young children's growth and psychosocial development. It is in this context that, since 1997, the CLR is developing and delivering inputs for programmes catering to children under 3 years old.

Issues /Needs Addressed

Targeting caregivers of disadvantaged children in the birth to 3 years age group, in both rural and urban areas, the CLR addresses the following needs:

- The need to enhance the knowledge of caregivers about holistic child development, including the importance of psychosocial stimulation in early childhood and what it involves in practical terms.
- The need to endorse sound traditional care giving practices, and to integrate inputs for psychosocial development with health and nutrition education.
- The need to identify and develop good communicators within communities, to effectively convey key messages and stimulation practices to families.

Education Package for Caregivers

The CLR Education Package for caregivers has been developed in various Indian languages. It has emerged out of their research activities in care giving practices and their interaction with parents, grandparents and other caregivers of young children in villages and urban slums. They attempt to provide effective communication materials for an illiterate or semi-literate audience.

Scope of the Education Package

The manual and accompanying visual materials comprising the package promote holistic home-based child care in disadvantaged communities. The interactive, easy-to-use communication approach of the package helps to convey the following key messages:

- Holistic child development and role of the caregiver
- Prime messages in :
 - reproductive health, child and maternal health
 - child nutrition
 - Importance of psychosocial stimulation and how to promote it
 - Child safety and age-appropriate handling of children
- Play materials
- Gender equity in care giving practices

Hindi Package: ‘Vikas Shishu ka: Sahbhag Sabhi ka’

Marathi Package: ‘Vikas Balacha : Sahbhag Sarvancha’

Oriya Package : ‘Vikash Shishura : Sahayog Sabhinkara’

Telugu Package : ‘Vikasam Sisuvudi : Sahakaram Andaridi’

Components

- **Manual for Communicators** - Contains 20 modules, for periodic meetings with caregivers. Each module provides the necessary content and step-by-step guidelines for conducting the meeting with a semi-literate or illiterate audience.
- **Discussion Photo Booklet** - Contains 4 sets of photos. Each set helps to discuss the developmental characteristics of a particular age group.
- **Other Visual Materials** - Puzzles and discussion pictures which help to make the meetings participatory. Encourage caregivers to analyse issues for themselves.
- **Handouts for Caregivers** - To be duplicated and given to each participant at the end of a meeting. Contain illustrated reminders of some of the main child care messages discussed at the meeting.

Who can use it

This Education Package can be used:

- For parent and family education within interventions for Integrated Child Development.
- Within programmes for Community Health, Child Health and Women’s Reproductive Health, for raising awareness about the influence of caregiver-child interaction on children’s growth and development.
- Within meetings of existing women’s groups, such as ‘Mahila Mandals’, self-help groups, etc. as an ‘add-on’ activity for parent and family education.

Training Programme for Community Based ‘Communicators’

To help organizations to use this package effectively, the CLR conducts training programmes for community-based field workers and health workers who serve as 'communicators' of messages within interventions for home-based child care.

Content of CLR Training Programmes for Community-Based ‘Communicators’

- Understanding holistic development in infancy, and particularly the synergistic effects of health care, nutrition and psychosocial stimulation.
 - How to assess child care needs in the community through simple surveys
 - Participatory communication techniques for targeting illiterate and semi-literate parents and families
 - Content and use of the CLR Education Package for caregivers
 - How to conduct effective caregivers’ meetings and home visits
- CLR training for field-level communicators is conducted in Marathi or Hindi.

Training Programmes for Master Trainers (TOTs) within NGOs and Government Agencies

They also conduct training of master trainers for the implementation of home-based interventions and IEC activities within NGOs and government agencies.

Content of CLR Trainers’ Training

All the field-level content of communicators' training, plus:

- Alternative models of field-level interventions
- Interactive training methods and use of CLR audio-visual training materials
- Planning effective field-level training programmes for community-based communicators
- Monitoring of interventions

CLR Training of Trainers (TOT) is conducted in English, Marathi or Hindi.

Training Materials

1. Guidelines for Master Trainers

These guidelines are given to all trainers who avail of our Trainers’ Training (TOTs). They contain outlines for conducting field-level training sessions for communicators

2. VCD Series entitled ‘Care for Development’ 4 Modules available in Marathi and Hindi.

These VCD modules are accompanied by discussion guidelines. They serve as aids to discussion in participatory training programmes for trainers and field-workers. They can be used directly with parents and caregivers wherever VCRs are available.

3. Poster Exhibition

CLR developed poster exhibitions on holistic child care in various regional languages. Simple poetic text, relevant photographs and artworks explain to viewers the concept of holistic child development and how parents, families and the community can promote it. The posters also suggest plenty of ways in which adults can interact with babies and toddlers, and provide a stimulating environment for them.

Three to Five Years Age Group – Early Childhood Care and Education

It is now universally acknowledged that the first five years are the most crucial in human development. There is no other time in human life when so much is learned in so brief a period. In India, this awareness is reflected in the large scale government and private efforts to run ‘balwadis’, ‘Anganwadis’ (pre-school centres) and pre-primary schools. The quality, however, of the majority of these centres is poor. Inadequately trained teachers, lack of an appropriate curriculum and a dearth of learning materials make for unstimulating programmes for young children.

Issues/Needs addressed –

The CLR addresses the following needs in Early Childhood Education:

- The need for ongoing professional development of teachers and teacher trainers
- The need to introduce activity-based, experiential learning in preschool centres
- The need for low cost learning materials and play materials
- The need for greater community awareness about Early Childhood Education

In-service training of Teachers and Workers in Early Childhood Education

The in service teacher training for Early Childhood Education is based on the curriculum designed for pre-school centres.

CLR Preschool Curriculum

The preschool curriculum is activity-based, focusing on the holistic development of children in the 3-5 age group. To assist ‘balwadis’ and ‘Anganwadis’ (preschool centres) to introduce or strengthen the activity-based approach, they offer in-service training of rural and urban ‘balwadi’ teachers and ‘anganwadi’ workers.

CLR Trainers Training and Training Package for Early Childhood Education

The CLR has developed an audio-visual training package entitled ‘Active Learning in Early Childhood Programmes,’ which is available in 8 regional languages and English. They train teacher trainers to use the package to conduct in-service teacher training programmes within their own local projects and institutions.

Features of Training Package

- Audio-visual and print modules emphasize active, participatory training method
- Gives step-by-step guidelines to trainers
- Allows for local adaptation
- Integrates theory and practice
- Communicates with grassroots teachers and workers having modest educational backgrounds.

Advocacy activities in Early Childhood Education

In their efforts to promote the holistic development of young children and to improve the quality of their early education, the need to raise parent awareness and public awareness on issues concerning children was always felt. Here are some examples of advocacy activities.

Raising Awareness of Children's Rights

In partnership with other training agencies, they offer a training programme on the Rights of the Child, with a focus on the rights relating to survival, protection, development and participation. This training is conducted in Marathi or English, and is appropriate for teachers and other personnel of organizations working with urban, rural and tribal children.

CLR Exhibition on Early Childhood Education

CLR has designed a bilingual exhibition in Marathi-English, focusing on the developmental needs of young children and the role of adults in fulfilling them. The panels and table displays of exhibition on Early Childhood Education highlight various aspects of intellectual development in 3 to 6 year olds, and suggest play activities which can nurture and challenge their minds. The exhibition has been staged at several locations. It has been viewed by thousands of parents, grandparents, ECE workers, teachers, policy makers and the general community. The exhibition is designed to travel. CLR collaborates with other agencies to stage it in urban and rural areas in Maharashtra.

Consultancy in Early Childhood Education

CLR offers consultancy services in project design and implementation for organizations who are initiating Early Childhood Education programmes or seeking to upgrade existing 'balwadis,' 'Anganwadis' and pre-primary schools. For example, they conducted an intensive orientation programme in Katmandu for field managers and trainers of PLAN International, Nepal, focusing on design options for a community-based Early Childhood Development Programme in 5 districts.

In collaboration with a professional team deputed by Plan-Indonesia, CLR undertook a cultural adaptation of the CLR Early Learning Kit which was published in Bahasa-Indonesia. The CLR audio-visual ECE training package was also adapted and they have conducted trainers' training in Indonesia for Plan-Indonesia's ECE trainers, who in turn have trained rural pre-school teachers.

Closer to home, they have assisted Forbes Marshall, a corporate group in Pune, to set up a preschool centre as part of their welfare activities for low-income families, emphasizing a high degree of community participation.

Implementation Challenges

The major implementation challenges faced by CLR are

1. Transmission loss from training of master trainers to the field-based training of teachers and or communicators, and subsequently to the classrooms or to families.

- They attempt to overcome this by providing systematic training materials for field-based use, including audio-visual communication materials.
2. Replication of a particular strategy or approach is not always applicable to different areas. Therefore understanding the needs in a particular project area is very important. Hence the CLR stresses research towards locale-specific solutions, as also continuous dialogues between recurrent training sessions for different projects.

FGD with Communicators for Educating the Caregivers in 0 to 3 years age group

Sandhya (Supervisor), Sarada Sathem, Sarada Yadav

The communicators hold meeting with the caregivers thrice a week and enhance their skills in holistic care including different methods to interact with the young ones for psychosocial development. The programme is for one year which is divided into 20 modules. Communicators are trained at the field level by CLR every month for the meetings which they implement in the field. During this time they also share their experiences and problems. Assessment of their work is also done in the training sessions.

The caregiver's meetings starts with a prayer after the children are engaged in play with toys given to them. Then the communicator initiates the topic of discussion from the module and encourages every caregiver to come up with different ideas in line with the topic of discussion. They sing songs, tell stories and discuss various things to be done with the child for their psychosocial development.

In the beginning, the villagers were not very keen to the idea of coming up for meeting. They did not realize the importance of such sessions. They had a difficult time collecting caregivers since they have time constraint. Earlier the meetings were held in the morning when it was difficult for most of the caregivers to come due to daily chores, so then the time have been shifted to afternoon.

As the communicators are from the same village, they were able to convince few mothers to attend the meeting by convincing their family members and now the success can be seen as many of the grandmothers are also attending the meetings apart from the mothers. Fathers have also become more sensitive towards their young ones because of the home visit of the communicators, in which they go the individual houses, talk to the family members about what should be done and what should not and then also give them different picture handouts to put up in their houses.

They say that the mothers are happy to see the child play with toys given to them during the meeting. They are relaxed during the meeting and happy to see the positive changes in their children. Communicators are also happy that earlier the mothers were very shy and would not talk among them but now they are eager to discuss different problems faced by them and also share experiences.

In contradiction to earlier times, when they had to wait for caregivers to come for the meeting now they come on their own and wait for the meeting to start. They said that the mothers also come up with various ideas which help them in facilitating the process.

They also said that earlier when toys were not there for the young ones they used to hang around with their mothers and thus they were not able to give their full concentration in the meeting, but as the toys have brought in children are happy to play with them and mothers are able to actively participate in the meetings.

FGD with Caregivers in 0 to 3 years age group

Mothers – Kavitha, Vaishali, Aasha, Sujata, Sonika

Grandmothers – Parvati Bai, Baida, Anasuya

Mothers are very happy to see their child curious about the outer world and also get delighted to see them playing, responding to their poems and stories. Sujata, has two children, she tells that due to difference in the way of handling, her younger daughter is more intelligent and responsive than the elder one. Not only the mothers, but also other caregivers like grandmothers realize that with more interaction they not only develop a strong bonding with the child but also help in overall development of the child.

Earlier, the grandmothers use to believe that there is nothing more that they can learn but in no time they have realized that many of their beliefs are myths and there are better ways of doing things. Caregivers are happy to share their problems and also find solutions themselves with the help of discussion.

After coming for the meetings, the caregivers have realized the importance of toys and things available around the house to play with in the development of the child. They have also learnt to make simple toys with the materials easily available at home.

Mothers felt that though earlier they were hesitant in coming for the meetings but now they eagerly wait for the meetings and learn new things. They also told that there is a positive change in their male counterparts as well and they are also interested in listening to what they have learnt and also takes an active participation in upbringing of the child.

Lastly, mothers said that they would like to come again for the meetings for their next child to learn and also share their past experience.

Chapter V: State Resource Centre – Early Childhood Education, Andhra Mahila Sabha

Introduction

SRC – ECE, AMS is an umbrella organization in the field of early child hood and care for the state of Andhra Pradesh providing training support, developing training material, conduct research studies, initiate advocacy and provide ongoing professional support to the different governmental and non governmental organization functioning in the state. Over a period of 20 years it has developed various teaching modules customized for children having various needs. It has been closely working with central government, state government and other international bodies like UNICEF for the cause. SRC has been doing the onerous task of capacity building for initiating various ECE programmes which is being done by giving required training to personnel at different levels on different components. The Centre works to enrich the learning process of children in the pre-primary and early primary years (from 3 to 8), and spearheads the cause of early childhood education.

Principles

The basic principle of SRC – ECE, AMS is overall development of child by creating a child friendly environment through understanding the child, understanding the guardian of child and then providing them customized education.

Values and Beliefs

SRC AMS believes that ECCD includes both development of the child and care for development and intervention should include welfare, nutrition and learning. The following points are highlighted by SRC AMS:

- Capacity building ultimately revolves on mobilization of resources and convergence of initiatives
- Strengthening the capacities at different levels – Child care worker to the policy maker through convergent efforts by the NGOs, government institutions and also private training centres
- Better coordination of various child-focused services particularly at the local level
- Strengthening programmatic linkage such as between health and education.
- Provision for a comprehensive frame work for ECCE based on rights, equity and justice.
- Public and private partnership in realization of child rights

Goal & Mission

The motive of AMS is to **‘bridge pre and early stages in tune with development continuum’**. The purpose is not to experiment on children but to work with children so as to understand their needs and tailor the programme to ensure happy learning in early years as an alternative to burdened preschool child. Broadly it can be said as –

- To develop the spirit “I AM, I CAN” among children
- To ensure happy learning environment to children and safeguard the children from inappropriate practices. Demonstrate the feasibility of a developmentally appropriate programmes

Genesis

Realizing the crucial importance of early childhood education in terms of fostering and promoting all round development in children and also to bridge the wide gap between the needs and catering to this age group, College of Education, Andhra Mahila Sabha started a Post Graduate Diploma course in Early Childhood Care in the year 1984 to train a cadre of teachers with high level of sensitivity and dedication. On 14th January 1987 a laboratory Preschool was started for providing happy learning environment to children in the age group of 3 to 8 years as an innovative project of College of Education of Andhra Mahila Sabha. In 1990, in collaboration with UNICEF and NCERT, AMS started a project to support preschool component of ICDS and was recognized by UNICEF as **State Resource Centre – Early Childhood Education (SRC – ECE)** for Andhra Pradesh.

Geographical operations

SRC AMS started with its activities in Hyderabad and in the period of 20 years have been working in most parts of the State of Andhra Pradesh. It provides guidance, training, training materials and packages to different organizations working in the field of Early Childhood Education.

Organizational Structure

SRC AMS have few members in its team. It is headed by Smt. K. Lakshmi, Honorary Director. Other members in the team are Secretary, three project staff and 14 teachers.

Activities and Projects

Lab School

It was opened in 1987 to provide child a burden free learning experience with 20 children between the age group of 3 to 8 years from lower economic segment of the society. At present the school is having 260 children. It is an demonstrative centre for practicing child friendly programmes supported by UNICEF, NIMH, NCERT, State Education Department and a number of NGOs, for different functionaries in the area of Early Childhood Education and also a centre for providing hands on experience for student teachers in handling young children. It can rightly be called the action-field of SRC-ECE. The methods that are followed in the school have been recognized as a LABSCHOOL METHODS by parents and other organizations. Here latest trends are practiced and propagated in the area of child education. It ensures providing foundation skills for better learning at a later stage. It focuses on play way method and individual needs of the children. It also provides scope for participation of parents. It stands as a functional model creating the best environment with limited resources. At the Lab School, the teachers enjoy themselves almost as much as the children, thus it becomes increasingly evident that joyful teaching makes for joyful learning and vice-versa.

Training Project – ICDS

The project started in 1990, in which teaching learning material was prepared for Anganwadi centres and training was given to ICDS functionaries in strategies of effective

pre-school education programme. It was done in consultation with NCERT, UNICEF, Dept. of Women's Development & Child Welfare (AP), College of Home Science – Acharya N.G. Ranga Agricultural University, Dept. of Psychology – Osmania University, and Dept. of Education – Osmania University. Guidance was provided on all policy issues. Apart from training to ICDS, training was imparted to Instructors/coordinators of AWTC/MLTC's (both World Bank and Non - World Bank) and teachers of Shramik Vidyapeet. The functionaries trained were CDPOs, Supervisors, and Anganwadi Workers. The following materials were prepared in the project –

- I. Integrated readiness kit – it includes integrated kit material (low cost & no cost), Listing out parallel activities & material for their preparation, manuals for kit material and flash cards/story cards in booklet form.
- II. Translation of CML material – it includes translation of 6 out of 12 manuals in Hindi to Telugu, translation of the 2 books “stimulating activities for young children” by Dr. R. Muralidharan, NCERT and “ECE programme” by Dr. Venita Kaul, NCERT
- III. Production of Audio Cassettes – ‘Udaya Bala’, Virise mogga, Bala prapancham, Chitti paatalu I / II etc.
- IV. News letter
- V. Documentation – ‘Rising Sun’ and ”Ushodayam” Video Cassettes
- VI. Documentation of the project

School Readiness Programme

It started in year 1993 – 94, with focus in tribal areas of the state namely Paderu (Vizag), Utnoor (Adilabad) Chenchu (Srisailam) and Kondareddi (Bhadrachalam). Extensive work was done in Utnoor where bilingual package was prepared i.e., in Telugu and Gondi (local language of the Gondi tribe). This programme helped in enhancing the creative skills of the children apart from helping them to join formal school. Customized School readiness package was also prepared. The package for tribal areas was for 12 weeks, that for rural areas was of 8 weeks and for the urban areas was 6 weeks.

Janshala Programme

The programme started in 2000, in which training was given to teachers and module was prepared. 100 different books were developed for graded readers, i.e., children with different reading capability to generate reading interest in the children. It was supplied to all the schools under Janshala Programme.

Other Training and Programmes

- a. Training to teachers of DIET (District Institute of Education and Training)
- b. Training to teachers of KVS (Kendriya Vidya Sangathan)
- c. 3 month training programme was developed and given for preprimary teachers
- d. Two Day Care centers are functioning – one with MCH Hyderabad and other in Shrirangapur in Shadnagar.
- e. Training to teachers in formal Schools
- f. Capacity building was done at various levels of staff dealing with children from *Ayah* to Teachers

Noteworthy Achievements

1. “Sisu Vikasa Karyakramam”: a developmentally suitable, pre-school curriculum currently making learning more enjoyable for children in 30,000 Anganwadi Centres in rural and tribal Andhra Pradesh.
2. “Arambh”: an adaptation of “Sisu Vikasa Karyakramam” is being used by the National Institute for the Mentally Handicapped as an "Early Childhood Special Education" package.
3. Special school readiness-kits have been designed for children living in rural and tribal areas.
4. The SRCs emphasis on joyful learning has inspired many private schools to make the shift to less stressful schedules.

Capacity Building and Training

In the year 1984, in remembrance of Durgabai Deshmukh, founder of AMS, College of Education, AMS started a course “post graduate diploma in Early Childhood Education” with a thought of preparing a cadre of teachers with better educational support in ECE. The course got accreditations from Osmania University and support from UGC. In 1987, a Lab School was started with 20 children where the teaching was done through play way method. In 1990 with support of UNICEF and NCERT this became State Resource Centre – Early Childhood Education. It is now an umbrella organization extending support to all Pre and Primary schools in the state seeking help and support. Capacity Building and Training is believed to be an ongoing process for the staff which is done through the continuous exposure to the children from different background.

Partners

SRC have been working in collaboration with UNICEF, NCERT, DPEP, NIPPCD, NIMH, Home Science Department and State Department of Women and Child Welfare. Other than this it has worked with various NGOs – DDS, RDF (Rural Development Foundation), Samskar, PLAN and Seva Bharati.

Implementation Challenges

The major challenge for SRC AMS has been sudden shift in priorities resulting in diversion of focus and lack of continuity which comes while working with different agencies. SRC has always kept its objective very clear, though there have been challenges in implementation but the motivation and dedication has helped in achieving the objectives.

**PART III: Early Childhood Care and Education – Role of Policy
Agencies**

The last section in this booklet describes the agencies involved in advocacy for policy change in ECCE and other child related issues. Advocacy work related to children's issues gained greater focus and momentum in the past two years. Advocacy in ECCE is carried out at different levels – It moves upwards from local communities and their concerns to policy issues at the state and national level. It takes the form of awareness building, training, networking and lobbying and research and documentation.

Forum for Crèche and Child care Services (FORCES) is an informal network of organizations engaged in policy advocacy on issues related to women and children. The focal advocacy thrust is on women working in the unorganized sector and the care of their children. The forum was launched in response to the Shram Shakti Report of the National Commission for Women Working in the Unorganized Sector in 1989, which revealed harsh circumstances, under which millions of poor women earn a living, bring up their children and carry out household responsibilities. In the absence of childcare services, this situation becomes grave and has implication on child survival and development, the health and economic viability of women and for the girl child who shares her responsibilities.

What FORCES does?

At national level, FORCES was involved in campaigning and lobbying with decision makers, planners, policymakers, political parties to bring the young child on the centre of their agenda. At local level, they focus on organizing, supporting and arranging childcare and at regional level, they do networking and campaigning through nine regional networks in the country.

TN-FORCES

The Tamil Nadu Chapter of Forum of Crèches and child care services represents a non-political, semi-structured network of organizations and institutions, which were 38 in number at the time of inception in 1992. With its varied memberships like Trade Unions, NGOs, Research and professional institutions the number rose to 55 in 1994, 68 in 1995 and 120 presently. Since its inception, has been advocating the cause of effective early childhood care and development services for children below six years, especially the children of those mothers who are employed in the unorganized working sectors. The objective of TN-Forces is to lobby for better care and development of the young child in Tamil Nadu. As the Government is a major provider and a regulator of childcare services, the Network works closely with the Government in fulfilling its Constitutional and Statutory obligation to the young child

Chapter VI: Forum for Crèche and Child Care Services

Forum for Crèches and Childcare Services (FORCES) is an informal, national network of organizations and individuals concerned with issues relating to women working in the unorganized sector and care of their children. It was founded in 1989 to act as a pressure group. The network is committed to the survival and development of the young child and mother working in the unorganized sector. The issue is the lack of childcare support as a critical factor which impacts the health and development of children and increases poverty and social hardships.

FORCES believe that every child has the right to early child care and development including crèche and childcare services. Special care and benefits during pregnancy, birth, early child caring and maternity benefits to mothers are all intrinsic to the development of the young child.

Day care and childcare services has a direct bearing on:

- Child survival and development
- Women's health
- Increased economic productivity and women's empowerment
- School entry and retention especially for the girl child
- Prevention of child labor , child abuse, child prostitution
- All strategies for equitable development, poverty prevention and alleviation

FORCES is committed to adopting a holistic approach with a multi pronged advocacy for:

- Harnessing adequate resources for childcare services
- Seeking decentralization in the distribution of resources
- Social security for women working in the informal sector
- Adequate and just policies with planned outlays and inclusion of children in all sectors

FORCES Network

- Focus only on the young child
- Rounded membership of child rights groups, trade unions, women's organizations, research and academic institutions, trainers, lawyers, educationists, and doctors
- Nine regional networks in Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Orissa
- Engaged in grassroots mobilizations, campaigning and lobbying, policy intervention, research and surveys, dialogue and consultation
- Several reputed institutions/ organizations and eminent personalities support FORCES in various ways.

Forum for Crèche and Childcare Services in Tamil Nadu (TN FORCES)

Background

Action for Childcare and Education Strategies and Services (ACCESS) was started by M.S Swaminathan Research Foundation to focus on childcare at three different levels:

Micro level: Developing alternate childcare strategies through action and research in select Balwadis.

Intermediate level: Facilitating interventions through other agencies with training inputs and documentation.

Macro level: An advocacy role, highlighting issues of childcare and launching of Forum for Crèche and Childcare Services in Tamil Nadu (TN-FORCES)

A project, Children on the Agenda (COTA) was initiated with funding assistance of Bernard van Leer Foundation, The Netherlands. The objective was to strengthen and co-ordinate the activities of TN-FORCES which would serve as a pressure group for Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) in Tamil Nadu.

Introduction to TN-FORCES

The Tamil Nadu Chapter of Forum of Crèches and child care services represents a non-political, semi-structured network of organizations and institutions, which were 38 in number at the time of inception in 1992. With its varied memberships like Trade Unions, NGOs, Research and professional institutions the number rose to 55 in 1994, 68 in 1995 and 120 presently. Since its inception, has been advocating the cause of effective early childhood care and development services for children below six years, especially the children of those mothers who are employed in the unorganized working sectors. The objective of TN-Forces is to lobby for better care and development of the young child in Tamil Nadu. As the Government is a major provider and a regulator of childcare services, the Network works closely with the Government in fulfilling its Constitutional and Statutory obligation to the young child.

Convener Organization

In 1998, the Convener'ship of TN-FORCES was given to the Department of Social Work, Loyola College, with Dr. K.Shanmuga Velayutham as the Chief Executive, (Convener) assisted by the Secretariat that comprised the Project Coordinator and Project Associates. While the Department of Social Work, Loyola College, is primarily engaged in imparting education for students of Social Work at the Postgraduate level, it has undertaken various extension programmes in the areas of community development, health, and child welfare. In Child Welfare Services apart from monitoring and evaluation of ICDS centres, the Department has conducted research on such live issues as female infanticide, childcare in the unorganized sector and street children. Its link with several voluntary organizations and recognition by the various Government bodies as well, constituted a major strength of the Department of Social Work.

Charter of TN - FORCES

It was in 1996 that the Charter of TN-FORCES was adopted, which is as follows:

- Reach every child according to age, context, need and relevance, prioritizing the poor, the marginalized and the unreached
- Integrate all the three sectors-public, private and voluntary-through different instrumentalities
- Restructure ICDS flexibly, modifying the location, size and timings of centres to reach the unreached, especially women in the unorganized sector
- Raise the overall quality of ICDS centres
- Decentralize ECCE services to the level of Local Bodies for greater effectiveness
- Support and encourage those running ECCE services in the Voluntary Sector with adequate finance and strict monitoring to ensure high standards
- Enforce and monitor implementation of all ECCE services mandated in the labor sector, for women working in both organized and unorganized sectors
- Introduce, implement and monitor a Code of Regulation to govern the quality ECCE in the private sector
- Offer, regulate, promote and monitor training of ECCE workers in all sectors and for all kinds of programmes
- Recognize all ECCE workers as skilled workers and pay them fair wages

Activities of TN-Forces

The activities of TN-FORCES revolve around the beliefs that emanate from the collective experience of the Network. They are:

- Childcare is a basic support to working women and the right of the child.
- Day-care is an important strategy for poverty prevention and development.
- Adequate resources are vital for childcare services
- People's planning and participation are vital to the success of the programmes
- Childcare workers need recognition, adequate remuneration and capacity building
- Advocacy is required at every level from the parent to the Government i.e., the policy makers for achieving proper care for the children below-six years of age category through effective ECCD programme

Core Committee: The Core Committee with representatives of all the main constituencies or subgroups determines the priorities and directs the activities of the Forum.

Sub-groups: The subgroups were formed of members to be responsible for the activities, focused on specialized themes like Mother and Child, Pre-school Education, Legislation, Media and Southern Regional Group. The activities of subgroups were based on specific issues and modes of intervention as follows:

- Media - Core group gives theme related inputs to the media and also functions as a media monitoring group
- Mother & child health, carrying out activities pertaining to maternity and child welfare.
- Early Childhood - concerned with the quality of pre-school education, this Education subgroup lobbies for burden less Education System

- Legislation- lobbies for appropriate measures, through legislation, to address issues related to childcare services in Tamil Nadu
- Southern Regional group - aims at organizing and coordinating activities of members in the Southern Districts of Tamil Nadu, within the mandate of TN-FORCES

The programme seeks to reach out and influence a wide range of people namely, policy makers, legislators, employers, programme planners, administrators and the general public.

Strategies

For the purpose of carrying out the activities, various strategies adopted are:

- Presenting memoranda
- Organizing Public Hearings and Face-to-Face programmes on childcare services
- Social research and Documentation
- Pre-election appeal
- Seminars & Workshops
- Building alliances
- Lobbying with legislators

TN-FORCES succeeded in addressing many of the issues, availing of the professional inputs and expertise already existing among its members. While the child below six years of age was central to the macro-to-micro intervention process, capacity-building, women empowerment and collective action were given a fresh impetus.

Advocacy

TN-FORCES use various Advocacy strategies like lobbying, information sharing, capacity-building, building alliances, etc. It adopts advocacy as an organized intervention developed on behalf of the disadvantaged sections of the society to redress the injustices they suffer by effectively interceding with the Government. Memorandum is used as a form of advocacy which targets mainly the bureaucrats and politicians in their capacity as policy makers. This is to intervene between those that hold the decision-making power, and the affected people. Advocacy has helped the Forum in the process of working with Government on behalf of young children for the following issues:

- Obtain services and resources for young children
- Modify existing policies, procedures and practices that has an adverse impact on the right of the young children
- Promote new/amend legislation and policies that will result in the provision of needed resources or services

Advocacy and Campaign

The issues are first identified and then arguments developed in defense of the issues substantiated by facts evidence and logic. Thus it was aimed at creating larger public opinion on the issues against the authority who is responsible for formulating policy. The work of mobilizing the people on the issues is done through communication. The issues are taken to the people through a planning campaign mechanism. The work of

identifying the people with common vision and mobilizing them on common goal is part of the campaign mechanism.

Analysis

Analysis is the first step to advocacy Its efforts are designed to have an impact on public policy which starts with collection of accurate information and in-depth understanding of the problem / issues, the people involved, the policies, the implementation or non-implementation of those policies, the organizations, and the channels of access to influential people and decision makers.

Identification of Issues

The revision of the Grants for the Government Crèche Scheme was a major issue for advocacy and campaign for TN-FORCES. The issue emerged from the members in the General Body Meeting of TN-FORCES.

Reasons for choosing the issue

- 1960 onwards there was no revision of the Grants
- Difficult to run the Crèche with the meager amount
- There are 12,470 Crèches and 3.11 lakh children are benefited in India

Identification of Stakeholders

Success of advocacy and campaign depends on identification of the appropriate stakeholders. As regards the Crèche Scheme the stakeholders are NGOs, the State Government, the State Social Welfare Board, Central Social Welfare Board and the Department of Women and Child Development, Government of India.

Identification of Partners

As advocacy requires convergence of various views and wisdoms into a collective effort which cannot be achieved by sole initiative of any one organization or an individual, coming together of like-minded individuals and organizations has become imperative on the issues of Young Child's Rights. So the collaborators in advocacy work share a common goal on the issue for which they are coming together. In this context TN-FORCES formed a subgroup to carry out this Campaign headed by Mrs. Padmini Sivasubramaniam of Women Voluntary Services.

Meetings

For planning and coordinating the Network activities, various meetings are organized by TN-FORCES at regular intervals. Policy matters, issues and trends and strategies of intervention were discussed and appropriate decisions made at the Core Committee meetings. All the Subgroups' representatives actively participate in deliberations. They contribute to the planning, decision-making and execution of concrete programmes to fulfil the objectives of TN-FORCES.

Programmes

TN-FORCES' effectiveness was evident in the specific programmes organized both at the State level and the District level. These included public hearings, training, workshops and campaigns. In all the programmes especially in the workshops and campaigns the advocacy role of the Forum was of prime importance.

Communication

The Convener and the Secretariat adopted diverse methods and procedures of communication. Reports and minutes of all the meetings held were circulated to the Network members. In order that the information was fully comprehended by the members, Tamil was used as the medium of communication. The quarterly Newsletter "imma" contained information relevant to the issues, events held or to be held, profiles of member-organizations and case studies of important issues.

Process

It is recognized that of the total female work force in the country, 93 per cent were employed in the unorganized sector (1991 census). That they were forced to work on low wages and poor work environment for a mere subsistence was a reality one could not afford to ignore. Under pressure of work, these women had no time to care for their children at an early stage of development, a vital period for societal intervention. Being unorganized they were unable to openly voice their concerns, which in fact reflected the rights of the children.

TN-FORCES was committed to stand by these vulnerable groups and speak out on their behalf for collective action. Their demands were listed in a memorandum and submitted to the various Departments of the Government. This was followed by lobbying with Government functionaries and political leaders.

Memoranda

Memoranda were used as tools for advocacy to represent the needs of the children and the mothers as well as the workers in the childcare centres. Some of the memoranda submitted by TN-FORCES are for the following demands:

- Childcare services to suit the working hours of women
- Maternity benefits, ESI, Provident Fund, equal wages for men and women
- Setting up of Welfare Boards for the various unorganized sectors and registration of the employers and the employees under each Board

Another Memorandum submitted was to redress the grievances of the unorganized laborers. Some important demands were the following:

- Setting up of crèches wherever needed
- Change in the working hours to suit the needs of the mothers
- Maternity benefits: paid leave for 4 months, increase of allowance to Rs.1,600/
- Medical allowances, compensation for accidents; retirement benefits
- Registration of employers and employees and Housing

State Level Public Hearings

Akin to the submissions of memoranda was the instrument of the public hearing to highlight a specific issue or a set of issues and sensitizing both the policy makers and the general public. This mode of intervention involved the choice of location, the representatives of the focus groups and the officials of the Government machinery. The issues were openly discussed, analyzed and causes identified. It was for the administrators to face the affected people and provide the appropriate answers or solutions to the problem. The general public would become aware of the realities and some times get involved in addressing the issues.

As a follow-up on the State level Public Hearings, issues were discussed and analyzed by the people in the Face-to-Face programmes conducted in the various districts by TN-FORCES. The responsibility of organizing the Face-to-Face programs was assumed by the district level subgroups.

The outcome of the Public Hearings and Face-to-Face programmes figured as reports and petitions for the consumption of both the officials and the general public. In this effort the Press and the TV were involved for coverage to play an advocacy role in their news coverage.

Lobbying with the Legislators

During the Parliamentary Elections in March 1998 and September 1999, TN-FORCES had appealed to the political parties to include in their party manifestoes the demands related to ECCD. The demands put forth by TN-FORCES comprised

- Inclusion of childcare services under Minimum Needs Programme
- Setting up of a special fund for crèches and childcare services
- Allocation of minimum annual amount for childcare services keeping in mind the below six category who constitute 18% of the population
- Payment of at least minimum wages for all childcare workers
- Provision of adequate physical facilities in the existing childcare centres and allocation of Rs. 6/- per child for daily maintenance.

An overview of the rights of the mother and the child was drawn up in the form of a manual titled "Thai sei urimai -Oru paarvai". It lists the needs of the child, the various Government schemes available and also points out the gaps therein. There is also a detailed account of what the members of the Legislative Assembly could do towards ECCD. This manual was circulated to all the members of the Legislative Assembly.

Campaigns, Seminars and Workshops

Memoranda and Public Hearing had their own contribution to the macro to micro intervention process, but follow up was necessary through letters to the concerned Departments, delegations and personal meetings with the officials and sometimes representations to the political parties. Not infrequently, cooperation of the media was also sought to highlight the issues for the notice of the general public.

Capacity Building: Among the felt needs of the different constituencies of TN-FORCES, training and capacity building programmes were considered vitally important and the members looked to the Forum for help in organizing them, tailored to their local requirements. Seminars and Workshops were organized at intervals for specific groups of workers. Training programmes were designed and held every year mainly for the pre school teachers.

Workshops were held for pre-school teachers to equip them with capacities and skills for their specialized vocation. Experts in the field of Early Childhood Education participated in the workshops

Building Alliances

In the Networking process, an important strategy adopted by TN-FORCES was building up of an effective partnership among the member organizations. As it believed that, for a team to take shape, grow and develop, the members should have clarity of purpose, identification with the cause and collective and democratic approach to addressing the issues.

While TN-FORCES has been advocating the cause of the children and early childcare development, it has consciously worked to build up alliances with other like-minded organizations, operating in the State, for the issues described below:

- Campaign against Child Labor (CACL), Tamil Nadu made the pre-election appeal to the political parties to include in their election manifestoes the issues pertaining to the children below 6 years, like pre-school education and crèches for children of women in the unorganized labor sector.
- The demands of TN-FORCES were presented to the Chief Minister during a meeting of the Women Struggle Committee in which Mrs. Mohini Giri, former Chairperson, National Commission for Women, participated.
- On the issue of crèches for the construction workers, TN-FORCES has been actively aligned with the Nirman Mazdoor Panchayat Sangh.
- Women Rights Movement closely worked with TN-FORCES to organize a protest in front of the Labor Commissioner's Office to press for the demand for crèches for children in the unorganized labor sector.
- For the preparation of an activity based developmentally appropriate Curriculum in Tamil for pre-school children, the expertise of Indian Association of Pre-school Education (IAPE) was sought.
- A State-level meeting of the National Alliance for Fundamental Right to Education was held on January 29, 2000. TN-FORCES being one of the members of the Core-committee pressed for the inclusion of under-6 in their agenda.
- In collaboration with the Professional Social Workers' Forum of Kanyakumari District, a Seminar on the Rights of the Child was organized

Training & Capacitation

While Workshops and Seminars were designed to highlight the contextual issues, they served also to set the participants thinking critically and to help formulate appropriate

collective responses to the issues. To that extent, the Workshops organized by TN-FORCES contained a training component as well. Besides, there were also programmes of training and Capacitation organized to meet the felt needs of certain categories of workers in the field.

Organizational structure

A Core Committee, the Convener and the Secretariat were indicated as the major components in the administrative structure responsible for the effective functioning of TN-FORCES. Besides assisting the Convener in the general office upkeep, correspondence and documentation, Project Coordinator and Associate visit the field and participate in the Sub-group meetings and District level meetings and help organize the programmes of TN-FORCES. The office timings are from 9.30 to 5 p.m. six days a week. The functions of the Secretariat are carried out in accordance with the Charter of TN-FORCES. Although the financial control over the Convener and the Secretariat was exercised by the College, the College administration never interfered with the day-to-day operations of the FORCES. The Secretariat enjoyed full autonomy within the institutional setting of the College

Implementation challenges

The path of networking, however, was not smooth and easy to tread. It involved hard work in "organizing the organizations". Some of the members in the Forum found advocacy with the Government to be risky and so hesitated to align with TN-FORCES. To address this issue, a programme to sensitize the members in building up of alliances and strategizing advocacy measures was organized.

Sustainability of TN-FORCES

A corpus fund of Rs.1crore and 77 lakhs is created which will facilitate and sustain the child care services and strengthen existing ICDS

Achievements of TN-FORCES

Capacity Building: Advocacy campaign besides institutional and professional growth of the Convener Organization and also other Sub-group members has enhanced the advocacy skill and also lessons have been learned.

Network: TN-Forces has grown into a small on-a-voluntary basis, but committed effective group dedicated to early childhood care and development. It is also a platform for sharing of experiences and learning by interaction.

Tamil Nadu State Programme Enhancement of Grant: Tamil Nadu Social Welfare Board runs 212 Crèches through selected voluntary organizations by providing a grant of Rs.25, 410/- per centre per year towards recurring expenditure. Through the advocacy of TN_FORCES, It is proposed to enhance assistance from Rs.25, 410/- to Rs70, 800. For non-recurring expenditure it is enhanced to Rs.10, 000/-.

Enhancement of Grant: The Central Social Welfare Board through selected voluntary organizations runs 12,470 Crèches, for about 3.11 lakh beneficiaries. Ceiling for eligibility has been increased from Rs.1, 800/- to 12,000/- per month for a family. At present revision of financial norm from existing Rs.18, 480/- per crèche per annum to Rs.42, 384/- per crèche per annum is being considered.

Conclusion

Early childhood care and education is all that the name implies and more: It comprises all the essential support a young child needs to survive and thrive in life, as well as the support a family and community need to promote the child's healthy development. This includes intellectual stimulation, providing the opportunities for exploration and active learning, as well as providing the social and emotional care and nurturing a child needs in order to realize his/her human potential. Research is showing that the most crucial years for learning are the pre-school years when the child's brain is growing and developing. Those are the years when nurturing and appropriate stimulation will reap long-term benefits as children develop self-worth, self-confidence, and a host of new skills that will serve them for a lifetime.

The case studies presented in this booklet are successful in many ways because of their flexibility and responsiveness to local needs and contextuality; community involvement and supportive linkages; diversified funding and mobilization of community resources. The most commendable aspect of the balwadi program of DDS was that the community owned it and took responsibility for it. The community is also accountable to successfully running the centres in terms of selecting teachers, monitoring the centres, and contributing for the food component of the program. Similarly, Mobile Crèches is engaged in community outreach activities that support and sustain the field program. For the community, the program seeks to facilitate development of appropriate childcare arrangements through awareness building interactions and training. Mobile Crèches also sensitize communities, governments, civil society groups, to create an environment that will enable and sustain. The nutrition program in Tamil Nadu state, is one of a very few programs around the world which have had a substantial impact on malnutrition on a large scale, and over a sustained period.

The greatest lacuna in ECCE is the absence of appropriately trained teachers in all sectors and at all levels, and to make up this gap may take some time. There is a great need to develop and promote training both in the public sector and through voluntary organizations. There has to be a diversity of training models to suit to the diversity of ECCE models. In this context, CLR's and SRC's capacity building initiatives are noteworthy to mention. CLR do not conduct set training programs. Before taking up any capacity building event, it will assess the needs of its clients. Inputs will be carefully planned after mutual discussion. CLR conducts participatory trainings that address actual problems in the field. Materials designed are based on the needs of varying educational programs. SRC has been working in most parts of the state of Andhra Pradesh for more than twenty years. It provides guidance, training, develops training materials and packages to different organizations working in the field of ECCE. SRC has been doing the onerous task of capacity building for initiating various ECCE programs which is done by giving required training to personnel at different levels on different components. SRC believes that strengthening capacities at different levels – child care worker to the policy maker through convergent efforts by the NGOs, government institutions and also private institutions.

FORCES has been strongly advocating the rights of the young child and working towards putting the issue on the agenda of the family, community, state and the nation. FORCES has taken the task of campaigning and lobbying with decision makers, planners, policymakers, political parties to bring the young child on the centre of the agenda. It does networking and campaigning through its nine regional networks. FORCES would first identify the issues and then arguments will be developed in defense of the issues substantiated by facts and logic. These included public hearings, training, workshops and campaigns. In all the programmes especially in the workshops and campaigns the advocacy role of the Forum was of prime importance.

A major concern which has emerged in recent years is child care for the group under 3 years of age. Developmentally, 0 to 3 years has been identified as a crucial and vulnerable stage. Somehow, it has remained the most neglected age group. Very few provisions have been made in programs to meet its needs related to health, nutrition and stimulation. Further, to provide child care as a support service for working women are inadequate and do not cover even the tip of iceberg. Non-availability of child care services has implications for education of girls. In order to achieve the objectives of universalisation, expansion of child care centres should take place both in the government and voluntary sectors. Multi-pronged, concerted and coordinated efforts at all levels of program implementation, beginning with policy making, are required to get out of the present state of chaos.

ECCE must be made to work on the basic principle of people's participation in their own development. It has to be adequately backed by revamping training programs and imparting relevant skills to functionaries at all levels to strengthen ECCE at the grassroots. The goal should be to reach all children in disadvantaged groups and to enable every child, especially the girl child, realise its full potential.

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