

Two consultative meetings were chaired by the Deputy Chairman, Planning Commission on 13th and 20th November 2009 to discuss the schematic details of ICDS including the physical and financial parameters, the objectives, implementation bottlenecks and the challenges. The key points that emerged during these consultative meetings include:

- The AWC is the only platform available at the village/habitation level reaching out the community. ICDS has been universalized subsequent to the Supreme Court directives. However, there are serious deficiencies in terms of infrastructure, quality of services provided and convergence of service delivery specially between the ANM and AWW. The pace of universalisation is also slow on account of implementation delays specially by the State Governments;
- The system was not functioning even where it was operational. The quality of food provided was poor, there was inadequate mobilization of the Mothers Committees and Self Help Groups and monitoring was ineffective. There was serious need for capacity building with focus on training.
- The entire design of ICDS was inadequate in terms of fulfilling the prescribed goals. Lack of adequate human resource and delay in flow of funds from state to project to AWC were also instrumental in hampering the implementation
- The inflexibility of the scheme in terms of its design as well as implementation norms was a cause of concern. The objectives, implementation design and pattern of service delivery have remained unchanged since its inception.
- There is a need for systemic improvements along with documentation of the best practices. Some of the development partners have been able to achieve better results in terms of improved nutrition outcomes, better community monitoring and outreach. Factors that have contributed in achieving better

outcomes need to be analysed along with appraisal of the possibilities of replicating the same at large scale

- ICDS has been revamped only with respect to cost and population norms. While the scheme has been universalized, improvements in quality of service delivery also need to be focused on. There is a need for devising a holistic scheme, with provision of better governance and by integrating health and nutrition services.
- There was a need for redefining the goals and objectives along with the responsibilities of AWC. AWW should be accountable only for the services, which she is capable of delivering and is trained and empowered to do. The mandate of ICDS could therefore accordingly be revised.
- The need for converting ICDS into an entitlement programme where money is transferred directly to the beneficiaries, needs to be explored along with appropriate investment in infrastructure at the AWC level and also investment on training activities.
- There is a need for building a cadre of dedicated and training workers.
- A comparative analysis of the various options/combinations of providing the package of services was required to be done whereby the most cost effective option could be adopted for achieving improvement of nutritional and health status of mother and child.
- There is need to draw up a plan for delivery of services under ICDS, where the concerned departments are provided separate targets, accountability and credibility. Thereby dovetail each individual component to form an integrated plan with focus on coordination and convergence.
- Data generated by ICDS can be used for analytical purposes
- The existing projects could continue functioning for the time being. However, for the new projects, assessment of what is working at the levels of state and local government should be carried out along with the possibility of replicating the same.

- Flexibility to adopt projects as per their requirements should be ensured. A method or system should be devised to help in producing the desired outcomes and that fits our conditions.
- State Governments should sign MOUs with the Centre regarding the basic conditionality which they have to fulfill for addressing the gaps in service delivery. Fund flow should be linked to these commitments and a framework should be devised appropriately
- State Governments should be taken on board in decision making. In view of prevailing scenario of fund shortage, it must be ensured that the State Governments are provided with entitlements.