

Development of women and children

Empowerment of Women

10.68 As per the Census 2001, women account for 495.7 million representing 48.3 per cent of the country's total population. Initiatives in the areas of training and capacity building, employment and income generation, welfare and support services and awareness gender sensitization are being undertaken by the Department of Women and Child Development with the ultimate objective of empowering women both economically and socially and making them equal partners in development.

10.69 The year 2001 was declared as the Women's Empowerment Year by the Government. A Task Force on Women and Children was set up under the Chairmanship of the Deputy Chairman, Planning Commission in August 2000 to review laws and programmes for women. The National Policy for the Empowerment of Women has been approved by the Cabinet on March 20, 2001. The Policy prescribes strategies and action points to bridge the gap between the equal de-jure status and unequal de-facto position of women in the country. It also seeks to guide action at every level and in every sector by mainstreaming gender perspectives into all laws, policies, programmes, regulations and budgeting allocations of the Government. A major strategy adopted during the Ninth Plan (1997-2002) has been to introduce a Women's Component Plan (WCP) under which not less than 30 per cent of the funds/benefits should be specifically earmarked for women's programmes in all the women related sectors.

10.70 The Department of Women and Child Development, in collaboration with UNIFEM, had commissioned the National Institute of Public Finance and Policy to analyse the Budget for the year 2001-02 from the Gender perspective. The study identified 3 categories of public expenditure on women, viz., i) expenditure specifically targeted to women, ii) public expenditure which has earmarked pro-women allocations, and iii) mainstream public expenditure that has gender impact. The study brought out that the first category accounted for

an amount of Rs.3,260 crore out of the total budgetary outlay of Rs.3,75,223 crore. The second category accounted for Rs.10,596 crore. Due to paucity of gender disaggregated data of most mainstream programmes and services, the study made only an illustrative analysis of the third category of expenditure on elementary education as an example. The study found that girls received 40 per cent of the public expenditure on elementary education. Gender analysis of public expenditure is being taken up through collection of gender disaggregated data from different Ministries and various States/UTs.

10.71 There are a number of programmes underway which supplement general development efforts, for improving the status of women. The Indira Mahila Yojana (IMY) launched in 1995-96 has been recast after merging Mahila Samridhi Yojana and retitled as 'Swayamsiddha' in 2001 to empower women through awareness generation, achievement of economic strength through micro-level income-generating activities and establish convergence of various services such as literacy, health, rural development etc. IWEP also aims at organizing women into Self-Help Groups to form a strong institutional base. The Scheme is being implemented in 238 Community Development Blocks and more than 42,000 Women Self-Help Groups were formed by the end of 2000. The Rural Women's Development and Empowerment Project (RWDEP) now called the Swa-Shakti Project, was sanctioned 1998 as a Centrally Sponsored Project for a period of 5 years with an estimated outlay of Rs. 186 crore.

10.72 For encouraging employment and income-generation the Programme for Support of Training and Employment (STEP) provides a comprehensive package of up-gradation of skills through training, extension of inputs and market linkages in the traditional sectors of agriculture, dairying, handicrafts etc. Since 1987, about 4,91,795 women have been covered under 96 projects launched in various States. A Women's Economic Programme (WEP) was launched in 1982-83 with assistance from the Norwegian Agencies for Development Corporation (NORAD) for extending financial assistance to

Women's Development Corporations, autonomous bodies, Public Sector Corporations etc. to train poor women, mostly in non-traditional trades and to ensure their employment in these areas. Since 1982-83, 1850 projects benefiting 2,50,000 women have been implemented. Under the Socio-Economic Programme (SEP) work and wages are provided to needy women such as destitutes, widows etc. The Condensed Courses of Education and Vocational Training (CC&VT) provide new vistas of employment through continuing education and vocational training for school drop-outs.

10.73 The Rashtriya Mahila Kosh (RMK) is a national level mechanism to meet the micro credit needs of the poor and asset-less women in the Informal Sector. From inception in 1993 till February 2001, total credit worth Rs. 100 crore was sanctioned to benefit more than 400,000 women through 827 NGOs spread over the country. RMK has a very creditable recovery rate of 90 to 95 per cent. It has also ventured to develop an institutional base at grass-roots level with the establishment of Self Help Group for expanding its credit services.

10.74 Other Welfare and Support Services for working women are being extended through Hostels for Working Women (HWW) which aims to promote greater mobility for women in the employment market through cheap and safe accommodation for working women in low income groups. Since inception in 1973 upto February 2002, 873 hostels have been sanctioned to provide accommodation to 60,865 working women. Alongwith this, the Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS), through its nationwide networking of 6,00,000 anganwadi centres and crèches/day-care centres for working/ailing mothers are also being taken up. Short Stay Homes (SSH) for women and girls are under implementation since 1969 to protect and rehabilitate women and girls in social and moral danger due to exploitation. At present there are total number of 339 SSHs benefiting about 10,170 women/girls. Looking to the plight of the widows in Vrindavan, a Committee under the Chairmanship of the Minister of State for

Women and Child Development has been set up to coordinate the efforts of the States Governments of Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal and the Central Government organisations for rehabilitation of these marginalised women and to monitor the flow of benefits to the target group. The strategy focuses on provision of shelter, health check-up facilities and rehabilitation with the coordinated efforts of the Centre, States, voluntary organizations and trustees of various Bhajanashrams of Vrindavan under the Swadhar Scheme.

Development of Children

10.75 Children in the age group of 0-14 years account for 347.54 million (33.84 per cent) of the total population in the country. Of these 169.03 million (48.64 per cent) are females. For the holistic development of the child, the Department of Women and Child Development has been implementing the Integrated Child Development Services Scheme (ICDS) which aims at strengthening the on-going approach of converging the basic services of health, nutrition and pre-school education. This scheme caters to pre-school children below 6 years of age and expectant and nursing mothers by providing a package of services viz immunization, health check-ups, referral services, supplementary nutrition, health and nutrition education etc. Under universalisation of ICDS, World Bank assistance is being received for expansion of the ICDS Programme since 1990-91. The WB-ICDS Project I (1991-97) covered 301 ICDS projects in the States of Andhra Pradesh (110) and Orissa (191) while WB-ICDS Project II (1997-2000) covered 454 projects in the States of Bihar (210) and Madhya Pradesh (244). This Project has been extended upto 2002. The WB-ICDS Project III (1998-2004) started in 1998-99 aims at covering 461 project in the States of Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. The World Bank assisted ICDS Programme in Andhra Pradesh is being implemented in 257 blocks as part of the total programme of Andhra Pradesh Economic Reconstruction Programme (APERP). The Scheme was operational in 4384 blocks in 2000. By the end of 2001-02, 5171 blocks/urban areas

are proposed to be covered which implies a 90 per cent coverage of blocks by the end of the Ninth Plan. Along with the expansion of this Scheme the allocation of Central Government for the Scheme have also increased. During the Ninth Plan period a sum of Rs. 4,960 crore for ICDS Scheme has been allocated against which Rs. 2,159 crore was spent during the first three years. Against an allocation of Rs. 935 crores for 2000-01 Rs. 1,005 crore has been released upto February 2001 to States/UTs. For the year 2001-02 Rs. 1,050 crore has been earmarked.

10.76 A special intervention for improving the well-being of adolescent girls using the ICDS infrastructure, is the Kishori Shakti Yojana (KSY). The Scheme aims at breaking the inter-generational cycle of nutritional and gender disadvantage and providing supportive environment for self-development of the girl child in the age group of 11-18 years.

10.77 Under the Scheme UDISHA, the ongoing ICDS Training Programme is being strengthened into a dynamic training-cum-human resource development programme. World Bank assistance to the extent of Rs. 600 crore has been committed. The National Institute of Public Cooperation and Child Development, New Delhi is to implement this scheme through its wide network. Another national level programme

launched in 1997 to improve the status of the girl child belonging to the Below Poverty Line (BPL) groups is the Balika Samridhi Yojana (BSY). This Scheme has been reformulated in 1999 to extend (i) a post delivery grant of Rs. 500 (ii) annual scholarship ranging from Rs. 300 to Rs. 1000 between classes I to X. These amounts can be deposited in the Post Office or Bank in an interest bearing account in the name of girl child and paid to the girl child in lumpsum on attaining the age of 18 years.

10.78 The National Policy on Children was adopted in 1974 to provide adequate services to children both before and after birth to ensure their full physical, mental and social development. Two National Plans of Action for children were adopted in 1992, one for children and the other specifically for the girl child. A National Charter for Children and a National Commission for Children are other major initiatives which are in the process of being finalised. Though the implementation of various policies have brought about a positive change in crucial indicators like infant and child mortality rates, school enrolment ratios, levels of malnutrition, yet there are wide inter-state variation and much progress still to be made to bring about an appreciable change in the overall status of children in the country.