

## **Development of Women and Children**

10.34 Gender inequality is now receiving greater attention. Women and children represent 67.7 per cent of country's total population. The government is keen to ensure that women are empowered both economically and socially and thus become equal partners in national development along with men. For the holistic development of the child, various programmes/schemes have been undertaken which inter-alia include the most unique outreach programme of the Integrated Child Development Services Programme (ICDS) besides schemes for improving health and nutrition levels of the child, pre-school education and crèches/day care centers for children below five years belonging to weaker sections of society.

10.35 The major policy initiatives undertaken by the government in the recent past for welfare of women include, inter-alia, restructuring of Indira Mahila Yojana (IMY), Balika Samridhi Yojana (BSY), Rural Women's Development and Empowerment Project (RWDEP), setting up of the National Commission for Women (NCW), National Commission for Children (NCC), National Creche Fund (NCF), adoption of National Nutrition Policy (NNP) and Rashtriya Mahila Kosh (RMK).

10.36 Indira Mahila Yojana (IMY) which aims at empowerment of women was launched during 1995-96 in 200 blocks. Based on the findings of the Joint Study Team of the Planning Commission, the recast IMY with the awareness generation and training component has recently been approved to overcome the existing weaknesses, as a mid-term correction. The Mahila Samridhi Yojana (MSY) has been merged with IMY.

10.37 Balika Samridhi Yojana (BSY) launched in 1997 with the specific aim to change the community's attitude towards the girl child has been further recast in June 1999. Earlier, the mother of a girl child born on or after August 15, 1997, in a family below the poverty line in rural and urban areas was given a grant of Rs.500/-. In the recast scheme, the post-delivery grant of Rs.500/- per child is deposited

in an interest-bearing account in the name of the new born girl child. In addition, the benefit of scholarships approved will also be deposited in the same account.

10.38 Rural women's Development and Empowerment Project (RWDEP) sanctioned in October, 1998 as a centrally sponsored project is aimed to create an environment for empowerment of women in the six States viz. Bihar, Haryana, Karnataka, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh at an estimated cost of Rs.186.21 crore. In addition, an amount of Rs.5 crore will be provided over the project period but outside the project outlay for facilitating in setting up of Revolving Fund for giving interest bearing loans to beneficiary groups.

10.39 National Commission for Women (NCW) is mandated to safeguard the rights and interests of women by reviewing of laws, intervention in specific individual complaints of atrocities and social harassment of women at work place, and suggest remedial action.

10.40 Integrated Child Development Services Scheme (ICDS) aims to provide integrated package of health, nutrition and educational services to children up to six years of age, pregnant women and nursing mothers. At present it covers 4200 blocks and major urban slums benefiting 5.1 million expectant and nursing mothers and 25.8 million children under six years of age. The World Bank provides credit for ICDS projects for the additional components like construction of Anganwadi buildings and CDPO's office-cum- godowns. A number of new initiatives have also been taken during the recent years to strengthen the impact of ICDS. These include services for the adolescent girls in the age group of 11-18 years, effective involvement of the NGOs and strengthening of monitoring.

10.41 A Central provision of Rs.1320 crore has been made in 1999-2000 (BE) as compared to Rs.1134 crore in 1998-99 (RE) for implementation of various welfare schemes for women and children.