

Chapter 1

Introduction

- 1.1 The Department of Women and Child Development was set up in 1985 as a part of the Ministry of Human Resource Development to give the much-needed impetus to the holistic development of women and children. In its capacity as a nodal agency looking after the advancement of women and children, the Department formulates plans, policies and programmes, enacts and amends legislation affecting women and children and guides and coordinates the efforts of both governmental and non-governmental organisations working in the field of women and child development. Apart from this, the Department implements certain innovative programmes for women and children. These programmes are in the areas of training and capacity building, employment and income generation, welfare and support services, and awareness generation and gender sensitization. The ultimate objective of all these programmes is to make women independent and self-reliant and to ensure that children grow and live in a healthy and secure environment.
- 1.2 For the empowerment of women the Department made major policy initiatives during the year. Government declared the year 2001 to be the Women's Empowerment Year. The Year was formally launched by the Prime Minister on 4th January 2001 in a glittering function at Vigyan Bhawan when the first Stree Shakti Puraskars were also awarded to five distinguished women for their outstanding contribution for the upliftment and empowerment of women. Each month of the year was dedicated to a particular theme around which series of programmes and activities were taken up at the National, State and Local levels by the Central and State Governments, civil society, academic and research institutions, and private sector and voluntary organizations.
- 1.3 The National Policy on Empowerment of Women was announced by the Government. The main objective of this Policy is to bring about the advancement, development and empowerment of women, to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women and to ensure their active participation in all spheres of life and activities. A National Plan of Action on Empowerment of Women with measurable goals to be achieved by the year 2010 is currently under formulation.
- 1.4 The Task Force set up under the Chairpersonship of Shri K.C.Pant, Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission to review the laws and the programmes on women completed its deliberations. A major legislative initiative in the shape of Domestic Violence Against Women (Prevention) Bill 2002 has been finalized for introduction before the Budget session of Parliament. Two new schemes on women, Swyamsidha and Swadhar were launched, one for the integrated empowerment of women and the other for women in difficult circumstances.
- 1.5 For the holistic development of the child, the Department has been implementing, the Integrated Child Development Services Scheme (ICDS), which provides a package of services comprising supplementary nutrition.

immunisation, health check up and referral services, pre-school non-formal education and health and nutrition education. Started in 1975-76 in 33 blocks, the programme has spread its network throughout the length and breadth of the country, making it the world's largest outreach programme for early childhood care and protection. During the year Government took the historic decision to universalize the ICDS in all the 5652 blocks of the country. Nearly six hundred thousand anganwadi centers are now in operation providing day care services to 63.81 lakh pregnant and lactating mothers and 295.89 lakh children below six years of age. The Department also worked towards setting up a National Commission for Children on the lines of National Human Rights Commission to safeguard the constitutional and legal rights of children. A draft Cabinet Note on the bill for setting up the National Commission for Children is in the final stages of approval and is expected to be introduced in Parliament during 2002. The Department has also prepared a draft National Charter for Children that is in the final stages for approval of the Cabinet.

- 1.6 The autonomous organizations of the Department, namely the National Institute of Public Cooperation and Child Development (NIPCCD), Central Social Welfare Board (CSWB), and Rashtriya Mahila Kosh (RMK) and the statutory body of National Commission for Women (NCW) contributed their existing and special programmes during the year.
- 1.7 The Department continued to recognize the contributions and the potential of rich and vibrant civil society organizations, specially the women's groups, all over the country and forged a strong partnership with them for the implementation of many of its innovative schemes and programmes. These organizations are also contributing in a big way as think tanks, advocates and watchdog of the development initiatives for the empowerment of women and development of children.
- 1.8 The following Chapters of the Annual report broadly cover the main activities of the Department during the year 2001-02.