

Performance of Rajiv Gandhi National Crèche Scheme for Children of Working Mothers

D. S. Sutaria*

ABSTRACT

Children are the future of the nation and backbone of economic development. However, a large number of children in India are homeless, exploited, neglected and abused. The destitution of children may be due to various factors such as backwardness, poverty, marginalization, social exclusion, developmental deprivation, etc. A large number of disadvantaged children in especially difficult circumstances need protection, care and rehabilitation services for their growth and development. The enormity of the problems faced by the children cannot be doubted in a country like India where more than 1/4th of the population lives below the poverty line, natural calamities take their toll, unemployment exists on a large scale, the incidence of illiteracy, malnutrition, poor housing and poor health is large, the state of public social services is very poor and there is a little social security coverage for the masses. It cannot be denied that large number of children are deprived of opportunities for growth and development. Rajiv Gandhi National Crèche Scheme for Working Mothers has been implemented by Government of India under the Ministry of Women and Child Development and the responsibility of its effective implementation has been entrusted to Central Social Welfare Board along with two other nodal agencies viz., Indian Council for Child Welfare and Bhartiya Adim Jati Sewak Sangh. The programme is being implemented in partnership with civil society organizations and some of private and corporate agencies. Present study purports to examine the functioning and performance of the scheme and suggesting the measures for its effective implementation.

Introduction

In the changing business and economic environment, women are entering the job market with increase employment opportunities and also gender inclusive policies. Economic liberalization, globalization and privatization have brought out significant changes in society, polity and economy. With the breaking of joint family system and the increased phenomena of nuclear families, working women need support in terms of care for their young children while they are at work. Effective day care for young children is

¹ CEO, Supath Gramodyog Sansthan, Himmat Nagar, Gujarat

essential for providing support to both mothers and young children. It is also a protective measure which addresses the issues of child labour, school drop outs, outreach for medical and health programme, female literacy, malnutrition, etc. Hence, there is imperative need to improve the quality and outreach of child day care services for working mothers and also achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Rajiv Gandhi National Crèche Scheme for Working Mothers has been implemented by Government of India under the Ministry of Women and Child Development and the responsibility of its effective implementation has been entrusted to Central Social Welfare Board along with two other nodal agencies viz., Indian Council for Child Welfare and Bhartiya Adim Jati Sewak Sangh. The programme is being implemented in partnership with civil society organizations and some of private and corporate agencies. Present study purports to examine the functioning and performance of the scheme and suggesting the measures for its effective implementation.

Child Care in India

Children are the future of the nation and backbone of economic development. However, a large number of children in India are homeless, exploited, neglected and abused. The destitution of children may be due to various factors such as backwardness, poverty, marginalization, social exclusion, developmental deprivation, etc. Millions of children are becoming destitute in India due to several socio-economic factors. This is cause of concern as children are the future of the nation. Although, a number of programmes and schemes have been implemented by the government and non-government agencies, however, the services and schemes are found to be grossly inadequate in the context of growing social problem of destitution. India is home of almost 20 per cent of the world's children. More than one third of the country's population, around 400 million, is below 18 years. By 2016, India's child population below 14 years of age is expected to stabilize around 350 million. No other nation in the world including China is likely to enjoy the benefits of having such a large young population in the years to come. It is only by ensuring that India's children are well cared for, well protected and well supported that India can attain the Millennium Development Goals by 2015 and be counted in the league of developed nations. The health and nutrition status of children has been an area of major concern for policy makers, health administrators, child development specialists and the public at large. However, about half of the all Indian children are undernourished, similar proportion escape full immunization. The survival of the child is dependent on maternal health and nutritional status, which is determined by factors such as age at marriage, fertility behaviour, use of antenatal and post natal care, and medical attention at the time of delivery. Importantly,

malnutrition of children is one of the biggest public health problems facing the country. It adversely affects the growth and development of children including their learning ability and the capacity to cope with the problems of daily living. Similarly, prevention from abuse, neglect and exploitation of children has been universally recognized as essential for child's well being and for the growth and development of the family, the community, and the nation. However, millions of children are out of schools and engaged in economic activities for sustenance of their families. There are other disadvantaged children in especially difficult circumstances who need social services for their care, protection, and development.

Indian society has experienced dramatic changes in the last decade. The changes have been sweeping in impact and also have affected the children. The forces of globalization, economic liberalization and privatization have affected the social, economic, cultural and political value system. The growing urbanization has led to the congestion, overcrowding and stress on infrastructure and services. Thus, people are becoming more self-concerned and the breakdown of the traditional extended family support system and disappearing of the social values, the children are becoming the potential victims of exploitation, negligence, and abuse. Thus, the new environment is throwing up new needs and challenges for the children. Similarly, the combination of sexualization of society, sexual curiosity, lack of adequate sex education and access to technology has created a series of new problems for children. Children are also experiencing vulnerability of commercial sexual exploitation as trafficking of women and children is becoming most profitable trade. In India, especially in the tourism destinations, sex tourism is flourishing that promotes commercial sexual exploitation of children. Interestingly, the number of street children is growing gradually due to poverty, backwardness, negligence, abuse and exploitation of children.

A large number of disadvantaged children in especially difficult circumstances need protection, care and rehabilitation services for their growth and development. The enormity of the problems faced by the children cannot be doubted in a country like India where more than 1/4th of the population lives below the poverty line, natural calamities take their toll, unemployment exists on a large scale, the incidence of illiteracy, malnutrition, poor housing and poor health is large, the state of public social services is very poor and there is a little social security coverage for the masses. It cannot be denied that large number of children are deprived of opportunities for growth and development. The erosion of values, breakdown of joint family support system, abandonment due to death of parents, long illness of parents, maltreatment, acute poverty, etc. has made the present state and future of children placed in difficult circumstances, terrorism, insurgency, and

communal conflicts as well as natural disasters have devastated families and traumatize the children.

Children need access to nutrition, basic social services, such as health, education, protection, and care to improve their welfare and their capacity. Delivery of social services requires increasing financial resources and particularly, the quality of public expenditure in these areas. The governance of social services, particularly care and protection of vulnerable, marginalized, and other disadvantaged children may be improved through public private partnership as well as ensuring administrative reforms and children's centric development approach.

The government of India is implementing about 120 schemes and programmes for the welfare and development of children and women through more than 13 government Ministries and Departments. The Integrated Child Development Services Programme (ICDS) represents one of the world's largest and most unique programme for early childhood development, an initiative unparalleled in history. A network of Anganwadi Centres, literally courtyard play Centres, provide basic health, nutrition and early childhood care and development services to address the interrelated needs of children below the age of six, adolescent girls and expectant and nursing mothers from disadvantaged communities.

With increased opportunities for employment for women and the need to supplement household income more and more women are entering the job market. With the breaking up of joint family system and the increased phenomenon of nuclear families, working women need support in terms of quality, substitute, and care for their young children while they are at work. There has, however, been very slow growth of Crèche/ Daycare facilities, resulting in failure to meet the needs of working mothers in terms of extent, content and quality of services. Crèche and Daycare Services are not only required by working mothers but also women belonging to poor families, who require support and relief from childcare as they struggle to cope with burden of activities, within and outside the home. Effective day care for young children is essential and a cost effective investment as it provides support to both the mothers and young children. It is also a protection measure as it addresses issues such as child labour, school drop outs, child prostitution, outreach for medical and health programme female literacy etc., Hence, there is an urgent need for improved quality and reach of child day care services for working women among all socio-economic groups in both in the organized and unorganised sectors.

The need for child care services has been emphasized in the National Policy for Children, 1994, National Policy for Education, 1986 and National

Policy for Empowerment of Women, 2001 and the National Plan of Action for Children, 2005. The Parliamentary Standing Committee on demand for grants for the year 2002-03 has also pointed out that all sections of the society should be allowed to avail the services of the crèches. Labour Legislations also contain provisions for child care facilities for women workers. The National Common Minimum Programme also emphasizes enhancement of child care and development services in the future. Thus there is need for an expanded and effective scheme for childcare facilities.

In view of the growing importance of crèche centres, government of India initiated Rajiv Gandhi National Crèche Scheme of Children for Working Mothers. The scheme envisages assisting implementing agencies for setting up and running crèche centres. The scheme has made provision that a crèche centre must have a minimum space of 6-8 sq. ft. per child to ensure that they can play, rest, and learn without any hindrance. The Centre should be clean, well lighted with adequate ventilation. A fan should also be installed in the Centre where electricity supply is available. The centre must have clean toilet and sanitation facility that caters to the needs of small children. There should be adequate safe play area outside the Centre also. Within the Centre, there should be sleeping facilities for children, i.e. mattresses, cradles, cots, pillows and basic infrastructure to meet the requirement of the children. Essential play material and teaching and learning material must be available to meet the needs of pre-school children. The cooking area must be located at the place which is away from the activity area of the children to avoid accidents. Basic cooking equipment like stove, gas cylinder or the traditional chulhas must be available and safely placed. Attendance Register must be maintained at every Centre, duly filled up. It should be available for inspection at any time during the working hours of the crèche centers.

It has been made provision that Implementing Agencies and the Crèche Workers must ensure linkages with the local Primary Health Centre or sub-Primary Health Centre in the area. They should also have a tie-up with the nearby anaganwadi centres and its workers for health care inputs like immunization, polio drops, basic health monitoring. Community support including support from Panchayati Raj Institutions is also envisaged in the Scheme to ensure their participation and to supplement the grant of the Government. The provision of non-recurring grant has been made in the scheme to enable the implementing agencies to provide the basic minimum facilities to ensure that the children in the centre have a hygienic, healthy and child friendly environment for their proper growth and care.

The new crèches are being sanctioned to the present Implementing Agencies, viz, Central Social Welfare Board, Indian Council for Child Welfare and Bhartiya Adim Jati Sevak Sangh. The Crèches will be allocated to a State/

UT on the basis of the proportion of child population. Uncovered districts/tribal areas under the Scheme will be given highest priority while extending the scheme to ensure balanced regional coverage. Priority will be given to 87 uncovered districts, i.e. those districts that do not have even one crèche. The component of Training has been added to the Scheme to orient the Crèche Workers as well as the Implementing Agencies to provide better services and to build up child friendly environment in the Centre. Short term training will be provided to every crèche worker and helper. The training module, which will be made with the help of NIPCCD will be provided through training agencies that will be identified with the help of State Governments.

In order to ensure effective functioning of the Scheme and also ensure that the beneficiaries get all the elements of the scheme, there should be regular monitoring of the crèches. Monitoring of the Crèches being run under the Scheme will be conducted through independent agencies, to be identified in each State, which will submit reports direct to the Central Government. It is expected that every crèche will be inspected at least once in period of two years. Schools of Social Work, Women's Studies Centers and other reputed agencies will be engaged to monitor crèche units. They will be regularly provided list of sanctioned units in their respective areas with complete address and details of the NGO. A lump sum one time grants of Rs. 10,000/- is being given to each nodal agencies and Rs. 700/- per crèche visited and inspected.

The present scheme provides assistance to NGOs for running crèches for babies (0-6 years) and would provide assistance to ensure sleeping facilities, health-care, supplementary nutrition, immunization etc. for running a crèche for 25 babies for eight hours i.e. from 9.00 A.M. to 5.00 P.M. The Government assistance can only be on a limited scale and should not induce too much dependence on the part of the voluntary institutions on such help and the efforts of the voluntary sector should be to utilize the Government assistance towards snowballing resources for widening the scope of the programme with increasing voluntary contributions. The government recognizes the need for more crèches and day care facilities and realizes that, as the scheme comes to be implemented not only would the children looked after properly, but their parents would have greater freedom to work without norms and that would lead to an increase in their efficiency. The Government assistance will be limited to 90% of the schematic pattern (except salary of crèche workers and helpers) or actual expenditure whichever is less and the remaining expenditure will have to be borne by the Institution/Organization concerned. If an institution has already received or is expecting to receive a grant from some other official source for a project for which application is being made under this scheme, the assessment of central grant will normally be made

after taking into consideration the grant from such other official sources (Table 1).

Table 1
Crèches and Beneficiaries under Rajiv Gandhi National Crèche Scheme in India

Sl. No.	Name of the State	No. of Crèches				
		CSWB	ICCW	BAJSS	Total	Beneficiaries
1.	Andhra Pradesh	2144	575	383	3102	77550
2.	Assam	418	290	275	983	24575
3.	Bihar	934	264	132	1330	33250
4.	Chhattisgarh	563	295	185	1043	26075
5.	Delhi	525	90	70	685	17125
6.	Gujarat	695	232	157	1354	33850
7.	Haryana	313	373	144	830	20750
8.	Himachal Pradesh	549	149	86	784	19600
9.	Jammu & Kashmir	556	130	177	863	21575
10.	Jharkhand	420	210	218	848	21200
11.	Karnataka	1179	205	208	1592	39800
12.	Kerala	811	222	133	1166	29150
13.	Madhya Pradesh	2133	363	319	2815	70375
14.	Maharashtra	1719	260	418	2397	59925
15.	Orissa	761	173	270	1204	30100
16.	Punjab	325	58	0	383	9575
17.	Rajasthan	723	146	320	1189	29725
18.	Sikkim	169	0	43	212	5300
19.	Tamil Nadu	1341	142	93	1576	39400
20.	Uttar Pradesh	1211	270	686	2167*	54175
21.	Uttarakhand	265	140	241	646	16150
22.	West Bengal	1157	248	231	1636	40900
23.	Tripura	184	186	40	410	10250
	India	20893	5323	5522	31718	792950

Source: Ministry of Women & Child Development, Govt. of India.

* Presently functional creches in in Uttar Pradesh are 1453 (Centralized Unit 129, Decentralized Unit 734 and BAJSS 590).

Government of India, under the Ministry of Women & Child Development, has implemented Rajiv Gandhi National Creche Scheme for the Children of Working Mothers. The scheme envisages to support non-government organizations and for setting up and running crèche centres for working mothers. The assistance is being provided for the child care. In order to maintain the recurring cost of the crèche centre, user charge concept has been applied under the scheme. In order to effective implementation of the scheme, orientation training to the crèche workers is being provided with the help of state government and other academic institutions. Proper monitoring of the crèche centres is also being ensured. As on March 2008,

31373 crèche centres were found functioning under the Rajiv Gandhi National Crèche Scheme. The scheme for the children of working mothers was revamped on January 1st, 2006 and is being implemented by the Central Social Welfare Board with two national level voluntary organizations. The scheme provides crèche services to children in the age group of 0-6 years and includes supplementary nutrition, emergency medicines and contingencies. Though, the scheme has in-built monitoring component but no evaluation has been carried out at the national level. Mid-term appraisal of 11th Five Year Plan has also envisaged the imperative need of evaluation of the scheme to examine its relevance and need in view of the universalization of ICDS. It also envisaged to explore the possibility of using Anganwadi Centres as crèche centres and converting the scheme into a centrally sponsored scheme. Since the launch of the scheme, there has been no major study to assess the functioning and performance of the scheme as well as its impact on the children and working mothers. Therefore, it is imperative to conduct a national level study to examine the modus operandi of the implementation of the scheme and assess its performance so that effective implementation of the scheme may be ensured through action plan.

Objectives of the Study

The study has the following main objectives:

- To study the relevance and need of the scheme for children of working mothers in the view of universalization of ICDS;
- To study the modus operandi of implementation of Rajiv Gandhi National Creche Scheme for the Children of Working Mothers in selected states;
- To examine the status of physical infrastructure and service deliveries at Crèche Centres and also to explore the possibility of upgrading Anganwadi Centres to full time crèches in selected states;
- To study the training facility for orientation of crèche workers and also to examine the impact of training to crèche workers in implementation of the scheme;
- To review the existing mechanism of the monitoring of crèche for effective functioning of the scheme and also to study the possibility of converting the scheme into a centrally sponsored scheme;
- To examine the problems in effective functioning of the Rajiv Gandhi National Crèche Scheme for children of working mothers; and also women inmates in their socio-economic rehabilitation;
- To suggest policy measures for effective and efficient functioning and performance of the scheme.

Research Methodology

The present paper is based on a major research study conducted by Supath Gramodyog Sansthan, Himmat Nagar, Gujarat under the auspices of Planning Commission, Government of India during 2010-11. The study is mainly empirical in nature and based on primary data. Besides collection and analysis of primary data, secondary data and pertinent literature have been compiled from published and documented sources. A multi stage stratified random sample method has been applied for the selection of the sample of the study. We have covered 9 states viz., *Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal, Assam, Tripura, Himachal Pradesh and Maharashtra*. We have selected about 4 per cent crèche centres in each selected state, however, representation of crèche centres from Central Social Welfare Board, Indian Council for Child Welfare and BAJSS has been ensured. Overall, we have selected 636 crèche centres in different states. In each selected crèche centre, 4 working mothers who have enrolled their children in crèche centre have been surveyed regarding the availability of services and child care. Besides the survey of working mothers, interview of crèche organizers and workers has been ensured. Thus, our sample size comprises of 636 crèche centers, 636 crèche workers, 132 crèche Implementing Agencies, 2544 working mothers and 90 people's representatives and 94 concerned government officials. The field survey has been conducted with the help of structured interview schedules. The filled in interview schedules have been thoroughly checked, edited and processed in computer with the application of SPSS for the analysis. Inferences, results and conclusions have been drawn out from the analysis of data. The data in tabular form have been analyzed, interpreted and discussed in the respective chapters. The policy recommendations are based on the analysis of research findings and critical appreciation of pertinent literature.

Analysis of Research Findings

The early life of children has a great and lasting influence on the quality of life of a human being. The health, nutrition, education and development opportunities provided to a child in this stage determine the well being of children. The care of young children should not be the responsibility of family alone and therefore social intervention is required to provide child care services to the young children belonging to weaker sections of society. Rajiv Gandhi National Crèche Scheme for Working Mothers has been implemented with the support of civil society organizations in India. Central Social Welfare Board in association with State Social Welfare Boards, Indian Council for Child Welfare in association with State Council for Child Welfare, and Bhartiya Adim Jati Sewak Sangh as nodal agencies are engaged in implementation of the scheme. Present study purports to examine the

functioning and performance of the scheme in the selected states of India. Major research findings of the survey are discussed below

- During the 2008-2009, there were 31718 crèche centres with the beneficiaries of 7.92 lakh only. Most of the crèche centres were reported to be implemented by Central Social Welfare Board (65.83 per cent) while the share of ICCW (16.77 per cent) and BAJSS (17.39 per cent) was reported to be low. There has been declining trend of crèche centres over the period of 2006-07 to 2011-12.
- Agency-wise budgetary allocations under the scheme also demonstrates that a lion's share goes to Central Social Welfare Board (74.99 per cent) while ICCW constituted only 13.34 per cent share in the budgetary allocations during 2006-07. Moreover, there has been fluctuating trend in the budgetary allocations under the scheme during the period of 2006-07 to 2012-13.
- The observation of crèche centres demonstrates that most of the crèche centres have two rooms however; the space under the crèche centre has been reported to be small.
- About 60 per cent children living in crèche centres were from BPL families while about 2/5th children were from APL families. Majority of the children living in crèche centres were found belonging to the age group of 0-4 years. About 10 per cent children were also from the age group of 6 years and above. More than half of the children living in crèche centres were female.
- Most of the projects implementing agencies were NGOs (76.5 per cent) however; about 20 per cent PIAs were functioning as Trusts. They were registered under Societies Registration Act. Only 1/3rd PIAs have setup crèche centres in the office premises of their organizations in order to minimize the administrative cost of crèche centres.
- Most of the PIAs are receiving assistance from Central Social Welfare Board for running the scheme. Only 17 per cent PIAs reported that they have imposed user charges for augmenting the centre's resources.
- Most of the PIAs reported that their crèche centres have been inspected by the organizations other than sponsoring agencies. They were also found satisfied with the quality and adequacy of training to their workers for providing better child care services to young children. They further reported that the trainings have been organized mainly by Central Social Welfare Board and other academic institutions.
- The infrastructural facilities were found to be poor in most of the crèche centres. About 16 per cent crèche centres do not have

availability of electricity while 28 per cent crèche centres do not have clean toilets and sanitation facilities. Similarly, about 14 per cent crèche centres do not have clean and safe drinking water. Even 19 per cent crèche centres do not have ventilation for fresh air. Moreover, more than 1/3rd crèche centres do not have safe playground. Similarly, about 18 per cent crèche centres do not have play materials and equipments.

- The sleeping facilities in the crèche centres were also reported to be poor. A large proportion of crèche centres do not have mattress, carts, pillows, blankets and quilts, bed and bed sheets.
- The cooking facilities in the crèche centres were also reported to be poor. A large proportion of crèche centres do not have separate kitchen, stove, gas cylinders, proper cooking utensils, etc.
- Most of the working mothers were found belonging to Hindu community however, the proportion of Muslim respondents was also found to be significant. About 2/5th respondents were from general castes while about 30 per cent respondents were from Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes.
- Most of the beneficiaries were from labour class and their occupation was reported to be labour. Their family occupation was reported to be labour, agriculture and service. Most of the beneficiaries were found living below poverty line. The average annual family income was reported to be Rs. 28210 while their average monthly income was reported to be Rs. 2592.
- Most of the beneficiaries were reported to be married. They mainly belong to middle age group i.e. 20-35 years. Their educational levels were found to be poor as about 2/5th of them were illiterate. They were mainly from rural background. About half of the respondents reported that their families have migrated for better socio-economic opportunities.
- Most of the beneficiaries reported that they are availing crèche services from 6 to 18 months. However, about 30 per cent respondents reported that they are availing crèche services for more than 2 years.
- Most of the beneficiaries reported that the age of their child is in between 1-4 years who is availing crèche services. The timings of availing crèche services were reported to be 4-8 hours. Most of the beneficiaries were found satisfied with the quality of crèche services however, about 2/5th beneficiaries were found dissatisfied with the adequacy of facilities in the crèche centres.

- Most of the people's representatives were found belonging to NGOs and local governments. They were members of their organizations. Most of them were found aware about the implementation of the crèche scheme. They have also visited crèche centres running in their areas. Most of the respondents were found satisfied with the adequacy and quality of crèche services.
- Most of the officials were found associated with the nodal agencies of the scheme. They reported that they have adequate staff and officials for regular monitoring of crèche centres. However, crèche centres are being monitored mainly on quarterly and annual basis.
- A large proportion of officials admitted that there is no annual training calendar for training and capacity building of crèche workers. They have also not set up the linkages with academic institutions for conduct of the training to the crèche workers.
- Most of the crèche workers have received training however; the adequacy of training was reported to be low. The training to crèche workers requires on regular basis along with coverage of important areas such as community mobilization and empowerment, psychological care of young children, sanitation and hygiene, child health care, etc.
- Most of the officials admitted that there is no flow of funds from government to implementing agencies in time. This affects the functioning of the crèche centres. They further reported that the present assistance under the scheme is grossly inadequate to achieve the desired objectives and goals.
- The major constraints and challenges in effective implementation of the scheme include low budget, inadequate financial support under the scheme, no provision for honorarium of supervisory staff of the implementing agencies, no provision for house rent, no provision for administrative expenses, etc.

The following policy recommendations are provided to ensure effective functioning of the scheme and care and protection of children of working mothers:

- As ICDS and Rajiv Gandhi National Crèche Scheme are national programmes to address the multiple health, nutrition and educational needs of children under 6 years, strategies should be adopted to universalize the programme with quality as a guiding principle. Greater convergence between the ICDS and National Rural Health Mission and Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan for prevention and management

of malnutrition is imperative. Crèches and maternity entitlements along with focus on infant and young child feeding and outreach to children under the age of 3 years are to be ensured.

- Complementary strategies and other institutional arrangements including (1) maternity entitlements; (2) crèches and childcare arrangements; and (3) institutionalized support for infant and young child feeding will be required.
- Age specific interventions have to be paid to the varying requirements of different age groups. These interventions should involve the integration of related systems, focusing on food and nutrition; health services; and childcare.
- Decentralized approach is essential for fostering participatory planning, community ownership, responsiveness to local circumstances and the involvement of local governments in effective implementation of child-centred schemes such as ICDS and Rajiv Gandhi National Crèche Scheme.
- Community action should be encouraged with the active involvement of civil society organizations for community mobilization and participation in monitoring and evaluation of child-centred schemes. The existing network of community-based organizations such as Women SHGs, Community Development Societies, Mahila Swasthya Sangh, Women Associations, etc. should be involved in community mobilization and effective implementation of the scheme.
- Administrative reforms for capacity building and decentralization are essential. It is imperative to introduce central mechanism that sets standards, maintains quality, safeguards equity concerns, redresses uneven development and allocates resources in a transparent and equitable manner.
- The scheme should be restructured both in terms of budget and human resources. A crèche center should be provided a minimum budget of

Rs. 2.5 lakhs along with minimum support of qualified, dedicated and experienced staff. A crèche center should have at least two staff, preferably females to provide child care services. The existing norms and guidelines of the scheme need to be revised with incorporation of the earmarking of judicious fund for infrastructure development, maintenance, health care services, food and nutrition etc. of the crèche.

- The present procedure for allotment of crèche centers to the Project Implementing Agencies is not judicious as a few NGOs or agencies

are given the charge of running of 50-250 Crèche Centers while the average number of centers per PIA is 4-5 only. Thus, there is need of rethinking in allocation of crèche centers to PIAs.

- The location of the crèche centers is also found in favour of rural and semi urban areas where as job opportunities are found concentrated in urban centers and particularly in large cities. Thus, it also suggested that establishment of the crèche centers by PIAs should be reconsidered, accommodating major industrial and business clusters, construction sites, and work places.
- The concept of mobile crèche is becoming more popular and effective in delivery of services to working mothers and therefore, it should be further promoted and encouraged.
- Most of the PIAs, State Officials and People's Representatives are not in favour of the merger of the scheme with ICDS as the functionaries are already over stressed with the work and responsibilities and additional responsibility for implementing the crèche scheme will create work burden to them. The existing staff of ICDS is not qualified and well competent to perform the additional responsibility of implementing the crèche scheme. Therefore merger of the scheme with ICDS should be very limited in the initial stage and be confined to those areas where ICDS platform is strong enough to support the additional responsibility.
- The merger of Rajiv Gandhi National Creche Scheme and ICDS programme is practically not possible as ICDS programme is meant for providing supplementary nutrition to young children with a limited duration of 2-3 years child care services while creche centre is aimed at providing child day-care services to young children of working mothers for a period of minimum 8 hours.
- There should be more emphasis on convergence of resources, schemes, programmes, Departments and agencies for providing benefits of other social development schemes being implemented by other Departments and Ministries of Central and state government.
- The training and capacity building of crèche workers is very crucial for ensuring effective functioning of the scheme and therefore, it is imperative to provide quality training to crèche workers by reputed institutes. In this regard, public private partnership may be encouraged and Certificate should be issued after successful receiving of the training.
- Monitoring of crèche centers requires intensive and more frequently by a team of officials, peoples representatives, local development

activists and subject experts. Thus, it is imperative to development effective monitoring and supervision mechanism or effective monitoring and supervision of the crèche centers. State Social Welfare Boards may engage state level organizations for effective monitoring and evaluation of crèche centers on regular basis.

- There is a need to universalize crèches/day care centres. The universalization of crèches is likely to empower women to become economically productive, ensuring early child care and breast feeding, reducing infant and child mortality, prevention of malnutrition by facilitating continuing breast feeding and supplementary feeding, and proper care of young children.
- There is a need to adopt multiple strategies towards achieving universalization of crèches/ day care services in order to provide child care to young children as there is increasing demand of day care services to the young children. Presently the outreach of Rajiv Gandhi National Crèche Scheme is legible and therefore its coverage needs to be widened to provide benefits to the working women in the unorganized sector.
- A National Day Care Fund may be set up to provide resources for a range of models of day care services to young children of working mothers. Decentralized models of day care centres should be set up with the involvement of community based organizations such as SHGs, Women Associations, grassroots level voluntary organizations and civil societies etc. The norms for providing support for decentralized models of crèches may be separately evolved.
- There is need to encourage public private partnership to set up mobile crèches in the construction sites, brick kilns, slums, etc. so that the day care services to the children of migrant labours and workers may be addressed.
- It is imperative to improve the sanitary and hygienic conditions in the crèches through adopting improved practices, cleanliness and maintaining separate kitchen. The essential utensils should be made available in the crèches besides proper and adequate washing materials for cleaning of utensils, toilets, etc. should be made available to the crèche workers in order to ensure sanitary hygienic conditions.
- In order to provide quality and nutritious food to the young children, proper arrangement of ration, fresh vegetables, seasonal fruits etc. should be made available to the crèches. However, it will require earmarking of significant amount on nutrition against the financial assistance provided to crèche under the scheme. The resource

mobilization through imposing user charges (differentiated charges for children belonging to BPL, marginalized and APL families) is imperative in order to augment the resources in a crèche.

- In order to reduce the infrastructure cost of a crèche, the project implementing agencies should be encouraged to set up the mobile crèches besides mobilizing the individual households for facilitating in their own house for setting up temporary crèche. The PIAs may also set up crèches in their project sites and offices set up under other supported developmental programmes/schemes. Thus, there will be no need for additional charges as house rent.
- It is imperative to assign responsibility and accountability to only one national level organization to function as a nodal agency. The Central Social Welfare Board may be given this charge as it has wide national outreach from metropolitan cities to the remotest area of the country through its officials/non-officials member of state boards and also having a wide and required infrastructure in all the states and UTs to implement the Rajiv Gandhi National Creche Scheme for Working Mothers in a larger and broader perspective however it needs strengthening of its monitoring system by revitalizing its decentralized implementing committees.