

# Nutrition Programmers and Rural Development

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## Introduction

**ICDS:** The Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS), launched in 1975, aims at the holistic development of children up to six years of age with a special focus on children up to two years, besides expectant and nursing mothers. This is done through a package of six services: health check-ups, immunization, referral services, supplementary feeding, non-formal pre-school education, and advise on health and nutrition. In spite of its expansion in the last three decades, the impact on child nutrition and protecting the rights of the children is quite limited.

The ICDS, which has been in existence for over three decades, was intended to address the problem of child and maternal malnutrition, but has clearly had limited impact. Child malnutrition has barely declined at all in a decade and a half, anemia among women and children has actually risen and a third of all adult women were undernourished. The scheme has also had limited coverage. Therefore, the answer are increasing coverage to ensure rapid universalization; changing the design, and planning the implementation in sufficient detail that the object are not vitiated by the design of implementation .

First, the ICDS has to be universalized. Second, the current scheme does not focus on children between 0 and 3 years. However, malnutrition sets in uteri and is likely to intensify during during the 0-3 year period, if not addressed. In fact, this window of opportunity never returns in the lifetime of the child. A child malnourished during 0-3 years will be marred physically and mentally for life. The design of the scheme has to address this problem frontally.

The mother's malnutrition has knock-on effects on the child's malnutrition. Exclusive breastfeeding for six months is necessary to avoid unnecessary infections to the baby, develop the baby's develop the baby's immunity, and ensure growth. The baby must begin to receive solid, mushy food at 6 months (i.e. together with breastfeeds) to continue to grow in the way nature intended her to grow. The ICDS scheme accordingly needs to be restructured in a manner that addresses some of the weaknesses that have emerged and renders it suitable for universalization. The programme

must effectively integrate the different elements that affect nutrition and reflect the different needs of children in different age groups.

A part from the above, preliminary findings of FOCUS (Focus on children under Six) in six states brings out some of the problems and regional disparities in the working of ICGS. This study that Educated states scores over the northern states in infrastructure, quality of pre-school education, immunization rates, mother's perceptions and, quality of Anganwadi workers.

Saxena provides several recommendations for improvement of ICDS. According to this study, ICDS is reaching only 12.5 percent of children in the age group 6 months to 6 years. Every plan document aims at halving the incidence of malnutrition and reduce anemia among pregnant women and children to under 10 percent. To achieve these objectives, ICDS has to be restructured with higher allocations of funds and effective implementation.

**Mid-day Meal Scheme:** The mid-day meal scheme (MDMS) has been revised and universalized at the primary level from 1 September 2004. Recently, the MDMS has been extended to Upper Primary School from 1 October 2007. MDNS was supposed to cover about 18 crore children by 2008-09. There are problems MDMS with regard to financial allocations and the quality of the scheme. The sixth report of the commissioner appointed by the Supreme Court also points out inadequate infrastructure 4 mid -day meals. Of the sixteen States that sent data to the commissioner in this regard, thirteen state that less than 45 percent school have a separate kitchen.

The 11<sup>th</sup> Five year plan has given the following action points for improving the performance of MDMS : (1) MDM to be managed by the local community and PRIs/NGOs, and not contractor-driven: civic quality and safety t be prime considerations; (2) sensitize teachers and other involved in nutrition, hygiene, cleanliness, and safety norms to rectify observed deficiencies; (3) Involve nutrition expert in planning low cost nutrition menu and for periodic of samples of prepared food;(4) promote locally grown nutritionally rich food items through kitchen gardens in school ,etc.; (5) revive

the school health programme ;disseminate and replicate best practices adopted by states: (vi) provide drinking facilities in all schools on an urgent basis: (vii) display status regarding supplies. Funds norms. Weekly menu, and coverage in schools to ensure transparency (viii) central assistance to cooking cost should be based on the actual number of beneficiary children and not on enrolment. (ix) promote social audit: (x) Online monitoring<sup>59</sup>

**Other Child-specific measure:** ICDS and mid-day meals are child- specific programmes. One of the household responses to shocks is that children have less time to study. Or spend time in school or drop-out of school. The short term measure can be to increase funding to school feeding programmes so that the quantity of food that children get is not compromised The long term measure is to provide incentive to children to continue in school. School feeding programmes . financial incentives for children in school quality of education. Etc. are some of the long term measures. Of course, social protection programmes for households can raise household income and reduce child labour. Increased pressure on woman due to employment may affect the children adversely. The government has to ensure continued funding to existing public provision of childcare services. Support can be given for increasing women employment by providing community or public child care facilities care responsibilities can be incorporated in the design and implementation of policies in spending on basic services like health and education. This would affect the children adversely health care should be given more finances and incentives have to be provided for schooling.

**NREGA :** By now it is well recognized that rural works programmes (RWPs) have become important instruments in the strategies for alleviating poverty and hunger many developing countries.

Enacting the national Employment Guarantee Act is one of the key electoral promises of the ruling coalition at the centre under the common Minimum programme (CMP) The bill was passed by the parliament in August 2005 and became the national Rural Employment Guarantee Act. 2005 (NREGA) This is a step towards legal enforcement of the Right to work, as an aspect of the fundamental right to live with dignity NREGA was notified in September. 2005 with the aim to enhance livelihood security in rural areas by providing at least 100 days of guaranteed wage employment in a financial year auxiliary objective is regenerating a natural resource base and creating productive assets. The third a process objective is to strengthen grass root democracy by infusing transparency and accountability in governance. It is the first time that a rights based approach for employment has been introduced throughout India. This is

the largest ever public employment programme visualized in human history. One of the most important requisites for this programme is transparency and accountability. Gram Sabhas conduct social audits of all works taken up within Gram panchayat. Social audit includes scrutinizing and verifying the authenticity of all records and procedures of the programmed and expenditure. Social audit of all works in the Gram panchayat area is conducted by the Gram Sabhas The performance of the national Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) is uneven The problems and challenges in areas where it is unable to deliver are the following (i) awareness problems among workers: (ii) implementation and administration problems: (iii) monitoring and evaluation problems: (iv) lack of professionals and capacity building at various levels; particularly at the panchayat level.

However most evaluations official and non-official show that implementation in the case of NREGS has been more effective than for any of its predecessor schemes. In particular the leakages have been reduced significantly in many places. A significant increase in the agricultural wage is reduced, providing much needed relief during the financial crisis with the urban poor returning to rural areas. The 11<sup>th</sup> five year plan indicates that NREGS is going to be one of the important programmes for poverty reduction in India NREGS has the potential to not only transform livelihoods of the poor. But also to revolutionize rural governance.

NREGS provides a great opportunity to generate employment and create productive assets. If these can be linked to overall development there will be less need for such schemes in future If implemented effectively ,NREGA will be the biggest social security programme for unorganized workers.

Despite inefficiencies the contribution of social protection programmes to the observed reduction in rural poverty and as insurance for risk has been significant, even though their potential is much greater. There are several lessons in social protection to be learnt from the Indian experience These lessons will be useful for effective implementation of these programmes.

#### References:-

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