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Corresp. between Gopal Dutia, New Delhi and RRN Tuluhungwa, New York, attaching report by Thomas Matthai detailing the Composite Programme for Women and Pre-school Children in Kerala, India. The report was published by UNICEF, New Delhi as part of the Community Action for Basic Services series. UNICEF supports the Kerala CPWPC with supplies, while the state finances other inputs, including vaccines, vitamins, etc.

Print Name of Person Submit Image

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13 January 1981

PSC/81/25

Dear Gopal,

Re: Lessons in Self-Reliance (CPWPC) Kerala

Many thanks for the brief and vivid report attached to your memo PSC/714 of 28 November 1980.

The programme appears from the report and my observations when we visited Kerala together last year, to have met its objectives, and the impact looks impressive even after a very short time. I am wondering whether your section and our partners in Kerala could isolate the critical actions, processes, factors which have led to community participation and institutionalisation of the programme. There is a strong and coherent interaction including mutuality, between the programme and the Government, and religious and political infrastructures. An analysis of these aspects may throw light onto critical issues which programming and PSC should bear in mind.

Best regards.

Yours sincerely,

R.R.N. Tuluhungwa
Chief, PSC Service

Mr. Gopal Dutia
PSC Officer
UNICEF
New Delhi
India

cc: Mr. E. Lannert
Mr. K. Waki

INTEROFFICE MEMORANDUM
UNICEF/SCAR, NEW DELHI

TO: * (See below)

FROM: Gopal Dutia, PSC Officer, *Sepalwalia* New Delhi

SUBJECT: Community Action for Basic Services

DATE: 28 November 1980

REF. NO.: PSC/714

PSC SERVICE
Date <i>22 Dec</i>
Attention
Action
Also see
1. <i>Wan Fen</i>
2.
3.
in Self Reliance", School Children socio-economic

... Attached is a copy of a Report, "Lessons in Self Reliance",
on the Composite Programme for Women and Pre-school Children
(CPWPC) in Kerala. Background information on socio-economic
... conditions in that State is also enclosed.

This is the first of a series of studies of social work projects of significance to children, which may approximate to UNICEF's concept of Community Action for Basic Services. A couple of more studies are getting ready for release.

These reports represent 'a close look from outside', not an insider's view. It is not intended to have a uniform study design for projects of differing content and scope. All the same, suggestions on improving the approach and structure of the studies would be welcome.

Initially then, this study is being circulated only to those mentioned below. We would be happy to send it to any others you identify, as we would like to establish a mailing list for the wider dissemination of such studies.

*Circulation List

Mr James P. Grant, Executive Director, UNICEF, New York
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LESSONS IN SELF-RELIANCE

**A Study of the Composite Programme
for Women and Pre-school Children in Kerala**

by Thomas P Matthai

**UNICEF, New Delhi
September 1980**

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Author: Thomas P Matthai, former editor of the political-economic weekly, Democratic World, is a journalist with experience in government administration, specialising in development issues.

PREFACE

This report is the outcome of a week-long UNICEF-sponsored tour of five of Kerala's 11 districts, to study the on-going Composite Programme for Women and Pre-school Children.

The visits and meetings during the study tour were supplemented by informal exchange of views with people in the CPWPC villages. The women of the Mahila Samajams, who shoulder the responsibilities for the Programme, consider it not as official but as their own - despite its weaknesses. This testifies to its relevance to the people's lives and strengthens the hope that it may sustain itself over time.

The report has been structured, as far as possible, in terms of the components and aims of CPWPC. Its focus falls on certain basic issues like the participation of the community, mobilising women and motivating them for comprehensive child care and self-development, and the relevance of the 'basic services' approach. Suggestions, as they occur, are given at the end of each topic discussed.

CPWPC must be viewed against the conditions of living in Kerala. A selection of socio-economic indicators of life in the state is an annexure.

CPWPC is, in some ways, unique for Kerala. But not many people, outside the village circle of beneficiaries and the concerned officials, know about the Programme. Two articles written for the wider public are appended to this report.

New Delhi
August 1980

TPM

THE CONCEPT

Origin

The Composite Programme for Women and Pre-school Children (CPWPC) is, in a sense, an imaginative take-off from the slow-moving Applied Nutrition Programme of the early 1960's. In another view, it is a welcome consequence of the lessons of failure of the rather bureaucratised Community Development Scheme of the early 1950's. It has been started, a few units in every one of Kerala's 144 blocks, in 1975, the Women's International Year with the assistance of the State Government and CARE - UNICEF lending its support soon thereafter. It is being extended in a phased manner.

Focus

The focus is the deprived child - improving the child's physical and mental health; inculcating a sense of discipline and equality; promoting clean and healthy living habits; and strengthening the desire to learn and generally preparing the child for the school.

Method

The state does not take on the above responsibility but helps mothers in assuming it - by imparting to them nutrition, health, and environmental education of a practical nature; by assisting in generating additional income for them so as to meet the needs of their children; and by encouraging them in the way of democratic self-management at the village-level. The fact that the child can develop only as a member of the family, and of the society, is not lost sight of. As helpers, CARE and UNICEF, as well as the state government have come forward. The participation of the local community in CPWPC is considered crucial. CPWPC is structured as a horizontal administration rather than in a vertical hierarchy.

Forum

Accordingly, rural women are encouraged to organise themselves into Mahila Samajams (or Mahila Mandals) and assume the responsibility of working CPWPC.

Coverage

Kerala has today around 10,000 Mahila Mandals. As of March 1980, the number of CPWPC units is 1951. This strength is increasing. Roughly, 1,95,000 pre-school children and 58,000 pregnant and lactating mothers benefit from the programme.

Content

1. **Building the Balwadi:** As a first step for CPWPC, the Mahila Samajam finds the land and gets the building design approved. It also raises the building funds, beyond the financial assistance from CARE (Rs 4,500) and the State Government (Rs.1,500). UNICEF equips the balwadi (cost Rs.500). The property will stand in the name of the Mahila Samajam.

2. **Feeding:** CPWPC either upgrades the pre-existing feeding programmes or starts new ones - by selecting 100 pre-school children (0-5 years), and 30 pregnant and lactating women as the most deserving beneficiaries from among the local community by reason of the economic status of the family or the nutrition level of the child. The selection is done, before every school year (when the 6-year olds leave the balwadi).

Of the 100 children, 30 to 40 children (3-5 years) are admitted to the balwadi as regulars and fed twice a day unlike once for the other children and the women). About a fifth of the children are Harijans. The feeding extends to 300 days a year. The food consists of corn-soya mix, oil and milk powder supplied by CARE. The transport and handling charges are met by the State Government.

3. **Teaching and Training:** The balwadi teacher is selected by the Mahila Samajam from among the local community. She is given a month's training at a cost of Rs.200 (met by UNICEF), and, in addition, a two-day refresher course once a year on diet and drugs. The balwadi teacher is expected to work voluntarily and is given an honorarium (now Rs.50 a month) by the Mahila Samajam from the yearly grant (of like amount) given by the State Government.

Training for CPWPC is given also to Mahila Samajam members, Block Development Officers, Mukhya Sevikas and Grama Sevikas.

There are two departmental Extension Training Centres for the purpose at Kottarakara in the South and Taliparamba in the North. The one at Ollukara in Central Kerala is not yet geared to training women.

4. **Health Check-up and Immunisation:** This is expected to be done every month by the doctor from the Primary Health Centre, supplemented by a weekly visit by the Auxiliary Nurse Midwife. Growth charts and weighing scales are supplied by CARE. UNICEF supplies a Mini-diet Drug Supplement Set, while the State Government underwrites the other inputs like BCG, DPT, tetanus toxoid, vitamins and iron

5. **Health, Nutrition and Environmental Education:** This is imparted to the mothers of the balwadi children in two camps of two days' duration in every CPWPC unit each year. The cost of Rs.100 per camp is met by UNICEF. Teaching materials are supplied by CARE. The best use of locally available sources of nutritious food, the importance of safe drinking water, environmental sanitation and personal hygiene are the focus of this education.

For demonstration as well as daily use, each balwadi is supplied a squatting slab for latrine and a handpump (where the water table is within 25 feet) - by UNICEF. The State Government assists in providing a drinking water well for each balwadi.

6. **Economic Activity:** The aim is to increase the income of the mother and thereby promote the well-being of the child.

a. **Goats:** Assistance is given to buy 10 goats for 10 mothers of balwadi children (Rs.200 per goat, extended by UNICEF). The condition is that a female kid is given over to the Mahila Samajam after the first delivery, for being supplied to another mother - till every mother has at least a goat each.

b. **Poultry:** 10 mothers are given 10 birds each (cost of Rs.100 for 10 birds is met by UNICEF), on condition that the Mahila Samajam receives 100 eggs, which are then supplied to 5 mothers (at the rate of 20 eggs) for hatching and rearing. The aim is to have backyard poultry in every household of balwadi children.

c. **Kitchen Garden:** The State Government extends financial assistance at the rate of Rs.250 per mother (of a balwadi child) for 20 mothers per balwadi in a year for developing kitchen gardens.

d. The Mahila Samajam is encouraged and helped to organise any other economic activity suggested by local resources and capable of generating income for its members.

Having established 1951 units in the 5 years (1975-80), the aim is to extend CPWPC, as fast as feasible, to all the 10,000-odd Mahila Samajams of the State.

A REPORT

1. Mahila Samajams

Called Mahila Mandals or Samitis elsewhere, these women's forums are the bulwark of CPWPC. Kerala has around 10,000 of them, registered as societies, under the law. Many of these date back to the 1950's and owe their origin to the inspiration of the Community Development scheme. Some of them promoted economic activities for women, many were entrusted with feeding programmes for children, most were organised and run by middle class women like teachers, government officials, social workers, political activists. But, without funds and programmes that could sustain them, the Samajams began to languish. Given the state of the economy, this phase cannot be said to have passed for most of them.

There are bright exceptions like the Gandhi Memorial Mahila Samajam, Kattathy (Ettumanoor Block, Kottayam District) with its radio assembly unit, tailoring classes, creche, dairy unit and CPWPC. And the Kizhakumkara Mahila Samajam (Kazhakuttam Block, Trivandrum District), with its women Handloom Weavers' Cooperative Society, food preservation unit, printing press and CPWPC. It is clear that their success is due to the leadership of their moving spirits and the participation they have elicited from the local panchayat and community and the influence they have brought to bear on government authorities. It did not seem to matter that the members of the Samajams were poor: they could work.

In contrast, the Indira Mahila Samajam, Charumood (Vellanad Block, Trivandrum) district, registered in 1965 could get a piece of land only in 1976 and build a balwadi in mid-1979, to qualify for CPWPC. The economy of the surrounding area is depressed. The local headmistress is the President, the branch Post Mistress the Secretary. A break-through by way of gainful programmes for its members is not in sight - beyond the small beginnings (goat and poultry) under CPWPC. The Mahila Samajam at Nadakal (Ithikara block, Quilon district), 15 years old, did not appear brimming with activity, apart from the modest economic programmes of CPWPC. Set in one of the poorest coastal areas (Chavara block, Quilon district) the Panmana Mahila Samajam has little else but CPWPC and the building donated by the Panchayat which made that programme possible. The Shanti Mahila Samajam at Pariyaram (Chalakyudi block, Trichur district) has for its Treasurer the lady member of the local Panchayat and has been helped by the grant of 5 cents of temple land and the fact that its jurisdiction is an urban fringe. Yet it seems weighed down by its responsibilities.

Interestingly, the Holy Family Mahila Samajam at Muttuchira (Kaduthuruthy block, Kottayam district) and the Sree Narayana Sevika Sangam at Thottumukam (Vazhakulam block, Ernakulam district) are able to expand their socio-economic activities (and also run the CPWPC units fairly well) due to their umbilical links with the Catholic Church and the Sree Narayana Trust respectively.

As of March 1980, only 1951 Mahila Samajams have qualified for and vested with CPWPC functions - though about 3000 balwadis are said to be run, in all, between the 10,000 odd Samajams.

The aim should be to get all the Mahila Samajams to qualify for CPWPC work. For this they need trained leadership and more material resources. UNICEF might consider aiding schemes for leadership training of members of Samajams (both CPWPC and others). The resources must come from the local community including the richer institutions and individuals - voluntarily if possible - in cash, kind and effort. An organic link between the Panchayat and the Mahila Samajam merits to be fostered - e.g. by making the (mandatory) women member of the Panchayat an ex-officio office-bearer of the Samajam. Indeed, there should be more than one woman in each Panchayat, all of them playing an active role in the Samajam. This is one way to increase community participation in CPWPC through Mahila Samajams and to make the Samajams financially viable. Some mechanism has to be evolved to identify women from poor families who are not members of the Samajam and to educate them of their right to be in it.

2. Building Balwadis

The first four years of CPWPC (1975-79) saw 1600 buildings coming up on Mahila Samajam lands. However, 1979-80 had only 250 plus a special IYC quota of 100, to its credit. The target for 1980-81 is still undecided in mid-1980.

This appears a set-back to physical progress as well as to popular enthusiasm.

As money (CARE building subsidy) is not a problem, funds for Kerala do not have to be provided by denying another state. The state government is ready with its share. Samajams are coming up with land and as children await competent attention, there seems to be no reason why the shortfall of 1979-80 should not be made up in 1980-81 in addition to the current year's quota of the usual 400 new CPWPC units.

3. The Balwadi Teacher

In theory, it is good to have a member of the Mahila Samajam (who holds a school leaving certificate or has just failed to get one) selected by the Samajam for voluntary work from morning to afternoon 300 days a year. The month's training at the Extension Training Centre (at Kottarakara in the south or Taliparamba in the north) has now been increased to two months. The Samajam also pays the teacher an allowance of Rs. 25 a month (recently increased to Rs. 50) which the state government reimburses the Samajam.

In practice, one is not sure if this works as well as it should. The balwadi teacher comes for employment as well as for social service of an agreeable kind. The two aspects need not conflict. But they do when ICDS pays Rs. 175 a month to the anganwadi teacher for much the same job, right in the same block as in Chavara. There have been cases of balwadi teachers leaving CPWPC for ICDS, and, ofcourse, frequently to alternative work. Nobody one talked to seemed to have a clear answer - beyond repeating the slogan of 'service before self'.

There seems to be no alternative to revising upward the allowance of the balwadi teacher, if CPWPC is not to receive a qualitative set-back.

4. Training

The visit to the Kottarakara Extension Training Centre (Home Science Section) was educative. A batch of 50 anganwadi teachers (under ICDS) was undergoing 4 months' training. A smaller batch of 35 or so Mahila Samajam members (not balwadi teachers) under CPWPC was also on training for a shorter duration.

The syllabi for the anganwadi teacher (ICDS) and the balwadi teacher (CPWPC) were much the same, except that the former included functional literacy.

It was mentioned that, in the absence of womens' training facilities at ETC, Ollukara (in Trichur district), trainees in Central Kerala have to travel some way to the northern or the southern ETC.

It would be useful if Ollukara ETC is provided with facilities for training CPWPC workers, as early as possible.

It would be good if functional literacy too is included in the CPWPC programme, provided the suggestion that follows - to have functional literacy as a CPWPC component - is acceptable.

5. Functional Literacy

As has been noted, CPWPC has an unusually comprehensive content. Yet literacy of the participating women is conspicuously missing.

Among the 30 pregnant and lactating mothers that come to the balwadi regularly, there are a few who cannot read or write. To deny them a chance to become literate is an omission that can easily be supplied.

Either the balwadi teacher herself - or a visiting teacher - can take functional literacy classes (with content appropriate to the socio-economic environment and need), at least twice a week. Some arrangement can be worked out with KANFED - Kerala's voluntary agency for adult, non-formal education.

6. Health Check-up and Immunisation

This appears to be the weakest link of CPWPC in a state where vaccination and preventive health measures were started in the mid-19th century. The main reason for this is the lack of qualified medical intervention when required. While ANMs appear fairly regular in their weekly visits, the PHC doctor's monthly visit (prescribed by the Government) is irregular or rare. Generally, he comes only for the annual selection of beneficiaries, or, if pressed, to the 6-monthly Health and Nutrition Training camps. This was the case in six of the seven CPWPC units visited, the sole exception being the Panmana unit in Chavara block (where the Primary Health Centre is situated close by).

The doctor's usual excuses are overwork and lack of transport. A probable cause is the absence of any special remuneration for the monthly visit. At the same time, at almost all the units visited, there were one or two chronic underweights (like Prince, the 4 year old son of the president of the Pariyaram Mahila Samajam, who confessed to his mother's embarrassment, that he took more tea than milk); or otherwise healthy, chubby, children suffering from scabies (as at the Kizhakumkara CPWPC unit).

Most PHC doctors are quietly ignoring the government instructions. This is a matter essentially of discipline.

A suggestion that can be considered is that the Mahila Samajam president should send a quarterly report to the District Medical Officer on the PHC doctor's attendance - with a copy to the Development Secretary - both through the Block Development Officer. The DMO should be required, by government, to keep these reports in the PHC doctor's confidential records and to assess his overall performance, taking them into account.

7. Education and Action for:

(a) Health

According to Dr Soman (Associate Professor of Nutrition, Trivandrum Medical College) 60 per cent of child morbidity in Kerala arose from unsafe drinking water and another 20 per cent from environmental insanitation. He cited his own experience of work with 800 children in Athiyannoor (Trivandrum district). With proper nourishment (using Norwegian fish powder) the children recorded remarkable weight increase in a few months - until an epidemic of measles came and left them weaker than at the beginning of the programme.

The process of education of the mother in preventive care has to be continuous and the monthly visit and attention of the PHC doctor (referred to earlier) has to be ensured.

(b) Nutrition

If the average diet in Kerala is more starch than anything else, it is not wholly due to lack of other edible stuff. On the day of the visit to Charumood, a camp of about 35 women (6-monthly) was in progress. Over 20 varieties of leaves of shrubs and trees, of nutritive and medicinal value, were displayed

for making chutneys or other preparations. Superstitions about the ill-effects of guava, papaya and groundnut have been removed through nutrition education. The Gramsevika was taking the camp, the health visitor having come the previous day.

Of the three main elements of ANP, education and distribution (of supplied food) seem to be better organised than production (of local food), in all the seven CPWPC units visited. The few kitchen gardens that were shown were not exactly thriving. The demonstration garden at the balwadi, seen only in one or two places, was a poor show.

Higher inputs are called for if the kitchen gardens are to serve the intended purpose.

The backyard poultry scheme (discussed later) envisages return of 25 eggs by each beneficiary, to be given to another member for hatching. An earlier practice appears to have been to give the returned eggs, boiled, to the balwadi children once or twice a week.

There seems to be general agreement that it would be best to use half the returned eggs for feeding and the other half for hatching.

There was a common complaint that the District Women's Welfare Officers were hard put to reach all the 6-monthly 2-day ANP camps. The number of camp-days in each block is too large for their regular presence to be practicable.

A proper assessment and refixing of staff strength in each district available for imparting training and ensuring action, appears overdue.

(c) Sanitation

The rains are heavy in a normal year and the risk of water-borne diseases is high. Environmental sanitation and personal hygiene are thus essential.

The cement slab for latrines are invariably there at the balwadi but the hole was blocked (due to there being no roof or walls - and no water - and possibly due to bad workmanship) at Charumood CPWPC unit. The arrangement was better at Pariyaram, where a superstructure was put up; but even here, there was shortage of water in summer. Even in the other seasons, water was brought from nearby sources, there being no well, yet.

If the latrines are to be used, a well for water supply plus an enclosure appear essential, in addition to a higher priority to sanitation at the teaching stage. The fact that some block development officers (e.g. Ettumanoor) have found funds from the Local Development Scheme for constructing wells, shows that the problem is not insuperable.

(d) Drinking Water

Piped water from public taps may soon become available, even in the interior places (e.g. Muttuchira CPWPC unit). But the main source at the balwadi as well as in the homes of the poor will, for a long time, be well water. The importance of boiling it before use is widely under-estimated. The fuel cost of doing so is also deterring.

However, a well in each balwadi (with or without a pump) is the first essential step for creating the consciousness and habit about drinking only safe water. As mentioned in the previous paragraph, this should be feasible.

8. Feeding Programmes

This is the oldest and demonstrably the most effective component of CPWPC today. The arrangements were working satisfactorily, except that Nadakal CPWPC unit was without even the buffer stock of milk powder and saiad oil - allegedly due to the recent strike at Cochin port. Charumood unit had logistical problems, Vellanad (non-ANP) block having no jeep.

It is estimated that of the 3.25 million children below 6 years in the state, about 2 million are below the poverty line and all of them but 4 lakhs are given nutrition supplement under one scheme or another. CPWPC covers 195,000 children and 58,000 pregnant/lactating women. A nutrition expert however expressed his skepticism about the longer-term viability of the feeding programme as presently conceived. His objections were mainly: dependence on imported food stuff and the inevitable irregularity about assured, consistent supply; heavy overhead expenditure (a percentage of 12½ of the cost was mentioned) borne by the beneficiary government; and finally, the erosion of the community's spirit of self-reliance.

Without rushing to conclusions, one could yet see the need to initiate steps by which locally made, high-caloric, low-volume foods are steadily substituted for the imported foods, in the feeding programmes.

On the other hand, there is need to extend the feeding programme to cover the entire child population of the state especially as this seems feasible in the next few years. Here, it is necessary to mention three practical problems being presently encountered:

(a) Multiplicity of Overlapping Schemes

In terms of caloric value, organisational strength, motivation of the workers and durability of benefit, CPWPC feeding programme appears at least as good as, if not superior to, the feeding programmes under ICDS (which is in operation in 14 of the state's 144 blocks), the Applied and Supplementary Nutrition Programmes and the post-IYC one-meal-a-day programme. Anomalies and wastage of scarce reserves are bound to happen, as when ICDS and CPWPC operate in the same block (e.g. Chavara in Quilon district) in relation to the same target population. As for the other schemes, they would become superfluous as and when CPWPC is extended to all Mahila Samajams and thereby covers the entire state.

This however cannot be taken for granted as the different departments of the same government often compete in an unhealthy way with bureaucrats developing vested interests in expanding their charges irrespective of what is in the best public interest. One report, locally current, says that the Education Department is planning to launch a feeding programme for 50,000 pre-school children - presumably at school premises, alongside the school goers.

A policy decision at the state government level appears called for to settle the best programme and agency for promoting the well-being of pre-school children and pregnant and lactating women; And, if the choice falls on CPWPC, as it should on merits, the programme should be allowed to expand as fast as feasible, with its weaknesses corrected, at least to the whole of rural Kerala. This would need consultations between the Development, Social Welfare, Harijan Welfare, Health and Education departments of the state and the central Social Welfare Ministry. As CPWPC expands, the other schemes will have to be phased out. The present overlapping will also have to be ended.

(b) Official Staff Support

Apart from the 1951 CPWPC balwadi feeding centres, there are thousands of other feeding centres run by Mahila Samajams. This number, it is understood, is not being increased due to:

- (i) the limited value of a feeding programme without the convergence of the other child services
- (ii) the lack of official personnel to supervise and handle the distribution of food stuff, and
- (iii) logistical problems.

The answer to (i) is the steady expansion of CPWPC. Item (iii) is discussed in the next paragraph. And how real item (ii) is can be seen from an illustration. Vellanad block has 94 feeding centres of all kinds but only two gramsevikas. (At the time of the visit only one was in position, the other being on leave). Varkala block (also in Trivandrum district) has 5 gramsevikas with only 64 feeding centres. This anomaly cannot be explained away by the fact that Vellanad is a non-ANP block while Varkala is an ANP block (which is sanctioned three additional gramsevikas).

A review of the strength of gramsevikas and mukhyasevikas, commensurate with the number of feeding centres in each block and of the overall workload (including form-filling), appears called for. Obviously, rationalisation of deployment should precede any increase in strength.

(c) Vehicles

ANP blocks are supplied with a jeep (from UNICEF funds). It appears that the state government is reluctant to sanction a jeep for the block development officer's official use, because he has a UNICEF vehicle at his command. In the result, the ANP jeep is extensively used for purposes unconnected with mother and child welfare. Also, the general state of repair of these vehicles appeared poor - which was explained by the argument that heavy food loads damaged the springs.

On the other hand, a non-ANP block like Vellanad, gets no UNICEF vehicle. And it is still awaiting the state government jeep. In the circumstances, Charumood Mahila Samajam spent about Rs. 30, specially raised by its secretary, to lift the last received food consignment.

The supply, use and repair of vehicles, in support of feeding programmes in general and CPWPC in particular need to be reviewed by the appropriate authorities.

9. Economic Activities

Engaging women in gainful economic activity, at least part of the working time, is central to the CPWPC concept. But such activity is bound to be influenced by the general socio-economic conditions in the state (see Annexure).

Kerala's high wage rates coexisting with a high level of unemployment remains a puzzle to many. While this may be left to economists to solve, income-generating self-employment for women is a way out of it.

The two on-going, and reasonably successful, schemes under CPWPC are goat rearing and backyard poultry (see Annexure). There is however nothing to prevent a Mahila Samajam to start on its initiative other schemes like spinning and weaving, composing and printing, book-binding, radio-assembly, food-preservation, rearing cattle, making mats, baskets, candles, matches, chairs in cane or plastic, and so on. Each of these was seen at one CPWPC unit or another. Each has its problems as well as promise.

(a) Goats

In all the seven CPWPC units visited, the scheme was working. But one could see the main attraction was not the milk (coming at the rather slow rate of say, a litre a day for some months in a year) but the saleability of the kids. The concept of a steady income, or for that matter a straight source of nourishment for the child (one suspects the little milk is more sold away than consumed in the family) is not fully realised.

It seems necessary and possible for the government to rear goats of superior breed in government farms and spread them through the CPWPC. Discussions with Dr Jayachandran (vet) of Ithikara block strengthen this view.

(b) Poultry

As mentioned earlier (see 7(b) - Nutrition), it may be better to use the eggs returned to the Mahila Samajam for feeding the balwadi children and for hatching, equally. More so, because there was a common comment that hens for hatching are not always to be found.

A suggestion heard, and deserving consideration, is to provide incubators at the block level, in the care of the block unions of Mahila Samajams. Such unions exist.

(c) Handloom Weaving

A visit to the Manvita Vanitha Handloom Weavers' Industrial Cooperative Society Ltd - allied to the Kizhakumkara CPWPC unit - was educative. This all-women enterprise is headed by Mrs. A George. Her husband is a former minister and senior leader of the Communist Party in the state. The 100-loom factory was financed by the Kerala Handloom Finance and Trading Corporation - Rs. 2.2 lakhs in loan and a slightly larger sum as grant.

The points of strength of this concern are (1) employment under fair conditions for the local women, (2) capability to produce a range of fabrics from coarse cotton towels to fine polyester dress material, and (3) low cost of production.

The weaknesses are: (a) more than a third of the 114 worker-members have not joined the factory and looms are idle to that extent, (b) production is low at around Rs. 25,000 a month and tends to decline, (c) the order book is not heavy, partly because most of the weavers are used to making only cheap varieties and partly because orders come mainly through the Handloom Corporation, and (d) it has not been possible to make the weavers appreciate or accept even minor technological innovations to improve finish or increase productivity.

While full credit must be given to the organisers of this ambitious venture, it is able to survive because of the strong element of state subsidy.

This reliance must shift to new marketing outlets and to higher product quality through simple technological innovations. Expert guidance in these should be welcome.

(d) Printing

The Kizhakumkara Mahila Samajam runs a letter press. This unit is running smoothly, thanks to regular orders from Trivandrum based institutions. A similar enterprise was seen in gainful operation under the Sree Narayana Sevika Sangam (allied to the Thottumukam CPWPC unit).

(e) Radio Assembly

Under agreement with Keltron, the Gandhi Memorial Mahila Samajam, Kattathy, Ettumanoor block is successfully running an assembly unit for 2-band transistor radios. It is financed by a grant for machinery, from the Central Social Welfare Board. Twelve ladies turn out 300 sets per month and the unit earns an income of Rs. 10 per set. It breaks even at this level. The aim is to raise the output to 500 sets.

(f) There are numerous other avenues for self-employment by Mahila Samajam members, as mentioned earlier. But the Samajams need reliable guidance regarding the various state and central government sources of funds, technical assistance, marketing facilities, etc.

Perhaps, the Development Department in association with other agencies could systematically help every Mahila Samajam to organise income-generating activities. The weakest area in this respect appears marketing - without falling into the clutches of middlemen.

10. Replicating CPWPC

A question has been raised about the replicability of the Kerala type CPWPC in other states. Perhaps the doubt arose because the proportion of literate women is far higher in Kerala than in any other state. However, literacy does not appear to be the sole determinant of whatever success CPWPC has come by in that state. Also, the programme in Kerala has several weaknesses, as discussed earlier. It has not yet reached all, or most, of rural Kerala. The decisive point however is that it has been possible to mobilise the women of Kerala. Twenty or ten years ago they would not have come out of their homes so readily, or perhaps their men would not have let them. Today, even the unlettered come, and they seem to have the ethical insight to judge what is good and right for them. There is no reason to think that the women of Rajasthan or Orissa lack such insight. The answer to the question of replicability of CPWPC is that if efforts are first made to form Mahila Mandals of ordinary village women - with the poor prominently included - the chances are that they would themselves easily assume the responsibility to look after their children and themselves.

An Appreciation

The most hopeful attribute of CPWPC is that it has the nature of a women's movement for the well being of children, that does not depend on the largesse of men. Its centre-piece is the balwadi, but the cradle of the movement is the Mahila Samajam. The Samajam is, or ought to be, the expression of democracy at the level of village women. It can, and mostly has, outgrown the barren aspects of party politics, in a constructive concern for the future generation.

The government participation in, and support to, CPWPC must be so governed as not to violate this unique character of the programme. The openness of the Mahila Samajams is a fair assurance against miscarriage of resources. Their strength has to be assured by forming their unions at the block, district and state levels - a trend already visible. This is likely to be encouraged with new state law for devolution of administrative and financial powers to the district and panchayat levels.

Motivational problems are a minimum, as a mother needs little persuasion to be responsible for her child. Mobilisation too has been proved to be possible when the mobiliser and the mobilised are both women from the same social stratum, speaking the same idiom.

The hope is that as underprivileged women come together in areas concerning them more than men, and begin to take power into their hands, the structures of society would slowly yield, given a climate of change. Till that happens, government support, steady but unobtrusive, will have to be ensured. This should be feasible as CPWPC is not a capital-intensive programme. And there is in it a certain balance between theoretical claim and practical effect.

But CPWPC has to evolve; for it can survive only if it grows; or else it will be smothered by the contrary forces of a crippling status quo. It is in constant danger of being reduced to yet another officially sponsored programme, of lapsing into a routine. Geographically, it must spread. The quality of its services needs constant upgradation. As suggested earlier, the nuts and bolts need tightening. The Mahila Samajams should become financially viable, partly through its own efforts to create new wealth and partly through transfer of resources from the richer segments of the local community, through friendly persuasion if possible, by public pressure if necessary.

A STUDY IN CONTRAST

ICDS and CPWPC in Kerala

Among the evolving perceptions of Indian development planners in the 1970's was the idea that in addition to conventional endeavour to promote growth and equity, a massive government intervention was called for to extend compensatory justice to the deprived social sections, explicitly disaggregating them from the better-off for deliberate, discriminatory favour. The minimum needs programme of the fifth and subsequent plans is an expression of this public policy. The Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) programme initiated in the second half of the decade is another. The ambition is sound but the task is stupendous. For, the majority of the Indian people, and of the children in particular, belong to the economically and socially backward class. There is little to be gained by evading the question: Can the government muster and apply the human, material and financial resources to spread the ICDS programme on a long-term basis, over the whole country - consistent with the well known cost-intensive, centralised methods of government working? A way to an answer may be shown by Kerala's experience with ICDS and an alternative scheme that has been in operation for slightly longer, called the Composite Programme for Women and Pre-school Children - CPWPC.

First, the inevitable similarities between the two schemes. The target population of both is children below six years and expecting and nursing mothers from the poorer segment of the community. The concept in either is to provide a package of converging and mutually supportive child services, namely supplementary nutrition through feeding programmes 300 days a year, health check-up, immunisation and referral services, education in health, nutrition, water supply and sanitation to the women, and non-formal education to the 3-5 year old children. The centre of ICDS activity is called *anganwadi* and that of CPWPC *balwadi*, which everyone agrees is a distinction without a difference.

There are however differences, quantitative as well as conceptual, between ICDS and CPWPC. To start with the former, ICDS is more ambitious in that a 100 per cent coverage of the local population is progressively aimed at, directly under the scheme, in regard to immunisation of children, and nutrition and health education of women of 15-44 years. CPWPC has a more modest aim, confining to the poor only and leaving the rest of the population to the normal responsibility of government departments.

ICDS is stronger organised than CPWPC in the sense that it enjoys greater government support in personnel and funds. There is, for instance, an additional doctor, 2 lady health visitors and 8 auxiliary nurse midwives sanctioned for each ICDS project - consisting of 100 or more *anganwadis* and covering a population of 100,000. The para-medical support to the Primary Health Centre is thus doubled, while the doctor's strength is substantially improved. Further, every 20 *anganwadis* have a supervisor (of the rank of *Mukhyasevika*) and each *anganwadi* worker is paid a monthly honorarium of Rs. 175. The staff set-up consists, in addition, a project officer (of the rank of Block Development Officer), an assistant (lower division clerk), a clerk-typist, a peon and 100 helpers on a monthly honorarium of Rs. 50 each. The ICDS operations are based in rented buildings and the total annual cost (minus the cost of supplies received free) of a rural project work out at Rs. 3.84 lakhs in addition to a non-recurring expense of Rs. 80,000 (1978 estimates). An urban project costs somewhat more and a tribal project a little less.

In comparison, Kerala's CPWPC looks a country cousin. The *balwadi* teacher is expected to work voluntarily, the monthly allowance being Rs. 50 (it was Rs. 25 till lately). The *Mahila Samajam* is to provide the land from its own, or the local community's resources and also meet part of the cost of construction of the *balwadi*. The *mukhyasevikas* and the (three) additional *gramsevikas* sanctioned for the old ANP - Applied Nutrition Programme - schemes would be available to assist CPWPC in case the block happens to be an ANP block - all 144 blocks in Kerala have CPWPC, only 95 of them have had ANP. But for this, the official support to CPWPC comes from the part-time attention of the Block Development Officer, the District Women's Welfare Officer, the PHC doctor and their subordinate staff. Financial assistance to CPWPC comes from the state government (Rs. 1500 for the initial construction, transport and handling charges of food materials, reimbursement of allowance paid to the *balwadi* teacher,

health inputs like vaccines and vitamins, assistance of Rs. 250 each for 20 mothers for kitchen gardens and help for a drinking water well at the Balwadi), from CARE (Rs. 4500 per balwadi building, food, material, equipment for health check-up and education materials); and UNICEF (equipment for balwadi worth Rs. 500, Rs. 200 for cost of training balwadi teacher, Rs. 100 per camp for women's training camps, supply of a diet and drug set, slab for balwadi latrine at Rs. 150 a piece and assistance to buy 10 goats at Rs. 200 each and 100 hens at Rs. 10 each per balwadi). The total financial implications are thus modest.

One consequence of the moderate financial outlay is that over the past four years it has been possible to spread CPWPC to nearly 2000 units by getting permanent balwadis built through the Mahila Samajams. These are all over the state's 144 blocks. Given the green signal, the number of CPWPC can equal the number of Mahila Samajams, about 10,000.

On the other hand, ICDS has been begun mainly with Central Government funds, and a few in the state sector, in 14 blocks so far. The massive financial and official effort required limits for the pace of its expansion.

Inevitably, as ICDS gets established in a new block it will rub against the CPWPC already in operation in many parts of that block. Anomalies and wastage of effort and public money would follow. A typical case is the Chavara block in Quilon district. The block authorities claim that the CPWPC beneficiaries number 4136, including 3405 children, at 51 balwadis. In addition, 2290 children are given a meal a day under a state government scheme started during the International Year of the Child. As against this, ICDS makes a parallel effort, on a comprehensive scale, over the same area and population. According to the ICDS Project Officer, he runs 137 centres (at the rate of one centre for 1000 population in the Chavara block) and the number of beneficiaries is 13,700. Both schemes claim that the poorest of the children are covered by them. And the total number of children below 6 years in the block is 22,000. Obviously, there is overlapping and possibly much else.

Assuming that it is financially possible to sustain and spread ICDS all over the state in the coming years, can it hope to acquire the attribute of a people's programme? The moment the official effort slackens for whatever reason, it will be badly hit. In contrast, CPWPC, in spite of its modest profile is sustained by the voluntary effort of the local women as members of the Mahila Samajams. They assume its responsibility. They own the balwadi and appoint its teacher. They engage in various income-generating activities, as the means to sustain the programme through self-reliance. The officials are there only to assist them. CARE and UNICEF have the role of catalysts of change rather than as purveyors of food and funds, for aid of this kind must taper off sooner or later, depending on the fulfilment of local self-reliance and self-management. ICDS bears little comparison with the conceptual sweep and growth potential of CPWPC, which is decidedly more in tune with the 'basic services' approach.

As CPWPC has struck strong roots in Kerala, as a women's movement for child development, it appears ill-advised to interfere with its spread by inducting ICDS side by side with it. If the latter must be tried out in Kerala, as in the other states, it could perhaps be worked in the urban areas (where officials are generally stationed) and rural Kerala be left to the care of CPWPC. It is time for the state and central governments to review and revise the present dyarchy.

LESSONS IN SELF-RELIANCE

The wisdom of India's mixed development experience over the decades may be capsuled into a three-fold formula: Investible resources have to be redirected for the produce of goods and services needed by the impoverished majority and for providing them with employment and purchasing power. Secondly, a measure of redistributive justice will have to be achieved in individual and corporate assets in villages and towns, if only to assure equality of opportunity for people at the start of their lives. And finally, the voluntary effort of the millions must be mobilised for community self-development. If there is to be no departure from India's well chosen constitutional path, lit by Gandhi, there ought not to be much further delay in registering substantial progress in all these three, mutually supportive strategies.

The moment of truth is probably dawning on Kerala in the south of India. Here semi-feudal capitalism and conventional communism have been jousting for nearly three decades in the beaten terrain of party politics. It may be over-optimistic yet to hope that a third alternative, India's own, may be born. But one sees an earnest of it in a confident five-year old state-wide programme for little children and mothers. Its success has, with an irony almost expected, not yet hit newspaper headlines - may be due to its name, the Composite Programme for Women and Pre-school Children (CPWPC). The name is long-winded, but its content has unusual relevance to common people for, it represents a massive, if orderly, experiment at community self-management at the women's level. It has a strong element of need-based production, pointing to decreasing economic dependence. And one ventures to believe, it facilitates a civilised, if slow, transfer of resources from the rich to the poor within the community.

There is no dearth of deserving beneficiaries. Of Kerala's 25 million population (in India's 650), about 62 per cent live below the line of poverty - no matter the state leads in literacy, both male and female, with a like percentage rate. That gives a figure of around 3 million children below 6 years who live below the poverty line. Can a government take care of them? Or, need a government take control of all means of production in order to be able to do so? Is there not an alternative less expensive in material and human costs? The stalemated economy of the state - where a high wage-rate dictated by highly politicised and unionised labour coexists with a high level of unemployment due to the shyness of capital to employ and invest - calls for a new management method.

Between the 1950's, or even earlier, and now, some 10,000 women's forums (Mahila Samajams) have sprung up in the state. Many of them came in the wake of the largely failed community development programme under state auspices of two decades ago. Some have been inspired by Gandhian idealism, others by religious faith, some by political ideology of one kind or another. Many of them were led by the local school teacher, the government official or social worker from the middle class, though the members were drawn mainly from the lower economic classes. As time passed and political consciousness increased, even the leadership passed largely to the poor, irrespective of the caste hierarchy. But, by the mid-1970's most Mahila Samajams, lacking in credible programmes lapsed into idleness, in the general climate of 'stagflation'.

About the time of the International Women's Year, an idea was mooted that the Mahila Samajams of Kerala could easily assume the responsibility for the development of local pre-school children whose families lacked the means for it. The scheme drawn up - CPWPC - envisaged regular feeding once a day of 100 least nourished children below 6 years and 30 expecting or nursing mothers of the locality. The more malnourished 30 children between 3 and 5 years would be kept on at the nursery (balwadi) for non-formal pre-school education and a second feeding. Education for nutrition, health and sanitation would be extended to the mothers and other women. Economic activities for housewives, like goat-rearing, backyard poultry and kitchen gardens would be systematically promoted. Health inputs like medical check-up, vaccines and vitamins would be provided by the state. A number of supportive innovations were also thought of. Where the scheme differed essentially from others in the field was that it was pre-eminently a voluntary effort of the local community of women, with the state agencies acting as the handmaid - rather than the other way round. And it involved a minimum loss during transmission of the community's resources in their application to its own good.

Thus the Mahila Samajam is to find the land for the balwadi and a good part of the cost of its construction. It will have to appoint one of its members as the balwadi teacher who will work as a volunteer. It will organise and conduct production activities as would suit local resources and needs - food processing, weaving, printing, radio-assembly, dairy, book-binding, cottage industries and handicrafts, etc. The focus of help is the child, the medium is the mother.

In all these, the Mahila Samajams needed financial, managerial, educational, technological and logistic support - till they were entirely on their own. Upto a limit the state government saw its way to extending such support. The district and block development administration gave their attention for part of the time. International agencies like CARE and UNICEF came forward with small but significant inputs for nutrition, health, education and employment.

As a result, there are today about 2,000 CPWPC units in reasonably efficient and extremely hopeful operation in Kerala - benefitting about 200,000 neediest little children and 60,000 expecting and lactating mothers in the same socio-economic category. Village women, the unlettered among them too, look forward to taking their children to the balwadi 300 days a year, to attending the nutrition training camps, to participating in production activities. They are no longer tied to their household chores but confidently aspire for social equality at least in their children's days.

Were Gandhi alive, he would probably have pointed to the need and the way to reduce the dependence of the Mahila Samajams on other agencies including officialdom and proposed the further widening of the scope of CPWPC, to include functional literacy. But he would have also rejoiced at their spirit and practice of self-reliance and seen in this obscure programme the stirrings of another age. For, did he not reject the pretence of government that it knew better than the people what was good for them ?

KERALA - Some Indicators

Kerala is at once progressive and poor. Statistical and qualitative indices show that.

The People

A population of 24.2 million (1977 estimate) live in one of the smallest states (38,864 sq.km.) - that is 3.90 per cent of India's population in 1.18 per cent of its area. They are more in the coastal belt in the west than in the forest fringe of the hilly east. Density is quite high at 549 persons per sq.km., against the national average of 167. Scheduled castes and tribes account for 8.30 per cent and 1.26 per cent respectively of the population. Over 16 per cent of the people live in urban areas (3 cities and 37 towns).

Vital Statistics

The number of births per 1000 population was low, by Indian standards, at 27 in 1977, compared to the all India figure of 34.8.

The number of deaths per 1000 population was also low at 7.5 against the national figure of 15.2.

The population growth was only 1.95 per cent in 1977.

The number of females per 1000 males was 1016, compared to the all India figure of 930 (1971 census). The rural component of this is 1019 and the urban 997.

Infant mortality has been reduced to 56 (all India 129) by 1976. This is the lowest for any state.

Expectation of life at birth has steadily improved to 61.20 for males and 64.40 for females (1975 figures). This is the highest for any state.

The mean marriage age was high - 26.31 for men and 20.88 for women - as of 1971.

Literacy and Education

Kerala leads the other states in literacy. The effective literacy rates (excluding 0-4 age group) was 77.13 for males and 62.53 for females - giving an average of 69.75, compared to 34.5 for all India (1971 census). The rural-urban differential is less than in any other state - though inter-district disparity persists (Alleppey over 70 and Palghat below 50).

While school enrolment of both boys and girls is higher than in any other state, the index of wastage and stagnation is also high - for Standard V, 33.3 for boys and 35.7 for girls; for Standard X, 56.0 for boys and 54.4 for girls. (1974-75 figures).

Health

Medical facilities are spreading, though at widely varying rates for different district. Kerala had an average of 3.84 modern medical institutions per 100,000 population, as of 1973-74. The doctor population is 1:2656 as against 1:3135 for India (1977). The average population served by a hospital bed is 445 compared to the all India figure of 1231. The number of hospitals for women and children is 7 with over 2100 beds, apart from about 2200 beds reserved for them in other hospitals. Target achievements in maternity and child health schemes are good but not as high as in certain other states like Gujarat, West Bengal and Tamil Nadu.

Nutrition

The nutritional status of the majority of the population is evidently low. The staple diet is starchy and unbalanced. State-wide indices of malnutrition are not available, but there are clear pointers - the chronic food deficit of the state; the protein deficient diet of the common people; their poor purchasing power and low consumption expenditure.

Sanitation

Environmental sanitation is severe. Rural latrines are the exception in the interior as well as coastal areas. Footwear is a luxury and ordinary people and their children go barefoot. Urban slums are as much a problem as in any other state.

Water Supply

Protected water supply has reached three-fourths the towns and about a fourth of the rural population.

Domestic Product

The net domestic product of Kerala is about a fourth of that of Maharashtra, though its population is nearly half the latter's. It was Rs. 23,188 million in 1976-77, giving a per capita level of Rs. 968 compared to twice as much in Punjab. Budgetarily, Kerala has a chronic deficit, leading to a crucial dependence on federal finance. Food production, never adequate, has reached a plateau. Cash crops like coffee, pepper, and ginger as well as plantations like rubber and cashew have seen better days in terms of product output. Traditional industries like coir, handlooms, cashew and fisheries are not exactly looking up, though inflation pushes up production in value terms. This position is reflected in the export trade.

Power generating capacity (1011 MW in 1977-78) is all hydro-electric. Some 800 villages are yet to get electricity. Power interruptions, together with shortage of raw materials like coal and cement, and endemic labour unrest (whatever its causes) stand in the way of an industrial breakthrough. Exceptions are there like the state-owned electronics industry.

Poverty

Only three other states - Orissa, Bihar and West Bengal - have a larger chunk of the population below the poverty line than Kerala where the percentage of the poor is 62.25 (vide Finance Commission report, 1978). The remittances home of temporary migrants to the Persian Gulf seem to have made little difference to this overall picture, partly because the money has by and large not gone into productive investment in the state. On a rough computation 2 to 3 million children in the 0-6 age group, must be living below the poverty line.

Employment

Unemployment of the educated, as well of others, is chronic. According to a 1977-78 survey, 1.17 million were in this category - over and above the endemically under-employed.

Kerala's 6.2 million workers fall into a classification very different from the all-India pattern - 17.8 per cent are cultivators (43.3), 30.7 per cent agricultural labourers (26.3), 15.7 per cent in manufacturing, processing, etc. (9.4), 9.1 in trade and commerce (5.6). The figures in brackets are the all-India percentages.

Employment in the organised sector is modest at less than 1 million (0.46 million in the public sector and 0.49 in the private sector - of which the proportion of women is 25 per cent and 43 per cent respectively). (1978 figures)

Politics

Kerala is among the more active states politically. A dozen ministries have come since the state was reorganised in 1956. Communal conflicts are practically absent - Hindus (59 per cent), Christians (21 per cent) and Muslims (19 per cent) live tolerantly together. All the same, politics is charged with communalism as well as communism. The pre-existing social structure has yielded to neither.

Social Change

Impressive reforms have been made in land ownership, minimum wages, etc. The caste system and untouchability have practically gone. Yet social cohesion has not come. This is a function of social organisation. The fact that Kerala's 11 districts with their 144 functioning development blocks, hold between them nearly 1000 panchayats and about 10,000 Mahila Samajams - active in their own way - points to the possibility of exercise of popular power for considered change.

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