

Attitude of beneficiaries towards the ICDS programme and benefits obtained by the beneficiaries

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ICDS programme is India's response to the challenge of meeting the holistic needs of the child, launched initially in 33 blocks, on October 1975. Today the ICDS is one of the world's largest and most unique programmes for early childhood care and development (Shukla, 2004). It symbolizes India's commitment to its children. It is widely acknowledged that the young children are the most vulnerable to malnutrition, morbidity resultant disability and mortality. The early years are the most crucial period in life, when the foundation for physical, cognitive, social, emotional, language development and life long learning are laid. Recognizing that early childhood development constitutes the foundation of human development. ICDS is designed to promote holistic development of children under six years, through the strengthened capacity of communities level. The programme is specifically designed to reach the disadvantaged and low-income groups for effective disparity reduction. The programme provides an integrated approach for covering basic services for improved child-care, early stimulation and learning, health and nutrition, water and environmental sanitation targeting young children, expectant and nursing mothers and women groups.

These target group are reached through nearly 3,00,000 trained community based Anganwadi workers and equal numbers of helpers, supportive community/ women groups through the Anganwadi centre, the health system of the community. To examine the effectiveness of this programme,

it is necessary to know the reaction pattern of the beneficiaries towards the programme. Hence, the present study was undertaken to make an investigation regarding the attitude of beneficiaries towards the programme and also to ascertain the achievement made so far with the following objectives to know the attitudes of beneficiaries towards the programme, to know the benefits obtained by the beneficiaries from the programme and to highlight the suggestions offered by beneficiaries for improve implementation of the programme.

There are one hundred forty four Anganwadi Centres under Dhakuakhana Development Block out of which 25 per cent *i.e.* thirty-five Anganwadi Centres were selected for the purpose of the present study. The study was broadly dealt with two aspects *i.e.* the beneficiaries and the functionaries at different levels. The respondents for this study were divided into two categories:

The beneficiaries of each selected Anganwadi Centre were interviewed as per as categorization of the ICDS programme, *i.e.*: pregnant women, nursing mother, and mothers with pre-school children. From the list of the beneficiaries registered at the thirty five Anganwadi Centre, three beneficiaries from each category were taken as sample *i.e.* nine beneficiaries from each Anganwadi Centre made the total number of beneficiaries three hundred fifteen as respondents for the present study. Since the age groups of pre-school children were minor to take them as respondents, therefore instead of them, their mothers were considered as respondents