

YE KHANA, SEHAT, SHIKSHA AUR PARVARISH KA KISSA HAI IN PAR DESH KE HAR BACHHE KA HISSA HAI

In our country today:

- 46% young children underweight and 38% are stunted
- Only 44% children are fully immunised
- Less than half the children are exclusively breastfed for six months
- Almost 80% of young children and 60% of pregnant women are anaemic

On the other hand:

- Less than 30% children under six and pregnant and lactating mothers received any services from the anganwadi
- ICDS is yet to be universalised, in spite of the Supreme Court deadline of December 2008
- The budget for 'child development' (including ICDS and crèche scheme) is less than 1% of the Union Budget, while children under six are 16% of the population

This, when India's economy is growing by leaps and bounds...

Even some of our worse off neighbouring countries are doing better than us in this regard!

The following are urgently required to protect the fundamental rights of children under the age of six.

1. 'Universalisation with quality' of the ICDS
2. Crèches and day care facilities
3. Maternity entitlements
4. Support for "infant and young child feeding" (IYCF), particularly breastfeeding
5. Prevention of interference of commercial interests through 'packaged' or 'ready to eat' food or 'public-private partnerships' in government programmes for child health and nutrition.

Public mobilisation is required RIGHT NOW, when we are at the brink of becoming an economic power, to ensure that the rights of children are not compromised by commercial interests.

Our demands:

1. **Universalisation:** An anganwadi centre in every habitation, for every child under six, every pregnant and lactating mother and every adolescent girl. All infrastructural requirements of the centre must be ensured (adequate space, toilets, safe water, kitchen space, play area etc).
2. At least **two anganwadi workers** and one helper in each anganwadi centre, to be able to effectively provide home-based and centre-based services.
3. **Preschool education** for children in the age group of 3-6 years at the anganwadi.
4. **Hot cooked meals** of good quality, quantity and variety for children in the anganwadi as a national policy.
5. Nutritious supplements based on **local foods** for children under three.
6. Skilled counselling and support for women to practice **exclusive breastfeeding** for six months.
7. **Crèche facilities** for all working women in the form of 'anganwadi-cum-crèches', crèches at NREGA worksites etc.
8. **Maternity entitlements** for lactating mothers.
9. Improved **training and capacity building** for anganwadi workers.
10. Anganwadi workers and helpers to be recognised and regularised as workers and receive fair remuneration as well as **workers' entitlements**.
11. **Convergence** between health and WCD departments at all levels, including provision of nutrition rehabilitation centres.
12. A comprehensive **monitoring and evaluation** system and a high-level overseeing mechanism which will serve as a strategic oversight, technical support and ensure convergence and accountability.
13. **Decentralisation** and involvement of panchayati raj institutions.
14. A policy statement by the government to guide and **regulate PPPs** in food, nutrition, health and development.

Working Group for Children under Six

(A joint working group of Jan Swasthya Abhiyan And Right To Food Campaign)