A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS OF INTEGRATED CHILD DEVELOPMENT SERVICES (ICDS) SCHEME ON WOMEN AND CHILDREN IN KOTTAYAM DISTRICT

1.1 Introduction

This present research is an attempt to study the impact of Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) scheme on its indented beneficiaries viz., women and children in Kottayam District. Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) is one of the most crucial and comprehensive schemes introduced by the Government of India for early childhood care and development. It aims at enhancing survival and development of the children from the vulnerable sections of society.

"Launched in 1975 with 33 projects on an experimental basis, ICDS has expanded considerably in subsequent years and at present has 5614 projects in about 45 percent of the community development blocks of the country, comprising of 4571 rural, 733 tribal and 310 urban projects. It is perhaps the only countrywide programme in the world functioning on a large scale, requiring multi-sectoral operations and inter-sectoral linkages for its implementation. It reaches out to 40.37 lakh expectant and nursing mothers and 214.5 lakh children in the age group 0-6 years through more than 7 lakh frontline workers."¹

ICDS is a unique programme, which encompasses the main components of human resource development, namely – health, nutrition and education. Under ICDS, a package of services, including supplementary nutrition, immunisation, health check-up and referral services, is provided to children below six years of age and expectant and nursing mothers. Non-formal pre-

¹ Children in India, NIPCCD Pocket Book. P. 203 &304, 1997
school education is imparted to children in the age group of 3 to 6 years and, nutrition and health education to women between 15 to 45 years. It takes a holistic view of the development of the children and attempts to improve both their prenatal and postnatal environments. ICDS is implemented in 127 Community Development Blocks in Kerala. In Kottayam District it is implemented in five Community Development Blocks, viz., Kanjirappally, Lalum, Madappally, Pampady and Vaikom.

It appears that ICDS is a very important welfare project for the promotion of health and development of children and mothers. It facilitates a healthy future society. It is also an agency for development and a tool for social change. ICDS promotes child survival and development through an integrated approach converging basic services for improved child care, early stimulation and learning, improved enrolment and retention, and health and nutrition. The integrated and inter-sectoral nature, co-ordination mechanism, community involvement, training infrastructure and monitoring system make ICDS a unique programme. Therefore, constant study and evaluation are required to ascertain the impact of the scheme. It is true that we can find some studies undertaken on this subject. But they are mostly about North Indian States. Not much work is found in Kerala on ICDS and its implementation. This is clear from the research reviews published from time to time by the National Institute of Public Co-operation and Child Development. This inspired the researcher to take up a study in this line.

1.2 Definition of Key Terms

(a) Critical Analysis: “analysis based on objective scientific criteria for assessing the effectiveness of a system”

(b) Problems: “areas within a system which presents operational difficulties which cannot be solved using routine procedures”
1.3 Significance of the Study

"ICDS – the Integrated Child Development Services – is the best expression of our commitment for our children. It is today the largest and unique and integrated programme of the world for early child development, converging interventions for health, nutritional well-being, psycho-social and cognitive development – linked to other sectoral operations for safe drinking water, environmental sanitation and women’s development." Children are the most valuable assets and the strength of our country. They are the foundation on which the future of this country rests. Therefore, the development of our children is a true indicator of our progress and of the power of a vibrant democracy to fulfil its promises to people. Hence ICDS Manual states: “Children are now recognised as the first in priority call on the agenda of development, not only because this is a desirable societal investment in the nation’s future human resource development but also because early childhood is a vulnerable and most crucial period, when the foundations are laid for cumulative life, long learning and human development.”

ICDS is being implemented in 5 out of 8 Community Development Blocks in Kottayam District. There is a proposal to cover the entire blocks of the District in the near future. In this context it is worthwhile to see whether the programme has achieved the expected objectives especially with regard to women and children. Every year the Government is spending enormous amount for the promotion of ICDS. The annual report for the year 1998-99 of the Government of India states that: “the Central Government has spent 767.14 crores rupees during the financial year 1998-1999 and every year the

expenditure goes up. Therefore the present study hopes to reveal whether the huge investment made on ICDS is justified or not. If not the draw back to be identified and rectified. The present study also hopes to examine as to whether ICDS needs to be extended to other areas or not.

1.4 Hypotheses of the study

The study has been designed to test the following hypotheses in mind:
1. ICDS group of children will show better intellectual development than non-ICDS group of children.
2. School dropout rates in the ICDS areas will be less than that of the non-ICDS areas.
3. The pre-school education programme under ICDS would help to create a better acceptance of the parents for further education of their children.
4. Women in ICDS areas will have better awareness of nutrition and health problems of children as against women belonging to non-ICDS area.
5. The efficacy of the ICDS delivery system is a major determinant of the impact it can produce on the beneficiaries.

1.5 Objectives

The objectives of the study are:
1. To find out to what extent the Pre-school Education Programme of ICDS will accelerate intellectual development of children in the ICDS areas;
2. To assess the impact of Pre-school Education in the reduction of school dropout rates, enrolment in further education and retention of the children in the ICDS areas;
3. To examine the impact of the Nutrition and Health Education components of ICDS on the women population in the ICDS area (between 15 to 45 years) in terms of enhancement of their knowledge in the critical health care areas - immunisation, nutritional care of children, prevention of nutritional

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deficiency diseases, environmental sanitation and personal hygiene - and on the extent to which the beneficiaries put this knowledge into practice;

4. To assess the efficacy of the ICDS delivery system impacts on the outcomes of the project, especially in respect of nutrition and health education, in the selected project areas;

5. To bring out to what extent the scheme helps in addressing the Gandhian concept of a welfare society (Sarvodaya); and

6. To identify the drawbacks in the implementation of the project.

1.6 Scope and Limit of the study

Assessment of a comprehensive programme like the ICDS is fraught with difficulties. The researcher had to delimit his investigation within some of the major parameters. Out of the ten districts covered by the programme, only one district has been isolated for the study. This, however, will not decrease considerably in the dependability of the findings since the project functions in almost the same way in different districts.

The decision of the researcher to limit the study to a smaller region has helped him to make a closer study of the area. He selected the Kottayam District of Central Kerala as a representative area for study. The findings of the study could be generalised to other districts of the state as well. While concepts like impact, intellectual development, health awareness, dropout rates etc., have been brought under the impact study, it cannot be claimed all possible dimensions of the impact have been covered. But the researcher claims that all major dimensions have been covered by the study. Intelligence was measured using a non-verbal test of intelligence – Raven's Coloured Progressive Matrices Test (RPM Test).

In Kottayam District the scheme is being implemented in 5 out of 8 Community Development Blocks. Therefore to make an in depth study of the
impact of the scheme on women and children, the researcher had to further limit the study area to Kanjirapally, Madapally and Vikom Blocks of the District. This again will not decrease the dependability of the findings for reasons mentioned earlier.

1.7 Methodology

To assess the impact of the ICDS an experimental group was drawn from the three ICDS Blocks and the control group was drawn from three non-ICDS Blocks. The initial step was a search into the primary sources and documents of ICDS, its origin, philosophy, objective, rationale and administrative mechanism. This has been gathered from the original documents, namely its by-laws, manuals and other documents published from time to time. After a pilot study of the implementation of the programme in Kerala, especially in Kottayam District, tentative hypotheses and objectives of the present study were evolved. Thereafter, the universe of the study was ascertained. Which was followed by a review of the various studies conducted on ICDS. This helped to revise the hypotheses and objectives and methodology. Rest of the details of the methodology such as sampling, tools etc. are presented below.

Sampling Procedure

For the study three ICDS blocks out of five in the District were randomly selected. It may be noted that Kanjirapally is comparatively a hilly area; Madapally is a plain area and Vaikom is a coastal area. The procedure helps to give a representative a cross section of Kottayam District and Kerala State. Three non-ICDS Blocks were also selected for the purpose of making a comparative study. All the areas selected were similar to the ICDS areas covered by the study except that they did not have ICDS scheme in operation.
The non-ICDS Blocks selected for the study are Ettumanoor, Pallam and Vazhoor.

20 Anganwadis each were randomly selected from the ICDS areas of Kanjirappally and Madappally for the study and 10 Anganwadis were selected from Vaikom. Similarly 10 villages each from the three non-ICDS Blocks were also randomly selected for the study.

From each project, 20 women comprising of 6 pregnant, 4 nursing and 10 other women between 15 to 45 years of age were randomly selected. Thus a total of 800 women from ICDS and 600 from the non-ICDS were in the sample for the Health and Nutrition Education component.

150 children each between 5 to 6 years of age were selected randomly from the 50 Anganwadi centres of ICDS project. It was ensured that those children who have attended Anganwadi centres at least for one year were included in the sample. Similarly 150 children from the 30 villages of non-ICDS project area between the same ages of 5 to 6 years who have not attended any pre-school education programme were selected randomly for our comparative study. The details of the sample projects selected for the study is given in table 1.1.

It was also ensured that in both projects, half of the samples selected were boys and the other half were girls. The study also collected data from ICDS functionaries listed below:

1. Child Development Project Officers : 3
2. Supervisors : 14
3. Anganwadi Workers : 50
4. Village Leaders : 100
Tools

A. Interview Schedules

1. Interview schedule for mothers/women (N = 600) from both ICDS and non-ICDS areas.

2. Schedule for middle level ICDS functionaries namely CDPO, Supervisor and Anganwadi Worker (N = 67) from ICDS area.

3. Observation Schedule for Anganwadis (N = 50, ICDS only)

4. Interview Schedule for Village Leaders (N = 100, ICDS only)

B. Intelligence Test

RPM Test for measuring intelligence of children (below 6 years); this test was used for measuring intellectual development. It is a non-verbal test of general intelligence.

C. School dropout rates, enrolment for further education and retention

The above details were studied with the help of secondary data collected from school records.

Available reports, records, guidelines and other documents form additional sources of information. The data collected were finally processed and analysed to find answers to the questions paused as objectives.

Data and statistical techniques used

To find out the statistical significance of the two groups ‘t’ test for large independent samples was used.

\[
t = \frac{M_1 - M_2}{\sqrt{\frac{\sigma_1^2}{N_1} + \frac{\sigma_2^2}{N_2}}}
\]

Also, the comparison of proportions was done using the following formula:

\[
t = \frac{p_1 - p_2}{\sqrt{\frac{p_1q_1}{n_1} + \frac{p_2q_2}{n_2}}}
\]
### Table 1.1
Target Population in the Sample Projects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Beneficiaries</th>
<th>ICDS</th>
<th>Non ICDS</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Women</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 - 45 years</td>
<td></td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expectant Mothers</td>
<td></td>
<td>120</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nursing Mothers</td>
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<td>80</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>All</strong></td>
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<td>400</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(20)</td>
<td>(20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Children</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 - 6 years</td>
<td></td>
<td>50</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(10)</td>
<td>(10)</td>
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</tbody>
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Chapterisation

The thesis is chapterised as follows:

**Chapter – 1** is the introduction. This includes the introduction of the topic, significance of the study, the hypotheses, the objectives, methodology and scope and limitations.

**Chapter – 2** comprises of the origin and stages of growth of child care services in India which *inter alia* include evolution of child care services, child in India, the Integrated Child Development Services, its philosophy, its implementation, and approach and details of the administration of the scheme in the country.

**Chapter – 3** is a detailed review of literature, which includes a general profile of the studies on the effectiveness of pre-school education component, studies on the impact of nutrition and health education and studies on the efficacy of the scheme of implementation.

**Chapter – 4** comprises the data analysis and discussions. Analysis has been done in the order of the objectives viz., the impact of the pre-school education component, nutrition and health education, efficacy of the ICDS delivery system relating to nutrition and health education, how the scheme helps in addressing the Gandhian concept of a welfare society, draw backs in the implementation and the important findings of the above components and validity of the hypotheses.

**Chapter – 5** conclusions and policy recommendations.

A critical analysis of the problems and prospects of integrated child development services (ICDS) scheme on women and children in Kottayam District is the topic of the Research. The important objectives are:

- To find out to what extent the Pre-school Education Programme of ICDS will accelerate intellectual development of children in the ICDS area;
- To assess the impact of Pre-school Education in the reduction of school dropout rates, enrolment in further education and retention in the area;
- To examine the impact of the Nutrition and Health Education components of ICDS on the women population in the ICDS area (between 15 to 45 years) in terms of enhancement of their knowledge in the critical health care areas - immunisation, nutritional care of children, prevention of nutritional deficiency diseases, environmental sanitation, personal hygiene etc., and the extent to which they put this knowledge into practice;
- To assess the efficacy of the ICDS delivery system relating to nutrition and health education, in the selected project areas and how its impacts on the outcomes of the project;
- To bring out how the scheme helps in addressing the Gandhian concept of a welfare society