

# A Study on Pre School Education and Supplementary Nutrition Program of ICDS for Children in Punjab

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## ABSTRACT

The present study was carried out to evaluate the pre-school education and supplementary nutrition ration components of Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS) in Barnala district of Punjab. The results revealed that a majority 60% of AWWs faced different problems in organizing pre-school education activities and about 63.33% of the AWWs did not receive help from the Supervisor at all for organizing pre-school education activities at AWCs. It was found that only half Anganwadi workers were getting regular SN ration in time. Combining the entire three ICDS project, it was found that a high majority (76.66%) of AWWs did not distribute SN ration 300 days in a year as per national norms. Only 45.42% of the total beneficiary children were enrolled in register of AWWs for pre-school education and supplementary nutrition ration. It is recommended that vigorous campaigns need to be launched by the Government using T.V., drama, folk songs, theater and other media to create awareness especially amongst the rural population about the long term benefit of the pre-school education and supplementary nutrition ration programme of ICDS scheme.

**Keywords:** Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS), Anganwadi Centres (AWCs), Anganwadi Workers (AWWs), Pre-School Education (PSE), Supplementary Nutrition (SN).

The child not only inherits but also transmits the human culture and civilization, human values and ethos. The child is the greatest human asset and most valuable wealth, which has to be nourished with all love and care and protected from all kinds of evils and exploitation, so the human beings will be happy and the world will prosper (Mamata and Sarada, 2009). Early childhood (the first six years) constitutes the most crucial period in life, when the foundations are laid for cognitive, social, emotional, physical development and cumulative life-long learning. Child's survival, growth and development have to be looked at as a holistic approach, as one cannot be achieved without the others. There have to be

balanced linkages between education, health and nutrition for proper development of a child.

Government of India proclaimed a National Policy on Children in August 1974 declaring children as, “supremely important asset”. The policy provided the required framework for assigning priority to different needs of the child. The program of the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) was launched in 1975, seeking to provide an integrated package of services in a convergent manner for the holistic development of the country with 33 projects on an experimental basis, ICDS has expanded considerably in subsequent years and at present, there are 7074 sanctioned projects, 6463 operational projects in India (Annual Report 2012-13).

Kumar (2009) highlighted the fact that the number of operational project had increased from 4608 in March 2002 to 5262 in March 2004, the number of children (3-6 years) attending pre-school education had increased from 166.56 lakh in March 2002 to 204.38 lakh in March 2004 during Tenth Five Years Plan. Gupta et al. (2013) in their article found that since its inception ICDS has expanded rapidly in its scope and coverage and total it covers approximately 36 million children less than six years of age at the end of 2012. It is perhaps the only country-wide program in the world functioning on a large scale, requiring multi sectoral operations and inter sectoral linkage for its implementation, Upto 31.01.2013, pre-school education service is being provided to about 34665683 lakh beneficiaries, comprising of about 17673362 lakh boy children and about 16992321 lakh girl children through a network of about 1331076 lakh operational AnganwadiCentres(Annual Report 2012-13).

ICDS is a unique program, which encompasses the main component of human resource development especially education. Under ICDS, a package of services, including supplementary nutrition, immunization, health check up and referral services is provided to children below six years of age and expectant and nursing mothers. Non formal pre-school education is imparted to children in the age group of 3 to 6 years. Rattan (1997) gave details about genesis, growth, components of ICDS and described a package of seven services comprising supplementary nutrition, immunization, health checkups, referral services, treatment of illness, nutrition and health education and non- formal pre-school education which are provided under ICDS.

Pre-school educationandSupplementary Nutrition Ration are very important activities of the ICDS Program. This focuses on the total development of the children from 3 to 6 years. Children 3-6 years have the benefit of non formal pre-school education through the institution of Anganwadi set up in each village. Non formal pre-school education is the most joyful play-way daily activity, visibly

sustained for three hours a day. It does not impart formal learning but develops in the child desirable attitudes, values and behavior patterns and aim at providing environmental stimulation. Good pre-school education increases cognitive abilities, school achievements and improve class behavior among children. Supplementary nutrition is also very important component of the ICDS which aims at improving the nutritional status of the children below the age of six. The main objective of this service is to provide supplementary diet to the children of Anganwadis to combat the adverse effect of malnutrition. Arora et al. (2007) found significant difference in the cognitive abilities of ICDS and non ICDS children in their sample of Jammu and Kashmir. Cognitive abilities of ICDS children were found to be better than that of non ICDS children. Mathew (2001) found that the ICDS program succeeded in attaining the goals set for it. There was a significant difference in the intellectual abilities of the children who had received pre-school education, compared to those in non ICDS villages who did not have received pre-school education. Aggarwal et al. (2000) highlighted that the behaviour, general hygiene and academic performance of children who had availed Anganwadi services regularly were similar to those who had not availed these services with few differences in Raipur Rani ICDS Block of district Panchkula in Haryana. Vaid et al. (2005) conducted in Resham Ghar Colony of Jammu city in Jammu and Kashmir State and reported that the children who attended Anganwadi centres had good health compared to their counterparts.<sup>1</sup> Tandon (1989) revealed that the ICDS nutrition intervention programmes achieved better coverage of the target population and led to a significant decline in malnutrition among pre-school children in the ICDS population, compared with the non-ICDS groups that received nutrition, health care and education through separate programmes. Dongra et al. (2008) found that poor quality of supplementary food, lack of cooperation among villagers, business of women in farm works, irregular and poor health check-up services, poverty, poor child care practices, poor support from authorities etc. are most common reason for limited success of ICDS Scheme. Jain (2013) highlighted that the objectives of the ICDS mission would be institutionalize essential services and strengthen structure at all level. There is a plan to roll out strengthened and re structured ICDS in three years beginning with 200 High Burden districts in the first year 2012-13 and so on. In the background of these observations, it is very important to investigate the relevance and effectiveness of the world's largest and most unique ICDS programme. So, this field study carried out in the Barnala district of Punjab.

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1 Sumati Vaid and Nidhi Vaid, 2005. *Nutritional Status of ICDS and Non ICDS Children*, *Indian Journal of Social Change*, **28**(9): 207-212.

## Scope and Objectives

The scope of present study is to evaluate the pre-school education and supplementary nutrition ration program of ICDS Scheme for children from 3-6 years of age in all ICDS Project namely Barnala, Sehna, MehalKalan of Barnala district of Punjab. In this study Pre School education and supplementary nutrition ration component of ICDS had been evaluated in the light of the objectives, to know the methods, problems and time devoted by AWWs for Pre-School Education at Anganwadi centers, Availability of regular Supplementary Nutrition ration for children in Anganwadi centres, Number of days used by AWWs for distributing supplementary nutrition to children during 2011 and to collect the actual data of pre-school education and supplementary nutrition ration beneficiaries at Anganwadi centers.

## Methodology

In order to achieve the objectives, pre-school education and supplementary nutrition ration component of ICDS was taken for the present study. ICDS beneficiary children between 3 to 6 years of Barnala District of the state of Punjab form the universe of the study. All three ICDS projects of Barnala District namely, Barnala ICDS project, Sehna ICDS project and MehalKalan ICDS project were selected for the study. Further 10 Anganwadis from Barnala ICDS project, 10 Anganwadis from Sehna ICDS project and 10 Anganwadis from MehalKalan ICDS project were selected on the basis of random sampling. Total 30 Anganwadi workers (one from each Anganwadi Centre) were also selected for study. The present study is primarily based on primary sources of information. For primary data, responses were elicited from the chosen sample through open and close ended questions in the Schedule followed by personal interviews. Schedules were designed in English and for the convenience of the respondents, they were translated in Punjabi which is common language spoken in the Barnala district. Observation method was also used during personal visits to AWCs. Besides this, secondary sources of information like books, articles, and newspaper clippings, articles in research journals, websites and reports were also consulted to collect the factual data concerning the study. The data from the total sample of 30 Anganwadi workers was edited. The data collected was analyzed manually and tabulated.

## Results and Discussion

The study was undertaken to evaluate the pre-school education and supplementary nutrition ration for children in Anganwadi centres. Personal interviews brought important findings. The details of the findings are presented below. All Tables are related to responses of *Anganwadi* workers.

**Table 1. How much time are you devoting in a day for Pre School education?**

*(Anganwadi Workers)*

Attributes	Responses			Responses of Total AWWs
	Barnala ICDS Project	Sehna ICDS Project	MehalKalan ICDS Project	
Below one hour	05(50)	03(30)	03(30)	11(36.66)
One to two hours	05(50)	07(70)	06(60)	18(60)
Three to four hours	---	---	01(10)	01(03.33)
Above four hours	---	---	---	
Total	10	10	10	30(100)

Source: Culled from Primary data. Figures in brackets are percentages.

In the present investigation, as described in Table1, it was found in Barnala District that a majority (60%) of the AWWs reported that they were devoting one to two hours in a day for pre-school education activities while 36.66% of theAWWsof the selected sample devoted below an hour in a day for pre-school education which was lesser than the time they were supposed to spend for pre-school activities under the rules. Merely one AWW said that she devoted three to four hours for conducting pre-school education activities.

**Table 2. What methods have you adopted for Pre School education activities?**

*(Anganwadi Workers)*

Attributes	Responses			Responses of Total AWWs
	Barnala ICDS Project	Sehna ICDS Project	MehalKalan ICDS Project	
Play way	04(40)	06(60)	----	10(33.33)
Demonstration	06(60)	02(20)	09(90)	17(56.66)
Story telling	--	02(20)	01(10)	03(10.00)
Any other	--	--	--	
Total	10	10	10	30(100)

Source: Culled from Primary data. Figures in brackets are percentages.

As per guidelines issued by the Directorate of Social Security and Women and Child Development, Government of Punjab, an AWW should function for four hours in a day. It is also important for AWWs that they devote one to two hours in a day for imparting pre-school education to the children. It means that in Barnala district about 40% AWWs did not follow the Punjab Government’s norms which is not good.

Response to the question regarding method for pre-school education adopted by AWWs at AWCs, as given in Table 2, indicates that 56.66% of AWWs adopted demonstration methods (charts etc.), for imparting pre-school education to the children. 33.33% of the AWWs reported that they adopted play-way method using toys, blocks etc., while only 10% AWWs answered that they adopted storytelling method. It was felt that the story telling method should have been used more frequent.

**Table 3. What problem do you face in organizing Pre School education activities?**  
(*Anganwadi Workers*)

Attributes	Responses			Responses of Total AWWs
	Barnala ICDS Project	Sehna ICDS Project	MehalKalan ICDS Project	
Lack of time	----	----	02(20)	02(6.66)
Lack of PreSchool material	02(20)	02(20)	----	04(13.33)
Lack of interest among Children & Parents	05(50)	05(50)	02(20)	12(40.00)
No problem	03(30)	03(30)	06(60)	12(40.00)
Total	10	10	10	30(100)

Source: Culled from Primary data. Figures in brackets are percentages

Replying to the question about the main problem faced by Anganwadi Workers in organizing Pre School education activities at Anganwadi Centres, as Table 3 describes, it was found that a few (6.66%) of the AWWs felt that lack of time at AWCs was the main problem, while 13.33% AWWs considered lack of pre-school material at AWCs as the major problem. 40% AWWs viewed that lack of interest among the children and parents were the main problem. The remaining 40% AWWs replied that they did not face any problem in organizing PreSchool

education activities. Pre-school education in a non-formal setting forms the backbone of the ICDS program. However, it is sad to see that lack of interest among the children and parents emerging as the major problem.

**Table 4. In what way Supervisor help you for organizing Pre-School Education activities at Anganwadi Centres?**

*(Anganwadi Workers)*

Attributes	Responses			Responses of Total AWWs
	Barnala ICDS Project	Sehna ICDS Project	MehalKalan ICDS Project	
By demonstrating new activities	02(20)	02(20)	02(20)	06(20.00)
By planning the programme	-----	-----	04(40)	04(13.33)
By helping the preparation of aid materials	01(10)	-----	-----	01(03.33)
No help	07(70)	08(80)	04(40)	19(63.33)
Total	10	10	10	30(100)

*Source:* Culled from Primary data. Figures in brackets are percentages

It is evident from Table 4 that a majority (63.33%) of the AWWs of the sample viewed that they did not receive any help from the Supervisor for organizing pre-school education activities. 20% of the AWWs answered that they received help from Supervisor by way of demonstration of new activities regarding pre-school education, 13.33% AWWs received help from Supervisor in planning the programme for organizing pre-school education activities, and only 03.33% AWWs replied that they received help from supervisor in the preparation of aid materials of pre-school activities.

As per norms, one supervisor is responsible to guide the work of 20 Anganwadi workers. But, it is shocking to see that only 36.67% AWWs received guidance from Supervisor for organizing pre-school education activities while majority AWWs did not receive any guidance from supervisor. It seems it is due to various reasons like lack of interest among supervisors, too much workload of them, non-availability of transport, etc.

**Table 5. Are you getting Supplementary Nutrition ration in time? If no, what was the main reason?**

(*Anganwadi Workers*)

Attributes	Responses			Responses of Total AWWs
	Barnala ICDS Project	Sehna ICDS Project	MehalKalan ICDS Project	
Yes getting in time.	06(60)	04(40)	05(50)	15(50.00)
No, food items not supplied.	04(40)	06(60)	05(50)	15(50.00)
No, due to transportation problem.	-----	-----	-----	-----
No, food items were spoiled.	-----	-----	-----	-----
Total	10	10	10	30(100)

*Source:* Culled from Primary data. Figures in brackets are percentages.

A perusal of the data of Table 5 indicates that half AWWs answered that they got SN ration in time whereas the remaining 50% of the AWWs reported that they did not get SN ration in time because food items were not supplied properly from the Government.

The main objective of providing SN ration to children is to combat the adverse effect of malnutrition in India. But without proper supply of SN ration at AWCs, India Government cannot achieve the targets which were set under the world’s largest and most unique social welfare scheme.

As per guidelines issued by the Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India, SN ration should be given to the children for 300 days in a year. The Table 6 provides vivid information about the number of days used for distribution of SN ration at AWCs by AWWs. It was noted that only 23.33% of the AWWs distributed SN ration for 300 days in a year, while half (50%) AWWs distributed SN ration for 250 days in a year and 26.66% AWWs distributed SN ration for 200 days in a year.

It was serious to find that, a high majority (76.66%) of AWWs distributed SN ration less than 300 days in a year, which were lesser than the days they were supposed to distribute supplementary nutrition under the rules.



**Table 6: For how many days from 1 Jan to 31 Dec., 2011, Supplementary Nutrition was distributed?**

(Anganwadi Workers)

Attributes	Responses			Responses of Total AWWs
	Barnala ICDS Project	Sehna ICDS Project	MehalKalan ICDS Project	
300 days	04(40)	01(10)	02(20)	07(23.33)
250 days	06(60)	03(30)	06(60)	15(50.00)
200 days	----	06(60)	02(20)	08(26.66)
Any others	----	----	----	-----
Total	10	10	10	30(100)

Source: Culled from Primary data. Figures in brackets are percentages.

**Table 7: Average data detail of Pre-School education and Supplementary Nutrition Ration beneficiaries children from 1 Jan., 2011 to 31 Dec., 2011.**

(Anganwadi Workers)

	Total No. of Eligible	Total No. of enrolled	Attended activities zero days	Attended 1-14 days	Attended 15-24 days	Attended 25 days & above
Children from 3 to 6 years of age in Barnala ICDS Project	378	170	16	15	18	121
Children from 3 to 6 years of age in Sehna ICDS Project	384	163	47	8	7	101
Children from 3 to 6 years of age in MehalKalan ICDS Project	341	168	19	5	3	141
Total	1103	501 (45.42)	82 (16.36)	28 (5.58)	28 (5.58)	363 (72.45)

Source: Culled from secondary data. Figures in brackets are percentages

Table 7 reveals that there were total average 1103 eligible children for pre-school education from 1 Jan., 2011 to 31 Dec., 2011 at all 30 AWCs. It was shocking to found that only 501 (45.42%) beneficiaries children were enrolled in register of AWWs for pre-school education. Out of them, 82(16.36%) children did not attend any pre-school education activity. 28 (05.58%) beneficiaries children used 1 to 4 days for attended pre-school education activities. Again 28 (05.58%) children came 15-24 days for attended pre-school

education activities while 363 (72.45%) children used 25 days and above to attended preschool education activities at AWCs.

It can be concluded that the coverage of beneficiaries children for pre-school education activities under the ICDS scheme is not satisfactory.

**Table 8. Less than 50% beneficiaries attend Pre-School education activities and received Supplementary Nutrition Ration, what is the reason?**

(Anganwadi Workers)

Attributes	Responses			Responses of Total AWWs
	Barnala ICDS Project	Sehna ICDS Project	MehalKalan ICDS Project	
Anganwadi centres far off.	01(10)	01(10)	01(10)	03(10.00)
Parent do not understand significance of pre-school Education	01(10)	---	01(10)	02(06.66)
Lack of facilities of water, space, light etc. at Anganwadi centres	01(10)	-----	02(20)	03(10.00)
The primary and private school teachers admit the children up to 4 years of age at their schools	07(70)	09(90)	06(60)	22(73.33)
Total	10	10	10	30(100)

Source: Culled from Primary data. Figures in brackets are percentages.

Replying to the question about the main reason for less than 50% beneficiaries attending pre-school education activities at AWCs, as the Table 4.6 describes, it was found that a high majority (73.33%) of the AWWs revealed that the primary and private school teachers admitted the children up to 4 years of age at their schools when they were short of the number of kids in their schools in order to justify their existence. Only 10% AWWs viewed that AWCs were far off from the residence of beneficiaries, merely two (06.66%) AWWs felt that parents did not understand the significance of pre-school education. The remaining 10% AWWs blamed the lack of facilities of water, space, light etc. at AWCs as the main reason.

It shows ironically that the children of a certain age group meant to be attending pre-school in AWCs were unable to attend pre-school education at AWCs.

## Conclusion

Summing up the findings from the study of Anganwadi workers of Barnala ICDS project of Punjab shows that, the overall picture that emerges was dismal as almost all the things were below expectation level. A majority 60% of AWWs faced different problems in organizing pre-school education activities and about 63.33% of the AWWs did not receive help from the Supervisor at all for organizing pre-school education activities. It was found that only half Anganwadi workers were getting regular SN ration in time during 1st Jan., 2011 to 31st Dec., 2011 in Barnala district of Punjab. Combining the entire three ICDS project, it was found that a high majority (76.66%) of AWWs did not distribute SN ration 300 days in a year as per national norms. Only 45.42% of the total beneficiary children were enrolled in register of AWWs for pre-school education and supplementary nutrition ration. 72.45% enrolled beneficiary children from three to six years of age attend pre-school education activities and received SN ration regularly from AWCs. It means that due to various reasons beneficiary children below six years of age were unable to receive SN ration from Anganwadicentres which is very serious. In fact, it leaves much to be desired. AWWs did not take any interest related to their job responsibilities due to lack of skills and lack of fixed services conditions, Supervisors were always busy in the paper work so they did not have any free time to guide and supervise the AWWs' pre-school activities. Based on the present experiences, the following are some of the steps that need to be taken for improve the pre-school education through ICDS:

- It is recommended that vigorous campaigns need to be launched by the Government using T.V., drama, folk songs, theater and other media to create awareness especially amongst the rural population about the long term benefit of the pre-school education and supplementary nutrition rationprogramme of ICDS scheme.
- Agencies responsible for supply of supplementary nutrition need to be given clear instructions so that no disruption of supplementary nutrition takes place at Anganwadi level under any circumstances except those caused by natural calamities or extremely bad weather conditions. Government must also look into the reasons for such disruption if any and initiate necessary actions required in the given situation.
- In addition, there should be proper comprehensive supervision of AWWs so that they dedicate sufficient time to pre-school educational activities which, in fact, lay a sound foundation of the children's further education.

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