

Development of Women and Children

Empowerment of Women

10.61 As per the 2001 census, women constituted about 48 per cent of the total population of the country. Women suffer many disadvantages as compared to men in the areas of education, labour participation rate and earnings. The Government has been implementing various schemes for the socio economic advancement and development of women in the country. The 'National Policy for Empowerment of Women' was adopted in 2001 with the objective of ensuring women their rightful place in society by empowering them as agents of socio-economic change and development. 'Empowerment of Women', is therefore, an important approach adopted in the Tenth Five Year Plan (2002-07) for development of women. With a view to translating the National Policy for Empowerment of Women into action, a National Plan of Action for Empowerment of Women has been contemplated. To eliminate all types of discrimination against women and the girl child and their empowerment, major strategies include social empowerment, economic empowerment and gender justice. Two important schemes in the areas of education viz 'Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan' and 'Mahila Samakhya' are being implemented by Department of Elementary Education and Literacy as special efforts to stretch the reach of education especially to the girl child. With the objective of achieving economic empowerment and welfare of women, a number of schemes are being implemented. These include Swyamsidha, Swashakti, Rashtriya Mahila Kosh, Swalamban, and Support to Training-cum-Employment Programme (STEP), Swadhar, and Hostel for working women. The details of these programmes were reported in the Economic Survey for last year.

Development of Children

10.62 The Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) Scheme launched in 1975 – 76 is a nationwide unique Early Childhood Care Programme which covers the main

components of a holistic and sustainable child development strategy viz., health, nutrition and education. The scheme provides a package of services comprising (i) supplementary nutrition, (ii) immunization, (iii) health check-up, (iv) referral services, (v) pre-school non-formal education and (vi) nutrition & health education. It is a centrally sponsored scheme, wherein the Central Government is responsible for programme planning and operating costs, and the State Governments are responsible for programme implementation and for providing supplementary nutrition out of States' resources. The Scheme has been continued in the Tenth Plan in 5652 projects with no expansion activities in view of resource constraints. As on 31.8.2004, 5274 Projects have become operational providing services to about 456 lakh beneficiaries, comprising of about 380 lakh children (0–6 years) and about 76 lakh pregnant and lactating mothers through a network of 6.74 lakh Anganwadi Centres.

10.63 The NCMP of the Government envisages universalisation of the ICDS Scheme to provide a functional Anganwadi in every settlement and ensure full coverage for all children. Nutrition programmes, particularly for the girl child, will be expanded on a significant scale.

10.64 The scheme for Creches / Day Care Centres for the Children of Working and Ailing Mothers is being modified so as to merge the National Crèche Fund with the Scheme for Assistance to Voluntary Organisations for running crèches. The revised scheme envisages increase in financial norms from Rs. 18,480 per crèche per annum to Rs. 45,780 per crèche per annum, increase in honorarium for crèche workers and enhancement in the provision for supplementary nutrition. The revised scheme provides coverage to more number of children by increasing ceiling for eligibility from Rs. 1800 per month to Rs. 12000 per month per family. By the end of Tenth Five Year Plan, it has been proposed to increase the number of crèches from the present 15,000 creches

(app.) to 30,000 creches by increasing 5,000 creches in a year. A National Charter for Children has been notified in the Gazette of India on 9th February 2004. The document emphasizes Government of India's commitment to children's rights and development. A National Commission for Children is in the process of being established. The initial proposal to set up the Commission has been revised in order to give more powers

to the Commission for effective implementation of existing laws and schemes for children. A draft National Plan of Action for children has been prepared taking into consideration the goals for children set in the UN General Assembly Special Session on Children held in May, 2002 and the monitorable targets set in the Tenth Five Year Plan, and goals for children in related Ministries/ Departments.