

## APPENDIX 2: ICDS IN TAMIL NADU<sup>5</sup>

The ICDS programme functions with varying efficiency in different parts of the country. Observations in a recent field survey indicate that anganwadis function with reasonably efficiency in Tamil Nadu. This has been facilitated by several practical measures.

**Ensure basic infrastructure:** Basic infrastructure was in place in every anganwadi. This included all-weather buildings with adequate space for play-way learning, storage and other activities. Most anganwadis also had a source of clean drinking water, sanitation, and other basic facilities that facilitate the smooth functioning of the anganwadi.

**A fulsome, diverse meal at the anganwadi:** Fresh cooked food is given to children of the 3-6 age group at the anganwadi premises. Different dishes are made out of rice with dal and vegetables each day of the week. On a couple of days there is an additional ration of green gram one day and potato on another. Recently eggs have been reintroduced; children will now get this once a week. Children under three, pregnant and lactating women and adolescent girls get a 'health powder' that can be boiled in water or milk. Each day the helper prepares it early in the morning and delivers it to the homes of all beneficiaries.

**Working together with the Health Care system:** The anganwadi works in close coordination with the Primary Health Care system to deliver its health services. Each anganwadi is attached to a Village Health Nurse (VHN), who visits anganwadis by a fixed routine. To ensure a smooth coordination several joint exercises have been done with the staff of both departments over many years. Together the two have achieved close to universal immunisation of children. A large proportion of children also receive care for problems such as Acute Respiratory Infection, diarrhea, polio, and other health problems.

**The preschool programme:** in most anganwadis educational activities were conducted a daily basis. The preschool education package is well designed to suit the needs of children

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<sup>5</sup> Note contributed by Vivek S. based on field work in three districts of Tamil Nadu.

of that age group. Teaching is done through a variety of creative games designed to develop key skills such as language, recognition of objects, skill of comparison, etc. A variety of playthings are made by the anganwadi workers and helpers out of simple materials that are available locally. Anganwadi workers regularly recounted with some pride that children who come to anganwadis tend to do better in school those who don't. In most anganwadis children boldly sang poems, recognised a range of pictures and had started learning numbers. In all children went to the school system better prepared to come out of it successfully.

**The unique training programme:** Tamil Nadu has a unique model of 'decentralised training' in the state. Training is done at the Block level by a Block level Training Team (BTT) and not in a nodal centre in the state capital. Providing training close to home makes it easier for the anganwadi workers to attend the programme. More importantly, the BTT regularly visits the anganwadi workers during the year helping them with ground level problems, clarifying issues, and obtaining feedback to improve the next round of training. Most anganwadi workers had received a refresher-training course in the recent past and felt well equipped to handle their activities. They were also regularly using the games and other methods at the anganwadi.

**Monitoring system:** Monitoring of the programme is done through a variety of indicators including growth charts, coverage figures, etc. Field level monitoring is done by all concerned departments resulting in constant watch over the system. Close monitoring has certainly contributed to the regularity with which the programme works in the state. It is rare to see a any of the mandatory activities to be missed for a day.

Barring the system of training, ICDS in Tamil Nadu shares the same design as the programme nationally. But the programme has been made more successful by providing realistic resources and by giving it a high degree of political priority, a step that should be done in other regions to give the programme a chance of success.