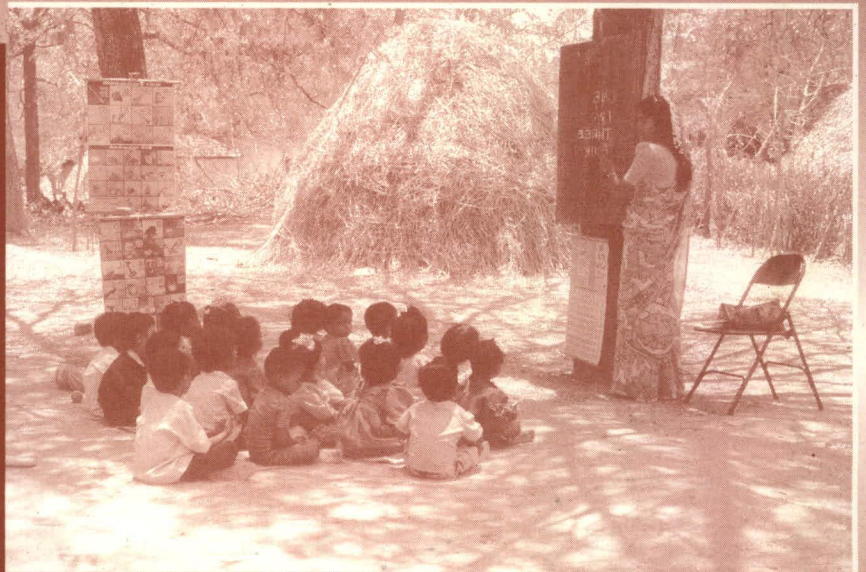


THE FIRST TEACHER



child care workers in the
voluntary sector in Tamil Nadu

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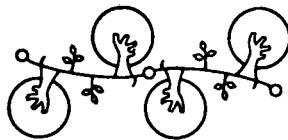
child care workers in the
voluntary sector in Tamil Nadu

J. Jayanthi Rani Christiana

with support from

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Research Report No. 3



M. S. SWAMINATHAN RESEARCH FOUNDATION

March 1999

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Foreword

The Fourth World Conference on Women held at Beijing in 1995 highlighted the roles and responsibilities of governments towards the achievement of gender equality. According to the UN estimates, there is increasing feminisation of poverty on the one hand and increasing number of women who have to be engaged in economic activities on the other. In addition to their roles in home making and keeping and child care and development, the livelihood and nutrition security of the family depends on women's economic work in most households in rural India. The multiple burden on women's time calls for attention to appropriate support services, particularly in the area of child care.

As more women enter the work force in both the organised and unorganised sectors the need for effective child care facilities increases. The responsibility for providing such services is largely borne by State Government Institutions. Civil Society Organisations are also playing an increasingly important role, particularly in the area of providing quality child care services. It is in this context that the present study on the child care services provided by the Non Profit Voluntary Sector assumes importance.

Even though voluntary efforts are steadily expanding, the number of child care workers in the state sector is nearly 100 times more as compared to the voluntary sector. The present study is confined to the voluntary sector but it is obvious that a similar indepth study is urgently called for with reference to the child care workers in the Government sector. I hope this publication will stimulate and inspire scholars as well as administrators to undertake studies on similar issues in the area of Government sponsored and supported child care services.

The emerging millennium is rightly being referred to as a Knowledge Millennium. It is also clear now that early childhood care is fundamental to the development of both the intellectual potential and psychological stability of the child. As more women go to work for the purpose of strengthening the livelihood and food security of their families, it is important that there is commensurate efforts in providing them with opportunities for quality child care outside the home. This report indicates the need for policy level changes that can speed up reforms in the voluntary sector which address the varying needs of both child care workers and child care services.

I wish to express my gratitude to Ms. Jayanthi Rani Christiana and the members of the core team for their dedicated efforts to prepare this timely and valuable report. This report will help to give meaning and content to the U N Charter for the Child. We are very grateful to all those who reviewed the report and gave their valuable suggestions. My sincere thanks go to the Bernard van Leer Foundation for making this publication possible.

M S Swaminathan

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J. Jayanthi Rani Christiana

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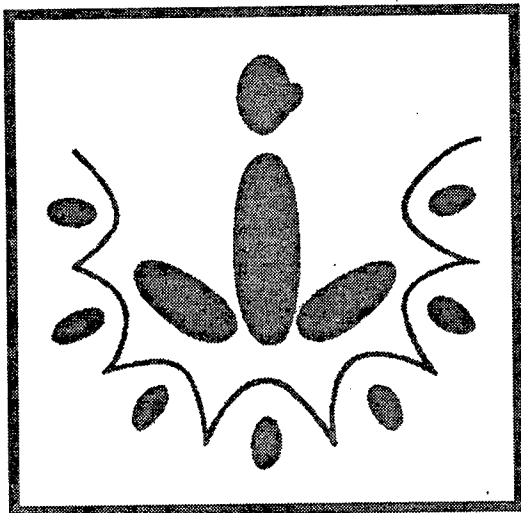
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Research has shown that half of a person's intelligence potential is developed by age four and that early childhood interventions can have lasting effects not only on health and nutritional status, but on intellectual capacity, personality, and social behaviour. Child care interventions are equally important from the point of view of child development. The younger the child, the more difficult it is to identify precisely which physiological and psychological factors govern children's growth, and children's needs in these areas change as they progress from infancy to toddlerhood, from preschool to primary school.

With twelve of thirteen infants now surviving to age one, the number of

children in the developing world – where four-fifths of all children live – is burgeoning (Myers 1995). In developing countries today, it is estimated that only one per cent of mothers get help beyond that provided by family and friends in rearing their infants. Yet, world wide, ever more women are entering the workforce, and ever more households are headed by women alone (Bennet 1993). This demographic shift underlines the growing need for alternative forms of child care for working mothers.

In addition to providing much needed support to working mothers, interventions early in children's lives can also raise mothers' status in the home and community, help to reduce gender inequity, increase women's participation in the labour force, and increase community participation in development efforts. And now, when both parents, especially in the unorganised sector, have to toil hard to make both ends meet, access to child care becomes an economic necessity as well as a social one. It is at this juncture that the role of the Child Care Worker, as the "First Teacher", or the bridge between home and school, gains importance.

The Child Care Worker

The dual responsibility for the development of young children and for providing support to mothers in rural

villages and urban shanties, is increasingly being shouldered by the Child Care Workers. Combining basic nutrition and health care with activities designed to stimulate the children's mutually reinforcing mental, language, physical, and psychosocial skills, and responding at the same time to parents' need for a safe and healthy caregiving environment for their children, becomes their task, requiring extensive involvement and assistance from the community, the voluntary organisation and the state. Hence an understanding of the situation in which these Child Care Workers function, their skills, working conditions and the available support mechanisms was considered important to study.

Along with the increase in the number of programmes and schemes of the Government to benefit women and children, there has been an increase in the number of empirical and evaluative studies on the performance of these programmes. Such studies (De Souza, 1979; Nirmala Niketan, 1980; Swaminathan, 1987; Anandalakshmy, 1989; Lady Irwin College, 1989-90; Gopal, 1998) have usually concentrated more on the programme content than on the human resources. But studies such as the SURAKSHA* series have already shown links between the social status and morale of Child Care Workers, the quality of their performance and the nature and extent of community support. Here the term

'morale' itself implies a set of linked factors like job satisfaction, working conditions, motivation, aspiration and accountability. Thus it is hoped that a deeper understanding of Child Care Workers and their attitudes may serve to improve, not only the quality of the work environment, but also the quality of care that they provide to young children. This study is a step in the attempt to create such an understanding amongst the different stakeholders concerned with young children.

Status of the Worker

Paying attention to the quality of child care services implies not only looking into programme content and the needs of children, women and families, but also into those of the caregivers. Hardly any Indian studies yet have looked into the needs and problems of Child Care Workers. The relative neglect of this issue up to now is yet another manifestation of the devaluation of the importance of women's labour force participation, as well as of the caregiving or nurturing professions. (Myra H. Strober, Suzanne Gerlach-Dawnie and Kenneth E. Yeager, 1995). Child care as an occupation is significant because it is so heavily female dominated, low paid and accorded low status in our country. Significantly, the so-called "First Teacher" is far below the primary school teacher in terms of both social prestige

* The SURAKSHA series refers to a set of eight case studies on innovative ECCE programmes in India documented by the M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation and recently published by SAGE (Swaminathan, Mina, ed. 1998)

and remuneration, and hardly receives any recognition since it is not mandatory for a Child Care Worker to have acquired a specific professional training. This is yet another aspect which deserves to be studied.

The Voluntary Sector

The rise of the non-profit voluntary sector in the last four decades as a central actor in development has become more evident in recent years. Recognising their role and capacity as "policy implementers", the Government has and is continuing to financially support some of their welfare programmes, including child care services. Though miniscule in size in comparison to the State sector, as far as child care services are concerned, especially in Tamil Nadu, the voluntary sector can have significant lessons to offer in terms of policy and programme. Thus when an opportunity arose through the first-ever Convention of Child Care Workers in the voluntary sector in Tamil Nadu organised by Tamil Nadu - Forum for Creche and Child Care Services (TN-FORCES) in September 1994 (Annexure 1), it was felt appropriate to begin with focus on this group, with the hope that it could pave the way for larger studies of Child Care Workers as a whole, especially those in the State sector.

Objectives of the Study

- To study the personal and professional background, working conditions and job satisfaction of Child Care Workers in the voluntary sector.
- To explore their perceptions about and attitudes towards the work environment, that is, available child care services, programmes and facilities.
- To study their attitudes to the working conditions and personnel policies in the voluntary sector.
- To study the relationship, if any, between motivation, aspiration and social status on the one hand, and job satisfaction and working conditions on the other.
- To document the policy issues arising out of the study relating to the welfare and development of Child Care Workers.

The Methodology

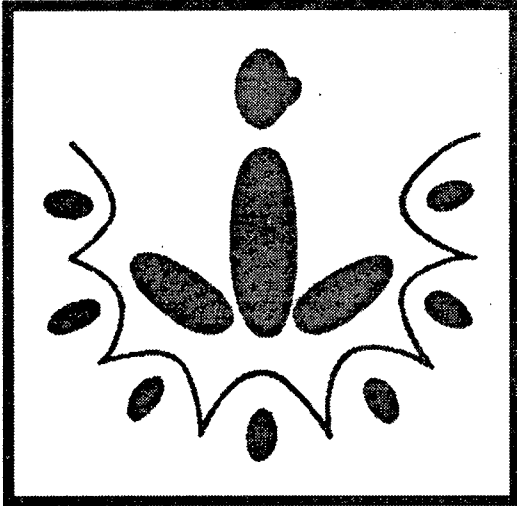
This study combines both quantitative and qualitative methods, using data from several sources. Primary data from a questionnaire completed by 300 Child Care Workers (CCWs) is supplemented by secondary data, informal discussions with Government and voluntary sector personnel, and information from in-depth interviews. As mentioned earlier, responses were sought at convenience from all the participants in the Child Care Workers' Convention held at Gandhigram in September 1994. Considering the limited time available during the Convention, questions were drafted to address only a handful of issues and hence no attempt could be made to collect data on many vital issues. For example, responses on the CCWs knowledge and practice of health and nutrition aspects of child care could

not be elicited. Out of the 300 responses, only 267 were found valid for further analysis. In-depth interviews with ten Child Care Workers conducted during the Convention have been used as sources to highlight issues.

Report Presentation

The report is presented in seven chapters, grouping together the information received from the Child Care Workers under six major headings:

- Chapter 2 *The Background* introduces the diverse activities of the voluntary sector, the interventions for women and children through creches, the patterns of funding and some of the constraints faced by voluntary agencies.
- Chapter 3 *The Worker Profile* offers a glimpse into the institutional affiliation of the workers, their personal and family backgrounds, training and knowledge of some aspects of ECCE.
- Chapter 4 *The User Community* looks at the children and mothers who make use of child care services.
- Chapter 5 *The Work Environment* examines the CCWs perceptions of the child care services, the programme and other in-built facilities offered at the Centres.
- Chapter 6 *Personnel Policies* focuses on the support measures and benefits offered to the CCWs by the voluntary sector.
- Chapter 7 *The World Within* looks into the motivations, aspirations and job satisfaction levels expressed by the Child Care Workers.
- Chapter 8 *Issues for Thought* discusses the personal and professional constraints faced by the Child Care Workers, and raises policy issues arising from their situation.
-



The voluntary sector has deep rooted foundations in Tamil Nadu, starting from the social reform movement of the late 19th century and the efforts of Christian missionaries in the first half of the 20th century to the Gandhian approach to rural development of the freedom struggle days. In the 1960s, a number of young social activists with Marxian approach to development also entered this sector. Thus, there has been an evolution in the approach of the voluntary sector with regard to development. All these various approaches from the first use of charity and welfare to the politically-oriented action groups are co-existing at present in Tamil Nadu.

The voluntary sector, which has expanded in size and form to cater to a

wide variety of societal needs, now undertakes a host of activities ranging from projects in environment, savings and credit, housing and health to Early Childhood Care and Education. The creation of such a large base by this sector has been possible both through international funding sources and grant-in-aid schemes of the Government.

Many of the interventions of these organisations in the voluntary sector have been directed towards women and children, as their empowerment is an issue of serious concern and despite the provision of various welfare schemes and reservations, these groups continue to be disadvantaged. Among the various programmes meant for these groups, the voluntary sector has been specially concerned with implementing varied schemes to provide child care services to poor working/ailing women. Many receive grants-in-aid from the Government for this purpose. Besides these, creches are also run by many "aided" and "unaided" voluntary agencies, the term "aided" in this context referring only to Government funds. These agencies receive funds from a diversity of sources, ranging from local philanthropy and charities to international and denominational agencies. But as a predominant majority (75 per cent) of those who participated in this study belonged to the "aided" category, it was felt necessary to look briefly into the type of

aid received and the conditions surrounding it.

The Creche Scheme

To study the situation of the Child Care Workers, it is necessary to know something of the background of the various schemes of funding, though it is not the purpose here to evaluate them. The main scheme, called the *Scheme of Assistance for Creches for the Children of Working/Ailing Mothers*, (Government of India, 1974), was first introduced in the Fifth Plan largely at the initiative of the late Smt. Meera Mahadevan, founder of Mobile Creches, a pioneer agency and the first in the voluntary sector to attempt to provide day-care for the children of women construction labourers. The pattern of financial assistance provided under this scheme is found in Annexure 2.

Patterns of Funding

The channeling of funds for this scheme is through four routes. Country-wide, grants under the scheme are made directly by the Government of India to four major national agencies (some of which also operate in Tamil Nadu) while the smaller agencies receive funds through the Central Social Welfare Board, (CSWB) which in turn routes it through the various State Social Welfare Boards. Thus in Tamil Nadu the bulk of the funds to the voluntary agencies are released through the Tamil Nadu State Social Welfare Advisory Board. Since 1996, funds are also being released from the National Creche Fund through the State Governments and the Government of Tamil Nadu is chan-

neling some funds for creches in this way. The pattern of assistance through this (third) channel is the same as in the case of CSWB scheme. The number supported in this way is indicated in Annexure 3. Recently, a fourth channel for Governmental funds has been opened up, through the assistance provided under a scheme of the Government of Tamil Nadu for creches also routed through the Tamil Nadu State Social Welfare Advisory Board. Here the amount and pattern of assistance (Annexure 4) is far higher (Rs. 25,410 as recurring aid) than that provided by the Central Social Welfare Board (Rs. 18,480), though with lower remuneration to workers, making it all the more difficult for voluntary agencies to implement both schemes. Annexure 5 shows the smaller number of creches being supported under this scheme, while Annexure 6 indicates the total number of "aided" creches in Tamil Nadu. As to the "unaided" creches, there is no exact information about the number of such creches, or their pattern of expenditure, sources of funding, or performance.

Inadequacies of the Scheme

The main CSWB scheme, which from the beginning provided only very low remuneration for the worker, has been only marginally revised from time to time, allowing for slight increases in the worker's honorarium, far from adequate to cope with the inflation of the last two decades. Besides this major flaw, which has been the cause of constant pressure from the voluntary sector, the scheme has several other weaknesses (Shantha, 1997; Gopal, 1998) relating to the inadequate provision for

items like infrastructure, rental and equipment, for supplementary feeding, health care services and play materials, for training and supervision and for the unrealistic ratio of workers to children envisaged. Over the years, critiques of the scheme have been developed (De Souza, 1979; Nirmala Niketan, 1980; Swaminathan, 1987; Anandalakshmy, 1989; Lady Irwin College, 1989-1990; Gopal, 1998) and presented by representatives of the voluntary sector, but the response from Government has been very limited, in the form of ad hoc increases from time to time. In brief, the scheme as it at present stands is not based on a realistic appreciation of the needs of a holistic and healthy programme of day care for children (Woodhead, 1996; Shantha, 1997) living in poverty situations.

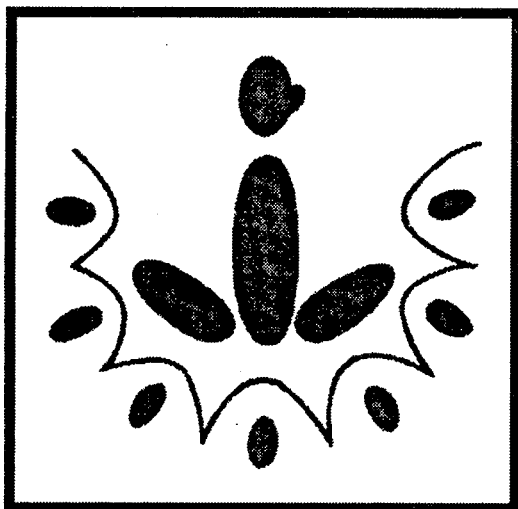
Other Constraints

With limited and uncertain funding from diverse sources, voluntary agencies are operating under serious constraints, which are not merely financial in nature. Apart from their inability to raise additional funds and uncertainty, delay and lack of continuity of funding, many small agencies also are beset by problems like lack of information about training and materials, or about women's and children's needs, sources of support and guidance and may find difficulty in balancing the needs of the various programmes which they run. With no forum or platform for sharing and exchange of ideas or for technical support and guidance, there has been no opportunity either to develop policies for training, guidance and develop-

ment of a cadre of Child Care Workers or to develop a coordinated policy towards them. The voluntary sector in child care thus presents a confused picture with little uniformity and scarcely any information. As far as employment and human resource development is concerned, it is a typical example of the "unorganised" sector with the significant exception that it is "not-for-profit".

As far as the programme is concerned, quality improvement does not seem to have matched quantitative expansion. There are about 12,470 creche units under this scheme in the country as a whole, which cover 3.11 lakh children (in Tamil Nadu 1058 units covering 26,450 children - Annexure 6), yet studies over a period of time have shown that the objectives laid down have not yet been fully realised to provide quality care for children in the age group of 0-5 years (Shantha, 1997; Gopal, 1998). At the same time, little is known about the crucial caregivers, namely the Child Care Workers, their conditions of work, the implications on their status and self-esteem and the possible influences of those on the quality of their work.

There is no doubt that, for significant change, the interface between the Government and the voluntary sector has to become even more collaborative, critical and partnership-oriented in order to benefit working mothers and their children. At the same time, attention has to be given to the third critical person in the triangle - the Child Care Worker - whose work is essential to the success of the enterprise. This study focuses on the third corner of the triangle.



This chapter attempts a glimpse into the personal and professional background of the Child Care Workers, drawn from their own answers. The Child Care Workers (CCWs) who participated in the study were located in 19 districts in Tamil Nadu, having both rural and urban characteristics. 73 per cent of the Child Care Workers worked in a rural setting, as compared to 27 per cent of workers in the urban areas. Table 1 gives the district-wise distribution of the 267 Child care Workers studied.

Table 2 shows the distribution of workers among "aided" and "unaided" institutions. "Aided" refers to those receiving assistance under the Government scheme through different channels indicated earlier, while "unaided" refers

Table 1
Geographical Spread

Districts*	Number of Child Care Workers
V.O. Chidambaranar	4
North Arcot	11
Dindugal-Anna	34
Madurai-Kamarajar	35
Chengai-M.G.R	23
Kanyakumari	26
Pudukottai	7
Periyar	1
Salem	4
Dharmapuri	14
Pasumpon	8
Trichy	15
Tirunelveli-Kattabomman	19
Coimbatore	11
Tanjore	5
Ramnad	3
Tiruvannamalai	3
Nagai-Quai-de-Milleth	2
Madras	42
Total	267

* Enumeration as done in 1994

Table 2
Institutional Affiliation

Type	No. of NGOs	No. of CCWs
Aided	40 (52.6)	198 (74.2)
Unaided	36 (47.4)	69 (25.8)
Total	76	267

to those dependent only on other non-governmental sources, including philanthropic, denominational, international and other organisations.

Large organisations running many creche units, through the centralised pattern of receiving grants, had deputed a larger number of CCWs each from their branch offices and creche units. Other small (aided as well as unaided) organisations sent only one or two Child Care Workers to attend the Convention. Hence 75 per cent of the respondents belonged to the aided sector, though only half the NGOs did.

Age and Marriage

From Table 3, it can be seen that 40 per cent of the CCWs were quite young, being less than 25 years of age and 81.4 per cent of these women were unmarried, i.e. they were probably waiting to get married. 43 per cent were married, with the responsibility of maintaining their households. It can be assumed that as a majority of the CCWs

were young and at a productive stage, there remains scope for future career options.

Single Women

Only 8.2 per cent of the CCWs were single, being either separated or widowed. In this context, it may be noted that in the original balwadi scheme of early 1950s, equal emphasis was given to the twin objectives of child care and provision of employment to destitute women. The professed objectives of the MGR Noon Meal Scheme also emphasised preferential employment opportunities to destitute and/or widowed women, as recorded in the archives of the CSWB and notings in earlier speeches of the ex-Chief Minister M.G. Ramachandran as late as 1982 (Harriss, Barbara, 1991). It is, therefore, interesting to see that very few of the CCWs now are separated and destitute women, and obviously this is no longer a criterion for employment in this sector. Social changes of the last few decades together with the growing awareness and acceptance of child care

Table 3
Age and Marital Status

Age	Marital Status			Total
	Unmarried	Married	Separated/ Widowed	
Less than 25	92 (81.4)	19 (16.8)	2 (1.8)	113
25 - 30	21 (46.7)	22 (48.9)	2 (4.4)	45
30 -35	7 (14.6)	35 (72.9)	6 (12.5)	48
Above 35	10 (16.4)	39 (63.9)	12 (19.7)	61
Total	130 (48.7)	115 (43.1)	22 (8.2)	267

as an occupation for women may both lie behind this phenomenon.

Age and marital status may affect both motivation and aspiration. One Child care Worker, aged 20 years, does not have any clear cut ambitions or plans for the future.

I feel marriage may prevent me from continuing the same job. However, my parents are on the look out for a suitable bridegroom. My parents still have a desire to send me to the police training course. But till then, they also wish to see me teach in a 'big school'.

But a married Child Care Worker mentioned... with a big sigh!

At least one of my colleagues may get a chance to leave the creche after marriage. I will have to stick on to this job till the end of my life time.

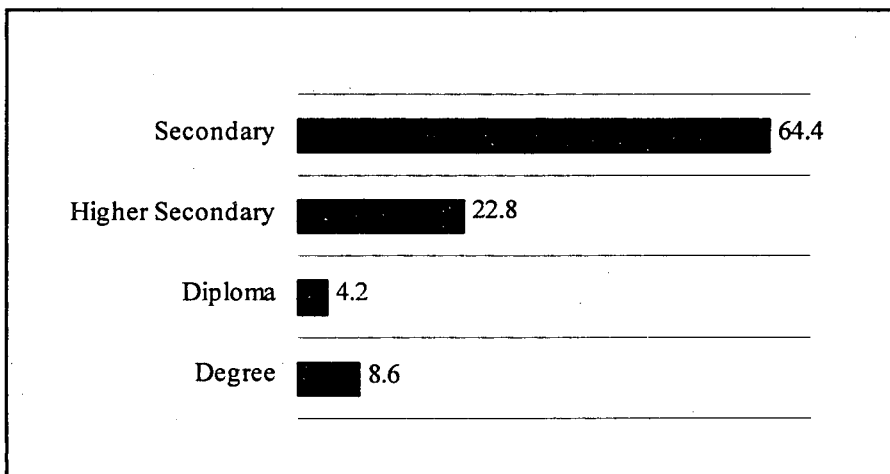
Here, the motivation and aspirations of these workers are bogged down by marriage. And clearly this work is seen by many as only a stop-gap arrangement, while waiting for better prospects, with an awareness that options are limited.

Education

Education plays an important role in shaping a career. Higher the qualification, higher are the chances to avail of better employment opportunities. But, if there is an increase in drop-out rates due to pressures from family or other reasons, career growth may be stunted.

In the case of our Child Care Workers, Figure 1 shows that a majority, (64.4 per cent) had studied upto the secondary level. However, data is not available as to whether they have passed at that level or simply dropped out.

Figure 1
Educational Background



Family Background

Figure 2 and Table 4 reflect the family background of the workers. Half lived in large families consisting of 5 or more members in the household, while 37.5 per cent lived in households with 3 to 4 family members. It is possible that consumption levels in such households would have led to a need to earn more income to make both ends meet.

A family's economic status depends upon the types of occupation all the members are involved in. Our data reveals that many of the male family members of the Child Care Workers were either unemployed (33.3 per cent) or were involved in unskilled labour in the unorganised sector (35 per cent), implying that the income levels would have been low, even putting together the joint earnings of the father/husband in the household. This may have been one of the underlying causes for women joining the Child care

Figure 2
Family Size

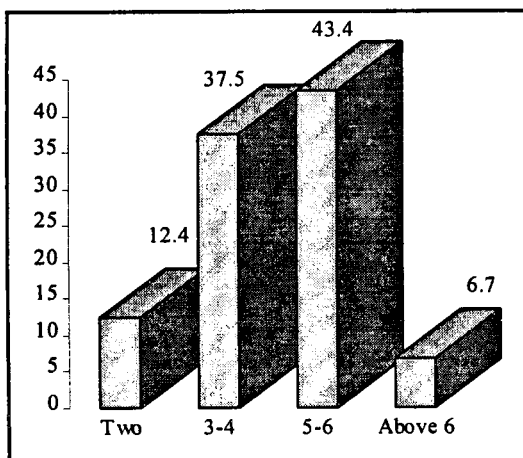


Table 4
Occupation of Husband / Father

Occupation	Nos.	Per cent
Agricultural Labour	40	15.0
Daily Wage Labour	52	19.5
Factory	20	7.5
Government Services	12	4.5
Self-employed	22	8.2
Unemployed	89	33.3
No Husband/Father	22	8.2
Others	10	3.8
Total	267	100

labour force. This kind of 'forced induction' of the CCWs could also be attributed to a lack of options in their neighbourhood.

Training

One third of the workers had received no training at all (36 per cent) while others had exposure to training of varying durations, as can be seen from Table 5. Twenty five per cent had undergone training for a period of one year or more, which meant that they had received some specialised exposure to professional training. Others have had exposures ranging from below a month upto two, four or six months, which is clearly inadequate for the kind of work they are expected to perform. And data on how frequent these exposures have been remains unexplored.

Table 5
Duration of Training

Duration	No. of CCWs	Per cent
15 days	23	8.6
1 month	61	22.8
2-4 months	10	3.7
6 months	12	4.5
1 year	61	22.8
Above 1 year	4	1.6
No training	96	36.0
Total	267	100

In their study "Creche Services in India - An Evaluation" (1998), Drs. A.K.Gopal and N.Khan of NIPCCD recommend that enhancing the skills of the creche workers in pre-school activities is a priority need. Stonehouse (1980) also argues that training is a key component of quality in early childhood services. Training helps staff to realise the importance of interacting in a caring and educational way with children, and helps them to be sensitive to children's individual needs as well as those of their parents. Training provides those who are 'naturally' gifted with children with an understanding of how children develop and are influenced by their environment. There is considerable evidence that interactions with children are positively influenced by staff training (Dunn, 1991; Howes, 1983; Kaplan and Conn, 1984; Meades, 1985; Prescott et al, 1967, Whitebook et al, 1989).

On the other hand, there is little general appreciation of the need for

training. "It is erroneously assumed that anyone can take care of young children, despite the growing wealth of research confirming the importance of teacher training to the quality of the early childhood experience. Moreover, teachers are far too often regarded as custodians and dispensers of knowledge who must follow a centrally controlled curriculum regardless of local conditions or the efficacy of other forms of learning. Instead, teachers should be trained on children's needs or how to respond to them or be imparted the skills of training with children" (Young, 1996). "The general belief is that child care is something which any woman should be able to do" (Swaminathan, 1985,1997).

Perceptions about Training

What do the CCWs themselves think about training? On the whole, they appreciate the benefits of training:

I worked in the creche without any training for one year. But I attended a five weeks programme in a school at Madras along with other creche teachers. It was very useful and made me aware of various issues related to the child's development.

During the training, it was stressed that the children should be taught with songs, stories, picture posters, charts etc. It was emphasised that we should be sensitive to the children's feelings and act according to the psychology of the child.

I developed a keen interest to teach the children with teaching aids only after this training programme. The other important effect of the training course was my realisation that beating children will not help them to improve. Both I and the other creche teachers earlier used to beat the children with a stick.

The training programme definitely changed our approach in handling and teaching the children. It made me more confident and added to my repertoire of teaching skills. More and more such training would be of great help to equip ourselves.

From the Child Care Worker's point of view, opportunities for professional development were also important for their job satisfaction:

Earlier, my teaching was largely influenced by my father who had been a teacher. I also observed other teachers during my one year tailoring course. In my hostel experience, older children were expected to teach the younger ones. After the five weeks training programme, I realised that my earlier teaching was not systematic, though I had tried to do my best for the children. The training I attended served as a "boost" to enhance skills.

The training was quite useful. I learnt to make handicrafts from waste products, the art of telling stories, singing rhymes, preparation of nutritious food and the right age for inoculating children. It has enhanced my knowledge.

Though the CSWB scheme does not have an in-built component for training as a recurring expenditure (Annexure 2), it supports voluntary organisations to hold five week orientations once a year for the CCWs in the voluntary sector. These are usually conducted by training institutions like the Indian Council for Child Welfare, academic institutions like Avinashilingam Institute for Home Science, Gandhigram Rural University, etc. However, due to paucity of funds, regular trainings have not been organised for the past two years. It may also be noted here that all the CCWs in the voluntary sector are not covered under such orientations. The quality of trainings/other orientations need to be studied further before drawing conclusions about the relationship between skills, performance and satisfaction.

Knowledge for Early Childhood Education

While many diverse activities are included in the daily programme in the creches, only data about story telling, singing and organising games could be compiled in Tables 6, 7 and 8 as indicators of the knowledge needed/being used by the workers as part of the teaching learning process.

Table 6
CCWs Knowledge of Songs

Age	Songs Known			Total
	0-5	6-10	11-20	
Less than 25	8 (7.1)	26 (23.0)	79 (69.9)	113
25 - 30	2 (4.4)	2 (4.4)	41 (91.2)	45
30 - 35	5 (10.4)	8 (16.7)	35 (72.9)	48
Above 35	6 (9.8)	10 (16.4)	45 (73.8)	61
Total	21 (7.9)	46 (17.2)	200 (74.9)	267

It is heartening to note that the majority (75 per cent) of all CCWs knew between 11 and 20 songs each, but even here there is an age difference. While 91.1 per cent of the CCWs between 25 - 30 years of age knew between 11 and 20 songs, only 73.8 per cent of those above 35 years and 70 per cent of the youngest knew the same number. While the recruits have yet to gain experience, it is to be expected that perhaps with age, both enthusiasm and memory may show decline.

As regards stories, the older CCWs (above 35 years of age) seemed to know

the most number of stories. Here again age difference appears, but in reverse form. Nearly half the group knew 11 to 20 stories each, but here the older group scores higher (60 per cent) than the younger groups. Perhaps story telling may be a more preferred activity among older women than singing or games.

As far as games are concerned, this conclusion is reinforced, since here too the younger and middle aged women seem to have greater knowledge. While half of all the women said they knew 11-20 games, 70.8 per cent of those

Table 7
CCWs Knowledge of Stories

Age	Stories Known			Total
	0-5	6-10	11-20	
Less than 25	20 (17.7)	48 (42.5)	45 (39.8)	113
25 - 30	4 (8.9)	17 (37.8)	24 (53.3)	45
30 - 35	8 (16.7)	14 (29.1)	26 (54.2)	48
Above 35	7 (11.5)	17 (27.9)	37 (60.6)	61
Total	39 (14.6)	96 (36.0)	132 (49.4)	267

Table 8
CCWs Knowledge of Games

Age	Games Known			Total
	0-5	6-10	11-20	
Less than 25	24 (21.2)	46 (40.7)	43 (38.1)	113
25 - 30	4 (8.9)	12 (26.7)	29 (64.4)	45
30 - 35	5 (10.4)	9 (18.8)	34 (70.8)	48
Above 35	11 (18.0)	20 (32.8)	30 (49.2)	61
Total	44 (16.5)	87 (32.6)	136 (50.9)	267

between 30-35 years fell in that category followed by 64.4 per cent between 25-30 years of age and only 50 per cent of women above 35. This suggests that the younger and middle-aged women were more interested in games than the older women.

However, the older workers are fully aware of the importance of these activities. In this context, an experienced Child Care Worker observed :

The children should not be overburdened with work. I teach the children through action songs. I know nearly ten games and more than twenty songs and stories. I also tell stories using my imagination. My nursery school children appreciate colours and pictures and they love to play outside. I do not believe in restricting the children.

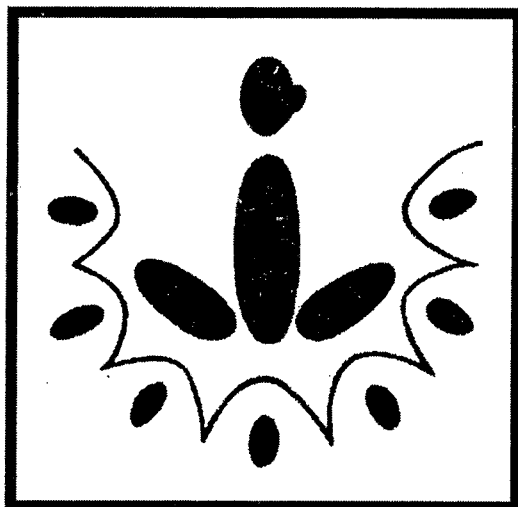
In spite of the limited number of trainings undergone by the workers, a large number of them seemed to have a good knowledge of songs, stories and games. As knowledge and skills rather than educational qualification is the basis of professional competence for

child care, it can be interpreted that most of the Child Care Workers felt able to perform their assigned roles. One Child Care Worker says:

Though I did not expect to become a nursery teacher and found it difficult to manage the children initially, I began to love my work with children. I frequently tell them stories using my imagination and teach action songs.

But it must also be understood that though the CCWs may profess to have knowledge of stories, games and songs, this may not necessarily enable them 'to perform'. Knowledge and provision of material resources by themselves cannot ensure performance of the CCW. Poor performance may also result from inadequacies of investment and management of human resource development.

With the large scale expansion of child care services since the inception of the various Government schemes, there is a need to review policy towards the provision of training and its impact on the programme.



This chapter looks at the situation of children and mothers who make use of the child care services at the creches – the community served by the Child Care Workers.

Location

The location of the Child Care Centre (CCC) is an important dimension affecting the use of the services. The location of the centre may be determined by several factors such as availability and cost of space, convenience, availability of transport etc. As a result, the needs of the target groups addressed by the scheme may not necessarily be the only or main criterion for location. Since residence patterns in villages are usually related to caste,

the location of the centre would in turn affect the caste composition of the user community (Vakil, 1993).

The location of the centres in which the Child Care Workers work is shown in Figure 3 and the caste of the majority of children attending the centres (as reported by the CCWs), is shown in Table 9.

Nearly half of all the centres (128) reported that the majority of enrolled children were SCs. Where the centres are in the main village, the reported numbers of the SC children are only slightly higher than the BC children, while where the centres are in SC colonies, the majority of children are said to be from the SC community.

Figure 3
Location of the Child Care Centre

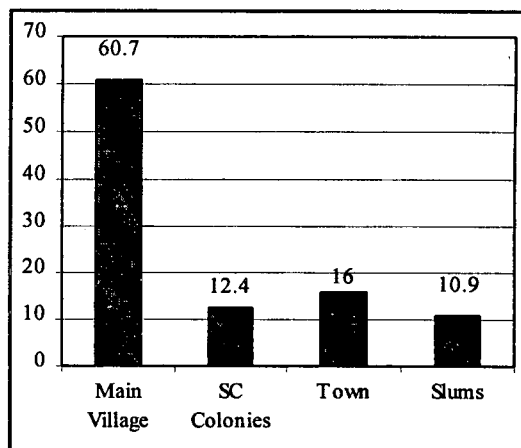


Table 9
Location of Child Care Centres and
Caste of Majority of Children (as reported)

Location of CCC	Reported Caste* of Children Enrolled					Total
	BC	SC	ST	FC	MBC	
Main Village	53 (32.7)	67 (41.4)	4 (2.5)	34 (21.0)	4 (2.4)	162
Scheduled Caste Colony	7 (21.2)	24 (72.7)	0	2 (6.1)	0	33
Town	13 (30.2)	20 (46.5)	1 (2.3)	7 (16.3)	2 (4.7)	43
Slums	9 (31.0)	17 (58.6)	1 (3.4)	1 (3.4)	1 (3.4)	29
Total	82 (30.7)	128 (47.9)	6 (2.2)	44 (16.5)	7 (2.6)	267

* BC-Backward Caste, SC-Scheduled Caste, ST-Scheduled Tribe, FC-Forward Caste, MBC-Most Backward Caste

(Interestingly, in urban slums and towns, the proportion of SC children seems to be uniformly high.) Though the MBCs and STs are less in numbers, a considerable per cent of FCs are also reported to use the centres. The available data suggests that the scheme, which originally was intended to benefit the poor and Scheduled Caste/working class groups seems to have broadly achieved the purpose for which it was mooted. But since no field data collection was done, it is also possible that the figures do not accurately reflect the field situation.

The dynamics of caste relationships and their implications for the CCCs (Bhat et al 1989) are indirectly reflected in some comments. One Child Care Worker mentioned the impact of caste and religion on her centre:

The majority of the children are from the Nadar caste and are Christians by faith. Hindu-Christian conflict which started about three

years ago became very serious last year. It had its impact on the nursery also. About 10 Sambava Hindu children have stopped coming to the nursery since then.

It is not known how typical this case is. But there is also an example of harmony between communities from a centre which has both Backward Caste and Scheduled Caste children.

There are ten Scheduled Caste children (three female and seven male children) in the creche. The remaining children are from Muthuraja or Ambalakkharar and Achari caste, the two major castes found in the main village. The caste Hindus do not have any reservations about sending their children to the creche.*

* Muthuraja refers to a Backward Caste; Ambalakkharar refers to either the Backward Caste or Denotified Community in certain regions of Tamil Nadu; Achari refers to a Backward Caste

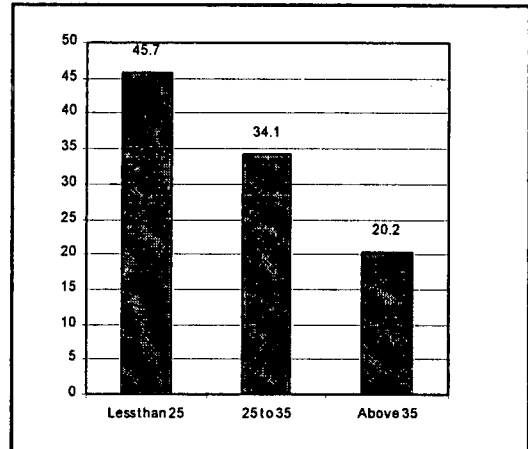
Enrolment and Age of Children

The enrolment of children and their age composition reflects how changing societal norms affect the kind of provision for women with young children to continue their work during the childbearing years, as well as the workload of the workers. It was hence considered important to study both the average enrolments at the Child Care Centres and the age of children attending the centres in order to find out the extent to which children of various age-groups are catered to. However, as no field study was undertaken, these tables merely report the responses of the Child Care Workers based on their experience.

According to the guidelines of the Central Social Welfare Board, the norm is to enrol 25 children per centre. But clearly more than half the centres had enrolled many more, some having more than 35 children each, as shown in Figure 4. The additional responsibility of the Child Care Workers in catering to the needs of a large number of children could add to their existing workload, especially in the context of these Child Care Workers being considered as "volunteers" receiving honorarium rather than workers receiving wages/salaries.

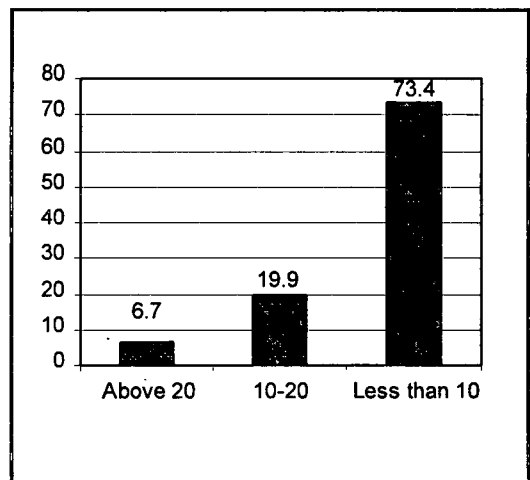
As regards age-groups, it can be seen from Fig.5 that while 73.4 per cent of the workers reported that they had less than 10 children on average below the age of two, 20 per cent said they had 10-20 children each in this age group and 6.7 per cent even said they had more than 20 infants below two. The data therefore draws attention to the difficulty the Child Care Workers may

Figure 4
Average Enrolments (as reported)



be experiencing in catering to children's needs according to age, since the younger the child, the more care and attention it needs. Whether the scheme provides adequate support to cater to the need for care in this age group is

Figure 5
Enrolment of Children below 2 years (as reported)



also a question to be pondered over (Swaminathan, 1997).

Mothers' Work Status and Creche Timings

This section looks at the suitability of the opening and closing timings of the Child Care Centres in relation to the work timings of mothers of children attending the creche, since the stated objective of the scheme is to provide day care for the children of women in the unorganised sector.

When we look at the occupations (as reported by the CCWs) of the mothers of the children attending the creche (Table 10), a significant 30.3 per cent reported that mothers were predominantly involved in agricultural labour that were seasonal in nature, but which involves going early in the mornings, putting in long hours of work and coming back late in the evenings. 18.4 per cent of the CCWs reported that many of the mothers worked in cottage industries either within their homes or outside, and 22 per cent replied that most mothers were daily wage labourers. According to the CCWs, many or most of the mothers were involved in unskilled labour work in the unorganised sector and they had to toil hard to make a living, apart from doing household work and child care.

One comment on the nature of mothers' work :

The mothers of the nursery children do not generally go for outside work. They earn their income by engaging themselves in doing embroidery

Table 10
Occupations of Majority of Mothers
(as reported)

Occupations Reported	No. of reporting CCWs	Per cent
Agricultural Labour	81	30.3
House Maid	25	9.4
Cottage Industry	49	18.4
Factory Labour	13	4.9
Daily Wage Labourer [Coolie]	60	22.5
Petty Business	31	11.6
Others	8	3.0
Total	267	100

work at home. Hardly any one sits idle at home in my village.

However, grass roots realities differ in various contexts and profoundly affect both location and timings. For example, in places where there are no ICDS Noon Meal Centres, the creches run by NGOs may also have to cater to the demands made by the non-working women in the village or slum. Similarly, they may also have to site the creche in a place where they could get help from the rich and dominant castes. Non-acceptance of such demands by the creches or NGOs would probably lead to strained relationships between the Worker/ NGO and the community.

However, even allowing for these constraints, Tables 11 and 12 do show that the match between CCCs working

Table 11
Reported Time of Leaving for Work of Mothers and CCC Timings

CCC's Morning Timings	Reported time of leaving for work of mothers						Total
	[No. of CCWs reporting]						
	6.00 a.m.	7.00 a.m.	8.00 a.m.	9.00 a.m.	10.00 a.m.	N.A.	
8.00 a.m.	10 [17.9]	12 [21.4]	23 [41.1]	4 [7.1]	2 [3.6]	5 [8.9]	56
9.00 a.m.	36 [19.4]	32 [17.2]	59 [31.7]	36 [19.4]	9 [4.8]	14 [7.5]	186
10.00 a.m.	4 [16.0]	2 [8.0]	6 [24.0]	7 [28.0]	1 [4.0]	5 [20.0]	25
Total	50 [18.7]	46 [17.2]	88 [33.0]	47 [17.6]	12 [4.5]	24 [9.0]	267

timings and mothers' work timings is far from ideal. Thus for example, though 88 CCWs reported that mothers leave for work by 8.00 a.m., and 96 that mothers left still earlier (at 6.00 or 7.00 a.m.), only 56 centres start work at 8.00 a.m. The vast majority (186) start at 9.00 a.m., though only 59 reported that mothers go to work at 9.00 a.m. or later. It was not however possible to find out the extent to which centres could individually match mothers' needs.

Similarly, the evening timings of the creches also did not co-incide with that of the reported time mothers returned back from work. 165 CCCs close at 4.00 p.m., though 105 CCCs reported that mothers return from work as late as 5.00 or 6.00 p.m. and only 77 remain open so late. It is an indication that timings are not flexible enough to suit the needs of working mothers and points to a shift in focus from the main objective of the scheme. Yet clearly some creches are making efforts to suit mothers.

Most mothers of my children are agricultural labourers. Some are

beedi rollers. Children of the agricultural labourers attend the creche from seven in the morning. The helper being a local person comes early and we co-ordinate everything together.

The mothers of the creche children are generally engaged in weaving. They can either carry it out at home or go to the weaving society. Depending on the amount of weaving done, a person is paid for the work. The creche timing generally suits the mothers. The creche seems to be helpful for the mothers who carry out their weaving at their respective houses enabling them to concentrate on the work.

Most of the mothers of the children are agricultural labourers. Few of them also go for collecting firewood to supplement the family income

Table 12
Reported Time of Returning from Work of Mothers and CCC Timings

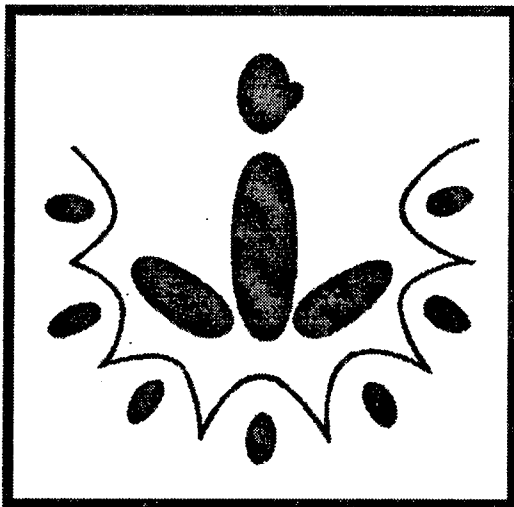
CCCs Evening Timings	Reported time of returning from work of majority of the mothers							Total
	[No. of CCWs reporting]							
	1.00 p.m.	2.00 p.m.	3.00 p.m.	4.00 p.m.	5.00 p.m.	6.00 p.m.	N.A.	
3.00 p.m.	1 [4.0]	3 [12.0]	4 [16.0]	2 [8.0]	4 [16.0]	11 [44.0]	0	25
4.00 p.m.	16 [9.7]	25 [15.2]	25 [15.2]	31 [18.8]	27 [16.4]	26 [15.7]	15 [9.0]	165
5.00 p.m.	5 [7.2]	5 [7.2]	10 [14.6]	9 [13.0]	22 [31.9]	10 [14.5]	8 [11.6]	69
6.00 p.m.	1 [12.5]	1 [12.5]	0	0	3 [37.5]	2 [25.0]	1 [12.5]	8
Total	23 [8.6]	34 [12.7]	39 [14.6]	42 [15.7]	56 [21.0]	49 [18.4]	24 [9.0]	267

and the rest go for "Sattumavu" preparation. The creche timings are between 7.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m. which is quite helpful in accommodating the children of these mothers. The ayah being a local person is able to come early and help these mothers.

But this raises an unaddressed issue about the extra time spent by these few CCWs and their helpers and whether they receive any special recompense for

the same. Whether the work is shared between two CCWs and one helper per centre or by one CCW with more pay and one helper could not be studied. The provision of extended timings remains an unexplored issue. However, it is clear that the keen awareness of the CCWs of the local situation and their intimate knowledge of the user community offers great advantages in meeting needs and handling expectations.

THE WORK ENVIRONMENT 5



This chapter examines the work environment of the Child care Workers, that is, the services, programme and facilities, as perceived by them.

Infrastructure

Analysing this aspect of the Child Care Centre (CCC) was considered essential in order to find out what voluntary organisations are able to offer in terms of space, equipments, type of buildings, etc.

It is heartening to note from Table 13 that a high proportion of the centres in the rural areas (76 per cent) are provided with "tiled" or "concrete" roofs. However, in the slums, half are found with thatched roofs. While the 90 per cent "tiled" or "concrete" in the town area may be seen as a welcome sign, this may be one of the pressures determining the location of the centre.

As the CSWB does not have any provision for infrastructure (Annexure 2) in its scheme to voluntary organisations, some of the small agencies with limited resources have to struggle with the

Table 13
Child Care Centres by Location and Type of Building Roof

Location of the CCC	Type of Buildings by Roof			Total
	Thatched	Tiled	Concrete	
Main Village	37 (22.8)	67 (41.4)	58 (35.8)	162
Colony	8 (24.2)	14 (42.4)	11 (33.3)	33
Town	4 (9.3)	13 (30.2)	26 (60.5)	43
Slums	15 (51.7)	6 (20.7)	8 (27.6)	29
Total	64 (24.0)	100 (37.5)	103 (38.6)	267

responsibility to provide space and infrastructure and have to find ways and means of utilising the existing resources in a community. For example, since voluntary organisations working in rural and urban communities also depend to some extent on the resources contributed by the rich and powerful segments of the community, it may affect the location, which in turn would affect attendance. As the community in the main village usually belongs to the dominant caste and landowning class, the agencies may be forced to seek their help for accommodation for creches and the question of power equations in community dynamics arises. In this context, these small organisations may face challenges to their autonomy and have to strike a balance between reaching the disadvantaged sections and maintaining good relations with the powerful in the community.

Daily Travel

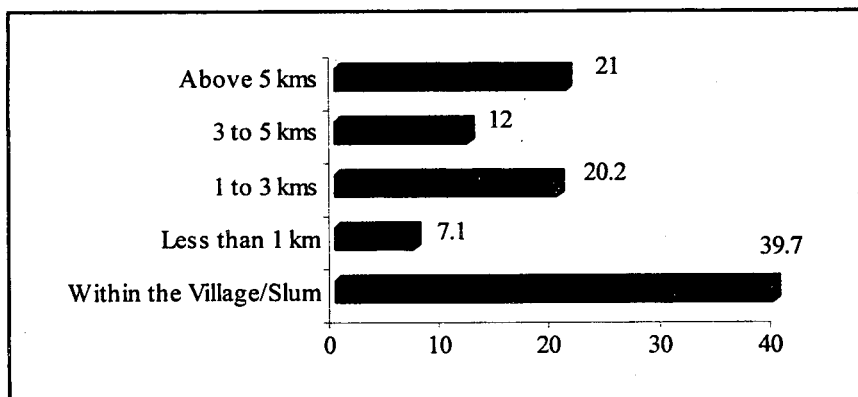
The infrastructure affects the work environment in several ways. Figure 6

shows how much travel CCWs have to undertake daily. 142 (53 per cent) of the CCWs who were not staying within the same village or slum, or within a distance of 1 km, had to travel a distance of 1-5 kms to reach the Child Care Centre. Thus, a substantial number (more than half of the CCWs) in addition to their domestic work, had to spend considerable time, energy and money in travelling to the Child Care Centres located in the main villages, Scheduled Caste colonies, towns, and slums of Tamil Nadu. How do these 53 per cent of the Child Care Workers cope with this long distance travelling?

My creche is far away from the town. It's difficult reaching my place without frequent bus services.

The creche starts at 8.30 a.m. and closes at 4.30 p.m. in the evening. Before my marriage I used to walk two kilometres to the creche. My Chitappa (father's younger brother) is also living in the same village. At

Figure 6
Distance of Child Care Centre from Residence



times I used to stay back with my Chitappa's family. After my marriage, I travel 10 kilometres by bus which costs me Rs.4 per day.

But for this Child Care Worker, the distance was not a problem:

The distance between my house and the creche is 2 kms. I walk the distance as it takes only a short time.

However, details about the money spent in travelling could not be obtained, which would have been helpful to calculate the costs borne from the meagre honorarium received. How this aspect is being managed by the voluntary organisations, and how recruitment is affected by travel costs, are questions which could not be answered. But it is worth studying how far community dynamics and lack of suitable/skilled personnel were reasons behind non-recruitment of local personnel (Woodhead, 1996) in child care work.

Other Facilities

Adequate infrastructure, in terms of space and facilities within the Child

Care Centres, is one of the guarantees of the quality of care offered. It also provides a good working environment for the CCW to discharge her duties effectively. Keeping this aspect in mind, the facilities available at the Child Care Centres, as reported by the CCWs were studied.

Table 14 points to a sad situation with regard to toilets and play ground. While the water availability is good, the status of kitchens is far from satisfactory. The non-availability of toilets thrusts an additional burden on the CCWs and their helpers to utilise the minimal resources. Time spent with children in play and teaching might get affected as the CCW would have to divide her time and may have to concentrate on tasks like cooking, taking the children safely along to provide water, washing children, accompanying the children to toileting in the open space outside, etc. Environmental and personal hygiene also get affected due to the smoke that emanates from cooking activities, infections arising from open toileting, etc. On these risks :

Table 14
Facilities at the Child Care Centres (as reported)

Facilities in the CCC	Available	Not Available
Water Facility	206 (77.2)	61 (22.8)
Separate Kitchen	170 (63.7)	97 (36.3)
Separate Toilet	129 (48.3)	138 (51.7)
Playground	156 (58.4)	111 (41.6)

Table 15
Availability of Outdoor Equipment

Out door Equipment	Adequate	Inadequate	Not Available
Swings	46 [17.2]	46 [17.2]	175 [65.5]
Sliding Board	47 [17.6]	24 [9.0]	196 [73.4]
Tyres	54 [20.2]	23 [8.6]	190 [71.2]
Cradles	60 [22.5]	23 [8.6]	184 [68.9]
Climbing Bars	46 [17.2]	20 [7.5]	201 [75.3]
Others	40 [15.0]	26 [9.7]	201 [75.3]

My creche is spacious and it has a tiled roof. It has got a separate kitchen, drinking water facilities and a playground. But I'm not happy about the toilet facilities. Without a toilet, my children are forced to defecate either by the roadside or near the cultivated land. There's a risk involved in sending young children alone to the roadside. So I always send my helper along with them.

Equipment and Materials

Table 15 reveals that equipment like swings, sliding boards, tyres, cradles, and climbing bars were reported to be not available in 65 to 75 per cent of the Child Care Centres. The non-availability of such equipment makes heavy demands on the CCWs to find ways of engaging children in indoor activities.

Table 16 indicates that in the eyes of the workers, play materials for

Table 16
Availability of Play Materials (as reported)

Play Materials	Adequate	Inadequate	Not Available
Dolls	118 [44.2]	79 [29.6]	70 [26.2]
Soft Toys	75 [28.1]	60 [22.5]	132 [49.4]
Balls	147 [55.0]	56 [21.0]	64 [24.0]
Constructional Toys	72 [27.0]	59 [22.1]	136 [50.9]
Puzzles	60 [22.5]	26 [9.7]	181 [67.8]
Picture Books	128 [47.9]	67 [25.1]	72 [27.0]
Others	53 [19.9]	20 [7.5]	194 [72.6]

children were mostly inadequate and not available in the Child Care Centres except for dolls (44.2 per cent), balls (55 per cent), and picture books (47 per cent) that seemed to be adequate, while soft toys, constructional toys, puzzles and other play materials were said not to be available to a significant extent. This emphasis may reflect the perceptions of managements as to what is desirable equipment for a Child Care Centre. This situation may imply that children belonging to the disadvantaged sections of our society are denied adequate opportunities of learning through play. Not only that, it also hinders the teaching-learning process in the CCC and can add to the frustrations of the worker.

One Child Care Worker complained:

The nursery does not have enough play materials. Whatever little is available like a wooden rocking horse and duck are in a very bad shape. There are no puzzles, water colours or picture books. I have been provided with sufficient papers, slates, chalkpieces, charts and balls. I feel that an additional stock of story/song books and picture books is required. Toy wooden cooking sets are provided for the children to play. Out of my own interest I have made balls in different colours with waste cloth material. I also buy story/song books if I have money to spare sometimes.

The CCWs also reported on the availability of teaching-learning aids which

are important accessories to create a conducive atmosphere for carrying out suitable activities with young children. Table 17 shows that common aids like blackboard, paper, cardboard, charts, story/song books were felt to be adequate by 60–75 per cent of the workers while many (15–40 per cent) stated that they were 'not available' and only a few (10–15 per cent) stated that they were inadequate. Aids like flannelgraphs, water colours, crayons, manuals and other materials were said not to be available at all in 55 per cent to 80 per cent of the Child Care Centres.

Availability of these aids depends on the resources raised by the agencies themselves. Even where resources are inadequate, the CCWs can be motivated to become creative in teaching-learning activities by designing innovative, low-cost and indigenous materials as already done by a few.

Since I do not have teaching aids, I teach my children to identify colours by the clothes they wear, and to observe the surroundings and watch the sky. I teach numbers with the help of pebbles and neem seeds. I make them separate items from a mixture of leaves and flowers. Sometimes to increase their observational skills, I show them a group of many things, ask them to take a look and then cover it up with a blanket. Later ask them to list what they have seen.

Table 17
Availability of Teaching-Learning Aids

Teaching-Learning Aids	Adequate	Inadequate	Not Available
Blackboard	194 [72.7]	24 [9.0]	49 [18.3]
Flannel graph	62 [23.2]	21 [7.9]	184 [68.9]
Water colours	57 [21.3]	23 [8.7]	187 [70.0]
Crayons	80 [30.0]	25 [9.3]	162 [60.7]
Paper	158 [59.2]	32 [12.0]	77 [28.8]
Cardboard	128 [47.9]	40 [15.0]	99 [37.1]
Charts	171 [64.0]	52 [19.5]	44 [16.5]
Story/Song books	164 [61.4]	62 [23.2]	41 [15.4]
Manuals	74 [27.7]	47 [17.6]	146 [54.7]
Others	31 [11.6]	11 [4.1]	225 [84.3]

I know about five to six stories, ten games and more than twenty five songs. The children are taught to identify colours, shapes, etc. with locally available materials. Pieces of card board are cut into various shapes like triangular, rectangular, etc. and oil papers are pasted on them. Identification of colours is done by using flowers, leaves and broken bangles. Addition and subtraction are taught by using tables and tamarind seeds. Sometimes, a few of the children are asked to go out and hide. The children are then asked to count the remainder. In order to improve observation and memory, the child is generally asked about the surroundings, the number of trees around their house or number of limbs on animals, and the things

the child sees on the way to the creche.

I use old powder tins filled with small pebbles and soda bottle caps as rattles for the one year old children. I make balls from waste cloth materials..... I also engage other children in creative work by making prints from ladiesfingers and threads dipped in different colours. I collect waste wood in different shapes from the carpenters to teach the children various shapes like triangle, square and rectangle. The children are made to identify different colours by using flowers, leaves and the dresses they wear. The children are engaged in separating items from a mixture

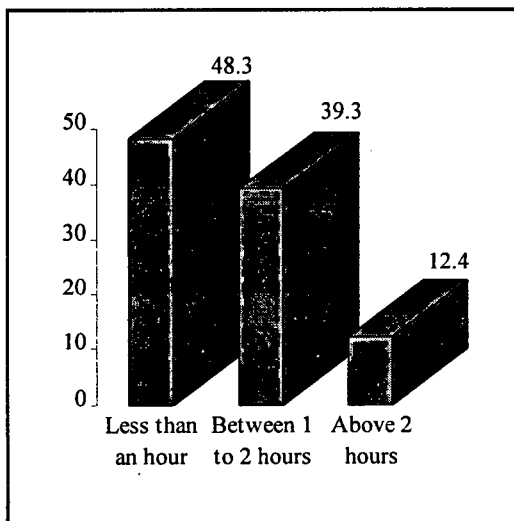
of pebbles, beads and seeds. Numbers are taught using small wooden blocks.

These examples illustrate the extent to which the CCWs have been able to overcome the shortage of resources and gives a glimpse into what could be done with proper support. However, it is also possible that the managements perceive ECCE as an avenue for formal learning.

Administrative work

Doing administrative work like maintaining attendance registers, stock registers, health reports and monthly reports of mothers' meetings becomes an additional responsibility apart from child care work and the time spent on it might also affect the quality of care provided to children. Figure 7 shows

Figure 7
Time spent on Administrative Work



the extent of workload of the Child Care Workers. Half reported less than an hour a day on such chores, but another 40 per cent had 1-2 hours per day, which may affect their attention to children and the quality of work. This brings us to the issue of supervision.

Guidance and Supervision

With limited skills and qualifications and a heavy workload at the Child Care Centres, CCWs require careful guidance and support from experienced personnel. Providing guidance and supervision both in their administrative work and in the programme of child care services will also help in creating better working conditions for the CCWs. With the meagre honorarium that CCWs receive, they may tend to become frustrated in their work in the long run. Guidance and supervision fosters personal rapport with the CCWs, which in turn helps in problem solving too. Questions like who supervises, how often and in what way, were included during the data collection process.

Who Supervises?

As seen in Table 18, 75 per cent of the CCWs reported that guidance and supervision were provided by supervisors appointed for the purpose of monitoring the child care services. Other staff members of the voluntary organisation and members of the Executive Committee of the Association also were involved in providing guidance and supervision to the CCWs. Only 8.6 per cent of the CCWs received no guidance.

It is interesting to note that though the creche scheme does not have any

Table 18
Person providing Guidance and Supervision

Supervision by	No. of CCWs	Percent
Appointed Supervisor	200	74.9
Other Staff Members	20	7.5
Association Members	3	1.1
Appointed Supervisor and Staff Member	21	7.9
None	23	8.6
Total	267	100

provision for employing supervisors (A.K. Gopal, 1998), a majority reported receiving supervision through persons appointed for the purpose. How did these NGO managements try to find additional resources? Did they have multiple programmes to make adjustments for such provisions? Did they delegate responsibility to other programme staff? Do they take financial risks inspite of their knowledge about the inadequacies of the scheme? These questions need exploration.

Frequency of supervision helps in one way to assess the adequacy of supervision. From Table 19, it seems that about 60 per cent were adequately supervised (40 per cent weekly) or even over supervised (20 per cent daily) and less than 5 per cent rarely supervised.

The type of supervision offered is probably the most crucial element in maintenance of programme quality and morale. Regarding the nature of supervision offered, 65 per cent of the CCWs opined that they received suggestions or support to improve their skills, services, rapport with mothers, administrative work etc, as shown in Table 20 (next page). Some organisations combined inspection with offering suggestions and other support as revealed by 19.5 per cent of the CCWs. However, less than one per cent of the CCWs identified the type of supervision received as equivalent to training.

The supervisor is also expected to provide administrative help, and take responsibility for community relations, as indicated by the following quote :

A supervisor visits the centre very often. She provides medicines to the villagers, takes children and village people for medical check up, provides material for cooking and attends to the other requirements of the creche.

Table 19
Frequency of Guidance and Supervision

Frequency	No. of CCWs	Per cent
Daily	55	20.6
Weekly	103	38.6
Fortnightly	56	21.0
Monthly	40	15.0
Rarely	13	4.9
Total	267	100

Table 20
Nature of Guidance and Supervision Offered

Type of Supervision	No. of CCWs	Per cent
Inspection only	30	11.2
Suggestions/Support	173	64.8
Both Inspection/ Suggestions and Support	52	19.5
Training	2	0.7
None	10	3.8
Total	267	100

She also leaves some medicine for minor ailments at the centre.

The co-ordinators visit regularly all the five nursery schools run by the organisation. Once in a month the nursery teachers are expected to submit a report on the notes of lessons to the office.

Staff Meetings

Regular staff meetings are yet another way to generate peer support as well as

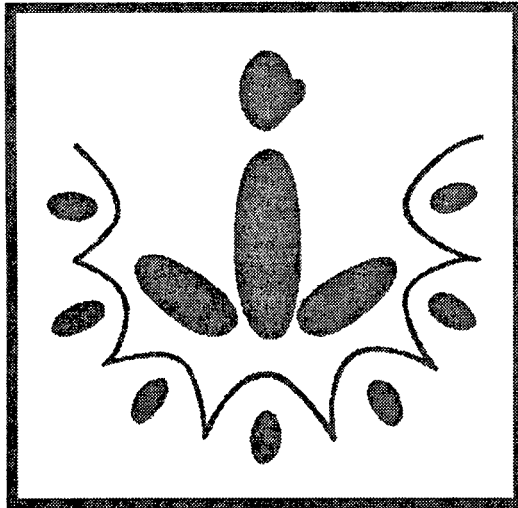
foster a sense of camaraderie among staff members which may enable the Child care Workers to get stimulation in their work environment. The importance of staff meetings emerged in this context from some of the workers.

Once in fifteen days all the nursery teachers (the CCWs) meet at the office to discuss and share our ideas, problems and difficulties.

The work environment therefore, plays an important role in shaping the attitudes of the CCWs, and their responses to working conditions and personnel policies.

6

PERSONNEL POLICIES



A Child Care Worker's professionalism and capacity to provide a warm, sensitive and stimulating environment for children is likely to depend to some extent on her sense of satisfaction and self esteem, which in turn are related to wages, working conditions and social status. It can be argued that only when they perceive their needs as attended to, will they be able to focus on the needs of children and mothers. One of the major ways to respond to their own needs is by paying them a decent living wage and offering other kinds of benefits. Child Care Workers in the State sector have been struggling to improve their basic conditions of work in Tamil Nadu. It was only recently, in May 1998, that the child care

functionaries in the Integrated Child Development Services Programme of the Government were recognised as Government staff, along with a hike in their pay scales. This big change became possible through the continuous lobbying of the Child Care Workers' Union over several years.

But the CCWs in the unorganised voluntary sector not only work in the "unorganised" sector, but are themselves "unorganised" and do not have any union or association of their own to voice out their needs and aspirations. It is in this context that we need to look into the benefits and support measures provided by the voluntary sector to cater to their needs. In studying the personnel policies in the voluntary sector, it again becomes important to analyse this within the policy framework of the Government that rules such programmes through its schemes such as the CSWB scheme, and to see how voluntary agencies have been able to overcome its limitations.

Remuneration

Job assignments appropriate to the skills and motivation and provision of opportunities for human resource development in child care services are some measures in human-centered services. More specifically, the remuneration levels linking job and ability, opportunities for skill development and skill training and advancement play an

Table 21
Years of Experience and Monthly Remuneration

Years of Experience	Less than Rs.300	Rs.300-500	Above Rs.500	Total
Less than 3 years	26 [21.5]	64 [52.9]	31 [25.6]	121
3 - 9 years	7 [17.5]	22 [55.0]	11 [27.5]	40
9 - 15 years	3 [8.8]	23 [67.6]	8 [23.5]	34
Above 15 Years	6 [8.3]	33 [45.8]	33 [45.8]	72
Total	42 [15.7]	142 [53.2]	83 [31.1]	267

important role in motivating workers and providing for a better quality of work life. However, there are no such provisions in the scheme. Child Care Workers or Balsevikas even today are not only paid a pitifully low wage, but they do not even get a salary according to any grades or pay scales. In fact they are not even recognised as workers but are considered as "volunteers" and have been receiving a fixed honorarium for their services under the scheme. From time to time the Government/CSWB announces a hike and in the past ad hoc jumps were provided periodically in the remuneration levels. The voluntary agencies are obliged to stick to this unless they are able to source other funds to make better provision.

The present situation regarding remuneration is shown in Table 21. Differences in remuneration levels based on age, education or length of service become inapplicable in this context. The periodic ad hoc increases in remuneration to the CCWs had never taken the length of service into concern, so that all those in employment at a particular time get the same increase.

Do the senior/older Child Care Workers accept uniform remuneration provided under the scheme? Is it acceptable to them to be treated on par with newly joined, young and inexperienced workers? These are issues demanding attention.

Regular Increases

Yearly increment to enhance income levels is considered a necessary prerequisite for job satisfaction. Though the CSWB has since the 1970s made no in-built provision in its scheme for yearly increment to CCWs, the voluntary sector has the autonomy to decide and provide increments from its own resources. It would also be appropriate to mention here that the CSWB scheme does not provide assistance for a long period to run creches. The agency has to renew its application every year for obtaining financial assistance and if conditions/circumstances do not prove to be satisfactory, the assistance can be stopped. So here again the agency is left in the lurch to fend for its own programme survival.

Figure 8
Increment Provided

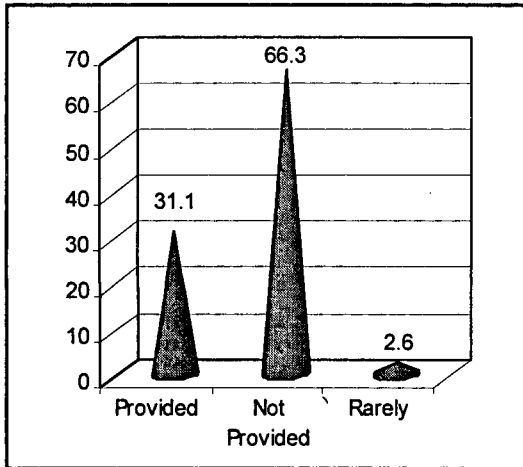


Figure 8 reveals the sad state of affairs that increment was not provided to 66.3 per cent of the workers and 2.6 per cent only received it occasionally, during festivals. 31.1 per cent of the CCWs reported that they were provided a small increment ranging from Rs.25 to Rs.50 per year. This demonstrates that the voluntary organisations were not in a position to cater to the rising remuneration needs of the CCWs.

Child Care Workers are clearly aware of these limitations. For example, one said:

I am not in a position to ask for an increment since the organisation does not have sufficient funds. However, I feel that we should be provided with PF facilities, because people generally do not tend to save on their own.

Benefit

With the meagre wage levels of CCWs, benefits like Provident Fund could,

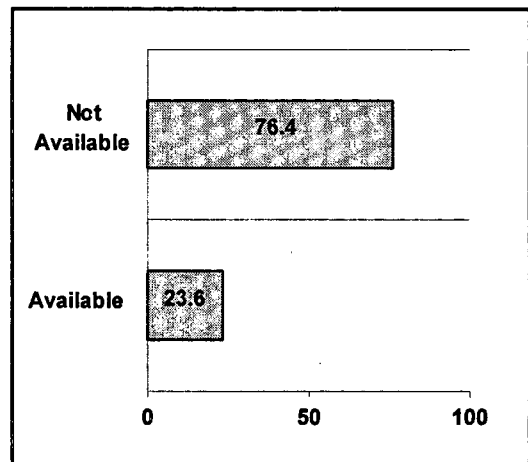
if provided, offer a much needed sense of security and provision for the future.

But from Figure 9, it is evident that such benefits were not widely available. Only 23.6 per cent said that they received the P.F facility. Details are not available regarding the criteria used to fix such benefits. In some cases, though it is termed as Provident Fund, it is merely a compulsory savings scheme, since there is no matching contribution from the employer.

Maternity Leave

Since 60 per cent of the CCWs were below the age of 30 and more than 40 per cent were yet unmarried, the question of maternity leave becomes very important. Maternity leave, in accordance with the laws of the land, should be granted for 3 months with full salary for those working in establishments of a certain size.

Fig.9
Availability of Provident Fund Facilities



The time of availing leave is left to the choice of the pregnant woman. This benefit is mostly available to women working in the organised sector and such laws are not easily enforced in the voluntary sector, which can be said to be in the "unorganised" sector (FEVORD-K, 1992)) in this sense though the status is not quite clear.

Figure 10 describes the situation with regard to maternity leave. It should be noted that 68.5 per cent of the voluntary organisations had provided one month of maternity leave to women workers inspite of funding difficulties. However, it is obvious that a casual attitude prevails towards the provision of maternity entitlement to the CCWs in the voluntary sector, ironically, amongst those committed to providing child care services. The field investigation was also not able to probe whether maternity leave referred to paid leave, or merely to the opportunity to take leave without pay. Generally, it has been seen that in the unorganised sector, employers discriminate against

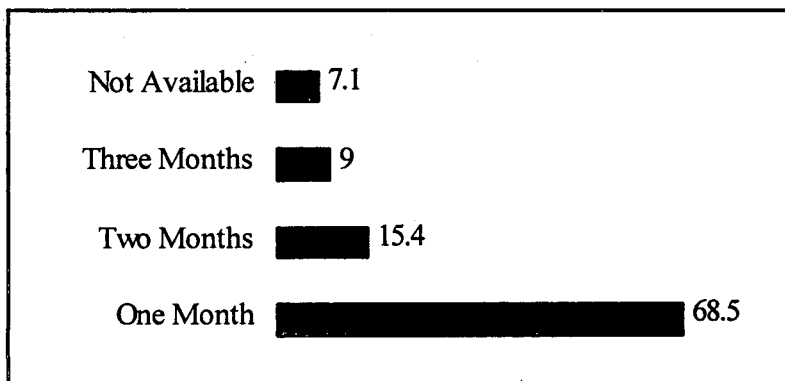
young married women in employment because of burdens like maternity leave, but it was not possible to explore this issue in the study. Many voluntary organisations say they find it difficult to raise the additional resources needed for such benefits, and that donors prefer to provide funds that will go directly to beneficiaries and not to support staff welfare. However, some donor agencies state (personal communication) that they have a charter for staff and encourage NGOs to provide benefits to employees, leaving the decision to them. Greater mutual understanding is clearly needed between the two groups, and this too remains an issue which needs further study.

Other leave and benefits

Regarding leave facilities, there were mixed responses from the Child Care Workers. One said:

My organisation is not very strict regarding leave. There is enough flexibility, depending on the situation.

Figure 10
Availability of Maternity Leave



Another mentions a "good" employer:

I am entitled to 12 days casual leave and 10 days medical leave in a year. I am also entitled to three months maternity leave with pay. When I take leave for a day, the nursery is taken care of by another girl from the village.

Regarding the other benefits like loans, some of the Child Care Workers' responses were:

During emergency, the organisation helps me with loan facilities.

Loan is provided occasionally.

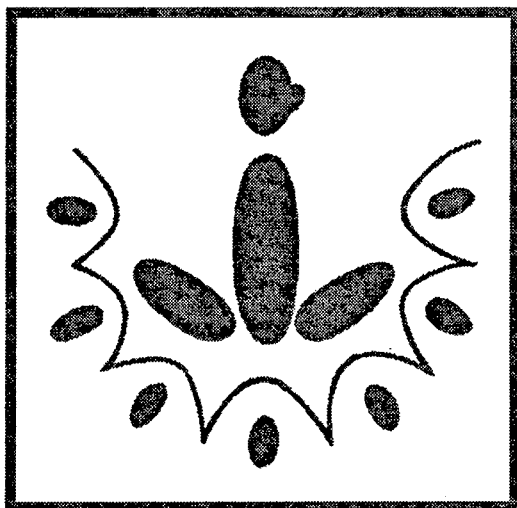
The organisation gives a loan upto Rs. 2,000 but deducts Rs.220 per month from the salary. I had received only Rs. 28 last month since I had taken a loan to meet my father's medical expenses.

There is no PF facility and the position is also not permanent. The

organisation gives a loan to meet urgent needs (Rs. 1000/- which is deducted from my monthly salary). I myself have taken a loan three times in my three year service.

These comments sum up both the lack of job security, since there are no permanent jobs, as well as the lack of what are today considered basic benefits to women workers. At the same time, the voluntary sector's dependence on funding from donors for a stipulated timeframe, and the fact that government schemes do not provide for such benefits, needs to be understood.

In conclusion, it may be said that Early Childhood Development requires an array of resources, including time and space, human, material and financial. Pervasively important for all operations are good working conditions for the personnel involved in carrying them out. Inability to afford it would definitely have an impact on the Child Care Workers' attitudes, aspirations and motivation to perform the given roles. The next chapter, culled from the indepth interviews, offers a view from the CCWs standpoint.



All components of any organisational system are inter-related and the child care system is no exception. There are several linkages between the CCWs, the community, the voluntary organisations and the State. The interplay between these linkages can create an impact on the caregiving environment in both positive and negative ways, which in turn may influence the interactions within the system. These interactions may also condition the attitudes and shape the aspirations of the Child Care Workers in the given environment. Therefore, it becomes necessary to understand the motivational and aspirational factors in the context of working conditions in the voluntary sector, as variables like income, working conditions and inter-

personal relationships are thought to be critical to the optimal functioning of Child Care Workers in the child care setting. This chapter looks into the attitudes, motivation, aspirations, opinions and feelings expressed by the CCWs.

As the previous chapters make clear, the Child Care Workers believed that there was a mix of both positive and negative conditions of work they experienced in their respective settings. The interviews helped extract these varied responses which would have otherwise been missed in the questionnaire tool. The mixed reactions of joy, frustration, fear and insecurity as articulated by the Child Care Workers along with complaints of stress and workload provide a base to study their attitudes.

Motivation

When asked "Why they chose Child Care Work" the CCWs ranked their reasons for choosing this career. 139 (52.1 per cent) of the CCWs gave as their primary reason their liking for work with children. Some opined that they found child care work to be a respectable job in society, but among these the largest number, 93, (34.8 per cent) ranked it fourth. Many mentioned that their residence is close to the Child Care Centre, but again most of them, 104, (39.0 per cent) ranked it fifth. Using their education for the benefit of

others or doing social service were reasons which 135 (50.6 per cent) and 115 (43.0 per cent) respectively, ranked second and third. How seriously can these reasons be taken, in studying the workers attitudes and expectations? It may well be argued that though reasons like "prefer working with children" and "centre is close to residence" are acceptable, some of the other reasons listed cannot be taken at face value, given the harsh economic reality and the lack of options in the neighbourhood, already commented on earlier. Whether these reasons are rationalisations of an unalterable situation needs to be considered. A few remarks from the Child Care Workers draw attention to the possible force of the unstated reasons.

I am 27 years old and unmarried. I'm the last child of my parents. I have two elder brothers, both married, and an older unmarried sister. As far as my academic qualification is concerned, I completed my +2 and typing in higher grade. I shoulder the responsibility of looking after my mother, aged around 70 years, and my elder sister who is a sick person. I lost my father when I was eight years old and the family does not have any source of income except my salary of Rs. 300/-. I do not even know where my two elder brothers are now. They have not given their address to us, probably fearing family responsibility. The distressing economic conditions at home forced me to look out for some kind of job to add to the family income.

My parents are illiterate daily wage labourers belonging to the Ambalakkarrar caste. They went to the nearby gem cutting factory to work. When I was young, I too went there to earn money to buy books for school. Somehow I managed to study till the X standard. Since my family's economic situation did not permit me to continue my studies, I joined the creche as a teacher.

I married a cousin who lost most of his father's hard earned wealth due to his reckless spending on luxurious lifestyles. He also drank a lot and wasted time at home. One of my school teachers who came to know of my plight offered me a job as a creche teacher. Initially, my husband refused, but I took it up to get some peace of mind.

I am 21 years old and a Brahmin by birth. My father who is around 80 years old had been a temple priest until three years ago. My brother is the eldest of the five of us at home and is already overburdened with responsibilities. Three of my elder sisters were married off with great difficulty and the debts are still remaining to be cleared by all of us. The economic pressures forced my mother to prepare snacks at home and sell them to a retail shop. I too joined as a creche teacher to add on to the family income.

It is hard to say from the fragile evidence whether these are exceptions or the rule, but it does indicate that the topic needs deeper exploration.

The Positive Perceptions

The interviews provided many illuminating remarks about the positive aspects of the work environment and working conditions. Similar comments were made by several.

One said :

I must be fortunate to work as a teacher. I consider this as a Dheiveeka Pani (divine task) and it is a gift from the Almighty. I feel proud of my profession, when the children call me 'teacher' when I go past their houses. I enjoy a respectable position amongst the mothers in the village. I feel encouraged when the Government School teachers compliment me for the good performance of the children who have joined them and they also suggest to increase the enrollment to more than 25 children in the creche.

On how the mothers perceive the Child Care Workers' role, here is a feed back:

I am accepted in society. The mothers of the creche children are happy with the functioning of the creche. They are proud of the achievement of the children, especially when they hear their children narrating stories and singing songs which they have learnt from the creche. Some of the

mothers proudly say that they are learning from their children. When they find time, the mothers also spend some time in the creche. The mothers take the liberty of telling me that it would be better if I could run the school even during the week ends and other holidays and spare them from the children's pranks. This is a mark of the confidence of the mothers in me.

For many Child Care Workers, the children themselves were a major source of job satisfaction:

I enjoy being with children. I feel proud to talk about my creche children- the way they talk, behave, play etc. Time just flies with the children around. Sometimes I stay in the school till 5.00 or 5.30 p.m. just playing with the kids. On Sundays I feel quite bored sitting at home.

I do not get tired of speaking about the creche children - the way they converse amongst themselves, how they imitate me, the curiosity to know about any new comer who visits the creche. The children usually remain quiet if some one like the neighbouring balwadi teacher, health worker, or any officer from the main office comes to the creche. The moment the person leaves, they will pounce on me to know more about that person. The children easily find out any change in me if I change my usual bangles or beads or whenever I wear a new sari. If they like the colour

of the beads or sari they do not hesitate to appreciate it - "Ungalukku Nalla Irukku (It's nice on you) teacher". It is fun to watch them imitate me. For example, when I say, 'Vai chettai pannathe' (do not be talkative) they will repeat the same way. When they children get angry or irritated they will tell me, "po, unga oorukku"(go to your native place). Sometimes just for fun, I purposely hold them back either to sing or tell a story; "otherwise I will not allow you to go home". They usually respond to my request.

I love my work. I appreciate my nursery children in their various moods- when they are being stubborn or plain speaking. I also enjoy watching the children imitate my action and speech, thereby displaying their power of observation.

Apart from the joy that Child Care Workers receive from children, they also perform the role of observers and counsellors. One Child Care Worker narrated about the hidden talents of children to be spotted through observation:

I try to observe children very keenly to find out their interest and potential and take necessary steps to promote a child's particular interest. For example I noted a girl having interest in painting and I pointed this out to the child's mother who has promised to send the girl to drawing and painting class after two years, since she is too young to attend now. Similarly, a boy is fond

of music and is good at singing. When I pointed this out to his parents, they expressed their willingness to send him to music class.

But for this particular Child Care Worker, it was important to talk to parents about a child's behaviour rather than to wait too long:

I observe keenly the various moods of the children and act accordingly. I have the habit of talking to parents about their child's performance. I do not hesitate to discuss personal matters with the parents if it affects children emotionally.

...One day in the nursery school I noticed a boy crying constantly and asking for his mother. He insisted that he should see his mother at once. I felt something unusual with him because the boy is generally a cheerful child. I tried to comfort the child and asked him slowly why he wanted to see his mother. The child started talking slowly. He said that his mother was beaten up last night by his father because his grandmother (father's mother) complained about her to his father. His mother was crying the whole night. The child feared something would have happened to her and insisted that he must see her at once. Then understanding the whole situation, I consoled the boy that nothing would happen to his mother and Murugansamy (God) will take care of his mother. The boy needed

to be reassured many times before he calmed down. After this incident, one day I met both his parents separately and told them to restrain themselves from fighting in front of child. The parents promised me that such things would never happen in future.

Mutual help has important implications for Child Care Workers' job satisfaction. Flexibility and willingness to exchange tasks to reduce stress was highlighted by one of them:

The children are very understanding and eager to learn new stories and songs. If some local children do not come on time, the others of the group come forward to bring them from their houses. They generally come back with a valid reason, if the other children are late or absent. If any one of them wants to answer nature's call the other children would say, "I will go with him, I will take care of him"..... the Ayah who is incharge of the cooking helps me when a child is required to be washed and cleaned. Initially when the Ayah was on leave I became a little upset when I had to do the washing and cleaning. Now absolutely no problem..... I do it without any repulsion, I certainly do not feel bad, especially when I am adored by the children and loved by the mothers. It is a pleasure being with the children and no hassles doing anything for them. When the Ayah takes leave, her mother comes for work to take care of the children. The village women come to her help

and assist me in carrying out the normal duties. Myself and the Ayah go to a nearby sandai (weekly market) every Thursday to get vegetables for the children.

Much as a principal sets the tone and direction of a school, so does a director/manager wield influence on the quality of the workplace environment at a Child Care Centre. The satisfied workers interviewed had a good working relationship with the management and were appreciative of the supportive and professional environment he/she created or fostered, while those who were unhappy with their work often listed the director and her/his policies and management style as a cause of their dissatisfaction. But sometimes, factors that actually produced workers' dissatisfactions were not under the management's control at all. As could be seen from the previous chapters, low honorarium, lack of benefits, lack of play materials, etc are issues that can be addressed only through policy changes at the Government level.

One Child Care Worker mentioned:

The President and the Secretary treat us as equals. They believe us and entrust us with more responsibilities. At times, they help us financially. We also get some gifts during special occasions. There is moral support, congenial work atmosphere, financial support and what not. I'm not mentally prepared to take up a different job, even if it's more rewarding financially.

Obviously, it is these positive factors which help the CCWs to keep going,

enjoy their work and continue to serve in the midst of difficulties and problems.

The Negative Perceptions

I am frightened when I think of my future. I feel insecure and I wonder what is going to happen to me after my mother and sisters' lifetime. I may have to find an orphanage for my shelter and do some service to the orphan children.

When asked whether she was not trying for any other job other than this, lack of self-confidence was shown in her reply.

I am not brave enough to try for another job.

The difficulties, the fears, frustrations and disappointments faced by them were clearly articulated by many.

Fig. 11 lists the major problems faced by the CCWs. 51.7 per cent of them voiced out low pay as the first major problem faced by them and went on to say that they used a variety of strategies to survive. Some had husbands who earned a reasonable income, others kept their expenses very low and still others did additional work to maintain their families.

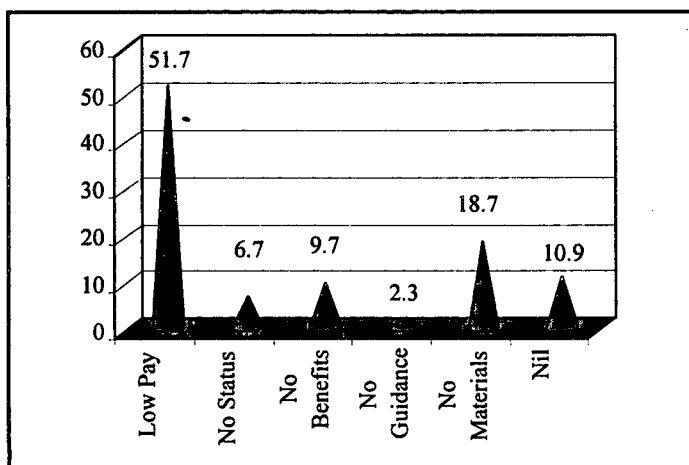
One Child Care Worker aspired :

I'd like to earn more..... But with my present qualifications, I simply can't imagine going high up the career ladder.

Many showed understanding of the policy limitations :

The organisation cannot fulfill our expectations regarding hike in salaries. It rests with the Social Welfare Board.

Figure 11
Problems faced by the Child Care Workers



Some of them expressed their fears and insecure feelings:

Regarding my job as a creche teacher I'm quite satisfied, as I have always liked the company of children in general. It definitely gives me peace of mind when I am amidst the children. But..... I feel helpless as regards the job and salary. I feel I'm underpaid. Moreover it is not a permanent one and at any time I stand the risk of termination. At times financial problems frustrate me, but I have to accept my fate as I feel that I would not be able to get any other job if I lost the present one.

They continued looking to a bleak future?

I have to stick on to this work till the end. Still, I feel luckier than some of the better qualified people who remain unemployed. I hope that my job will become permanent. Although I would like to do it as a social service, I cannot afford it, as

there are many financial problems at home.

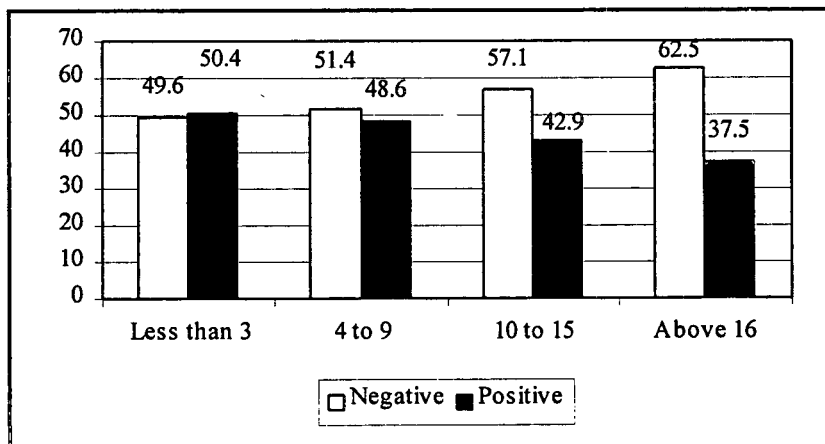
On the workload, many complained:

When I'm exhausted due to the workload, I feel annoyed and irritated. Sometimes I cannot cope up with work during illness or if there are guests at home.

I reach the creche usually by 8.15 a.m. in the morning. I go to the houses to pick up the children. Some of them come on their own to the creche. A few children are left by their elders.

Apart from balwadi work, I am expected to see that all the children below the age of one in the village are vaccinated at the right time. The children's weights have to be recorded once in a month or once in three months. I also teach the mothers about simple household remedies for treating diarrhoea and cold.

Fig. 12
Years of Service and Opinion on Working Conditions



Negative feelings about working conditions seem to increase with the years of service.

Figure 12 reveals that the CCWs opinions became more negative as their years of service increased. 62.5 per cent of the CCWs with above 30 years of experience voiced out their negative opinions with regard to wage levels, facilities offered at the centers, skill development opportunities, benefits, supervision and management. On the other hand, positive opinions decreased with their years of service. It was generally found that the CCWs who received benefits were more satisfied with their jobs than those who didn't.

This study makes it clear that there were no clear cut personnel policies in the voluntary sector to provide emergency leave, casual leave, medical leave and maternity leave, etc to CCWs. Even if casual leave was available to some of the CCWs, they were inadequate, and the CCW had to seek permission from the head of the voluntary organisation to avail such leave facilities.

When it comes to leave facility, the teachers are eligible to take one day casual leave in a month. We cannot accumulate it. If I need leave I have to plead for it several times. Unless it is very urgent, leave is not usually granted. If I have to attend a relative's marriage or other occasions, permission is given for some time to attend the same. In my

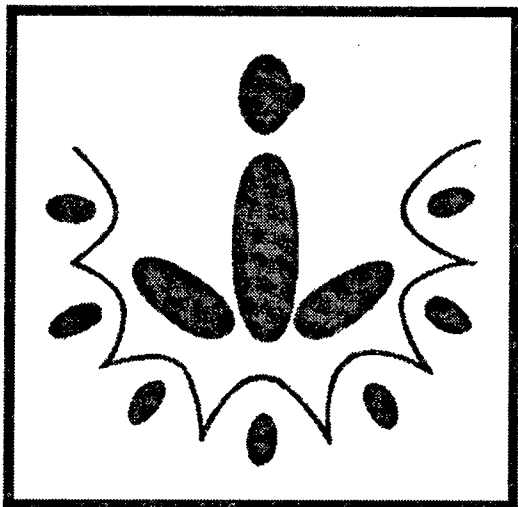
absence, either the Ayah or the other creche teachers take care of the children.

It would obviously be difficult for the voluntary organisation to sanction leave in the absence of a substitute, as the children would suffer from the absence of a worker, and the agency would be forced to find a substitute from the existing staff during the period of leave availed by the CCW. Illness among both children and adults is common and as there were no substitutes available or funds to fill leave vacancies, CCWs were hesitant to ask for leave and agencies to grant it.

One Child Care Worker indicated that the availability of substitutes is a central factor in being able to take leave without stress or tension:

When I take leave for a day, the nursery is taken care of by another girl from the village. She has been appointed by a committee comprising of one retired headmaster, parents of nursery children and a person from the local church. The substitute is given a nominal salary of Rs.40 per month irrespective of her attendance.

These extracts from the interviews round off the portrait whose bare bones were sketched out in Chapter 1, revealing the human face of the CCW with all her joys and sorrows, but leaving unanswered questions.



The study has thrown up several important issues on the Child Care Workers' situation, with implications not only for the quality of the child care programme, but equally for their own status and development.

Employee or Volunteer?

Looking at the working conditions of the Child Care Workers from a labour perspective, it appears that the situation is anomalous. Normally, labour legislation is mandatory for all those employing 10 or more workers, that is, those coming within the purview of the Shops and Establishments Act (Vaidyanathan, 1994). But in this case, it appears that "child care" is not yet viewed even as a job, leave alone a

skilled one, nor is this sector viewed as an "industry" in the sense defined in the Industrial Disputes Act of 1947 (Pandeya, undated; Seshadri, 1991).

Keeping in mind that the Act was introduced as an important step in achieving social justice and to ameliorate the service conditions of the workers, providing a machinery for resolving conflicts and encouraging co-operative effort in the service of the community, perhaps it is necessary once more to consider the pros and cons of including the voluntary sector in the definition, and to analyse the situation in terms of "employer-employee" relationship (SHRAM SHAKTI, 1988). According to the well-known judgement of the bench (comprising of the Chief Justice Mr. M.H. Beg, Mr. Justice Y.V. Chandrachud, Mr. Justice P.N. Bhagwati, Mr. Justice V.R. Krishna Iyer, Mr. Justice Jaswant Singh, Mr. Justice Tulzapurkar and Mr. Justice D.A. Desai) of the Supreme Court (in Bangalore Water Supply Vs. A. Rajappa, 1978) any situation, *including social services*, where work is performed for remuneration should be considered as setting up an employer-employee relationship. This ruling however caused considerable distress to the voluntary sector and led to a national debate, since it was argued that welfare agencies and service providers like hospitals, orphanages etc are not profit-making and do not generate income

except through charity, and hence could not be treated in the same way. The call for separate legislation to regulate working conditions for the voluntary sector led to the formulation of the Hospitals and Other Welfare Institutions Bill of 1988 (Government of India, 1988), but this has yet to be passed/notified and implemented. The situation of workers in the "not-for-profit" sector hence continues to remain anomalous. But from the point of view of the workers, however, their situation is similar to that prevailing in the 'unorganised' sector as a whole.

Constraints relating to Work Environment

In the case of the Child Care Workers, the direct employer is the voluntary agency, which functions with the support of the Central Social Welfare Board or Government offering the *Scheme of Assistance for Creches for the Children of Working/Ailing Mothers*. The study has revealed the inadequacies of the scheme, as perceived by the Child Care Workers, at two levels, the work environment and their working conditions. On the one hand, there appear to be serious lacunae with regard to play materials, teaching-learning aids, supervision and guidance as well as infrastructure, nutrition and health care. In this context, good quality of care and effective services can be rendered only if adequate provision is made by the agency to support the caregiving process at the Child care Centre, since the state and status of CCWs and management of this service influences the quality of Child Care Centres. Without such support, one cannot expect the CCWs

to maintain programme quality or to take up additional responsibility beyond their capacity, especially at such low remuneration. The extent and quality of support offered to voluntary organisations by the Central/State Social Welfare Boards seems to be inadequate in this respect, with serious implications for quality.

The study also reveals that the Child Care Workers are burdened with several responsibilities relating to administrative work and duties like taking care of children belonging to a mixed age group. No attempt could be made to probe whether the CCWs have the requisite skills to meet these diverse needs nor could the suitability of the ECE curriculum at the centres to be studied. Issues like adequacy and flexibility of training and its focus on skills developed also need to be addressed. There is need for careful study of the impact of the scheme on users.

Working Conditions

The second aspect concerns *working conditions* in the voluntary sector, where the study reveals that remuneration, regular increments, leave facilities and benefits such as Provident Fund offered to the Child Care Workers were unsatisfactory, as voiced by the Child Care Workers themselves. It is universally accepted that the worker is likely to be more preoccupied with wages and conditions of service than the service users, and that this in turn will affect motivation and job satisfaction (Paul, 1994). And this is all the more pronounced at the lowest levels. Unlike the Indian bureaucratic system

characterised by the seniority system, the practice of providing a hike in remuneration with an increase in the years of service does not seem to apply here. The negative feelings of senior and experienced workers in this respect would no doubt affect their motivation. Similarly, the lack of provision for maternity leave, medical leave and other kinds of leave, with severe impact on the welfare of the workers, is bound to affect their morale and productivity. The situation is particularly poignant since it arises in the context of institutions providing welfare services to women and children.

Though the voluntary sector is "not-for-profit", the nature of activities which involves the co-operation of employer and employee in the production of services remains the same as in the profit-making sector. From the point of view of the CCWs, there is no charity, as for them charity begins at home. Therefore, it is necessary, even urgent, for the voluntary sector to develop personnel policies for the welfare and development of its own workers, especially CCWs, within the ambit of the labour laws. While the resource-scarce situation and donor demands on the voluntary sector also need to be taken into consideration, donor agencies and the government must consider the ethical and management aspects, as well as the sustainability of a sector built on such fragile foundations.

Status and Motivation

The Child Care Workers *motivation and aspirations* need to be understood

in the context of their working conditions and job satisfaction levels. It is evident from the previous chapters that the CCWs studied had high motivation to perform their best in the given roles and that they were satisfied to work at their level, realising that no other options were available with their given skills, educational qualifications, lack of mobility and other limitations. To a certain extent, this highlights the gender issue of women's inability to seek better jobs due to limited mobility (FEVORD-K,1992) lack of options in the neighbourhood and the widespread perception that child care is an appropriate job for women, who are considered "naturally" suited for it. These CCWs had to make themselves content with whatever they could get and the roles they were playing at the Child Care Centre, and most had done so.

Job Satisfaction

It is worth commenting here on the findings of some other studies (SURAKSHA Series, 1995), which have demonstrated the strong linkages between social status, prestige and accountability to the community on the one hand, and job satisfaction and high motivation on the other. At the same level of remuneration and with similar working conditions, the motivation and satisfaction levels of workers in the voluntary sector have been found to be significantly higher than those in the State sector. The CCWs here are no exception, enjoying as they do, considerable respect in the community. However, it suggests that greater community involvement in child care services,

as well as better personnel policies, may be beneficial both for the workers and for the programme. While on the one hand community involvement in funding and management may be a source of strength (Vimalanathan J., 1990), it is sometimes seen by voluntary agencies and workers in terms of interference, loss of autonomy and harassment. This is a dilemma that needs to be worked out, keeping in mind that CCWs, along with the voluntary organisations and the service users, are also stakeholders in the child care enterprise.

Finding a Voice

Due to the limited exposure of the CCWs, their aspirations were low. Feelings of job insecurity, helplessness in finding other jobs due to limited skills, lack of mobility, and inability to voice out feelings within the organisation, or in a common forum, have obliged them to accept prevailing working conditions, a situation linked with the larger issues faced by all NGO employees. Unlike the Child Care Workers in the State sector, CCWs in the voluntary sector lack a common forum, which implies lack of opportunity to get together, voice out issues or plan collective strategies as a group. Moreover, the lack of recognition of their skills and services, and the lack of both job security and possibilities for advancement may block the entry of new aspirants in the future. If policy changes are not brought about, there lies a chance of drift away from the profession and decline of recruits to this sector. A shortage of young people and

redundancy of the old in child care may become more visible in the future.

The Lessons

Early Childhood Care and Development provides the critical foundation for the trajectory of a child's development process. The quality of child care services would result from the priority accorded to this sector, as reflected in budgetary allocations of government towards this sector. The low status and remuneration of CCWs is an indication of the low priority accorded to this sector. The big divide between the status of CCWs and primary school teachers is yet another anomaly of the system, in which non-enrolment, heavy drop-outs or slow take-off rates of a large number of children at the primary school stage, as well as low performance levels of school children are symptoms. Urgent attention is therefore required, especially in the light of the growing demand for these services now, to close this gap.

There is also the larger issue of Child Care Workers in the State sector, who in numbers may be about 100 times more numerous in Tamil Nadu than those in the voluntary sector. Though organised in Unions with increasing clout, and hence more visible and audible in recent years, they face similar problems in many respects. A similar in-depth study of the CCWs in the State sector would yield valuable information for policy formulation and all-round improvement of child care services in Tamil Nadu.

Emerging from the study is a strong need for policy level changes that can

speed up reforms in the voluntary sector which address the varying needs of both Child Care Workers and child care services. This requires strong lobbying from all sides – the community of service users, CCWs, NGOs, forums like the national and state-level FORCES, women's organisations and Trade Unions. Efforts towards a change should also address the wastage of resources

by the Government through its overlapping and divergent schemes and lack of adequate information about, and coordination with, the "unaided" sector, in order to make the process of effective human resource development more cost effective. Many steps are needed to deal with all the issues raised, but it is hoped that the outcomes of this study point in the direction for change.

Tamil Nadu Child Care Workers Convention, 1994

The Tamil Nadu Forum for Creche and Child Care Services (TN-FORCES), set up in 1992 as the State-level branch of the national FORCES is a non-political platform bringing together all those interested in working for the cause of the underprivileged young child, especially the children of women working in the unorganised sector. A network of organisations belonging to different sectors, it includes as members trade unions and women's organisations, NGOs concerned with child welfare, research, educational training and academic institutions and other professional associations. In 1994, there were 55 members.

In 1994, TN-FORCES organised, for the first time ever, a State-level Convention of Child Care Workers working in creches and balwadis in the voluntary sector, of whom it was estimated that there were more than 3000 in the State. An Organising Committee of 13 institutions was formed to plan and conduct the Convention and raise the necessary funds. The objectives were:

- To recognise the important role played by the CCWs towards the all-round development of young children
- To create a sense of professional identity among such workers and the need to form an association to bring together the Child Care Workers on a common platform

- To improve their working conditions and other social security measures through awareness building exercises with different stakeholders
- To enable them to share and exchange views on issues of common concern, upgrade their skills and work towards a network or forum for the future.

The two day Convention was held at Gandhigram on September 4-5, 1994, the latter being Teachers' Day, to mark the significance of the Child Care Worker as the child's *First Teacher* beyond the home. Nearly 351 Child Care Workers from 94 institutions and their branch units attended the Convention, and over 40 resource persons and 50 volunteers facilitated the proceedings. Dignitaries such as the Director of Social Welfare, Tamil Nadu Government, and the Chairperson of the Tamil Nadu State Social Welfare Advisory Board participated in the inaugural and valedictory ceremonies.

On the first day, the Chief Guest Mr. Deenadhayalan, Director of Social Welfare, and other dignitaries addressed the gathering. This was followed by a symposium by a panel of distinguished speakers on the "Role of the Child Care Worker in a Changing Society". In the afternoon, about fifteen skill development workshops were held in parallel,

to enable all the participants to gain from a variety of experiences relevant to their daily work with children. On the second day, parallel group discussions were conducted in small groups on issues of working conditions, environment and management of creches, training needs and community relationships, and these were condensed into a set of recommendations for the future.

In the course of the second day, about an hour's free time was found to canvas, with the help of a team of volunteers, a self-administered questionnaire to collect the information on which this report is based. In addition, one of the members of the research team was able to conduct in-depth interviews with ten persons.

The Convention was highly appreciated by the participants as a unique opportunity to come together and address common problems. Of the recommendations made, follow-up action was possible in some cases. The Organising Committee took responsibility for conducting a three-day orientation for managements of NGOs undertaking child care services in April 1995, and a six-day training for NGO supervisors of Child Care Workers in July 1996. Many of the participating institutions became members of TN-FORCES, while some of the Child Care Workers became members of the Indian Association for Preschool Education, and have continued to work together in some ways. A second Convention was suggested but has not yet come about.

Annexure 2

Schematic Pattern of Financial Assistance to Voluntary Organisations from the Central Social Welfare Board

Items	Amount (in Rs.)
Recurring :	
Honorarium for 2 workers [Full Assistance] @ Rs.800.00 p.m. x 12	9,600.00
Supplementary Nutrition at the rate of Rs. 1.05 per child per day for 25 children for 26 days [Rs.682.50 p.m.] x 12	8,190.00
Contingencies [medicines and other miscellaneous expenses] @ Rs.139.00 p.m. x 12	1,668.00
	19,458.00
Less:10% Contribution from the Voluntary Organisation	978.00
	18,480.00
Non-Recurring :	
Equipments [once in 4 years] @ Rs.2,000/- per centre for 2 cupboards, storage tins, drums, cooking utensils, service utensils, feeding bottles, 10 small cradles, mattress, 10 small cots, toys, registers	2,000.00
	2,000.00

Source : Tamil Nadu State Welfare Board, Chennai

Annexure 3

Year- wise sanction of aid to Voluntary Organisations in Tamil Nadu under the CSWB Scheme

Year	Decentralised Pattern		Centralised Pattern	
	No. of Institutions	No. of Units	No. of Institutions	No. of Units
1992 - 1993*	198	248	69	483
1993 - 1994	266	346	77	559
1994 - 1995	266	348	74	522
1995 - 1996	234	304	74	523
1996 - 1997**	305	484	23	343
1997 - 1998	335	498	23	341
1998 - 1999	310	500	23	341

* Under the decentralised pattern, grants were provided upto 2 units (1992 -96)
Under the centralised pattern, more than 2 units received grants

* Upto 5 units were sanctioned under the decentralised pattern and more than 5 units under the centralised pattern (1996 onwards)

Annexure 4**Grant-in Aid Scheme to Voluntary Organisations through
the Department of Social Welfare and Nutritious Meal
programme, Tamil Nadu**

Items	Amount (in Rs.)
Recurring :	
Honorarium to Caretaker [Rs.300.00 p.m. x 12]	3,600.00
Two Helpers @Rs.100 each [2 x Rs.100 p.m. x 12]	2,400.00
Supplementary Nutrition [25 children x Rs.1.05 per day for 30 days]	9,450.00
Contingencies	960.00
Weekly Visits by Doctors and for Medicines	6,000.00
Rent	2,400.00
Electricity and Water Charges	600.00
Total	25,410.00
Non-Recurring :	
Equipments [only for the first time]	5,000

Source: Tamil Nadu State Social Welfare Board, Chennai

Annexure 5**Year-wise Sanction of Aid to Voluntary Organisations under the Tamil Nadu Government's Scheme**

Year	No. of Institutions	No. of creche units		
		Newly Sanctioned	Continuation of old units	Total
1993 - 1994	17	17	-	17
1994 - 1995	17	-	17	17
1995 - 1996	40	25	17	42
1996 - 1997	50	75	42	117
1997 - 1998	49	50	117	167
1998 - 1999	50	50	167	217

Source: Tamil Nadu State Social Welfare Board

Annexure 6**Year-Wise Total of "Aided" Creches in Tamil Nadu**

Year	Number of Creches	Number of Children
1992-1993	731	18,275
1993-1994	922	23,050
1994-1995	887	22,175
1995-1996	869	21,725
1996-1997	944	23,600
1997-1998	1006	25,150
1998-1999	1058	26,450

Source : Tamil Nadu State Social Welfare Board

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