Chapter 1

Introduction
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

The most valuable asset of a nation is its human resource. Developed nations are advanced not because of their high rise buildings and latest infrastructure, but because of the quality of human resource they possess. In today's world, the countries who have learnt to invest in their human resource are the most progressive and developed nations. India also has recognized the importance of human resource and has made several efforts to improve the quality of its human resources. India has been trying to develop the human resource from the very beginning of modern times. It was initiated with the process of child welfare development. India's history of child welfare goes back to 1920 when the first children's organisation called Balkanji Bari was formed with child membership with Headquarter in Mumbai. In 1924, the Guild of Service started excellent child welfare services in Chennai, and its services spread to most of South India. In 1927, the Children's Aid Society, Mumbai took vagrant children in residential care. India achieved Independence in 1947 and after that the Government of India has undertaken various initiatives towards nation's human resource development.

The Constitution of India itself provides a framework for care and protection of
women and children. Article 47 of the Directive Principles of State Policy states that “The State shall regard the raising of the level of nutrition and the standard of living of its people and the improvement of public health as among its primary duties and, in particular, the State shall endeavour to bring about prohibition of the consumption except for medicinal purposes of intoxicating drinks and of drugs which are injurious to health”.

In 1958, the Indian Council for Child Welfare, a non-governmental organisation made a representation to Government for a specific child welfare plan. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child changed the very approach to child care, and the child rights. The Government of India formulated and adopted the National Policy for Children in 1975. Department of Women and Child Development formulated the National Plan of Action for Children in 1992; and in 2003, a National Charter for Children was adopted which redefined India’s policy commitments towards the child. The revised National Plan of Action for Children was adopted in 2005 to remove obstacles and improve the condition of children of India.

Recognizing the need for early intervention to ensure the development of a young child's body, mind and intellect to its maximum potential, the Government of India started Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS), a centrally sponsored services which is a step towards responding to the child's needs in a comprehensive and holistic perspective.

India has a fully developed organizational set-up to meet the challenging needs and rights of children. The national machinery, and above all the
commitment at the highest governmental level, gives an impetus to the efforts being make to ensure child survival, growth and protection over term benefits for children, a stage has been reached where we have the ability to cater to the basic needs of children, which is so relevant for promoting the holistic development and full realization of the potential.

In India, child related programmes have been changing in a continuous manner from remedial and piecemeal welfare approach to a preventive, holistic and developmental approach to meet the conditions of multiple deprivation, isolation, underdevelopment of the child; and specialized approaches are being progressively supplemented by comprehensive; integrated and cross sectoral approach. Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) is a landmark programme in the field of child development. The ICDS programme of the Department of women and child development started on 2nd October, which is the 106th birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi in 1975.

Today, ICDS represents one of the world’s largest and most unique programmes for early childhood development, and this programme is one of the unparalleled programme in history. ICDS is the foremost symbol of India's commitment to her children. India’s response to the challenge of breaking the vicious cycle of malnutrition, mortality, etc. of the child remains in its ICDS programme.

The early years of childhood are most crucial period in life, because the foundations for physical, cognitive, social, emotional, language development
and life long learning are laid in this period. Recognizing that early childhood
development constitutes the foundation of human development, ICDS is
designed to promote holistic development of children under six years through
the strengthened capacity of caregivers and communities and improved
access to basic services at the community level.

ICDS offers a powerful community based system that functions as the
convergent interface between disadvantaged communities and government
programmes such as primary health care and education. ICDS is also
regarded as the foundation of the national efforts for universalisation of
primary education because which provides increased opportunities for
promoting early development, and is associated with improvement of
cognitive and social skills of the learning and enrollment and retention in the
early primary stage. By releasing girls from disadvantaged groups and from
the burden of dibbling care, it enables them to participate in primary
education. ICDS has emerged as the world's one of the most unique and
largest early childhood development programme. This programme started as
a social experiment at firm, and now it includes an integrated package of
services, namely, supplementary nutrition, health check-up and information,
health and nutrition education and non-formal pre-school education, etc.

The mark the start of the 20th year of integrated child development services,
development of women and child has decided to re-dedicate itself to strengthen
integrated activities aimed at improving the nutrition and health status among
children for full physical, emotional and all round development of the child.
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It will also provide stimulation to participate effectively in the implementation of ICDS services designed for their welfare and development and jointly work towards achieving the developmental goals.

India is the home of about 380 million children, the largest number for any country in the world. The nation has a great responsibility to bring these children up as responsible and capable citizens. During the last five decades, the Government has accorded the highest priority to children in the development programmes, so as to meet their challenging needs and rights, and bring them into the mainstream. However, the impact has not been commensurate with the inputs. Despite commendable efforts, for many Indian children a gap definitely persists between policy and ground reality.

Even today, a large number of children continue to face sizeable challenges in their effort to survive and to develop to their full potential in a secure and nurturing environment. Female foeticide, infanticide, neglect to the girl child, crime and rape remain largely invisible and often tend to go unreported and unpunished. The existing age old child rearing practices, behavioural patterns and attitude of communities and families, the existing value system of society combined with poverty and illiteracy, etc. are mainly responsible for these situations.

As a result, too many children reach the threshold of adulthood after missing out their childhood. The phenomenon of “Lost Childhood” weakens the very moral fabric of society and the strength of the nation. To meet the gap the
Integrated Child Development Services has been operating in accordance with the government policy and principles.

1.2 Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS)

The Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) of today is the World's largest Programme which aims at enhancing the health, nutrition and learning opportunities of infants, young children (0-6 years) and their mothers. As such, it is the foremost symbol of India's commitment to its children — India's response to the challenge of providing pre-school education on one hand and breaking the vicious cycle of mal-nutrition, mortality, and morbidity, on the other.

The service provides an integrated approach for converging basic services through community-based honorary workers viz. Anganwadi Workers and Helpers. The services are provided at a centre called the 'Anganwadi' which literally means a courtyard play centre a childcare centre located within the village itself. The package of services provided are — (i) Supplementary nutrition, (ii) Immunization, (iii) Health check-up, (iv) Referral services, (v) Preschool and non-formal education, and (vi) Nutrition & health education.

It is a centrally sponsored services implemented through the State Governments with 100 per cent financial assistance from the Central Government for all inputs other than supplementary nutrition which the States were to provide from their own resources. However, from the year 2005-06, the Government of India has decided to provide Central assistance to States for
supplementary nutrition to the extent of 50 per cent of the actual expenditure incurred by States or 50 per cent of the cost norms, whichever is less.

The Government has emphasized a lot on integrated and holistic development of children through ICDS Programme. As far as the two basic elements of human resource development, i.e. health and education, are concerned the role of ICDS is very vital in nature. As development has several inter-related dimensions - physical, cognitive, social, emotional and psychological, therefore, a synergistic approach to the implementation of the services becomes inevitable.

Needless to say, learning occurs in all these above stated areas of development and influences many other areas of development; all of these areas need to be developed simultaneously. The services, therefore envisages inter-sectoral convergence of various services viz. nutrition, health and education through the Anganwadi Centres. The services are delivered through different Departments and such departments converge their activities at the Anganwadi Centre. The converging Departments include Health, Rural Development, Drinking Water Supply, Panchayati Raj Institutions etc. These Departments work in synchronization with each other.

There has been significant progress in the implementation of Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) during the last two years, both in terms of increase in number of operational projects and Anganwadi Centres (ACWs) and coverage of beneficiaries as indicated below:
Table 1: ICDS Projects, Anganwadi Centres and pre-school beneficiaries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>No. of operational projects</th>
<th>No. of operational AWCs</th>
<th>No. of pre-school education beneficiaries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>31.03.2004</td>
<td>5267</td>
<td>649307</td>
<td>204.38 lakh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31.03.2005</td>
<td>5422</td>
<td>706872</td>
<td>218.41 lakh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31.10.2005</td>
<td>5645</td>
<td>745120</td>
<td>231.38 lakh</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Assam first ICDS project was started in 1976 and at present there are 196 ICDS Projects and 25416 Anganwadi centres (AWCs) were in operation as on 31st October, 2005. Beside these 23 new projects and 6659 Anganwadi centres (AWCs) sanctioned in 2005-06. Under the service, 781953 Children (6 months to 6 years) and 148030 pregnant & lactating mothers were getting benefits. The State also got Rs. 366.67 lakhs from the Centre for Supplementary Nutrition Programme (SNP) in 2005 – 06.

1.3 Perspective Plan of Child Development with special reference to Pre-School education

The value of Pre-school education has now been very well recognized and accepted. Pre-school education helps in promoting physical, social, emotional and cognitive development of children. Scientific data is not available, yet there is enough evidence to prove that pre-school education definitely contributes to enhancement of enrolment and reduction of school dropouts at the primary level.

The age group 3 - 6 in India constitutes roughly seven per cent of the total population and is estimated to size around 59.6 million by 2000 AD. (under the medium variant assumption). Although article 45 of the Constitution
states for free and compulsory education for children up to 14 years of age, but, pre-school education has not been recognized as a part of it. Till now, pre-school education has been a function of the social welfare sector and in many cases the functions of voluntary and private agencies. However, there has been an increasing diffusion of the awareness of the need for early childhood education after Independence.

The First Five Year Plan stressed on the importance of education for children of 3 - 6 years of age and the Government urged the local bodies to organize balwadis in the rural areas. Under the initiative of the Central Social Welfare Board, large scale attempts were made to pre-school services in rural areas. During the Second Five Year Plan, efforts to popularize balwadis were intensified. The Third Five Year Plan laid emphasis on improvement of the existing balwadis, opening of new balwadis and expanding training facilities for balsevikas. The Kothari Commission (1964 - 66) fixed the target of enrolment in pre-school at 5 per cent of children in the age group 3 - 5 years. However in 1968, the Committee on Programmes for Child Welfare recommended that the enrolment of the children in the 3 - 5 years age group should be expanded to ten per cent within a period of ten year. In the Fourth Five Year Plan, the Government's efforts were confined to training of teachers and evolving suitable teacher-guides. During the Fifth Five Year Plan, pre-school education was covered under the Integrated Child Development Services. Thirty-three projects were sanctioned in different parts of the country and by the end of 1977- 78, 3280 Anganwadis were functioning in 320 villages and about 1,15,000 children were receiving non-formal pre-
school education. In the Sixth Five Year Plan, the ICDS services expanded tremendously to cover a total of 1000 projects. Thus, about 4,000,000 children were getting pre-school education facilities through about 95,000 Anganwadis till 1985.

In 1978, it was estimated that there were about 12,000 nursery schools catering to the need of urban children and over 44,000 recognized and non-recognized balwadis were working. In 1981, in addition to the Angwadis of ICDS and Balwadis, there were around 10,800 pre-primary schools being run by Ministry of Education. However, these services of pre-school education of some kind or the other cover about only 12.5 per cent of the total child population between 3 – 6 years. Poised for universal coverage by the turn of the century, ICDS today reaches out to 3.8 million expectant and nursing mothers and 17.8 million children (under six years of age) of disadvantages groups, of these 10.2 million children (three to six years of age) participate in centre Pre-school education activities. The network consists of 3,907 projects, covering nearly 70 percent of the country's community development blocks and 260 urban slum pockets. The challenge is to build on the rich experience of the past two decades and effectively tap programme, as it moves towards Universalization. ICDS is the reality of today which our vision for tomorrow is founded.

Pre-school education plays an important role in the ICDS services for proper psychological, physical and social development of the child. In ICDS services, pre-school education is one significant component and this pre-
school education is provided in the Anganwadi Centres. Pre-school activities in the Anganwadi lead to the total development of the child, i.e., physical, social, emotional and mental.

This pre-school education also gives importance on development desirable social attitudes and manner among children encourages healthy group participation among children and makes the children sensitive to the rights of the self and privileges of others.

The early years constitute a formative period when all-round development takes place very rapidly. Besides, taking care of health and nutrition of children during these years, development of intellectual, cognitive and language abilities have also to be given equal importance.

In fact, early years of life offers unique opportunity for exploring one’s own intellectual capacity and other abilities through the nature of his experiences and environment available. A number of research studies indicated that children who attended pre-school had an advantage in the development of social, emotional, physical and cognitive abilities. A second most crucial advantage of pre-school education is the reduction of wastage and stagnation at primary school stage. A number of studies have proved that wastage and stagnation in primary schools is reduced due to the effect of pre-school education.

Pre-school education is the back-bone of the ICDS programme. Children between the age group of three to six years attend the Anganwadi for about
three hours a day for the pre-school education. The main objective of the pre­
school education component is to stimulate and satisfy the curiosity of the
child, rather than follow any rigid learning curriculum. Children are taught
music and songs, games, etc. in pre-school education centre. Locally
available materials are used as the teaching-learning materials in pre-school
education centre. There is no formally structured curriculum and flexibility is
encouraged.

Keeping the above points in view, the ICDS services provides in it's package
of services a very crucial place to the non-formal pre-school education
component. As per the services, the non-formal pre-school education is to be
imparted to the children in the age group of 3 to 5 years through the
Anganwadi. The activities designed in Anganwadi are not to impart with any
formal learning but to develop in child the desirable attitudes, values and
behavioural patterns, and also to provide environmental stimulation. No
attempt is made to achieve uniformity in teaching / learning procedure in the
Anganwadies with regard to children's learning. Thus, the whole objective of
pre-school activity aims at the all round development of the child.

1.4 Objectives of Integrated Child Development Services

1. To lay the foundation for the proper psychological, physical,
educational and social development of the child.

2. To improve the nutritional and health status of children in the age
group 0-6 years.

3. To reduce the incidence of mortality, morbidity, malnutrition and
school drop outs.
4. To achieve effective co-ordination of policy and implementation amongst the various departments to promote child development
5. To enhance the capability of the mothers to look after the normal health and nutritional needs of the child through proper nutrition and health education.
6. To bring about an effective transition from non-formal pre-school set up in ICDS to formal primary school set-up.

Through the ICDS service all the needy children in the age group 0 - 6 years expectant and nursing mothers and women in the age group 15 - 45 years are provided the basic services in respect of their needs subsequently and they are provided the facilities to alleviate the condition of their socio-economic deprivation prevailing in society. Since 1975, there has also been a constant rise in the number beneficiary covered under services of ICDS.

A team of Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) functionaries comprising of Anganwadi workers, Supervisors and Child Development Project Officers provide a set of integrated services to the beneficiaries in order to bring desirable changes among them.

To achieve the above mentioned objectives, ICDS provides a package of services to children and mothers which is shown below -

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Beneficiaries</th>
<th>Services</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Expectant and nursing mothers</td>
<td>i. Health check-up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ii. Immunization of expectant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>iii. Referral services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>iv. Supplementary Nutrition</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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2. Other women 15 to 45 years
   i. Nutrition and Health Education

3. Children below 1 year of age
   i. Nutrition and Health Education
   ii. Immunization
   iii. Health Check-up
   iv. Referral Services

4. Children 1 to 3 years of age
   i. Supplementary Nutrition
   ii. Immunization
   iii. Health Check-up
   iv. Referral Services

5. Children below 3 to 6 years of age
   i. Supplementary Nutrition
   ii. Immunization
   iii. Health Check-up
   iv. Referral Services
   v. Non-formal pre-school education

6. Development types of services can very well fit in the rural life of the country. Through these types of programmes, the local community will be economically benefited and motivated to send their children to pre-school. As such children will develop interest in educational activities which ensure their joining in primary school to a great extent. This may ultimately solve the problems of school drop-outs to some extent.

In Assam first ICDS project was started in the year 1976, at Dhakuakhana of Lakhimpur district. At present there are 196 ICDS projects in Assam.

In the Barak Valley area of Assam, there are 26 projects of which 5 are in Hailakandi District, 7 are in Karimganj District and 14 are in Cachar District.

The Programme provides an integrated approach for converging basic services for improved child care, early stimulation and learning, health and
nutrition, water and environmental sanitation to the targeting young children, expectant and nursing mothers and women, and adolescent girl groups. These have reached nearly 300,000 trained community based Anganwadi workers and equal number of helpers, supportive community structures women's groups through the Anganwadi centre, the health system and in the community.

ICDS is a powerful outreach programme which helps to achieve major national nutrition and health goals, embodied in the National plan of Action for children, 1992. It also contributes to the national goal of universal Primary education.

1.5 Need and Rationale of the Present Study

It needs no explanation about the problems faced by the child in the age group of 3 to 6 years in respect of education. A study is essential in regard to the non-formal pre-school education in the age group of 3 to 6 years to find out the various problems faced by the child as well as the parents and community in general.

As mentioned earlier that pre-school is the non-formal education form, an important component of the package of ICDS programme. It seeks to lay proper foundation to Psychological, Physical, Social and Educational development of the child as also to reduce the incidence of school dropouts. The services envisage to achieve this through organization of various development activities in the Anganwadi. The Anganwadi does not aim at
standardization of curriculum or learning procedure, but emphasis is given encouraging and stimulating the child to grow at his own pace. It is expected that the Anganwadi tries to locate the curiosity of the child and Co-operates in their play and creative activities. It is also expected to establish linkages with Primary/Elementary schools so that children can move from the Anganwadi to formal schools with the necessary emotional and mental preparation. As children are the national assets, hence they need maximum support from the workers teachers, parents and other integrated organizations. The researcher has explored more than seventy five research studies and literature related to Pre-school Education in India and abroad and find that hardly any attempt has been made to examine the status of ICDS in Assam with a special reference to pre-school education, which has created an inquisitiveness in the minds of the researcher to raise the following issues - how far the aims of pre-school education under ICDS have been achieved? What is the present status of pre-school education in the state? Whether the service is in order? What are the difficulties in implementing the pre-school education programme under ICDS? How far these service of Pre School Education is helpful or complementary to the process of achieving the universal Primary education. The similar type of observation was made by the Prime Minister of India Dr. Manmohan Singh. He was concerned over the poor implementation of the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS), and asked States to set up an institutionalized review process at their level to exclusively deal with the services. Looking into the situation the present research was designed to find out the answer of these questions and issues.
The ICDS project is running in full swing in Cachar District, but so far no study has been made in this area. Hence, here is an attempt to study the ICDS service specially, in the pre-school area in the Cachar District of Assam.

1.6 Statement of the Problem

In Cachar District of Assam a sizable section of people is covered by local area and block inhabited mostly by Bengali speaking people.

Pre-school education is basically preparing the child in the age group of 3 to 6 years to formal school. So, the investigator considered it is necessary to make an in-depth study of the ICDS services on non-formal pre-school education in the age group of 3 to 6 years in the Cachar District of Assam.

In the Cachar district of Assam majority of the Block, is covered by the ICDS projects, it would be convenient to make an ICDS services in this area and hence the investigator selected the topic under the following head.

1.7 Title of the Study

"ROLE OF INTEGRATED CHILD DEVELOPMENT SERVICES WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION IN THE CACHAR DISTRICT OF ASSAM: A STUDY"

The present study is basically explorative in nature and coverage will be limited to 4 ICDS projects out of 14 ICDS projects in Cachar District which has been in operation since a decade till today. The study will attempt in identifying and describing the prevailing methods of non-formal pre-school education prevalent in ICDS project. The study will justify the problems faced
by the child and Anganwadi worker in imparting pre-school education, transitions from non-formal set-up to formal set-up and drop-out rate of school children.

In December 2006, two Commissioners, appointed by the Supreme Court submitted their update report on the progress towards universalisation of the ICDS. They expressed grave concern that the orders of the Apex court have not been implemented by the Government of India. This contradicts the UPA government’s commitment in the Common Minimum Programme which states that "The UPA will universalise the ICDS service to provide a functional ‘Anganwadi’ in every settlement and ensure full coverage of all children".

1.8 Objectives of the Study

1. To study the role of integrated child development services in the Cachar District as perceived by:
   a) The ICDS functionaries about pre-school education.
   b) Parents of pre-school children
   c) Anganwadi workers.

2. To study the role of ICDS on the –
   a) Physical Development of children
   b) Social Development of children

1.9 Hypothesis

i) The status of ICDS as perceived its functionaries, parents and Anganwadi workers varies from one section to another.

ii) There is a great bearing of pre-school education on physical and social development of the children in the age group 3 - 6 years in
the Cachar District of Assam.

1.10 Delimitation of the Study

The study is delimited only to the pre schools under the ICDS in the Cachar District of Assam. The study is restricted only on the 4 of ICDS projects i.e, Udarbond, Razabazar, Sonai and Salchapra ICDS projects.

The present research has been carried out on the basis of the rationale or need and the objectives formulated in this chapter. It is essential to mention that the researcher carried the work in the field for more than 3 years which have been reported through various chapters - Theoretical framework, Review of related research studies, Methodology adopted, Analysis and interpretation and with the Major findings and Conclusions. The researcher has developed an insight by developing a theoretical framework for the purpose of clarifying the conceptual positions and of operational definitions in the next chapter, i.e in chapter II.