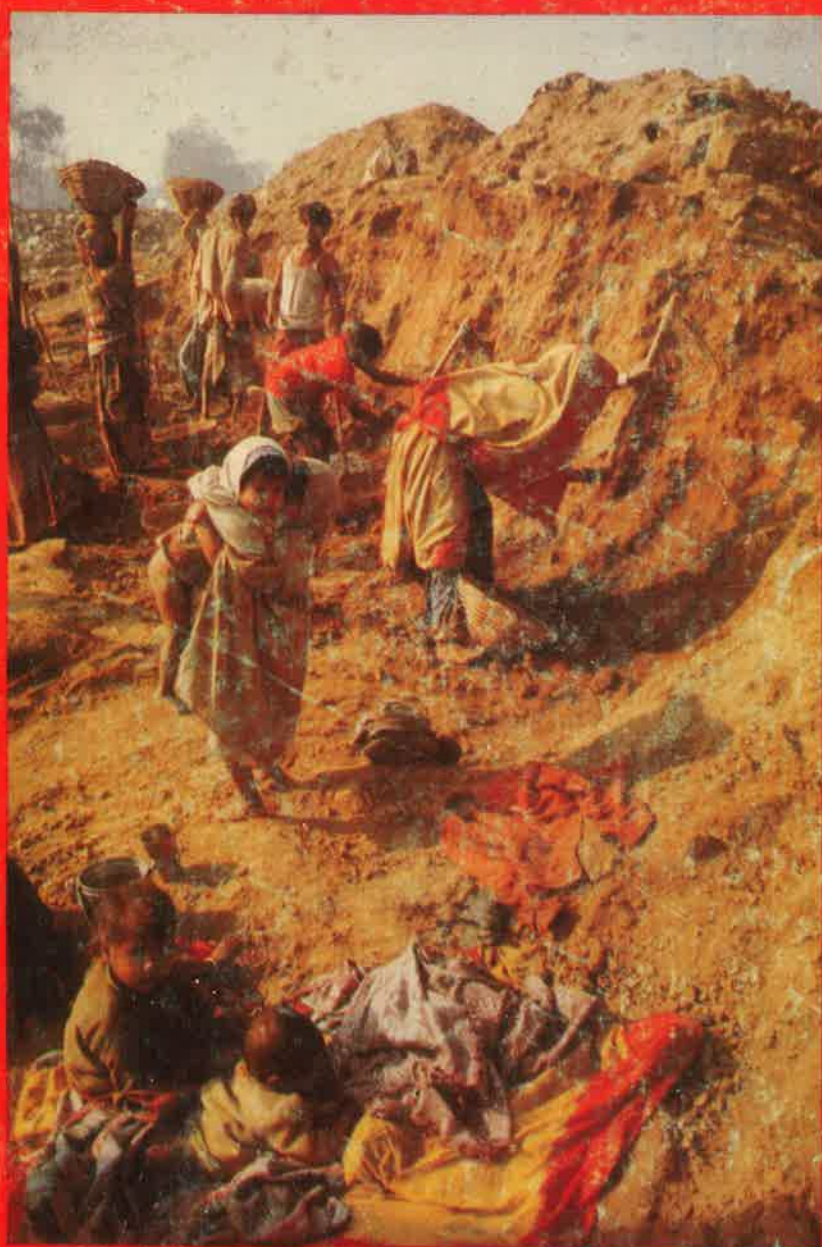


# *Whither Child Care Services ?*

## **Child Care as an Essential Input in Women's Development**

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The diversity of child care programmes under different auspices and the extensive coverage are two striking features of the scene in Tamil Nadu.\* So much so, that practically every child between 0-6 years has access to some form of child care service. But the most important feature is that in most cases, the services are for at least 6 hours a day. The services are mainly planned for catering to children of low-income groups and since a majority of women in this group are working, the services provide support to them.

The study of child care services in Tamil Nadu takes into account the following intersecting needs: (a) care and protection; (b) development and growth; (c) social and emotional development through appropriate stimulation; (d) to prepare them to enter the educational system; (e) the needs of the women to be free of mental and physical stress about the welfare of their children while at work; and (f) to provide time for women and girl children for education, employment and participation in community affairs.

#### Number of Children of Working Mothers

Working mothers have been defined as working, ever-married women in the age group 15-49 years, which works out to 85% of all working women. By this definition there are 44 lakh (1981) and 49 lakh (estimated population for 1989) working mothers. The Child-Woman ratio was taken as 435 (0-4 years)

children to 1000 women (15-49 years). By this calculation there are 20 lakh (1981) and 22 lakh (1989) children (0-4 years) of working women needing day care. Taking the average number of children born to a woman in 5 years as 1.54 (arrived at by making use of spacing data, a survey conducted by Institute of Rural Health, Gandhigram in 1974), these children have been born to 13 lakh (1981) and 14 lakh (1989) working women. Therefore, out of the total number of working mothers 31% (1981) and 32% (1989) are mothers who need child care services. Out of 58 lakh children (1989), 22 lakhs (1989) of children, 37% (1989) are in need of day care. The majority of working women i.e. 73% of all working women are cultivators or agricultural labourers and hence belong to the unorganised sector and 64% of these working women are in the rural areas. 40% of the population was taken to be below the poverty line.

#### Integrated Child Development Services

The population of Tamil Nadu is about 7% of the total population of India. But being reckoned as one of the advanced States, out of a total of 1605 ICDS projects in the country, only 65 (approximately 4%) are in Tamil Nadu, 37 in urban, 27 in rural and one in tribal areas.

The Tamil Nadu ICDS programme is different from that in other States in three significant respects:

- *The Timings.* While in most parts of the country, with the exception of Kerala, ICDS pre-school centres function for two, three or at most four hours, in Tamil Nadu the centres keep children aged 2-5 for 6 hours or more. Timings are approximately 10.00 to 4.00 p.m., roughly coterminous with that of schools.
- *Link with Nutritious Noon Meal Schemes.* The

coverage of the Noon Meal programme is State-wide. Wherever there is an ICDS centre, it functions as the delivery point for the Noon Meals, so the two between them provide a coordinated network of centres which cover the entire State with the exception of some difficult-to-reach areas. Since the State government has to fund the nutritional component of ICDS, the same quantity and quality of food is uniformly provided to all the centres; *The Staffing Pattern* followed for ICDS in Tamil Nadu is similar to that of the Noon Meals, in having one AWW and two helpers, unlike the pattern of one AWW and one helper followed elsewhere.

For these reasons, ICDS in Tamil Nadu is already making a significant contribution to providing day care to vulnerable groups, and it is worth asking how well it performs this service.

#### Noon Meal Programme

Tamil Nadu has been a pioneer in introducing a programme for feeding children in the age group of 2 to 9. This programme was first introduced in rural areas from 1982 and later extended to urban areas. The programme was originally introduced with the aim of attracting children to school and checking drop outs. Later it was extended to cover old age pensioners, children (10-15 years) and ex-servicemen/widows of ex-servicemen. The programme covers 20 districts of which 385 are rural blocks, 86 municipalities, and a township. The beneficiaries include 20.24 lakh pre-school children (2-4 years), and 42.21 lakh school children (5-9 years).

Each centre is staffed with one Child Welfare Officer receiving an honorarium of Rs. 195 per month and a Child Welfare Assistant who receives an honorarium of Rs. 70 per month. The Child Welfare Officers are required to have passed 10th standard in the age group 25 to 35 years, except for widows for whom the age limit is extended up to 40 years. All staff selected have to be from the local community.

The child welfare centres have been upgraded into nursery schools to accommodate 22,060 child welfare centres. The programme is also used in motivating mothers for family planning but are not given any targets.

#### Social Welfare Board Funded Creches

The programme of running creches for working and ailing mothers was initiated in 1974-75. The objectives of the scheme are to assist the voluntary organisations in organising child care services for working and ailing mothers of low income groups (below Rs. 300 per month). Children in the age group 0-5 years are covered under the scheme. In this creche programme 894 units are functioning in Tamil Nadu benefitting 22,300 children. Each unit consists of 25 children who are provided with sleeping facilities, health care, supplementary nutrition, immunisation etc. The units run for more than 6 hours daily with variable timings from 9.00 a.m. to 6.00 p.m.

Each agency is eligible for a grant of one unit or more according to the need in the area and implementing capacity of the institution. The total number of voluntary agencies utilising this scheme is 252. Each unit is staffed with three people (one teacher and two helpers). Since 1988, nine schools of social work have been entrusted with the responsibility of monitoring the creches and submitting regular reports. Monitoring is also done by field officers of the Social Welfare Board in order to approve the grant.

#### Factory-run Creches

There are 8,11,936 factory workers in Tamil Nadu, of which 1,20,508 are women. In the year 1986, 12,286 factories were covered under the Factory Act in Tamil Nadu. Four hundred and ninety-eight factories are supposed to be providing creche facilities. The utilisation of the service was found to be very poor. The returns show only 1,727 children utilising these 498 creches which works out to only 3.4 children per unit.

According to a study of creche facilities provided by industrial units in Coimbatore, it was found that there are 13 units in Coimbatore that have to provide creche facilities for their workers. Out of these only five factories maintain a creche. The remaining eight are not running them for various reasons, including employees being on strike, and an inadequate number of children in the relevant age group.

\* Tamil Nadu has a population of 48,408,077 of which 23,920,453 are women according to the Census of India 1981. The sex ratio is 977 and the average number of children (0-5) per household is 1.5. The literacy rates are 46.76% (all persons) and 34.99% and 58.26% for men and women respectively.



### Plantation Creches

Plantations on which fifty or more women workers are employed on any one day of a year are required to provide and maintain creches under Rule 31 of the Madras Plantations Labour Rule, 1955 in accordance with the standards laid down under the rules.

There are 537 big plantations in Tamil Nadu with 1,32,000 workers of which 67,300 are women. 150 managements have to provide the facilities. The number of labourers employed on these plantations is 18,750 of which 10,500 are women. The total number of creches should be around 275. If they were to have a minimum of 10-20 children per creche, the total number of beneficiaries could approximately be 3000 to 5000.

Some support services other than day care are provided by the Tamil Nadu Integrated Nutrition Programme (TINP); Mother and Child Health Programme and *balwadis* of the Association of Sarva

Seva Farms. Their services include nutrition, non-formal education, health monitoring and facilitating community development.

### Self Financed Creches

A majority of the non-governmental creches are funded by Christian religious institutions. The most significant programme is financed by the Church of South India (CSI). There are 8 Dioceses in Tamil Nadu, each running around 10 day care centres, each in turn serving about 40 children. Children above 2 years are mostly found at such programme centres though children above 3 months are also included. All services necessary for the child's development, namely nutrition, health care, immunisation and non-formal, pre-school education are provided. For each child approximately Rs. 175 is spent per month. The duration of the programme is from 9.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m.



Pebbles can be used to develop with (Mobile Creches, Delhi)

The creches are divided into two sections consisting of children of different age groups. Each creche is staffed with one creche nurse, one helper and one social worker. In addition there are two cooks and an attendant. Even after the child leaves the creche, its contact with the centre continues. In the evening tuition facilities are provided for school-going children and they are served supper at the centre. Only one child from a family is eligible to utilise the facility at a time.

### White Collar Workers' Creches

There are 10 creches functioning in the office premises of women workers mostly on their own initiative. The space is provided by the management, free of cost and the maintenance responsibility also lies with the management.

The date of establishment of these creches varies between 1968 to 1989 benefitting 122 to 2000 working women in these offices. The staff members of these creches vary between a teacher and one to three helpers. All creches are charging fees for the services and range from Rs. 100 to 120 per month. In some institutions where the management provides financial assistance, a nominal fee of Rs. 15 to 20 is charged. What is significant about these creches is that the male members are also allowed use of these creches.

### Training Programme

The presence of a number of child care education services in the state necessitates provision for training the personnel. Various types of courses are made available to suit various needs both regular as well as ad hoc. The minimum qualification for training ranges from standard X to the first degree. There is, however, no uniformity in the training programmes.

The curriculum followed by a majority of the organisations consists of both theory and practical aspects of Child Development. Child care and development, nutrition and health education, first aid, and pre-school education form an integral aspect of the training programme in all the organisations. A few organisations have also mentioned register maintenance, preparation of low cost toys and teaching material, story telling, pre-school organisation and administration, handicrafts and music etc. as part of the practical aspects of the training programme. Care of sick and handicapped children has been included in the syllabus of CSI Creche Nurses

Training and Model Day Care Centre of Nilgiris District. The Madurai Kamaraj University and the Annamalai Institute of Higher Education do not mention practical training in their teaching modules. Kasturba Gram Teacher Training Institute, Brindawan Training Centre (Children's Garden School) and the Middle Level Training Centres (Madras) are some of the other institutions involved in training child care workers.

An overview of the pre-school training programme in Tamil Nadu shows not a very grim picture but that it needs a thorough revamping and regularisation to suit the growing needs of child care facilities required in rural areas for working women.

### CONCLUSIONS

The commendable part of the situation in Tamil Nadu is that an infrastructure for day care now exists. But from the point of view of the quality of services, however, there are several shortcomings. The first is the almost uniformly poor quality of the day care that is offered to young children. In most cases, it is merely custodial, often in very poor conditions. Little or no attention is paid to children's developmental needs, and they are kept in forced inactivity for most of the time. This is because the bulk of the services are provided by the Noon Meals Schemes (and ICDS) which were never intended to function as day care centres and are not equipped to do so.

The virtual absence of training of the staff makes it impossible for them to be effective as day care centres. Another shortcoming is the virtual absence of any arrangement for the care of infants below the age of three. Most of the children in the centres are above three years while a handful in each centre may be between two and three years old. The centres at present are totally incapable of attending to infants, lack in space, materials, finances, workers and other facilities to do so. Adaptation and adjustment to local needs and situations and flexibility is sadly missing in the large-scale government schemes. Timings and days of work are rarely adjusted to the mother's work needs; seasonal, migrant or itinerant workers do not seem to be recognised as existing. Linkages with primary schools, enabling girls to be free from the burden of child care and go to school are not found.

The record of the voluntary sector is far superior to that of the government sector, but it is still regret-



TABLE 13

## Women: Population and Employment (Tamil Nadu)

1. Women population 15-49 years	1981	12697199
	1989	13755298
2. Ever married women 15-49 years	1981	9873364
	1989	10696144
3. Women (15-49) years by work status		
Main workers	1981	4187428
	1989	4536380
Marginal workers	1981	781004
	1989	846087
Non-workers	1981	7449159
	1989	8343058
4. Total no. of working women (15-49)	1981	4968432
	1989	5382467
5. Total no. of ever married 15-49 working women	1981	4429448
	1989	4983376
6. Women 15-49, ever married, by occupation		
Cultivators	1981	930323
	1989	1041961
Agricultural labourers	1981	2237663
	1989	2506182
Live-stock, forestry & fishing	1981	102505
	1989	114805
Mining and quarrying	1981	8831
	1989	9890
Manufacturing I (Household)	1981	265865
	1989	320168
Manufacturing II (Non-household)	1981	446651
	1989	500249
Construction	1981	41913
	1989	46942
Trade and commerce	1981	101622
	1989	113816
Transport & communication	1981	14420
	1989	16150
Others	1981	279655

tably small in size and starved of funds. The voluntary sector is able to stretch its funds and make them go a long way, and has the best cost-benefit ratio. Flexibility, innovation, responsiveness, participation are possible here. Nevertheless, encouragement is required for a massive increase in the size and scope of the voluntary sector.

The record of the organised sector, in which 10% of the female work force is found, is pitiful. The Factories Act is practically a non-starter, with creches provided only in name. However, the creches pro-

vided under the Plantations Act offer little more, in terms of availability or quantity, mainly because the laws have been framed in such a manner as to leave out the majority of those who need the services. There is a strong case for a complete overhaul of labour legislation with regard to child care.

The development of child care services on such a massive scale has brought in its wake the growth of a huge work force of low-paid women engaged in this work. In the short space of ten years, a new profession—child care workers—has emerged. Child

WHITHER CHILD CARE SERVICES?

TABLE 14

## Child Care Programmes at a Glance (Tamil Nadu)

Auspices	No. of Centres	No. of Beneficiaries (Children)	No. of Workers	Total Cost
NMP	Rural 20917 Urban 1574	1647000	29332 49488	Food 24.84 Crores Staff 11.76 Crores Other 2.26 Crores Total 38.86 Crores
ICDS	Rural 2439 Urban 3090	314000	5595 11190	Food 2.90 Crores Staff 4.52 Crores Other 1.28 Crores Total 8.70 Crores
SWB through Voluntary Agencies	894	22300	About 2500	105 lakhs 10% Contribution from Voluntary Agencies
Missionaries	80	3200	About 400	672000 approximately
TINP	Rural 7862	136000	About 9000	Food 1.01 Crores Staff 4.24 Crores Other 1.73 Crores Total 6.98 Crores
Statutory creches				
Factories	498	1727	N.A.	N.A.
Plantations	140	3000	N.A.	N.A.

N.A.: Not available

care workers number almost a lakh of women in this state alone. But unfortunately, it is a low status occupation and its members are still invisible to society.

Equally responsible for the shortcomings in day care services are the gaps in training. For the vast majority of child care workers, who are employed by the Noon Meals schemes, training is virtually absent. The scheme started out merely as a feeding programme and has almost accidentally evolved into a form of day care. ICDS training has recently been decentralised, and is now conducted by mobile training teams at the field level. Creche workers from the voluntary sector are also of late being exposed to orientation through one-month courses, largely of a theoretical nature. There is a large back-

log of workers who have yet to receive even this exposure. The poor training, remuneration and working conditions of child care workers are matters which need serious attention if child care services are to improve in quality and meet their goals.

Furthermore, there is lack of involvement of the working mother herself in matters relating to child care, in all the three sectors—government, voluntary and statutory. Whether regarding decentralised management or trade union activity, parent participation or quality improvement, timings or location, infant care or self-help, awareness of legislative weaknesses or emphasis on workers' training, the voice of the working mother is conspicuous by its absence.

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TABLE 15

## Training Programmes at a Glance (Tamil Nadu)

	Agency	No. of Centres	Duration	Minimum Qualification	Size of Batch	No. of Batches per year	Funding	
A. FIELD LEVEL PRE-SERVICE								
1.	Anganwadi Worker	State Govt. for ICDS	Mobile-moving from block to block in 65 project areas	72 days	SSLC Pass	50	Depends on need	Govt.
2.	Balsevika	ICCW	2	1 year	SSLC Pass	40	One	AIDED
3.	Vocational	Vidhya Vikasini Coimbatore	1	1 year	SSLC Pass	40	One	Social Welfare Board AIDED
4.	Pre-prim-ary: Kind-ergarten, Nursery	Brindavan Training Centre and Pre-primary Training Centre	1	2 years	XIIth Pass	40 maximum	Once in two years	AIDED
			1	1 year	XIIth & Graduates	20 to 25	Two	AIDED
5.	Creche Nurse	Church of South India	1	2 years	Xth pass or SSLC	16	Once in Two years	CSICC German
6.	Creche Teacher	Brindavan Training Centre	1	10 months	Xth appeared	20 to 25	One	
B. FIELD LEVEL IN-SERVICE								
7.	Creche workers	ICCW	No specific Centre	30 days	VIIth to Xth Std	25 to 30	Ad hoc	
8.	Helper	ICDS	No specific Centre	5 to 7 days	No prescribed Qualification	20 to 25	Ad hoc	
9.	Noon Meals	SWB	No specific Centre	70 days	SSLC	40 to 50	Ad hoc	
10.	Miscellan-eous/Volu-tary	UPASI Viveka-nanda Kendra Palmyra Worker's Union	No specific Centre	One week to One month	SSLC	No specific number	Ad hoc	
C. SUPERV-ISORY LEVEL								
11.	MLTC	ICCW	1	3 months	SSLC	33 to 50	One	NIPCCD
12.	Graduate	Universi-ties & Colleges	5	One year	XIIth pass	10 to 25	Once in three years	
13.	Post Gra-duate	Universities & Colleges	2	Two years	Graduates	10 to 15	Once in two years	