

**RAJYA SABHA****COMMITTEE ON PETITIONS****HUNDRED AND TWENTY NINTH REPORT**

**ON THE PETITION PRAYING FOR INSTITUTIONALISATION OF INTEGRATED CHILD DEVELOPMENT SERVICES (ICDS) SCHEME BY CONVERTING IT INTO A REGULAR DEPARTMENT UNDER THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT AND REGULARISATION OF SERVICES OF ANGANWADI WORKERS/HELPERS AS EMPLOYEES OF THAT DEPARTMENT.**

**(Presented on the 17<sup>th</sup> May, 2006)**



**RAJYA SABHA SECRETARIAT**

**NEW DELHI**

**MAY, 2006**

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**COMPOSITION OF THE COMMITTEE ON PETITIONS**

1. Shri Jana Krishnamurthy. K - *Chairman*

**MEMBERS**

2. Shri Nandi Yellaiah
3. Shri V. Narayanasamy
4. Prof. Alka Balram Kshatriya
5. Shri Lalit Kishore Chaturvedi
- \*6. Shri Dipankar Mukherjee
7. Shri P.G. Narayanan
8. Shri Bhagwati Singh
9. Shri Subash Prasad Yadav
10. Shri Dinesh Trivedi

**SECRETARIAT**

1. Shri Tapan Chatterjee, *Joint Secretary*
2. Shri G.C. Miglani, *Director*
3. Shri A.K. Gandhi, *Under Secretary*
4. Shri Sanjeev Chandra, *Committee Officer*

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\* Ceased to be a Member of the Committee consequent on his retirement from Rajya Sabha on April 2, 2006.

## **HUNDRED AND TWENTY- NINTH REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON PETITIONS**

I, the Chairman of the Committee on Petitions, having been authorized by the Committee to present the Report on its behalf, present this Hundred and Twenty-Ninth Report of the Committee on the petition (Appendix – I) signed by Ms. K. Hemalata, General Secretary and Ms. A.R. Sindhu, Treasurer, All India Federation of Anganwadi Workers and Helpers and countersigned by Shri Chittabrata Majumdar, Member, Rajya Sabha, inter-alia praying for institutionalisation of the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) Scheme by converting it into a regular Department under the Ministry of Human Resource Development and regularization of services of Anganwadi Workers and Helpers as employees of that Department, which was found in conformity with the Rules and presented to the Rajya Sabha on April 19, 2005. The petition, in terms of the provisions contained in Rule 150 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the Council of States stood referred to the Committee on Petitions for examination and report.

### **ISSUES RAISED BY THE PETITIONERS**

2. The petitioners have submitted in their petition (Appendix I) that the Integrated Child Development Services Scheme, which was formulated nearly 30 years ago, has over a period of time developed into an institution, with its wide reach all over the country so much so that its key functionaries viz. about 12 lakh anganwadi workers and helpers all over the country have been discharging multifarious responsibilities at the grass root level in the rural and tribal areas and urban slums. Their services are being utilized for the implementation of various schemes and programmes of the Government in the health, education and various other sectors. Some of the jobs which the

anganwadi workers and helpers are called upon to perform are creating awareness on ORS, Upper Respiratory Infections, Directly Observed Treatment System (DOTS) for tuberculosis, AIDS awareness, motivation and education on birth control methods etc. They are also involved in jobs related to the Education department like Total Literacy Programmes, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, DPEP, and Non Formal Education etc. In some States they are even involved in the promotion of small savings, group insurance, forming Self Help Groups, conducting surveys to identify BPL families, Leprosy survey, Filariasis survey, cattle census etc. Though as per the ICDS scheme, they are supposed to work for only four and half hours in a day, in practice, they have to work for more than 6-7 hours in a day to carry out the responsibilities entrusted to them. But unfortunately, even after 30 years, the ICDS continues only as a Scheme and the Anganwadi workers and helpers are not even recognized as employees by the Government. They are paid only a meagre honorarium. They do not have any promotional avenues or job security or social security. That apart, after decades of service they do not have anything to fall back upon in their old age and are forced to starve. In view of the services provided through the ICDS being very useful and essential for the development of a healthy nation, they strongly believe that time has come when the services provided through ICDS need to be regularized and the anganwadi centres have to be converted into multiple service delivery centers for the welfare and empowerment of women and overall development of children. The petitioners have, therefore, in view of these submissions prayed that the -

- ICDS should be institutionalized by converting it into a regular Department under the Ministry of Human Resource Development.

- The anganwadi centres should be developed and strengthened to effectively carry out activities for the overall development of children and women in the area; and
- The anganwadi workers and helpers, who are already involved in providing multifarious services from the anganwadi centres should be regularized as employees of the department and provided all the benefits and facilities due to them. Pending this, they should be paid wages at par with Grade III and Grade IV Government employees.

3. In order to enable the Committee to make an in-depth examination of the issues raised in the petition, the comments of the Department of Women and Child Development of the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India were obtained (Appendix – II). The Committee considered the petition in a total of three sittings. At its sitting held on November 14, 2005, the Committee heard the views of the petitioners on the issues raised by them in the petition. At its sitting held on December 20, 2005 the Committee had the benefit of the views of the Secretary of the Department of Women and Child Development, Ministry of Human Resource Development on the subject. At its sitting held on February 16, 2006, the Committee had the oral evidence of the representatives of some of the organizations of Anganwadi Workers/other organizations and some of the eminent persons working for the welfare of women/children.

4. The Committee considered and adopted this Report at its sitting held on May 11, 2006.

5. The views of the petitioners, the Department of Women and Child Development and the representatives of some of the organizations/individuals with whom the Committee interacted vis-à-vis the issues raised in the petition,

together with the observations/recommendations of the Committee are set out in the succeeding paragraphs.

**COMMENTS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT (MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT)**

6. In its written comments, (Appendix – II) the Department of Women and Child Development inter-alia submitted that the ICDS Scheme, which is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme implemented through the State Governments/UT Administrations, is the flagship of the Department and adequate attention is being paid to the administration of this Scheme. Anganwadi is the focal point for the delivery of services under the Scheme and there has been constant emphasis on States to ensure regular functioning of Anganwadis and effective delivery of services. However, improvement is a continuous process and it has been the endeavour of the Government of India to provide all basic facilities in Anganwadis through convergence of efforts of the Department of Family Welfare, Department of Elementary Education, Department of Drinking Water Supply etc. With regard to the specific issue of regularisation of Anganwadi Workers as Government Employees, the Department clarified that the ICDS Scheme envisages the Anganwadi Workers and Helpers as “honorary workers” from the local community who come forward to render their services, on part-time basis, in the area of child care and development. They are paid a fixed honoraria per month as may be decided by the Government from time to time and in recognition of the significant services being discharged by these grass-roots functionaries, the Government has already doubled their honorarium w.e.f. 1.4.2002. The Government has also extended insurance cover to the Anganwadi Workers/Helpers w.e.f. 1.4.2004 under the Life Insurance Corporation’s Social Security Scheme. In view of their status under the

Scheme, it is neither feasible nor appropriate to treat them as Govt. employees. They are also not covered under the provisions of Minimum Wages Act.

### **ORAL EVIDENCE OF THE PETITIONERS.**

7. The Committee at its sitting held on November 14, 2005 heard Ms. K. Hemalata and Ms. A.R. Sindhu, the petitioners, on the issues raised by them in their petition. Making a presentation, Ms. Hemalata submitted that the ICDS scheme has been in existence for the last 30 years and the All India Institute of Medical Sciences and the Planning Commission had, based on their evaluation of the performance of the Scheme, categorized it as a very useful Scheme, particularly for the women and children. Not only that, the Scheme was recognized throughout the world as a unique delivery system of services for the benefit of women and children. The objective of the Scheme basically was to bring down the infant mortality rate which was very high in the country and under the pregnant women were provided services like supplementary nutrition and pre-school education through the Anganwadi Centres. Anganwadi workers and helpers, who managed these Centres, had very close relationship with the local population and were entrusted with manifold responsibilities by the Central as well as the State Governments which included creating awareness about various health related programmes like AIDS, malaria, respiratory infection in children etc. and providing preliminary medicines for the treatment of such diseases. The gamut of their activities was quite large in that they were also asked to provide adult literacy, non-formal education and conduct several types of surveys like BPL surveys, surveys of the disabled, small savings surveys, and encourage formation of Self-Help Groups. Recently in some States, they had also been assigned the task of stopping social evils like child marriages etc. The fact of the matter was that as and when any services were to



be provided at the grassroot level, it was the Anganwadi workers and helpers who were entrusted that responsibility. In other words, over the years, Integrated Child Development Services Scheme (ICDS) had developed into a very useful service delivery mechanism and multiplicity of functions were being assigned to the Anganwadi workers and helpers so much so that the Planning Commission and the Second Labour Commission had recommended that the Anganwadi Centres should be run throughout the day so that they could be developed as 'Day Care-cum-Crèche Centres' and the working women and agricultural labourers could leave their children there for the entire day. Underscoring the point that though the ICDS Scheme was a temporary one yet having regard to the plethora of useful services being provided through this Scheme at the grassroot level for the last many years, she demanded that this Scheme needed to be institutionalized in the shape of a permanent programme under a regular Department of the Ministry of Human Resource Development and the services of the Anganwadi workers and helpers who were the key functionaries in that Scheme, should be regularized as Grade-III and Grade-IV employees of the Government.

8. The Members thereafter sought clarifications from her on various points arising out of the submissions made by her. When asked as to what she meant by institutionalization of the ICDS and its being brought under a separate Department especially when the Scheme was already being administered by the Department of Women and Child Development of the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Ms. Hemalata submitted that every five years the Scheme was being reviewed to take a view about its continuance or otherwise and what they wanted was that the Scheme should be put on a permanent footing. The Anganwadi workers were also not treated as regular workers. They were called social workers and the remuneration which they were getting

was paid as honorarium. That too was very meagre with the workers being paid just Rs.1000 per month and the helpers getting a paltry sum of just Rs.500 per month. The Anganwadi workers were appointed by the Government of India and everything like the criteria for their appointment, the work they should do and how much remuneration should be paid to them was also decided by the Government. Not only that, it was the Department which took disciplinary action against the erring workers. That clearly showed that a kind of employer and employee relationship existed between the Department and the Anganwadi workers / helpers and keeping that in view, they wanted that they should be treated as employees of the Government and should be paid wages at par with Grade-III and Grade-IV employees of the Central Government. Responding to another query from the Chairman of the Committee about the agency involved in providing the infrastructure under the ICDS, Ms. Hemalata stated that it was the Government which provided the necessary infrastructure. At the State level, it was under the Women and Child Welfare Department albeit in some States, it was the Social Welfare Department which looked after it. Basically, the Scheme was of the Government of India and the State Governments implemented it. The entire expenditure was incurred by the Government of India and whereas in various States, there were authorities like Commissioner for ICDS or a Director in the Women and Child Development Ministry at the apex level and Programme Officers at the District level, it was only at the grassroot level that the Anganwadi workers and helpers were not recognized as workers. Responding to another query about the total number of Anganwadi workers in the country as on date, Ms. Hemalata in her reply submitted that there were around 13 lakhs Anganwadi workers but in view of a decision being taken recently by the Government to open 168 more Anganwadi Centres and raise the number of workers / helpers, the total number of Anganwadi workers /

helpers would be around 16 lakh. Replying to a question about the recruitment criterion laid down for Anganwadi workers and helpers, Ms. Hemalata submitted that there was a Committee at the district level the composition of which differed from State to State. In some States, the Collector was the Chairperson and the District Programme Officer the Convener. In that Committee, others who were represented were Child Development Project Officer (CDPO), the District Medical and Health Officers and the local MLAs and whenever there was a new project, applications were called for against which the interested women applied. The criteria was that the Anganwadi workers and helpers should be the local women from the local community. In some States, Panchayats had also been involved in recruiting the Anganwadi workers and helpers. When pointedly asked as to what justification their demand for regularization of services of Anganwadi workers / helpers had when the Scheme itself clearly provided that they would be treated as honorary workers and paid fixed honoraria per month, Ms. Hemalata clarified that they did not see the Scheme as being related only to the Anganwadi workers and helpers as they want it to be institutionalized and made a permanent Scheme in view of multiplicity of services being provided thereunder at the grassroot level. In other words, what they wanted was that the ICDS should not be continued as a Scheme but should be converted into a Department of the Central Government and as a corollary thereto, the Anganwadi workers should be made regular employees of the Central Government.

9. Ms. Hemalata was next asked by a Member of the Committee as to whether the ICDS was wholly being funded by the Central Government and whether it was not a fact that the Anganwadi workers / helpers were working only part time. Her reply was that though the Scheme was being funded by the Central Government yet in some States, the State Governments were providing

part of the remuneration to the Anganwadi workers / helpers. For example, in some States, workers were being given additional remuneration of Rs.200 or Rs.400 in view of their putting in additional hours of work viz i.e. upto 7 hours. Some State Governments were even giving them many other responsibilities and providing a little extra remuneration. One of the Members of the Committee raised a pointed question as to whether conceding the demand for regularization of services of Anganwadi workers and helpers as employees of a Department of the Central Government would not open floodgates for similar demands from the workers / helpers recruited under various other schemes that may be launched by the Government from time to time. The reply of Ms. K. Hemalata in that context was that in so far as ICDS was concerned, it had been in existence for the last 30 years and could not be equated with schemes which were transitory in nature. On the contrary, ICDS was a unique Scheme of its kind related to the future of the children. The Supreme Court had also recognized the importance of the Scheme and directed the Government to universalize it. She further submitted that it was their estimate that even if the ICDS was universalized and the Anganwadi workers / helpers were treated as Group-III or Group-IV employees of the Government, the expenditure would be only 0.6% of GDP which was definitely worth spending having regard to the valuable services being provided for the health and development of children and women. When asked whether the Supreme Court judgement had also dealt with the issue of remuneration to the Anganwadi Workers / Helpers, Ms. Hemalata replied that the Supreme Court had not delved into that issue. Rather the Court had only talked about universalization of the Scheme and the workers being properly compensated. Reacting to a suggestion from the Chairman of the Committee as to why the duties of the Anganwadi workers / helpers should not be restricted only to the objectives originally envisaged under the ICDS and the

gamut of their functions should not be enlarged, Ms. A.R. Sindhu, the petitioner, submitted that as far as Anganwadi workers were concerned, their work must be confined to the original objectives of the ICDS but their services were preferred because Anganwadi Centres were having good reach to the people. The Chairman of the Committee then posed the question as to whether it would not be an ideal proposition to ask the authorities not to give Anganwadi Workers and Helpers additional work and that they should be required to handle only the work originally envisaged under the ICDS and if they were saddled with additional responsibilities, then the principle of extra remuneration for extra work should be applied. Elaborating that point, he asked the petitioners as to why they should not project the demand to suitably increase their remuneration in view of their being required to put in extra hours of work instead of insisting on their being made Government servants. In other words, they needed to be compensated in monetary terms for the extra work they were required to do. Ms. Hemlata's answer was that even the remuneration that was being paid to the Anganwadi Workers / Helpers for the work they did was very low and as representatives of the All India Federation of Anganwadi Workers and Helpers, they were definitely concerned about their working conditions. At the same time, they were also concerned about the beneficiaries and the essential services that the Government was providing through Anganwadi Centres could be used as a very useful vehicle for empowerment of women and children.

**ORAL EVIDENCE OF THE SECRETARY, DEPTT. OF WOMEN & CHILD DEVELOPMENT, MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT**

10. The Committee at its sitting held on December 20, 2005 heard the Secretary, Department of Women and Child Development, Ministry of Human

Resource Development on the issues raised in the petition. Making a presentation on the subject, the Secretary of the Ministry submitted that the ICDS programme which had begun in 1975 as a very small child welfare measure, with 33 blocks in the country, had expanded over the years and as it stands today, there are 6,108 ICDS projects covering all the blocks of the country. Recently, following Supreme Court's orders for further expansion and universalization of the programme so as to cover all the children and habitations, especially in rural areas, the Department had further expanded it by adding some more projects and as on date there has been an addition of one lakh and eighty eight thousand more Anganwadi centres which raise the number of such centres in the country to approximately 9.42 lakhs. These centres offer a range of services like supplementary nutrition, some additional food to the children, immunization, health check-up, free and non-formal education and health education. This is especially beneficial to the children from the rural areas. For this, the Anganwadi workers are paid an honorarium. Till now, no formal conditions/qualifications were laid down for hiring them since most of them are taken from villages. Recently, however, the State Governments have started taking people who are 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> Standard pass. Different State Governments are doing it in their own way. They work for four or five hours a day and this is precisely the reason that from the beginning they were paid honorarium which has been increased and doubled to Rs. 1,000 for Anganwadi workers and Rs. 500 for the assistants, who are called *Sahayika*. Some State Governments, however, are even paying more. At the Department level a decision has also been taken to give them some more facilities like BIMA Insurance Scheme with the LIC. Under this Scheme a part of the premium is paid by the Anganwadi workers & Helpers and a part by the Department. She

admitted that the responsibilities of the Anganwadi workers over the years have increased manifold since more and more people are depending on them.

11. She further submitted that notwithstanding the fact of their being honorary workers, efforts are under way to provide them a channel of promotion whereby 25 per cent to 50 per cent quota for their promotion is to be provided so that they can go up to the grade of supervisor, depending on their seniority and performance. Coupled with this, best Anganwadi workers both at Central and State levels are suitably rewarded for their good work and for this purpose the number of awards has also not only been increased recently, but the amount of such awards has also been doubled.

12. Dwelling on the issue of regularization of services of Anganwadi workers, the Secretary stated that it is a very large policy matter to be commented upon. However, given the fact that the Anganwadi workers work only for a few hours, and no qualifications are prescribed for their recruitment, regular Government jobs cannot be given to them. This had been clearly told to their Unions when they came with such demands, especially when with the expansion of Anganwadi centers, the number of Anganwadi workers and helpers had gone up to 20 lakhs.

13. Supplementing some of these points, the Joint Secretary of the Department inter alia submitted that the people in the social services sector advise them against any move to make Anganwadi workers/helpers regular Government employees for the reason that the kind of services being provided now by them might not be available. He, however, admitted that even though the job chart of Anganwadi worker envisages a work schedule of four or five hours a day but in reality their services are utilized by the State Governments for some of their own schemes as a result of which there is corresponding increase in their hours of work for which they are paid additional honorarium

by the State Governments concerned. Regarding the strengthening of the ICDS scheme, he submitted that it is a well conceived programme of the Government for ensuring child survival, growth and development and efforts are on to strengthen it. The number of Anganwadi centers has increased and so has been in the case of the number of Anganwadi workers and helpers. There is increase in the outreach of the programme as well to cover more and more children. Supplementary nutrition was earlier entirely the responsibility of the State Governments but when it was observed that many States were not doing so, a view was taken by the Central Government not only to increase the norms of nutrition but also to share the cost of nutrition with the State Governments.

14. The Chairman and Members of the Committee thereafter, raised pointed queries and sought clarifications on various points arising out of the submissions made by the Secretary, Department of Women and Child Development and the Joint Secretary concerned of the Department. One of the Members of the Committee, while expressing his disagreement with the perception of the Department about their not getting the same level of services from the Anganwadi workers/helpers in case they are made Government servants, asked them whether they could give the figures of the number of such workers/helpers as are given honorarium and those who have been promoted in the scale of Supervisors. The Joint Secretary replied that the information would be obtained from the State Governments and made available to the Committee. Responding to another query from the Member as to whether the benefit of minimum wages could not be extended to the Anganwadi workers/helpers, the Secretary clarified that they are not covered under the minimum wages, as the job they perform is not an eight hourly job. The Member next asked whether they could share with the Committee the feedback they had received from different quarters/agencies about these workers/helpers and whether financial



implications of their being regularized had been worked out taking into account the yeoman service being rendered by them and the sympathy they deserved. Replying to the aspect of financial implications, the Secretary stated that the Department is going to submit their Approach Paper on the Eleventh Plan in which the inputs given by the Committee could be incorporated. She conceded that there is no denying the fact that the Anganwadis are the steel framework of rural India. Replying to another question about the amount of honorarium being made a little respectable, the Secretary submitted that honorarium paid to the Anganwadi workers/helpers has already been doubled and the regularization of their services cannot be thought of as the financial implications which involve not only salary component but so many other allowances and pensionary benefits are of huge proportions. This will also entail certain qualifications being prescribed for their intake which will make things a little difficult for the village girls.

15. The Chairman of the Committee next asked whether in view of the Anganwadi workers/helpers not being permanent employees, they did not have any fixity of tenure and could be fired at any time. The reply of the Secretary was that in actual practice they are not removed from service. Responding to another query about the number of persons having been removed from service ever since the ICDS was launched, the Secretary stated that this information was not available with her Department and the same will be collected from the State Governments and made available to the Committee. The Chairman next asked as to what was the difficulty in institutionalizing the ICDS when over the years it had worked successfully. The Secretary replied that the ICDS is the flagship Scheme of her Department so much so that about 85 to 90 percent of its budget is spent on this Scheme alone. There is considerable scope for its being expanded further in view of just 4-5 crores children out of a total of 16 to

17 crores of children being presently covered. They accordingly want to strengthen this Scheme and in so far as the question of institutionalizing this Scheme is concerned, the matter has already been taken up by her Minister for a separate Department of Child Welfare being created. In reply to another question as to whether there is any mechanism in place in the Department to inspect the Anganwadi Centers and whether the conditions there are conducive/hygienic for the children, the Secretary submitted that other Departments are involved in this process and special attention is paid to drinking water and sanitation. The Joint Secretary of the Department in this context submitted that the Scheme as of now does not provide for construction of Anganwadi building except in the World Bank assisted programme which is run in five States. As per the survey done by the National Commission for Applied Economic Research in 2001-02 on the availability of infrastructure in the Anganwadi Centres, 9 percent Anganwadis are operating from open space.

16. Subsequent to her evidence before the Committee, the Secretary, Department of Women & Child Development (Ministry of Human Resource Development) in written replies to a questionnaire on the subject given to her by the Committee *inter-alia* furnished the following additional information:-

1. There is no mechanism in place at the Central level to monitor the norms being followed by the State. However, individual cases which come to the notice of the Government are got investigated for appropriate directions to the States. Of the 9.42 lakh sanctioned AWCs, 7.41 lakh AWCs are operational as on 31.7.2005, each AWC being managed by an AWW & a Helper. However, actual number of AWW & Helpers in-position may be less than the operational number of AWC, on account of being on leave, training etc. State wise number of sanctioned & operational

AWCs and number of AWW & Helpers actually in position as on 31<sup>st</sup> July, 2005 is given at Annexure-I.

2. Anganwadi Workers & Helpers, being honorary workers, are paid a fixed honoraria per month as decided by the Government from time to time. At present, honorarium is being paid to the Anganwadi Workers ranging from Rs. 938/- to Rs. 1063/- per month and to Helpers @ Rs. 500/- per month respectively. The revision effected in their honoraria from time to time is indicated below:

**Honorarium of Anganwadi Worker**

Qualification/Year	1975 -76	1.4.78	1.7.86	2.10.92	16.5.97	1.4.02
Non-Matriculate	100	125	225	350	438	938
Matriculate	150	175	275	400	500	1000
Non-Matriculate with 5 yrs. exp.	-	-	250	375	469	969
Matriculate with 5 yrs. experience	-	-	300	425	531	1031
Non-Matriculate with 10 yrs. exp	-	-	275	400	500	1000
Matriculate with 10 yrs. exp.	-	-	325	450	563	1063

**Honorarium of Helper:**

Helper	35	50	110	200	260	500
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3. In addition to the honorarium being paid by the Govt. of India as indicated above, some States are also giving monetary incentives to AWWs/AWHs out of their own resources for the additional work assigned to them. A statement indicating amount of additional honorarium given by some States is at Annexure-II.
4. The Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) Scheme aims at holistic development of children below 6 years of age and pregnant & lactating mothers by providing a package of services comprising supplementary nutrition,

immunization, health check-up, referral services, pre-school non-formal education and nutrition & health education. It is a Centrally-sponsored scheme implemented through the State Government/UT Administrations.

5. The Government has been conscious of the significant services being rendered by these grass roots workers. In recognition of the services being discharged by them, Govt. has extended them the following facilities:-
  - (i) Their honorarium has been increased from time to time.
  - (ii) They have been allowed paid absence on maternity at par with women employees of organized sector.
  - (iii) The Govt. of India has introduced Anganwadi Karyakartri Bima Yojana' to Anganwadi Workers/Anganwadi Helpers w.e.f. 1.4.2004 under Life Insurance Corporation's Social Security Scheme.
  - (iv) Reservation of at least 25% of the posts of Supervisors under ICDS Scheme for matriculate AWWs with 10 years of experience;
  - (v) Preference of the services rendered as AWWs as additional qualification for being recruited as Primary School Teachers, ANMS and other such village based posts:
6. At present there are about 15 lakh Anganwadi Workers and Helpers in position and with the recent expansion of the Scheme, the number of these honorary workers will increase to over 19 lakh. In the event of Anganwadi Workers and Helpers being given Gr. 'C' and Gr. 'D' status of Government employee, the annual financial implication on their salary alone would be about Rs. 14000/- crore per annum and this will have wide repercussions for the Government exchequer.
7. The State Governments being the implementing agencies have to ensure that the Integrated services are delivered at AWC so as to achieve the objective of the Scheme. There is built in monitoring system for promoting

assessment analysis and actions at the State, District and Project levels. There is a supervisor for every 20-25 AWCs to see that AWWs/Helpers provide the services and maintain the record of such services.

8. As regards job security of the AWWs/AWHs, the broad guidelines issued by the Government of India provide that an Anganwadi Worker may remain in employment till 58 years and even thereafter, so long as she is able to perform her duties with due diligence, alertness and efficiency. The matter of upper age limit for Anganwadi Workers and Helpers has been left to the State Government who may take an appropriate view in the matter. However, some States have fixed the upper age limit of an AWW at 58/60 years. No incident of unjust termination of services of AWWs/Helpers has come to the notice of the Government.
9. Before the recent expansion of ICDS Scheme, there were 7.64 lakh sanctioned Anganwadi centers in the country of which about 7.41 lakh Anganwadi Centres have become functional, as on 31.7.2005.
10. The Supreme court, in response to a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) filed by the People Union of Civil Liberties (PUCL) vide its order dated 28.11.01, inter-alia, gave the following direction in respect of ICDS Scheme: "Have a disbursement center in every settlement."

Vide its further order dated 29.11.2004, the Apex Court issued, inter-alia the following directions to the Government of India with regard to implementation of the ICDS Scheme:-

"We direct the Government of India to file within three months an affidavit stating the period within which it proposes to increase the number of AWCs so as to cover the 14 lacs habitations."

With regard to Supreme Court's direction dated 29.4.2004 to increase the number of Anganwadi Centres to cover 14 lakh habitations, it may be submitted that the figure of 14 lakh habitation appears to have been taken from the data compiled by

the Department of Drinking Water Supply for the purpose of providing safe drinking water under which, on an average, a habitation consists of 250 persons, i.e. 50 households of 5 persons each as clarified by that Department.

As per census data of 2001, proportion of 0-6 years age group constitutes approximately 16% of the total population. As such, in a habitation of 250, children in 0-6 age group would be around 40 only. On an average, only 45% of the children in this age group attend AWCs as of now. Even if pregnant and lactating mothers are added, total target beneficiaries would be around 20 only. A view, therefore, needs to be taken if it would be a cost effective method of delivering services envisaged under the ICDS to set up an AWC for a population of 250. However, distance of a habitation from the main village where AWC may be located, also needs to be looked into for setting up of an AWC as it would not be appropriate to expect children in 0-6 years age group, pregnant and lactating mothers to travel long distance to avail of services under the ICDS programme. This would ensure that the services under the Scheme becomes accessible to all and constitute universalisation of the Scheme.

**Existing norms for setting up an ICDS Project/AWC:** The ICDS Scheme envisages that the administrative unit for the location of ICDS Project will be the CD Block in rural areas, tribal blocks in tribal areas and ward(s) or slums in urban areas. A rural/urban Project is assumed to have a population of 1 lakhs and tribal project 35,000. On an average, one Anganwadi Centre will cater to 1000 population in a rural/urban project and 700 population in a tribal project, with suitable adjustments, wherever necessary, in the light of local conditions. In respect of sparsely populated hilly/desert areas, there is provision for setting up an Anganwadi in every village or hamlet having a population of 300 or more. Very small villages/hamlets with a population of less than 300 may be covered from the adjoining Anganwadi.

Based on the existing population norms, the Government has approved, in the first phase, expansion of the ICDS Scheme to 467 additional projects and 188168 additional Anganwadi Centres, out of which 456 additional ICDS Projects and 1,88,055 AWCs have been sanctioned.

Further, an Inter-Ministerial Task Force was also set up in 2004 to review the existing population norms for sanction of an

ICDS Project/AWC and suggest revised norms. The Task Force submitted its reports/recommendations in May 2005. The revised population norms recommended by the Task Force have been circulated to all States on 12.7.2005 and they have been requested to furnish details of additional AWCs required, if any, as per the revised population norms to consider further expansion of the Scheme. So far information from 18 States has been received. On receipt of details from all the States/UTs a composite proposal seeking competent approvals for further expansion of the Scheme will be processed.

The State Governments/UT Administrations are required to furnish information on the number of operational AWC and number of AWWs/Helpers in-position every month. Funds for payment of their honoraria are worked out and released on the basis of their actual number reported in the monthly reports. No instance of Angawadi Workers/Helpers being shown on record but actually not engaged and take disbursement of honoraria has come to the notice of Government of India.

The ICDS Scheme aims at improving the nutritional and health status of Children below 6 years, pregnant & lactating mothers of vulnerable sections of the society. Introduced in 33 projects on an experimental basis, the Scheme has been gradually expanded to 5652 Projects till the end of IX Plan, of which 5632 Projects with 7.41 lakh AWCs have become operational as on 31.7.2005. The Scheme has been further expanded recently to 467 Projects and 1.88 lakh AWCs.

There has been significant progress in the implementation of ICDS Scheme in terms of increase in number of operational projects and Anganwadi Centres (AWCs) and coverage of beneficiaries as indicated below:-

	<b>No. of operational projects</b>	<b>No. of operational AWCs</b>	<b>No. of Supplementary nutrition beneficiaries</b>	<b>No. of preschool education beneficiaries</b>
31.03.2003	4903	600391	387.84 lakh	188.02 lakh
31.03.2004	5267	649307	415.08 lakh	204.38 lakh
31.03.2005	5422	706872	484.42 lakh	218.41 lakh
31.07.2005	5632	741038	494.80 lakh	230.87 lakh

As per the information available, 20 States/UTs are giving monetary incentives to AWWs/AWHs out of their own resources, in addition to the honorarium being paid by the Govt. of India. Government of India has requested the remaining States/UTs to consider extending monetary benefits to AWW/Helpers for the work entrusted to them outside the scope of ICDS Scheme.

### **ORAL EVIDENCE OF THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ORGANISATIONS OF ANGANWADI WORKERS/INDIVIDUALS**

17. The Committee at its sitting held on February 16, 2006 had the benefit of the views of the representatives of some of the organisations of Anganwadi Workers and Prof. Jean Dreze, Honorary Professor, Delhi University on the issues raised in the petition as detailed below: -

#### **1. Ms. Sudha Sundararaman, General Secretary, All India Democratic Women's Association**

18. The ICDS has played a positive role in bringing down infant mortality, school drop out rates, severe malnutrition, and increasing school enrolment. Following Supreme Court directive for universalisation of this Scheme, it needs to be strengthened further so that all sections within the village are able to have access to the services. This cannot happen till the Anganwadi service is perceived as an *ad hoc* voluntary arrangement and the workers are seen as volunteers and are paid honorarium. If the ICDS has to become an effective multi-service delivery system for overall development of the child and safeguarding women's rights, a comprehensive view of the Scheme has to be taken by institutionalizing it and recognizing the Anganwadi workers as regular employees with eight hour work profile with a minimum salary and concurrent benefits. As things stand now, it is very unjust that six to seven hours of work are extracted from Anganwadi workers on regular basis but they are still



considered voluntary workers and paid a pittance. Secondly, it is supposed to move towards privatization as implicit in the decision to allocate 10 per cent of sanctioned centres to NGOs, which goes against the spirit of universalisation of essential services and amounts to retreat of State from its responsibility. This constitutes a very serious policy reversal which should be addressed and checked. Thirdly, given the need for expansion of the ICDS programme, a large number of vacancies in the post of CDPOs and supervisors ought to be filled immediately by promoting teachers, as there is no reason for keeping these posts pending.

**2. Ms. Amarjeet Kaur, General Secretary, All India Anganwadi Workers' Federations**

19. It was from 1980s that Anganwadi workers started unionizing themselves and from that period onwards, they have been step by step seeking rise in honorarium and asking for regularization. They submitted various memoranda to respective Governments and formed Samyukta Sangharsha Samiti of Anganwadi workers, which was a joint battle by all Anganwadi workers to fight unitedly for their demands. On a petition filed by them, the Karnataka Tribunal held that Anganwadi workers should be considered Government servants and advised the Karnataka Government to absorb all of them slowly into the Government jobs. The Karnataka Government, however, filed an appeal in the Supreme Court which did not stay the KAT decision and refused to accept their request for early judgment. If the ICDS Scheme is allowed to be privatized, and, slowly and slowly, it is abandoned, it would be very dangerous, since it is the only programme in the urban and rural areas which is of great benefit not only for taking care of children and women but also for having a good and lasting impact on the health and education of children and taking care of poor mothers from poor families. It is the only Scheme available to the poor in rural

and urban areas alike, where the children of these sections have some access to appropriate immunization process and pregnant mothers receive services. Hence, a vast majority of population needs this scheme. They have been insisting that this Scheme should be institutionalized since it is an investment for the future and the women workers from the unorganized and the informal sector should really get benefits. They have been asking for regularisation of their services as the Anganwadi workers and helpers are totally under the control of the Ministry or the Department. There can be any disciplinary action against them and they can also be removed. They also get notices and for all practical purposes, there is an employer-employee relationship. If they are required to come on Sundays, on Independence Day, for Pulse – Polio programmes which they even cannot refuse and have no choice, then why they cannot be treated as regular workers? Instead of 4 or 4 ½ hours job, it should be made a full time programme and they should be given regular Government employee status, of Grade III or IV. At the time when Right to Education was being incorporated as a Fundamental Right, both at the time when the Education Bill was moved as 83<sup>rd</sup> and later on by the next Government as 93<sup>rd</sup> Amendment, she was given to understand that children between 0-6 year age group will be taken care of under ICDS and to meet the targets of education, or even meet the whole issue of eradication of child labour, the best thing will be to see to it that the ICDS programme becomes universally institutionalized and the anganwadi workers become regular workers and institutionalizing the Scheme would in turn serve our society and our poor people.

**3. Ms. Sudha Upadhyaya, Vice President, Anganwadi Karamchari Mahasabha (HMS).**

20. The mandate of ICDS requires workers to work for 4 – 5 hours daily but in actual terms they have to work for 6-7 hours a day in the course of which they have to maintain 12-14 registers daily besides having to keep track of account of the children of 1000 population. If anything goes wrong with the work, they are held accountable. Despite this, the workers get only an honorarium and are told that they are social workers. In case the workers have to take leave for two or three days due to any illness or sustaining injury at work, their honorarium is deducted for the period of their absence. On the one hand, the workers of ICDS are treated as private, on the other hand, all the laws pertaining to Government Employees are applied on them. They are, therefore, unable to understand whether they are social workers or are employees of the Government.

**3. Ms. Suchitra Mahapatra, Akhil Bharatiya Anganwadi Karmachari Mahasangh**

21. The ICDS Scheme was initially launched in 1975 on an experimental basis for a period of five years and the Rules that were then framed. Now that the Scheme has been 30 years old and the workload of Anganwadi workers/helpers has increased manifold, the honorarium being paid to them needs to be suitably revised. On the one hand the Government treats them as social workers, on the other hand in case they take leave, deductions are made from the honorarium. Their retirement age has been fixed at 58 years but they retire without any superannuation benefits as a result of which many of them face starvation. The success of the ICDS Scheme is considerably due to the efforts of the Anganwadi workers/helpers and there is no reason why they should not be given the status of Government employees, especially when their

average of working hours comes to more than eight. The Government had, as a matter of fact, announced that they would be paid TA/DA at par with the Class III employees but there is no effective mechanism to oversee whether this is being implemented. The Anganwadi workers/helpers also suffer from lack of promotional avenues. When they are given multifarious tasks to perform and all the Rules of Government employees apply to them, the denial of adequate wages to them is nothing but exploitation.

22. In response to some of the queries raised by the Members, the following clarifications were given by the representatives of the aforesaid organisations :

- (i) the question of incurring of expenditure on the regularization of services of Anganwadi workers/helpers with attendant benefits/allowances has to be viewed as an investment on human resource development against the long term gains for the development of women and children;
- (ii) once the ICDS Scheme is put on a regular keel and is institutionalised through legislative enactment, Government has to find ways and means to generate resources and one of the ways through which this could be done is by improving recovery of NPAs and tax base; and
- (iii) the objectives of the ICDS Scheme can best be realised by institutionalising it and once this is done, there will be no need for this being privatized by entrusting the Anganwadi centres to the care of NGOs especially when such NGOs are not subject to the direct control of the Departments or the implementing agencies.

**4. Prof. Jean Dreze, Honorary Professor, Delhi School of Economics**

23. The demand of the petitioners for institutionalization of ICDS and better service conditions for Anganwadi workers and helpers has to be viewed in the context of larger goal of universalization of ICDS. As a matter of fact, the condition of Indian children is quite pathetic; half of them are undernourished. What is even more alarming is that there has been very little improvement in the condition of children over the last so many years. Infant mortality rate has not reduced and there is also very little improvement in the nutritional status of Indian children. ICDS is the only major Government programme that can take care of this age group, and it is an extremely important age group, which involves 16 crore children. Even the Hon'ble Supreme Court has directed the Government to ensure that the ICDS programmes reach every child under 6 years of age and there is a clear commitment in the common minimum programme of the UPA Government that it would universalize the ICDS; provide functional Anganwadis in every settlement and ensure full coverage of children.

24. A random survey of 200 Anganwadi centres carried out in six States two years ago revealed that in one village an Anganwadi worker was paid only Rs.1,150 a month, which is pretty below the legal minimum wage in most States. Besides, they were often asked to do work outside the ICDS programmes. Also, on an average, an Anganwadi worker has to maintain not less than 12 registers; which can even go up to as many as 30 in some States. And, half of the Anganwadi workers, who were interviewed, reported that it takes more than six hours a week just to fill the registers. So, it is like a full day's work, a completely unpaid work. On top of low salaries and workload, the workers are not paid it even regularly. Sixty per cent of them informed that they had not been paid in the last 30 days; twenty per cent of them reported that

they had not been paid in the last three months. There is no doubt that the working conditions of these workers have to be improved, and for this, the ICDS programme, as a Scheme, is not enough. It has to work as an institution and be seen in the larger context of universalizing the ICDS and improving the quality of work. It is important to improve accountability of the system to eradicate corruption which is widespread; and therefore, monitoring and supervision are required, which is not the case now. Responding to a pointed query from a Member of the Committee as to whether the Anganwadi workers and helpers be given the status of Government employees, Prof. Jean Dreze replied that he was not sure that he was confident enough to answer that question though it is true that they need better treatment. The issue of accountability has also to be taken into account as in a survey of Anganwadi Centres it was found that half of the workers were missing at the time the investigators visited these Centres. Making Anganwadi workers and helpers Government servants is indeed a complex question especially viewed from the context of those working in Himachal Pradesh or Jharkhand being employed by the Central Government. The ICDS nonetheless has to be institutionalised and that question has to be seen from the point of view of universalising this Scheme.

### **OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

25. The petitioners have basically in their petition sought institutionalisation of the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) Scheme by converting it into a regular Department under the Ministry of Human Resource Development, regularization of services of Anganwadi workers/helpers as employees of that Department with all the accompanying benefits and facilities and development

and strengthening of Anganwadi Centres to make them effective instruments for the overall development of children and women. The reason which they have cited in support of their twin demand for conversion of ICDS into a regular Department and regularisation of services of Anganwadi workers/helpers as Government employees is that the Scheme, even though it is reviewed periodically, has a wide reach across the rural and urban areas benefitting women and children with the Anganwadi workers and helpers being the key functionaries in this process and has been working for the last more than thirty years. In other words, it has become a permanent Scheme of the Central Government and there is no reason why there should not be an exclusive Department for this Scheme alone. Similarly, in view of the fact that the ICDS has grown by leaps and bounds with a wide range of activities being brought within its ambit and the consequent expansion of the area of work of Anganwadi workers and helpers and increase in their working hours, there is no justification for their being treated as social or honorary workers with a paltry amount being doled out to them as honorarium, especially when they have put in such long years of service and the success of the Scheme, which has been lauded by various agencies, is due to the hard work of the Anganwadi workers and helpers. Though under the ICDS a work schedule of 4 to 4 ½ hours a day is envisaged but in reality on an average they have to work for eight hours a day and all the rules applicable to Government servants are applied to them. That apart, in view of their close relationship with the people, their services are utilized by the respective State Governments for a whole range of activities - be it any survey, promotion of small savings, group insurance or non formal education - for which some of the State Governments are paying additional honoraria at varying rates but when it comes to their seeking regularization of services, their demand is brushed aside.

26. The Ministry of Human Resource Development (Department of Women and Child Development) in their written comments on the demands put forth by the petitioners has explained that the ICDS Scheme is the flagship of the Department of Women and Child Development which is paying adequate attention to the administration of this Scheme being implemented through the State Governments/UT Administrations. The ICDS Scheme, as a matter of fact, envisages that the Anganwadi workers and helpers have to be engaged as "honorary workers" from the local community who come forward to render their services, on part -time basis, in the area of child care and development and keeping in view their status under the Scheme, it is neither feasible nor appropriate to treat them as Government employees. They are not either covered under the provisions of the Minimum Wages Act. They are, however, paid a fixed honoraria per month as is decided by the Government from time to time. The amount of honorarium has already been doubled w.e.f 1.4.2002 in recognition of the significant services being rendered by them.

27. The Committee has noted that taking a cue from the ICDS Scheme's having been in operation for the last more than thirty years, the petitioners want it to be institutionalized by putting it on a permanent footing. In other words, they want the uncertainty arising out of this Scheme being subjected to periodical reviews to go and hence their demand for the Scheme being converted into a Department. This Scheme, as the Committee has observed, is already being administered by the Department of Women and Child Development as its flagship Scheme and as submitted by the Secretary of that Department in the course of her evidence before the Committee, 85 to 90 percent of their budgetary outlay is being spent on this Scheme alone which means that there is already a full-fledged Department catering to this Scheme. This Department, as the Committee came to know during examination of this



petition, has since been upgraded to the level of an independent Ministry of Women and Child Development and consequently the Committee feels that the demand of the petitioners to that extent is substantially met. However, their demand for regularization of Anganwadi workers and helpers as Government employees has to be looked at from the point of view of their status as it was envisaged in the ICDS Scheme itself. The Scheme is very clear that the workers from the local community who come forward to render their services on part time basis in the area of child care and development have to be engaged as Anganwadi workers and helpers which means that their participation is on voluntary basis. As a matter of fact, the demand for regularization of their services had been taken up by their Federations/Associations with the Department of Women and Child Development and the same was not acceded to in view of huge financial implications involved, the Anganwadi workers/helpers being required to work just for 4 to 4 ½ hours a day and not any specific qualifications laid down for their recruitment. As submitted by the Department of Women and Child Development, the number of Anganwadi workers and helpers presently is around 15 lakh which will go up to 19 lakh with the proposed expansion of the Scheme and if they are given the status of Group 'C' and Group 'D' Government employees, the annual financial implication on their salary alone would be about Rs. 14,000/- crores per annum which will have wide repercussions for the exchequer. **Therefore, having regard to the status of Anganwadi workers and helpers envisaged under the ICDS and huge financial implications involved, the Committee is of the view that their plea for regularization of services as Government servants is not feasible or acceptable in the present circumstances and therefore, the Scheme needs to be continued on a voluntary basis. This is, however, not to take the credit away from the Anganwadi workers and helpers for the**

**steady progress which the Scheme has made during the span of last over 30 years and in view of the significant services being rendered by them, the area of their work is being rapidly expanded. Therefore, in recognition of their services, they need a better lot and improvement in their service conditions and remuneration.** The Department of Women and Child Development has no doubt raised the amount of honorarium from time to time and has also taken some steps such as introduction of Anganwadi Karyakarti Bima Yojana for them, reservation of at least 25 % of posts of Supervisors under ICDS Scheme for matriculate Anganwadi workers with ten years experience and preference of services rendered as Anganwadi workers as additional qualification for being recruited as Primary School Teachers, ANMS and other such village based posts but in view of the fact that they are now being deputed on jobs by the respective State Governments not originally envisaged under the ICDS which has consequently led to the increase in their working hours, they have a claim for better remuneration and facilities. The Committee in this context has also noted that some States are giving monetary incentives to Anganwadi workers/helpers out of their own resources for the additional work assigned to them but the rates of additional honorarium vary considerably and there does not seem to be any uniform criteria being followed in this regard. The fact of the matter is that the Anganwadi workers have a huge job profile as laid down by the Department of Women and Child Development and the Committee was even apprised by Prof. Jean Dreze during his oral submissions that they have to maintain not less than 12 registers on an average which extend upto 30 in some cases. This leads the Committee to believe that the work profile as envisaged for Anganwadi workers under the ICDS when it was launched has significantly undergone a change whereas rules of their employment continue to remain the same. **The Committee, therefore,**

**is of the view that the Anganwadi workers/helpers should be assigned only the duties originally envisaged under the ICDS with their being strictly required to work only for designated 4 to 4 ½ hours and in case additional responsibilities are entrusted to them, then a rational criteria of additional honorarium be worked out and the same should be paid to them at a uniform rate by the respective State Governments/UT Administrations.**

The Committee has also noted that there is no strict time frame fixed by the Department of Women and Child Development for revision of honorarium payable to the Anganwadi workers/helpers though it has periodically been revised. It is really a pity that even after the ICDS being in operation for more than 30 years, the maximum honorarium that an Anganwadi worker is drawing is about Rs. 1000/- which is Rs. 500/- in the case of an Anganwadi helper, which, to say the least, is pitifully low, especially when these workers and helpers are mostly drawn from poorer sections of society. Since the Minimum Wages Act is not applicable to the Anganwadi workers and helpers, the Committee will not like to dwell on that but the Anganwadi workers and helpers definitely need to have something equal to the minimum wages especially when their workload has increased manifold and the State Governments are also utilising their services. **The Committee, therefore, recommends that a standing mechanism may be put in place in the Ministry of Women and Child Development for revision in the rates of honorarium after every 3 or 4 years which should be worked out in consonance with the prevailing rates of inflation.** The Committee was apprised by Prof. Jean Dreze that in a recent study of ICDS conducted by the Centre for Equity Studies in six States, 60 percent of the Anganwadi workers interviewed had reported that they had not been paid during the last 30 days and 21 per cent had reported that they had not been paid at all in the last three

months. Similarly, in a survey of the Anganwadi Centres, it was found that half of the workers were missing at the time the Investigators visited those Centres. It is really distressing to learn that the Anganwadi workers and helpers are not paid even the meagre amount of their honorarium in time. **It is, therefore, imperative that both the Central Government and the State Governments have to work in tandem in so far as the implementation of the ICDS Scheme and the welfare of Anganwadi workers and helpers is concerned and there has to be effective coordination between them. It is equally important that coupled with the betterment of service conditions of Anganwadi workers/helpers, effective delivery of services at Anganwadi Centres has to be ensured and there has to be stringent monitoring/supervision of Anganwadi Centres.** The Committee was informed by the Department of Women and Child Development that the State Governments being the implementing agencies have to ensure that the integrated services are delivered at Anganwadi Centres so as to achieve the objective of the Scheme and that there is a built in monitoring system for promoting assessment analysis and actions at the State, District and Project levels. There is a Supervisor for every 20-25 Anganwadi Centres to see that Anganwadi workers and helpers provide the services and maintain the record of such services. The very fact that in a number of Anganwadi Centres half of the workers were found missing amply goes to prove the inefficacy of this mechanism. **The Committee accordingly feels that this mechanism needs to be strengthened and since the ICDS is a centrally sponsored Scheme with huge amount of money being spent thereunder, this cannot be left entirely to the State Government functionaries. The Ministry of Women and Child Development needs also to evolve a more effective system of supervision of Anganwadi Centres.**

28. Alongwith their plea for institutionalization of ICDS and regularization of services of Anganwadi workers/helpers, the petitioners have also called for strengthening and development of Anganwadi Centres to effectively carry out activities for the overall development of children and women. The submission made by the Department of Women and Child Development (now Ministry of Women and Child Development) was that the Anganwadi is a focal point for the delivery of services under the ICDS and the Government of India has been fulfilling its obligation under the Scheme and that there has been constant emphasis on States to ensure regular functioning of Anganwadis and effective delivery of services. Nonetheless, improvement is a continuous process and it has been their endeavour to provide all basic facilities in Anganwadis through convergence of efforts of the Department of Family Welfare, Department of Elementary Education and Department of Drinking Water Supply etc. to fulfill its commitments contained in the National Common Minimum Programme (NCMP) and to comply with the Supreme Court's directives to increase the number of Anganwadi Centres (AWCs), the Government has approved expansion of the ICDS Scheme to 467 additional projects and 188168 additional Anganwadi Centres out of which 456 additional ICDS Projects and 1,88,055 AWCs have been sanctioned. With the expansion of the Scheme, the number of ICDS Projects has increased to 6108 and that of AWCs to 9.42 lakh. There are about 7.62 lakh Anganwadi Workers and equal number of Anganwadi Helpers as on 31.7.2005. With the recent expansion of the Scheme to 1.88 lakh additional Anganwadi Centres, the number of AWWs and Helpers will increase to about 19 lakh. The Committee notes that the Department of Women and Child Development (now Ministry of Women and Child Development) has been making concerted efforts in achieving the objectives envisaged under the ICDS Scheme. However, **as of now, children in the age**

**group of 0-6 years are covered under the Scheme which is just 16 per cent of the total population and the remaining children in the age group of above six years are left out of the Scheme. The Committee is, therefore of the view that the scope of the Scheme needs to be widened to cover the left out group of children.**

29. In this context, the Committee also noted that the Secretary, Department of Women and Child Development in her evidence had stated that out of a total of 16 to 17 crores of children just 4 to 5 crores of children are being presently covered by this Scheme. It is also in evidence that the Supreme Court also has directed the Government to universalize the scheme. It has also been stated that at present the number of honorary workers will be about 19 lakhs. Further expansion will mean additional resources to be found by the Government. Though it is not for the Committee to suggest ways and means to raise additional funds by the Government, still in view of the Supreme Court's observation and the imperative need to cover all children coming under the scheme, **the Committee suggests the following to the Government for its consideration:-**

- (i) to levy a cess called 'Anganwadi Cess' so that the cess amount collected is utilized to cover at least a good portion of the additional expenses incurred on this account.**
- (ii) To create a Public Trust under the control and supervision of the Government by associating representatives of business, industry and trade, to seek donation for the trust to be solely intended to cover children under this scheme and providing tax relief for the amount so contributed to the said Trust. The cost of setting up of an Anganwadi and running it for a year can be calculated and the cooperation of business, industry and trade can be sought to bear the expenses of as many Anganwadis as possible to be set up in new areas.**

30. The Government pleads its inability to increase the coverage of the Scheme and improve it so as to cover all children between the age group of 0-6. Hence the Committee has offered the above two proposals for serious consideration of the Government in order to enable it to augment its financial resources for the effective implementation of the scheme.

**JANA KRISHNAMURTHY K.  
CHAIRMAN  
COMMITTEE ON PETITIONS  
RAJYA SABHA**

**NEW DELHI.**

**May 11, 2006.**

**Vaisakha 21,1928(*Saka*)**