

A Comparative Study on Community Participation in Integrated Child Development Services Programme in Punjab and Rajasthan States of India

Sarbjit Singh Kular

Principal, Gugu Gobind Singh College Sanghera, Barnala, Punjab, India

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Corresponding author: kularsarbjit@gmail.com (ORCID ID: 0000-0002-6869-1659)

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ABSTRACT

Realizing the great importance of bringing improvement in children and women's health and nutritional status, Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) Scheme was launched on 2nd October 1975. The objective of present study is to evaluate the community participation in ICDS programme in Punjab and Rajasthan States of India. In order to achieve the objective of the present study, a total 80 Village Sarpanches comprising 40 Village Sarpanches from Punjab and 40 Village Sarpanches from Rajasthan selected for this study. It was found that near half 47.50% of the village Sarpanches in Punjab and half 50% of the Sarpanches in Rajasthan did not make any contribution to the AWWs due to various petty reasons like AWWs did not ask them for help, lack of time of Sarpanches and they did not know in what way they could contribute to the different activities of AWCs. It was extremely disappointing to find that a majority 57.50% of the village Sarpanches in Punjab and 60% of the Sarpanches in Rajasthan did not make any visit at all to the AWCs. A high majority 97.50% village Sarpanches in Punjab and all sarpanches in Rajasthan answered that they did not form any local committee to help the AWWs to conduct different activities and again a high majority 97.50% village Sarpanches in Punjab and 92.50% of the Sarpanches in Rajasthan admitted that there was no organization like youth club or village school teachers or voluntary organizations at the village level to help the AWWs.

HIGHLIGHTS

- A majority 57.50% of the village Sarpanches in Punjab and 60% of the Sarpanches in Rajasthan did not make any visit at the AWCs which is very serious matter.
- A high majority 97.50% village Sarpanches in Punjab and all sarpanches in Rajasthan did not form any local committee to help the AWWs to conduct different ICDS activities.

Keywords: Integrated child development Scheme (ICDS), Anganwadi Worker (AWW), Anganwadi Center (AWC), National Institute of Public Cooperation and Child Development (NIPCCD), Child Development Project Officers (CDPOs)

Realizing the great importance of bringing improvement in children and women's health and nutritional status, Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) Scheme was launched on 2nd October 1975, on the auspicious occasion of the 106th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, the Father of the Nation (T. Mamata and

D. Sarada, 2009). Government of India initiated an integrated approach for the delivery of health care as

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well as nutrition and education services at the village level through Anganwadi Centres (AWCs). ICDS is one of the flagship programmes of the Government of India and represents one of the world's largest and unique programmes for early childhood care as well as women etc. In the initial stages ICDS was implemented in 33 selected community development blocks all over India. ICDS has expanded considerably in subsequent years and Up to 31st March 2013; there are 7075 sanctioned projects, 7075 operational projects in India. In Punjab ICDS program has expanded very rapidly. At present, there are 155 sanctioned and 154 operational projects (*Annual Report 2019-2020*). Vijay Rattan (1997) gave details about genesis, growth, components of ICDS and described a package of seven services comprising supplementary nutrition, immunization, health check-ups, and referral services' treatment of illness, Nutrition and health education and non-formal pre-school education which are provided under ICDS.

The most significant feature of ICDS is to improve the capabilities of the parents to take care of the child and thus involve the community by encouraging self-help in improving the quality of life and well being of the child and family. ICDS has been envisaged and conceptualized as a community based programme. It calls for community participation in its process of implementation by utilizing local resources. Its objectives are not limited to mere delivery of services but emphasize on initiation of a process aimed at bringing about social change in the life of the community. This is likely to be reflected in increased awareness, change in attitudes, beliefs and practices. The choice of having Anganwadi workers (AWWs) at the grass-roots level as a voluntary worker and not a paid functionary makes it a scheme of the people. The assumption is that the Anganwadi worker, being a local woman, would be much more effective in delivery of services due to familiarity with the community. This would facilitate acceptance of the programme and the participation in it (Roy C. Mathew, 2001). Despite the built-in element of community participation, ICDS, in over more than four and half decades of its operation, has not been able to involve the community to the desired level. Most of the studies have found that the beneficiaries have less knowledge about

the scheme, its components and possible benefits they can derive from it. The participation of the community has been observed to be marginal or low. Only a few isolated individuals come forward to contribute in the programme. The total involvement of the community, its voluntary organizations and other local groups has not taken place as envisaged in most of cases. Though the project staff has received training in soliciting community participation, yet Supervisors and Child Development Project Officers (CDPOs), by and large, were unable to provide the desired support and guidance in involving the community (National Institute of Public Cooperation and Child Development. 1986-1995). Their skills in mobilizing the community have been found to be inadequate. Community participation in ICDS programme is important for the smooth functioning of the programme, it increases its utilization, accounts for success and failure, reduce government intervention and create sense of ownership as well as sensitivity of the programme. A lot of work has been carried on the participation of Panchayat in ICDS and it has been found that community leaders were not aware of ICDS services and did not spare time and work outside the household for long hours (Lal S., Khana P., Vashist B.M, Punia M.S., Satpathy S. and Kumar S. 1995). The study conducted by Nayer *et al.* (1999) revealed that 53.3% provided free accommodation for AWC and 42.6% assisted in implementing health activities and contributed in terms of raw food for supplementary nutrition and fuel for cooking. Jagbir S. Jakhar and Raj Kumar Siwach (2010) conducted a field study, to evaluate the implementation and impact of ICDS in Sirsa district of Haryana. It was found that AWCs have been playing a meaningful role in imparting non-formal education to the children. The immunization and supplementary nutrition program had shown overwhelming response, but referral services suffered due to unavailability of medicines at Primary Health Center and follow up measures. The study also suggested that for improving the performance of ICDS Program, co-operation with Panchayati Raj Institutions is a must. Anil Kumar (1996) in his article analyzed the various issues of social welfare programmes under successive Five Years Plan. He also highlighted that the success of all social welfare programmes depends on strong political will, active participation of people,

regular follow up, strict control and supervision on the part of administrators. T.N. Seema (2001) reported that poor location and physical set up of *Anganwadis*, lack of weighing machines, lack of community participation, majority of the *Anganwadi* teachers themselves belonged to the below poverty line category, lack of supervisor, etc. were some of the factors which hamper smooth implementation of ICDS in Kerala. The study also suggested that for improving the performance of *Anganwadis*, co-operation with Panchayati Raj Institutions and local community are required. In the background of these observations, it is very important to investigate the community participation in the world's largest and most unique ICDS programme. So, this field study carried out in the Punjab and Rajasthan states of India.

Objective and Methodology

The objective of the present study was to analyse the community participation in ICDS programme at grass roots level in Punjab and Rajasthan States of India. Amritsar, Tarn Taran, Ludhiana, Shahid Bhagat Singh Nagar, Jalandhar, Faridkot, Ferozpur and Sahibzada Ajit Singh Nagar and Ferozpur districts selected from the Punjab state and Jhunjhunu, Sikar, Jaipur, Hanumangarh, Churu, Dausa, Nagaur and Bikaner districts selected from Rajasthan state for research program. Under the present study to evaluate the community participation in ICDS program, 05 villages selected from each selected district for the study from both states. Then 01 Village Sarpanch selected from each selected village. Therefore, total 05 Village Sarpanches were selected from the one district for the present investigation. Eight districts were taken from Punjab and eight districts taken from Rajasthan to analyse the community participation in ICDS programme at grass roots level. So, total 80 Village Sarpanches comprising 40 Village Sarpanches from Punjab and 40 Village Sarpanches from Rajasthan selected for this study. The **objective** of the study was as given below;

1. To analyse the community participation in ICDS programme at grass roots level in the Punjab and Rajasthan states of India.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Keeping in view the specific objective, personal interviews with Village Sarpanches were conducted. The results are presented in tabular form below. All tables are related to the responses of Village Sarpanches. The findings are presented below;

Table 1: Have you in any way contributed to the Anganwadi centers? If yes, how?

(Village Sarpanches)

Attributes	Responses of Total Sarpanches in Punjab	Responses of Total Sarpanches in Rajasthan
Yes, Getting space for Anganwadi centre's	21(52.50)	18(45.00)
Yes, Storage facilities for ration	—	02(05.00)
Yes, Motivate the community	—	—
No, Did not contribute	19(47.50)	20(50.00)
Total	40(100)	40(100)

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

The original concept of the ICDS programme was to make it a people's programme, eventually becoming the most important programme for mothers and children at the grass-root level where the contribution from the community specially village sarpanch, had more relevance than in any other similar programme. The question regarding the nature of the contribution from Village Sarpanch is presented in table 1. It was sad to find in Punjab that near half (47.50%) village Sarpanches did not make any contribution to the AWWs due to petty reasons like AWWs did not ask him for help, lack of time with Sarpanches and they did not know in what way they could contribute to the AWCs. The rest 52.50% of village Sarpanches made efforts and got space for AWCs. It was explored in Rajasthan that half (50%) village Sarpanches did not give any contribution to the AWWs due to various reasons like AWWs did not ask him for help, lack of time with Sarpanches and they did not know in what way they could contribute to the AWCs, while 45% of village Sarpanches made efforts and they gave space for AWCs and merely two (05%)

of the Sarpanches answered that they provided Storage facilities to the AWWs for store the SN ration.

Table 2: Do you visit Anganwadi center? If yes, what do you do at the Anganwadi?

(Village Sarpanches)		
Attributes	Responses of Total Sarpanches in Punjab	Responses of Total Sarpanches in Rajasthan
Yes, I observe the Anganwadi activities	04(10.00)	05(12.50)
Yes, I solve the problems of Anganwadi workers	11(27.50)	10(25.00)
Yes, I talk to ICDS beneficiaries	02(05.00)	01(02.50)
I do not visit Anganwadi	23(57.50)	24(60.00)
Total	40(100)	40(100)

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

Success of ICDS programme also depends on regular visits of village Sarpanches at AWCs. In Table 2, the extent of involvement of Sarpanch in the activities of the AWCs is indicated in Punjab that 42.50% village Sarpanches visited regularly the AWCs. Out of them, 10% of village Sarpanches observed the activities of AWWs at the AWCs, while 27.50% Sarpanches took initiative to solve the problems of the AWWs, and only two (05%) village Sarpanch talked to the ICDS beneficiaries about their problems. It was revealed from data in Rajasthan that about 40% village Sarpanches claimed that they visited regularly the AWCs. Out of them, 12.50% of village Sarpanches reported that they observed the activities of AWCs. One fourth 25% Sarpanches answered that they solved the problems of the AWWs, and merely one (002.50 village Sarpanch replied that he talked to the ICDS beneficiaries about their problems regarding ICDS activities.

It was extremely disappointing to find that a majority 57.50% of the village Sarpanches in Punjab and 60% of the Sarpanches in Rajasthan did not make any visit at all to the AWCs. Thus, the participation of the village Sarpanches in ICDS activities was very pathetic. Only

some Sarpanches came forward to make effective participation in the ICDS programmes.

Table 3: Are there any local committees formed to help the activities of the Anganwadi?

(Village Sarpanches)		
Attributes	Responses of Total Sarpanches in Punjab	Responses of Total Sarpanches in Rajasthan
Yes	01(02.50)	—
No	39(97.50)	40(100.00)
Do not know	—	—
Any other	—	—
Total	40(100)	40(100)

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

Anganwadi Centre is the focal point for delivery of services to the community. Therefore, local committee at the village level is very important for the participation of community in ICDS programme. As per norms, AWWs, ANMs, local influential people, social workers and elected representatives of Panchayati Raj institutions should normally be included in the local committee. Replying to the question about the formation of local committee at village level, as Table 3 describes, shockingly, a high majority (97.50%) village Sarpanches in Punjab reported that they did not form any local committee to help the AWWs. Only one (02.50%) village Sarpanch viewed that he forms a local committee to help the AWWs. It was evident from the data in Rajasthan that all village sarpanches selected for the study answered that they did not form any local committee for the of AWWs at local level.

On this count, it was depressing to find that over a period of four and half decades to implement the ICDS programme, only a single local committee in Punjab and no any local committee in Rajasthan was formed to support the AWWs.

Participation of different organizations at the grass-root level is the cornerstone for success of any development programme. A programme like ICDS cannot achieve a lasting success if it does not have some inbuilt mechanism for involving the organization like youth club, village

school teachers and voluntary organizations at local level in planning, implementation and monitoring services.

Table 4: Are there any other organization and school teachers at local level which help the Anganwadi activities? If yes, name the organization.

(Village Sarpanch)		
Attributes	Responses of Total Sarpanches in Punjab	Responses of Total Sarpanches in Rajasthan
Yes, Youth Club	01(02.50)	01(02.50)
Yes, School teacher	—	—
Yes, Voluntary Organizations	—	02(05.00)
Not helped by any organization	39(97.50)	37(92.50)
Total	40(100)	40(100)

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

As Table 4 explains, it was again shocking to note in Punjab that a high majority (97.50%) village Sarpanches of the selected sample confessed that there was no organization like youth club or village school teachers and voluntary organization at the village level to help the AWWs to conduct the activities of AWCs. Only one (02.50%) village Sarpanch of the selected sample confessed that there was a youth club at the village level to help the AWWs to conduct the activities of AWCs. It is indicated in Rajasthan that a high majority 92.50% of the sarpanches answered that there was not available any organization at local level to help the Anganwadi activities, while merely one (02.50%) village Sarpanch reported that there was a youth club at the village level to help the AWWs and the remaining two (05%) of the village Sarpanch of the selected sample viewed that there was available voluntary organizations at the village level to help the AWWs.

CONCLUSION

Community's active participation is the key to the success of a social and development programme which is aimed to bring about a change in the life of the people. But under the present study, near half

47.50% of the village Sarpanches in Punjab and half 50% of the Sarpanches in Rajasthan did not make any contribution to the AWWs due to various petty reasons like AWWs did not ask them for help, lack of time of Sarpanches and they did not know in what way they could contribute to the different activities of AWCs. It was extremely disappointing to find that a majority 57.50% of the village Sarpanches in Punjab and 60% of the Sarpanches in Rajasthan did not make any visit at all to the AWCs. A high majority 97.50% village Sarpanches in Punjab and all sarpanches in Rajasthan answered that they did not form any local committee to help the AWWs to conduct different activities and again a high majority 97.50% village Sarpanches in Punjab and 92.50% of the Sarpanches in Rajasthan admitted that there was no organization like youth club or village school teachers or voluntary organizations at the village level to help the AWWs. The picture is gloomy there is an urgent need to make strong efforts to mobilize community support, which should be freely available if a strong policy for this is adopted.

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