

# **Recommendation for a Specific Five Year Strategy Plan (2011-16) for Ministry of WCD for Children (birth-6 years)**

**by Mobile Creches, New Delhi**

Mobile Creches has worked on issues of Young Children both on construction sites and urban slums since 1969. The work has included:

- Setting up Creches on construction sites, community-based balwadis and daycare
- Home-based interventions in childcare practices and behaviour change
- Capacity building of community women on issues of childcare
- Training in ECCD for NGOs/GOs/AWW across the Hindi belt
- Advocacy at grassroots, state and national level on ECCD issues

**Childcare, healthcare, nutrition and development are basic rights of all Indian children.<sup>1</sup> The overarching recommendation for the under sixes in the Strategy Plan is quality care and development for all children under six with special focus on the under threes. The Five Year Strategy Plan by the MWCD should focus on enhanced services for under sixes. In terms of action it will involve:**

**I. Universalisation of ICDS as per the Supreme Court Order, December, 2006.** Out of 14L AWC, till March 2009-10, 10.9L AWCs were operational.

**II. Universal Creches/Daycare-** Out of 5 crore children in need for daycare, Rajiv Gandhi Crèche Scheme only covers around 9 lakh children

**III. Universal Maternity Entitlement – Around 5 crore women in the unorganized sector in reproductive age group are almost without any access to maternity entitlements.**

**IV. Universal Preschool Opportunity through ICDS, Creches/daycare and other sources-** 2 crore children are out of any pre-school opportunity.

**Norms for quality for programmes like ICDS, Creches/Daycare/Preschool to be put in position on:**

- Space
- Infrastructure
- Child-worker ratio
- Nutrition
- Workers' remuneration
- Training

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<sup>1</sup> Summary of key Recommendations – Strategies for Children Under Six by Working Group for Under Six

## I. Universalisation of Maternity Entitlement

**Rationale:** Maternity entitlements are deeply linked to the health of women and children and have been recognised as part of labour rights for working women the world over. It is also deeply linked to the issue of survival and health for both the mother and the child and therefore to child rights, particularly right to breastfeeding. However, the allocations of funds and the issue of how to deliver maternity entitlements to the poorest women especially in the informal sector has remained a challenge.

### Recommendations <sup>1</sup>

- Schemes of maternity entitlement should be based on clear understanding of the full conceptual framework of this right, and provide wage compensation for a period pre-delivery and six months post-delivery, in order to meet all objectives and offer equity with the organized sector.
- Schemes should be of universal application, with no conditionality.
- Implementation must focus on the timely release of money so that it can be used for the intended purpose.
- Capacity building of functionaries at all levels and communication regarding this scheme needs to be strengthened.
- ICDS is well placed to collaborate in delivering such schemes and an arrangement needs to be worked out between the two departments.
- More attention needs to be paid to delivery of entitlements to the urban poor and the migrants.
- There should be no confusion of objectives with other schemes or overlap with other strategies for other purposes, such as family planning or incentives for delivery in hospitals.
- Further research on a large scale is needed, using quantitative indicators like maternal weight gain, anaemia and mortality, LBW, neonatal and infant mortality, breast feeding indicators and delay in return to work, to validate the findings of this exploratory study

## II. Universalisation of ICDS

The focus of universalizing ICDS will involve intervention through food, nutrition, health and pre-school for all children under six. In addition to coverage as mentioned in the Supreme Court judgment, ICDS needs attention to quality issue, design gaps and gaps in human resources.

Recommendations for ICDS are as follows:<sup>2</sup>

**Rights approach:** This framework recognizes that childcare, healthcare, nutrition and development are basic rights of all Indian Children.

**Universalisation with quality:** This would include raising the number for AWC to reach each child under six years of age, all eligible women (with priority to disadvantaged groups) and improving the quality of services (designing of quality norms suggested on space, infrastructure, child worker ratio, training).

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<sup>1</sup> Towards Universalisation of Maternity Entitlements: An Exploratory Case Study of the Dr. Muthulakshmi Maternity Assistance Scheme, Tamil Nadu by Primary Health Resource Centre

<sup>2</sup> Strategies for Children Under Six – Working Group for Under Six

**Two-worker model:** Adequate care of children under three combined with effective pre-school education for children aged 3-6 years cannot be achieved without the involvement of two Anganwadi Workers along with the helper. The issue of workers' remuneration needs to be addressed on an urgent basis.

**Training :** The regularity and quality of AWW/AWH training programmes should include. Training programmes should include training for care of new-born babies and children under three, nutrition counseling, and pre-school education. Improved training is also required for supervisors, CDPOs and related staff. Joint trainings with ASHAs, ANMs, and medical officers should be conducted to facilitate smooth coordination of ICDS with health services as well as supportive supervision.

**Infrastructure:** Each AWC should have own/independent pucca building. Construction grants should be made available for this purpose and also for the maintenance of the buildings.

**Nutrition Programme:** For children in the age group of 3-6 years, the supplementary nutrition programme should be based on hot cooked meals and take home rations for the 0-3s.

**Focus on Children under Three:** ICDS should give much greater priority to children under three. This would include providing adequate incentives to ASHAs for the relevant services (including home-based neonatal care, breastfeeding and nutrition support), provision of take-home rations, better training on issues related to children under three, and the adoption of the 'two worker' model.

**Pre-school education:** For children aged 3-6 years, pre-school education should be the primary focus of ICDS activities. Aside from adoption of the two worker model, this requires appropriate training, infrastructure, equipment, supervision and support.

### III. Universalisation of Creches/ Daycare

Creches/Daycare is a proactive and preventive strategy for the working woman, young child and the girl child. Despite commitment to Conventions like CEDAW and CRC and the Constitutional mandate, social policies have remained fragmented, focusing on health interventions for "mother and child" without factoring in "care" and the critical role it plays in the economic independence and productivity of women and also for the very survival, growth and development of children. With 91% of women in the employed in the unorganized sector left without almost any entitlement of childcare, there is a need to universalize crèches/daycare. The universalized approach is also required to endorse the country's ratification of INCRC, CEDAW and ILO Articles.

While providing crucial services, thereby allowing mothers to go for work, crèches are also an intervention in<sup>1</sup>:

- Empowering women to become economically productive
- Protecting women from discrimination faced during early childcare and breastfeeding
- Reduction of IMR, CMR
- Prevention of malnutrition by facilitating continuing breastfeeding and complementary feeding
- Promotion of growth, all round development and emotional security of children under six

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<sup>1</sup> Strategies for Children Under Six by Wrking Group for Under Sixes

- Facilitation of girl child's school entry and retention by freeing her from daycare responsibilities
- Protection of children from sexual abuse and neglect

Currently crèches are provided under the Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for Crèches and under Labour Laws. The gap in the provision of crèche services is huge and provision of support to women for children need a fresh conceptualization and approach. The State needs to adopt multiple strategies towards achieving universalisation of crèches/daycare services in order to provide care to the under sixes and also intervene to resolve the neglect of the under threes.

**Extent of need for daycare** - 11.7 crore women workers in the unorganized sector. 50% are in the reproductive age group. i.e. around 5 crore women<sup>1</sup>

Estimated 5 crore children under six require daycare<sup>2</sup>.

#### **Current Provisions:**

- Rajiv Gandhi Creche Scheme Coverage - 31,718 creches covering 7.92 lakhs
- ICDS – No day care programme
- Creches under Labour Laws: Negligible
- Limited number of crèches run by local bodies.

#### **Recommendation**

Establish a National Daycare Fund to provide resources for a range of models of daycare to match diverse situations in which women work. Implementation of daycare needs to be carried out through ICDS and the range of models discussed below, partners.

#### **Pilot Models for Daycare:**

To address the issue of universal daycare, it is recommended that the following models for provision of care need to be introduced on a *pilot basis* to enable clarity on feasibility etc. so that more accurate planning can take place and resources can be allocated in the 12<sup>th</sup> Plan. The pilot models should be implemented to develop the approach and methodology to achieve universalisation of crèche/day care.

The models are:

##### **1. Crèches as part of Government Schemes:**

**1a. AWC-cum-Crèche** as a special model to be called *ICDS Daycare Model* should be as a full *time* functioning centre which requires differences in staffing, training, nutrition, equipment, etc. from the regular AWC.

The ICDS daycare model should be piloted in 10 districts

**1b. ICDS Extension Model for temporary situations** – NREGS, Migrants etc

Rationale - Daycare should not be considered as an add on to the existing AWC, this will lead to confusions and conflicts within the system.

##### **2. Community based models for neighbourhood daycare in urban settlements managed by SHGs, CBOs, Unions**

<sup>1</sup> Report of the National Commission for the Unorganised Sector

<sup>2</sup> Guesstimates from the number of women requiring daycare arrangements in unorganized sector

The **State** needs to take responsibility for:

- a. Per child funding,
- b. Allocation for space through state governments as per attached norms/provision of rent adequate meet the norms
- c. Training
- d. Basic services of water and sanitation and health.

Role of **CBO /SHG/ Unions** will be management, monitoring, community participation raising additional resources through fees, events etc.

Suggest that 10 such neighbourhood crèches be piloted in each mega city and partnership between Dept and CBOs & SHGs be set up in formal MOU with clearly demarcated responsibilities.

### 3. Creches with Partnership between State and NGOs

**This model can be a solution in diverse situation where the responsibility is divided between the State and the NGOs. The roles and responsibilities of the two partners are as follows:**

- **State:**
  - Space
  - Training
  - Water, Sanitation and functioning PHCs
  - Contribution per Child to cover the care (health, nutrition, care, equipments, administration etc amounting to 90% of the total amount)
- **NGO:** Management
  - Supervision
  - Training on the job
  - Financial contribution to service (10% of the total amount perchild)

### 4. Employer Partnership Tripartite Model for Construction Workers/ Brick Kilns sites etc

A breakthrough is required for children of migrant labour in diverse situations through setting up a tripartite arrangement involving contractor, NGO and Welfare Boards set up for unorganized labour. The roles and responsibilities of the three partners are as follows:

- **Employer:** Space
  - Water and Sanitation
  - Contribution per child
  - Supervision
  - Management and Running
- **Civil Society Partner:** Training and Monitoring
- **Welfare Boards:** Resources from Cess Funds
- **State:** To activate the partnerships between Welfare Boards, Employers and monitor quality.

### **Contributions by Mobile Creches**

Mobile Creches is willing to work on any committees:

- Set up to detail the above pilots
- Participating in the evaluation/assessment of the pilots

## **IV. Pre School Opportunities**

Centre based learning opportunities and preschool education, well understood for its importance in child development and its linkage with later confidence and school performance, has been a neglected area and lacks comprehensive plan. Commitment to equity and equal start in life demand that this issue be addressed in the XIIth Plan.

**The current provision of Pre School opportunities and gaps are as below:**

### **Coverage:**

- ICDS – 3.35 crores (AR 2009-10, MWCD)
- RGCS – 7.92 lakhs
- State and Local and Governments 0.02 m(HRD Ministry, 2003)
- NGOs - 3-20m
- Private Initiatives - 10m

**Gaps - 2 crore children are left out of any pre-school services** (there is lack of data on utilization of private pre-school services).

Estimation of need in 2011 for Pre-school age group by 10th Plan Working Group – 70m children <sup>1</sup>

### **Problems :**

Due to lack of regulatory framework-consequently of data, the quantum of need is not clear

### **Empowered Task Force for Pre-School Education**

In view of the above, a time bound empowered Task Force is required to address policy confusions, assess manpower requirements and the resources required to close coverage gaps.

**Mobile Creches** will be happy to work on committees set up to develop the above.

### **Specific Recommendations for Strategic intervention on ECCE:**

- i. Formulation of Policy direction for ECCE: In view of confusions and differences in ECCE Policy at National and State Level on age of school admission, number of years of preschooling, division of responsibility of pre schools under different authorities(Directorate of Education, Local Bodies), and Department of Women and Child Development(ICDS), it is recommended that policy guidelines formulated for the preschool group to create equitable opportunities across the country.
- ii. Pre schooling comes under different authorities While the first two function autonomously and observe some norms and standards. ICDS pre school component

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<sup>1</sup> Working Group on Development of Children for XIth Plan (2007-2012)

and the private sector are not guided by any quality parameters thus raising quality and equity concerns for the pre-school child.

- iii Fill data gaps – to quantify the need  
Planning for filling up coverage gaps  
Reviewing quality of pre-school provision in ICDS:
  - budget
  - human resource issues (remuneration, training etc)
  - space/infrastructure
  - monitoring and supervision
- iv) Formulate regulatory framework and norms for the Private Sector -The private sector is replete with undesirable and damaging educational practices. Preschool education is transacted largely as a downward extension of primary education curriculum with teachers, often with no ECCE training, giving little thought to ECCE as a specific sub-stage of education with its unique pedagogical methods and curriculum. Developmentally inappropriate curriculum is implemented in a rigid, regimented and mechanical manner (Kaul, 1998; MSSRF, 2000). While there are excellent models of NGO programmes in ECCE, these have limited geographical coverage with no support/provision for scaling.

**In order to achieve all the above recommendations for the under sixes in a sustainable manner in the XIIth Plan the Ministry need to initiate the following as immediate preparatory steps.**

- I. **Initiating the process for a Child Rights Act** – At the outset it needs to be stated that, in the absence of a clearly articulated Right and a legal framework to deliver it, programmes, budgets, governance structures and strategies have remained limited and only partially successful in arresting the high mortality and malnutrition rates of children, as well as retention of children in primary school. The young child continues to remain largely the responsibility of the family. In a country of widespread poverty (taking the revised levels as articulated by Tendulkar, Sengupta and Saxena Committees), and inadequate coverage of schemes, poor quality and basic services, this is a responsibility that parents are in no position to fulfill. The process for articulating a legal framework for Rights of the Young Child and the required legislative process needed to ensure it needs to be initiated by government with seriousness to enable the nation to come closer to fulfilling its commitment to the survival, growth, development and protection of young children.
- II. **Status Report** – A fresh approach and focused strategies for the under threes are needed based on hard facts and fresh insights into the ground situation. Towards this end, it recommended that a Status Report on Women, Work and Early Childhood Care and Development be undertaken as soon as possible, prior to the formulation of the 12<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan, to determine the extent of neglect of young children in the country and its implications for survival, growth development. The Status Report will help to identify problems faced by women in providing care of adequate quality, within the circumstances of their paid or unpaid work, and also reveal the extent to which changing family structures can be depended on to provide support. Mapping the above needs to be done as a first priority amongst marginalized groups and poverty districts, covering diverse regions and work situations of women.  
The above will enable verification of the current assumptions regarding the extent of need for crèches and reasons for poor utilization of Schemes and assist in sharpening/reframing strategies for maternal health, child survival and development, contributing to better planning and use of national resources.

- III. **Task Force for Planning and Budgeting of Human Resources for ECCD** - There is need for an urgent assessment of human resources available for ECCD – level of training, quality of training, status of workers and remuneration issues.

**The issues are as follows:**

- The educational philosophy which has been advocating on extending the methodology of play and experiential learning appropriate for 3-6 to the transitional phase of child development (6-8 years) of children in Classes 1 and 2, has been completely abandoned by this restructuring of courses. This curtails the scope of ECCE to 6 years of age instead of 8 years which is favoured by ECCE professionals.
- The NCTE responsible for laying down the norms for teachers training has recently restructured courses and created a diploma and a certificate course. Concern regarding the restructuring is that it has created a hierarchy – diploma holders can teach upto Class II and are eligible for higher pays and the certificate holders can teach only upto pre school and are entitled to lower remuneration.
- The training programme for ICDS is of 39 days duration and the eligibility is 8<sup>th</sup> class/ 10<sup>th</sup> class pass which is lower than for the NCTE approved certificate courses. The preschool component is covered in 2 days. While the training has some refreshers but there is no regular plan for refreshers and continuous upgrading of information and skills. The limited training component results in gaps in conceptual clarity on ECCD and skill development of Anganwadi workers for working with this age group. This is a very serious issue as ICDS is the largest national programme for the young child and reaches the weaker sections of society that cannot afford the private school system

These are all interlinked issues and critical to the delivery of quality ECCD services for the entire spectrum of children in need. Findings of the Task Force and recommendations need to feed into budgets of the XIIth Plan. It is recommended that this stream of professional workers be given its rightful place and all childcare and anganwadi workers be regarded and treated in the same manner as teachers. **Mobile Creches will be happy to contribute to the investigation of the Task Force and formulation of approach to training of crèche workers and balwadi teachers.**

- IV. **Empowered Convergence Structure across Sectors for Delivery of ECCD Services** - Convergence across Ministries has been identified as a *major stumbling block* and needs to be addressed through an analysis of management structures currently in position and a strategic shift made in favour of *an empowered structure at the highest level* for delivery of services for young children. Similar structures are required at the state level. The Ministries requiring convergence structure are: WCD, Labour, Food and Agriculture, Health, Education, Urban Development, Rural Development, Finance
- V. **A new framework for partnerships with civil society for delivery of services** needs to be developed with the State Ministry for inputs on adequate space/rent, per child norm funding, training and monitoring. Current schematic patterns do not respond to need and fail on many points. Norms and terms of partnerships need to be clearly drawn up.