

## KEY ISSUES IN ECCE

### Important Theoretical Postulations

- First six years are critical for life long, optimal development
- Child development is a continuous & cumulative process so that what precedes influences what follows
- Health, nutrition & psycho-social develop. are synergistically interrelated
- Develop. is optimized if programme addresses child's ecological context

### Scientific Facts

#### Brain Research

- Critical period for the formation of synaptic connections in the brain. If a stimulating physical & psycho-social environment is not available in early years, the chances of brain developing to its full potential are reduced & often irreversible

#### Empirical Findings

- Nutritional status and cognitive development are related
- Exposure to pre-school improves enrollment, retention & performance in primary school.
- Girls whose siblings go to pre-school are free to go to school.

### EXISTING POLICIES & PROGRAMMES A CRITIQUE

#### Policies

- Despite the critical importance of early childhood a vast majority of 518 million children (0 to 6) still remain deprived of ECCD services
- The Tenth Plan does not focus on ECCD. It only recommended universalisation of ICDS programme
- The 86<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendment does not include ECCD as a fundamental right of children
- The NPA(2005) spells out concrete goals & strategies for ECCD within a Rights perspective

0-6 yrs.  
only ICDS people  
insufficient  
state for bys

Not PI. J. A. et al

#### Policy(cont.)

- The ECCE has been nationally recognized as the first step in the ladder of education & a main contributor in achieving the goals of UEE but it is not recognized as a part of mainstream education

### CHALLENGES

- The main challenge lies in translating the commitments in tangible outcome based indicators
- In view of large scale expansions quality of programmes needs to be maintained
- Some marginalized groups like children of migrant & labourer families, nomadic tribes, children with special needs, etc are left out
- The urban poor are not adequately covered by ICDS as only 8 percent of ICDS projects are located in urban areas

12 crore working women most in informal sector

2 govt schemes -  
a) Rajiv Gandhi creche fund  
b) cater 15 children 2003-4

There are some twelve crore working women in the country, a majority of them in the unorganized sector needing day care/creches for their children

- In many cases children of these working women are taken care of by older girl who has to miss out on her own education
- The existing creches (public sector) are catering to some 1500000 children (2003-04) thus there is a huge gap between the need & availability of services

## IMPLEMENTATION

- The coverage & outreach of ECCD programmes in private sector is not known
- In view of mushrooming growth of nursery schools there is an urgent need for a regulatory mechanism
- The creches & daycare centers are catering to children in 0 to 5 yrs age group but they provide just custodial care, infra-structure is poor, stimulation & educational activities are almost non-existent
- The workforce of ECCE programmes is often poorly trained, inadequately paid & has low status

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The access to good quality ECCE services should be a fundamental right of the child
2. The existing ECCD programmes like creches, balwadis, pre primary centres etc are giving services in a fragmented manner. It should be mandatory for all ECCD programmes to give a holistic package of services including health care, nutrition, stimulation (0 to 3 yrs) & non formal education (3 to 6 yrs)
3. The ICDS is the biggest programme of ECCD in the country it should be redesigned to have a flexible & efficient delivery system.

Some specific recommendations for ICDS are;

- Pre school component should be strengthened to include school readiness skills & smooth transition to primary school
- Concrete & measurable outcome indicators to assess the efficacy of pre school education should be developed
- Access of programme to the marginalized groups should be ensured by evolving special package of services for them
- Policy guidelines should be provided to ensure inclusion of children with special needs in Anganwadis / creche
- The infrastructure of anganwadis should be improved by providing toilets, drinking water, proper buildings, play material, teaching material, etc & making them child friendly
- The image of anganwadis should change from "feeding centres" to "joyful learning centers"

### Capacity Building

- A large number of manpower is implementing ECCD programmes. A long term strategy for capacity building of pre school teachers, AWWs, creche worker, etc should be evolved
- The remuneration & working conditions of ECCE workers need to be reviewed and rationalized

### Regulatory Mechanism

- A large number of nursery schools & day care centers are being run on commercial basis. Their numbers & quality is not known. Many are located in small places with little or no facilities burdening children with formal curriculum not suited for pre school child
- There is a need to evolve norms/minimum standards for all ECCE centers & institute a regulatory system for ECCE centres

ECCD - shd be a fundamental right

Advocacy to provide development oriented curriculum services  
com Involvement / monitoring  
NGOs & PRIs

#### **Advocacy**

•Due to the pressure from parents often AWW or nursery school teacher are pressurized to teach English & follow a school like curriculum which is stressful for young child. Advocacy to create awareness about the need for developmentally appropriate pre school education will help in improving quality of pre schools

#### **Involvement of Community**

▪ For effective supervision & monitoring of ECCE centres the local level institutions like Gram Panchayat, self help groups of women, mothers committees, etc need to be involved. Capacity building of these groups will go a long way in effective community monitoring

**THANK YOU**