

Care within ECD: Reflections from FORCES Network

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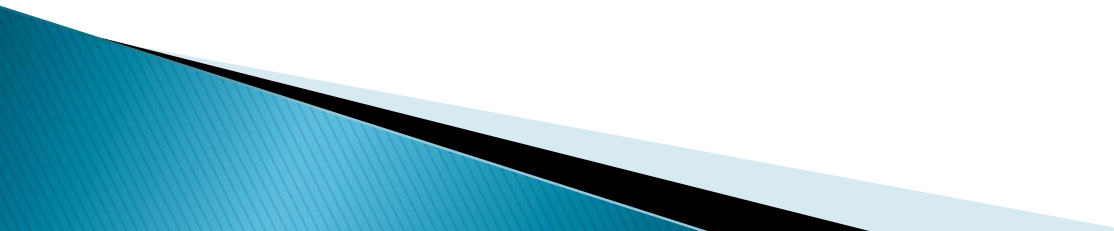
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CWDS- FORCES Network

ARNEC Conference


March 1-3, 2017, Siem Reap, Cambodia

About CWDS– FORCES Network

- ▶ Voluntary National network for children under six
 - ▶ 25 years old with 10 State chapters
 - ▶ Secretariat – CWDS, New Delhi–India
 - ▶ Advocating issues of Care/ creches/ ECCD / ICDS programme etc.
 - ▶ Policy/ Programme impacting Young child
 - ▶ Action research/evidence based advocacy
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Policy debates in context of Childcare

- ▶ 1971 – Setting up of a Committee to study the Status of Women in India.
- ▶ 1974 – Report “Towards Equality” highlighted the need for crèches and child care.
- ▶ 1974 – National Policy for Children
- ▶ 1988 – *Shramshakti* – Report of the National Commission for Self-Employed Women and Women in the Informal Sector – *highlighted the issue of women workers in the informal economy to the forefront, along with their need for crèches and child care.*

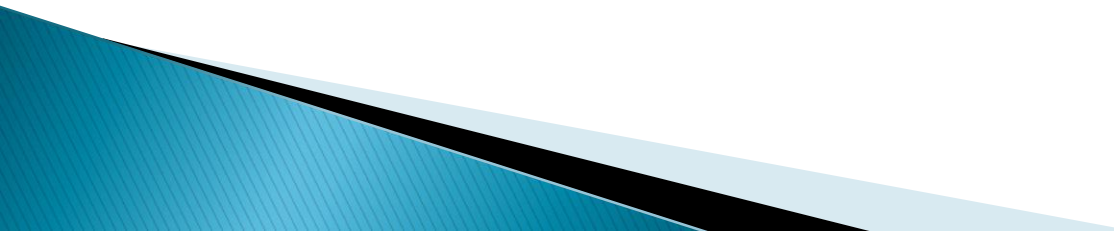
- ▶ **The need for childcare services has also been emphasized in other government documents viz the National Policy for Children, 1974, and National Policy for Empowerment of Women, 2001 and the National Plan of Action for Children, 2005.**
 - ▶ **2005- introduced Crèche in the then National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) known today as Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MNREGA).**
 - ▶ **2015- Law Commission's Report - state provisioning and responsibility for ECCD including maternity benefits for all women, including those working in the informal economy.**
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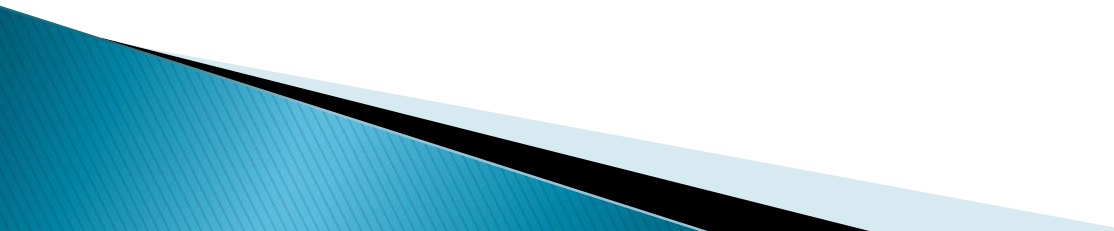
FORCES child care studies

- ▶ Study of “*Care component under NREGA*”
- ▶ *Need Assessment of Creches and Childcare Services*
- ▶ *Role of Panchayati Raj Institutions in Implementing ICDS in Mission Mode*
- ▶ *Objective:*
 - a) Situational analysis
 - b) to conduct advocacy based on the findings and observations.
- ▶ **Methodology: both quantitative and qualitative along with Focused Group Discussions (FGDs).**

A brief on studies

- ▶ **The NREGA study indicated that both awareness and availability of provisions are crucial indicators that impact women's decisions to bring children to the worksite, and vice versa. This is the primary dilemma thrown into sharp relief by this study - if more women bring their children to the worksite; the availability of crèche facilities is bound to increase.**
- ▶ **On the other hand, only if more crèches become available at the work site will women bring their children to work with them. The provision of childcare can work as a primary motivation for greater female participation in this employment guarantee scheme.**
- ▶ **Unavailability of child care facilities at work sites acts as a *pullback for women* who would like to work but do not have a place where they might leave their children.**

- ▶ **Study on “*Need Assessment of Creches and Child Care Services*” across six states and covering 3000 households highlighted the precarious situation of women across varied occupations with young children, and the urgent need for full time crèches and child care facilities.**
 - ▶ **87% respondents find it difficult to work and take care of the child because of lack of time, inability to work properly and that child remained unsafe and neglected.**
 - ▶ **The study has concluded that in more than 60% cases, the mother is the sole caregiver for children in the age group of 6 months to 3 years.**
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- ▶ In the age group 3–6 years, the %age of cases where the mother is the sole caregiver goes down to 49.2% and the role of others increases.
 - ▶ While 77% respondents wanted crèches near the home, 20% wanted a crèche near their workplace.
 - ▶ The third and the most recent one was conducted on the Role of implementing stakeholder like elected representatives known as PRIs in the State sponsored programme i.e. ICDS which has an integrated ECCD approach.
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Locating child care/ ECDC within ICDS

- ▶ **ICDS scheme is a forty year programme which is arguably, one of the world's largest and unique programmes for early childhood care and development.**
- ▶ **ICDS Mission introduced in 2012 basically to capture all the loopholes with revised norms and budget**
- ▶ **Highlights of this model:**
 - **converting AWCs into a vibrant child friendly centre**
 - **first village outpost for health, nutrition and early learning for children and mothers**
 - **introducing 70,000 centres with the facility of a crèche in phase I (2015)**
 - **enhanced budget for supplementary nutrition for all children and pregnant and nursing mothers**

Major findings

- ▶ Conducted in 135 panchayats across 7 states
- ▶ Total population of entire sampled area: more than eight lakhs. (Av. Population 6000 barring hill state)
- ▶ 13% of GPs: with 3 Anganwadi Centres(AWCs)
- ▶ 63% GPs : with more than 3 AWCs
(out of 135, 85 GPs with more than 3 AWCs)
- ▶ More than 55% panchayats with 4 or more than four villages

Perception of PRIs on Holistic Development

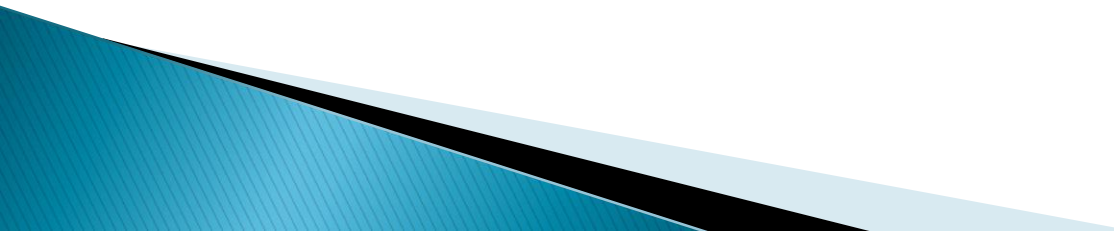
- ▶ More than 50% members relate with food and play and emphasize only on physical development.
- ▶ Mental growth or brain development is not considered important for this age group.
- ▶ *FORCES had also conducted this exercise in one of its earlier programme where almost 100% responses were on the necessity of food and clothes only. Understanding of holistic development is missing from all the areas.*

Requirement of AWCs

- ▶ Out of 135 GPs, 95 are in favor of having more centres on the ground of overpopulation, thereby adversely effecting the quality of services and space.
- ▶ Around 20 panchayats have categorically mentioned that they do not need more centres and an overwhelming majority comes from Uttarakhand (16) on the pretext of out migration.
- ▶ Hill states such as Uttarakhand also throw light on the peculiar nature of challenges that targeted ICDS faces in diverse and distant geographies.

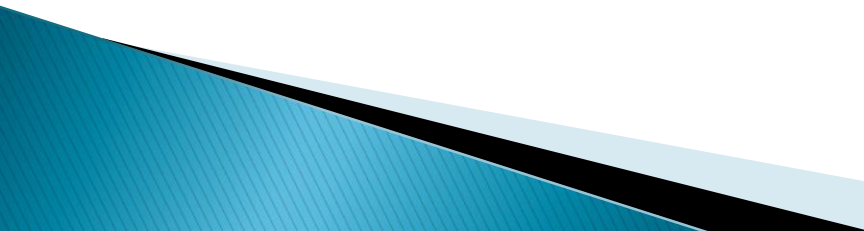
Discussion on Child Care

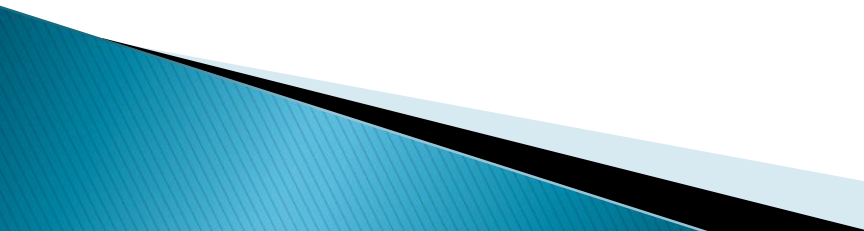
- ▶ Only a quarter of the surveyed GPs were aware of the ICDS Mission Mode but not on the crèche component
- ▶ Majority of the members feel that childcare should be done by family and AWC is only an alternate for a short period.
- ▶ They have also admitted that older siblings are involved in this and 58% of panchayats have also reported that girls are not sent to school for this reason only.
- ▶ Panchayats from the states of Jharkhand and Uttar Pradesh have reported on girls not attending schools on pretext of sibling care.

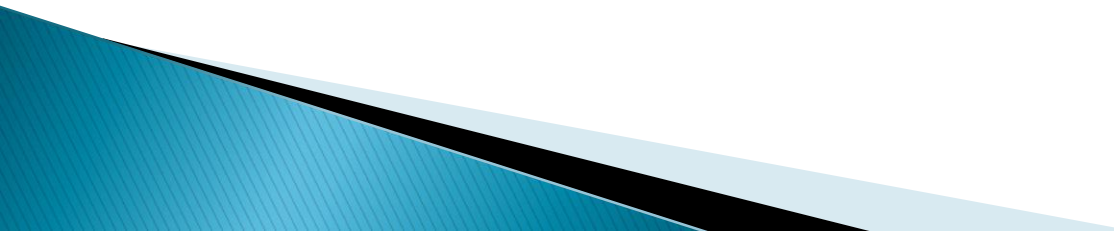
- ▶ In the absence of creches, certain cases were found where parents tied their children to household objects before leaving for work.
 - ▶ Another development that has been gaining some prominence is the increased number of migrant children at the ICDS centers, hitherto denied access under the programme.
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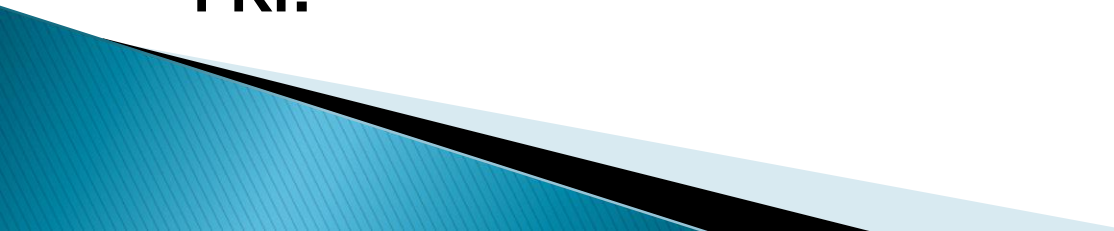
- ▶ Issues related to maternal health or child development rarely find any mention in panchayat meetings since such issues are considered as “soft issues”.
- ▶ Issues related to pre-school education and building of AWCs emerged as areas of concerns as most of the centres operating from small rented rooms with hardly any space for children to play.
- ▶ The positive outcome of this survey was that 40 panchayats have agreed to prepare plans for children in near future incorporating issues like Jhula ghar (swings), renovation of centre including separate bhawan for AWC etc.
- ▶ *This is also a known fact that PRIs are not trained in preparing micro plans whether for children or others.*

Conclusion

- ▶ Many troubling signs on the ground as per implementation of the ICDS Restructured. It further empirically confirms what many working on the field of child development have suspected.
 - ▶ Level of understanding about the present ICDS Mission is almost absent.
 - ▶ Members demanded that a formal training on ICDS Mission to the members of the Panchayat would be helpful in building knowledge.
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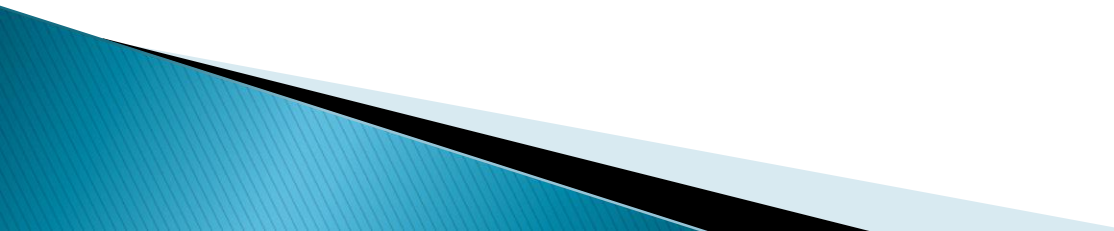
- ▶ Another issue which has been consistently raised through the study is the *need for the ICDS centres to collaborate with the MNREGA programme.*
 - ▶ The data also indicates that the *Gram Panchayat* has played a major role in disseminating information about the MNREGA in the village, but is silent on recruiting a *dai* or a care worker as it was not known to them.
 - ▶ There are some positive signs to be noted as well. Most AWCs have welcomed the idea of running crèche under the programme.
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- ▶ This demand has been echoed mostly by women members of different committees (though by no means limited to them) as it will reduce the burden of women working in the rural sector.
 - ▶ The demand becomes even more urgent in the present context of transformations within the rural sectoral economy, where a majority of employment is generated in the unorganized sector.
 - ▶ But unfortunately, the yearly plan of distribution of 70,000 crèches planned under restructured ICDS, only 17% crèches are planned in the rural areas, once again undermining women's multiple occupations in rural areas.
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- ▶ Working with PRIs shows that governments have often taken a gendered approach to childcare. Instead of providing institutional support to early childcare, which is premised on the family as a unit, it still abdicates the role to women in the family.
 - ▶ Moreover, the increased participation of women in the workforce under precarious, informal sector conditions adds to the vulnerability of young children as well, further necessitating the role of child care support.
 - ▶ In light of these factors, ICDS success is contingent on a better informed and autonomous PRI.
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Recommendations

- ▶ Incorporating “ECCD” in the course curriculum of PRI training workshops and to sensitise them on the needs of women and children with a focus on migrant dalit and disabled children.
- ▶ Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) tools need to become part of training and refresher courses. This would also help them in preparing micro plans which has become mandatory for panchayats especially.
- ▶ Involvement of Non state actors like NGOs or community workers resulting in better indices (both in terms of information and quality of services).

- ▶ **Filling up of vacant posts/Regularizing wage payments/ honorarium of front line workers**
 - ▶ **Most important, to enhance the budget for ECCD programme, the last fiscal year has seen the major budget cut (more than 50%) in ICDS programmes.**
 - ▶ **Recent announcement (February 2017) on Universal maternity entitlements is not only underestimated (in terms of budget) also applicable ‘with conditions’.**
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- ▶ Finally, childcare in context of ECD should be the focus of the approach and
 - ▶ Investing in quality child care leads to a triple dividend – it encourages more women to participate in the labour force and earn an income, it improves health and education outcomes for children, and it can generate new decent work opportunities – all of which contribute to more equal and prosperous societies.
 - ▶ This would also lead to in achieving SDG Goal 2, 3, 4 & 5 related to hunger, health, quality education and gender equality respectively.
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