

## **A study on Infrastructure at Anganwadi Centers in rural Punjab**

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**Abstract:** Realizing the great importance of bringing improvement in children and women's health and nutritional status, Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) Scheme was launched on 2nd October 1975. The scope of present study is to assess the physical infrastructure at Anganwadi centres in rural Punjab. In order to achieve the stipulated objectives of the present study, all three ICDS projects operating in Barnala district were selected. The ICDS projects so selected were Barnala, Sehna, Meha IKalan. Further 10 Anganwadis each from Barnala, Sehna and Meha IKalan ICDS project were selected randomly. In order to reach out the ultimate sampling units, 30 Anganwadi Workers (AWWs) were selected by selecting one worker each from sample Anganwadi. It was found that high majority (90%) of AWCs were not running in their own buildings. About 70% of the centres were found to be located in pucca buildings. One third (30%) of AWCs had adequate sewage disposal system and physical surroundings. It was sad to find that a very high majority (93.33%) of the AWCs did not have sufficient three rooms space as per recommended norms. Shockingly, a majority 76.66% of AWCs did not have any storage space to store the SN ration. In view of this the study has recommended that as far as possible AWC should be built with community involvement, be of low cost design using local materials and indigenous construction techniques.

**Keywords:** ICDS, AWW, AWC, NIPCCD,PEO

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Realizing the great importance of bringing improvement in children and women's health and nutritional status, Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) Scheme was launched on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 1975, on the auspicious occasion of the 106<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, the Father of the Nation [1]. Government of India initiated an integrated approach for the delivery of health care as well as nutrition and education services at the village level through Anganwadi Centres (AWCs). ICDS is one of the flagship programmes of the Government of India and represents one of the world's largest and unique programmes for early childhood care as well as women etc. In the initial stages ICDS was implemented in 33 selected community development blocks all over India. ICDS has expanded considerably in subsequent years and Up to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2013; there are 7076 sanctioned projects, 7025 operational projects in India. In Punjab ICDS program has expanded very rapidly. At present, there are 155 sanctioned and 154 operational projects [2]. Vijay Rattan [3] is his book (1997) gave details about genesis, growth, components of ICDS and described a package of seven services comprising supplementary nutrition, immunization, health check-ups, and referral services' treatment of illness, Nutrition and health education and non-formal pre-school

education which are provided under ICDS.

The focal point for the delivery of ICDS services in an *Anganwad*-a child care center located within the village or slum area itself. An Anganwadi Centre (AWC) usually covers a population of 400 to 800 in rural and urban areas and 300 to 800 in tribal and hilly areas. Each *Anganwadi* Centre is run by an *Anganwadi* worker (AWW), who is a part-time honorary worker. She is a woman of same locality, chosen by the people and having educational qualification of matric or graduation in some areas. She is assisted by a helper who is also a local woman and is paid a honorarium. Thakare et al, [4], revealed that Anganwadi Worker (AWW) is the community based voluntary frontline workers of the ICDS programme. Selected from the community, she assumes a pivotal role due to her close and continuous contact with the beneficiaries. In order to discharge the functions effectively, the AWCs require basic infrastructure. As per the norms for constructions of AWC building prescribed by the Ministry (2011) an AWC must have a separate sitting room for children, separate kitchen and store for storing food items. In Kerala, Seema's (2001)[5] found that more than one-fourth of the Anganwadis had own buildings, only 11% had electricity connection, 28% of them having some

playing space and hardly 30% had latrine facility. Similarly, NIPCCD (2006)[6] in 35 states and UTs indicated that majority of the Anganwadi Centres were located in pucca buildings. Around, 41 per cent of Anganwadis had toilet facilities and 17 per cent of these facilities were not found to be in good condition. Adequate outdoor space was available in only 44% AWCs, indoor space was available in 36% and separate space for storage was available in 39% Anganwadi Centres. Slightly better position was also found by PEO (2011) [7] in 35 states and UTs as 72% AWCs had adequate space for indoor activities, 60% AWCs had available piped water, half AWCs had adequate space for storage and half AWCs did not toilet facilities. In Aurangabad as Thakare *et al.* (2011)[8] observed that all AWCs were rented. All had a pucca building. Electricity supply, piped water supply and sanitary toilets are available with 60.71%, 64.28% and 53.57% of AWCs. In this background, the present study carried to assess the physical infrastructure at Anganwadi Centres in rural Punjab.

## METHODOLOGY

In order to achieve the stipulated objectives of the present study, all three ICDS projects operating in Barnala district were selected. The ICDS projects so selected were Barnala, Sehna, Meha IKalan. Further 10

*Anganwadis each* from Barnala, Sehna and Mehal Kalan ICDS project were selected randomly. In order to reach out the ultimate sampling units, 30 Anganwadi Workers (AWWs) were selected by selecting one worker each from sample Anganwadi. For collection of primary data, responses were elicited from the chosen sample through open and close ended questions in the schedule through personal interview method. Schedule were designed in English and for the convenience of the respondents it were translated in Punjabi which is common language spoken in the Barnala district. Observation Schedule was also made for observation Anganwadies. Besides this, secondary sources of information like books, articles, and newspaper clippings, articles in research journals, websites and reports were also consulted to collect the factual data concerning the study. The study was conducted during August to December 2012. The data from the total sample of 30 Anganwadi workers was edited. The data collected was analyzed manually and tabulated.

## FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Personal interview with Anganwadi Workers and observation of Anganwadi centres by the researcher brought important results and major are presented in the tabular form below. All tables are related to the responses of Anganwadi workers.

**Table 1: Where is the Anganwadi located?  
(Anganwadi Workers)**

Attributes	Responses			Responses of Total AWWs
	Barnala ICDS Project	Sehna ICDS Project	Meha IKalan ICDS Project	
In Panchayat building.	05(50)	10(100)	09(90)	24(80.00)
Building only for Anganwadi Centre.	02(20)	----	01(10)	03(10.00)
In Anganwadi worker`s own house.	----	----	----	-----
In rented building.	03(30)	----	-----	03(10.00)
Total	10	10	10	30(100)

*Source: Culled from Primary data. Figures in brackets are percentages.*

A perusal of the data of Table 1 shows that a high majority (80%) of the AWCs were running in the village Panchayat buildings or Dharmshalas. Some 10% centres were running in the rented buildings. Only 10% of the AWCs were running in their own buildings.

It was bad to find that a high majority (90%) of AWCs were not running in their own buildings which are going to negatively affect the requirements of the effective implementation of ICDS scheme at grass-root level.

The Table 2 provides vivid information about the building structures of the AWCs. It was a matter of satisfaction to note that a majority (70%) of the AWCs were located in pucca buildings. Around 16.66% of AWCs were located in semi-pucca buildings and the rest 13.33% of the AWCs were located in *katcha* buildings. In the National Evaluation of ICDS by NIPCCD in 1995, only 50% of buildings of AWCs were found to be located in pucca buildings, whereas in the present study 70% of the centres were found located in pucca buildings which a definite sign of improvement in the building structures of the ICDS scheme at village level.

**Table 2: Building structure of Anganwadi centers  
(Anganwadi Workers)**

Attributes	Responses			Responses of Total AWWs
	Barnala ICDS Project	Sehna ICDS Project	Meha IKalan ICDS Project	
Pucca structure	06(50)	08(80)	07(70)	21(70.00)
Katcha	03(50)	----	01(10)	04(13.33)
Semi pucca	01(10)	02(20)	02(20)	05(16.66)
Any other	-----	-----	-----	-----
Total	10	10	10	30(100)

Source: Culled from Primary data. Figures in brackets are percentages.

**Table 3: Sewage disposal and physical surrounding of Anganwadi centres  
(Anganwadi Workers)**

Attributes	Responses			Responses of Total AWWs
	Barnala ICDS Project	Sehna ICDS Project	Meha IKalan ICDS Project	
Adequate	01(10)	03(30)	05(50)	09(30.00)
Inadequate	07(70)	06(60)	04(40)	17(56.66)
Not existing	02(20)	01(10)	01(10)	04(13.33)
Any other	-----	-----	-----	-----
Total	10	10	10	30(100)

Source: Culled from Primary data. Figures in brackets are percentages.

The ecological surroundings play an important role in development of children. AWCs must be clean and stimulating in order to promote the learning ability of children. Sewage disposal and physical surrounding of AWCs can be considered adequate if there is proper drainage system, clean, orderly and attractive atmosphere. Observation related to sewage disposal and physical surroundings of AWCs, as Table 3 explains, is 56.66% of AWCs do not have adequate sewage disposal

system and physical surroundings. There were surroundings with uncovered drains and stagnant water which stunk badly. Only 30% of AWCs had adequate sewage disposal and physical surroundings.

It was alarming to find that about 13.33% of AWCs had no sewage disposal drainage system and properly clean surroundings.

**Table 4: Number of rooms at Anganwadi centres  
(Anganwadi Workers)**

Attributes	Responses			Responses of Total AWWs
	Barnala ICDS Project	Sehna ICDS Project	Meha IKalan ICDS Project	
One	09(90)	08(80)	07(70)	24(80.00)
Two	----	01(10)	03(30)	04(13.33)
Three	01(10)	01(10)	-----	02(06.66)
Above three	----	-----	-----	-----
Total	10	10	10	30(100)

Source: Culled from Primary data. Figures in brackets are percentages.

In order to discharge the functions effectively, the Anganwadi centres require basic infrastructure. As per norms for construction of AWCs buildings prescribed by the Ministry, an AWC must have a separate sitting room for children and women, a separate kitchen, and a separate store. It is evident from Table 4 that a high majority (80%) of the AWCs functioned only in single rooms, some with attached "veranda". About 13.33% of these Anganwadis worked

in two rooms. The remaining 6.66% of Anganwadis have three rooms' viz., a separate sitting room, a separate kitchen and a store room.

It was disappointing to find that a high majority (93.33%) of the AWCs did not have sufficient three (rooms) as per recommended norms. This is a very sorry state of affairs.

**Table 5: Size of rooms or indoor space at AWCs  
(AnganwadiWorker)**

Attributes	Responses			Responses of Total AWWs
	Barnala ICDS Project	Sehna ICDS Project	Meha IKalan ICDS Project	
Adequate	01(10)	01(10)	-----	02(06.66)
Inadequate	04(40)	02(20)	07(70)	13(43.33)
Too small	05(50)	07(50)	03(30)	15(50.00)
Any other	-----	-----	-----	-----
Total	10	10	10	30(100)

Source: Culled from Primary data. Figures in brackets are percentages.

AWCs should have proper indoor space for display of children's work as well as charts, posters and pictures. The size of rooms at AWCs can be considered adequate if they are large enough to accommodate 40 children at a time as per requirement of AWCs. It was shocking to see, as given in Table 5, that merely two (6.66%) of AWCs have adequate rooms to accommodate 40 children at a time and also space for display of charts, posters and pictures. About 43.33% of AWCs have inadequate rooms which were enough for conducting the pre-school activities but there was not

enough space for display of charts, posters and pictures. The remaining half AWCs had too small indoor space which was not enough to accommodate 40 children at a time for conducting pre-school education activities and also did not have enough space for display of charts, posters, and pictures.

Thus, the data shows that more efforts are required to improve the indoor space at AWCs as it is crucial for effective implementation of the programme.

**Table 6: Storage space at Anganwadi centres  
(AnganwadiWorker)**

Attributes	Responses			Responses of Total AWWs
	Barnala ICDS Project	Sehna ICDS Project	Meha IKalan ICDS Project	
Adequate	-----	-----	-----	-----
Inadequate	02(20)	02(20)	03(30)	05(23.33)
Non-existent	08(80)	08(80)	07(70)	23(76.66)
Any other	-----	-----	-----	-----
Total	10	10	10	30(100)

Source: Culled from Primary data. Figures in brackets are percentages.

Supplementary nutrition is provided to children aged from 6 months to 6 years, pregnant women and nursing mothers at the AWCs. The objective of the service is to end the malnourishment by awakening the community about specific needs of nutrition of children and women. Supplementary nutrition is also the main attraction for the beneficiaries to visit the Anganwadi centres. It was shocking to find from the position given in Table 6 that a majority (76.66%) of the AWCs did not have any storage space to store SN ration. 23.33% of the AWCs had inadequate storage space for storing sacks and tins of food items and grains. In most of the cases, the food materials were stored in the house of the AWWs which is not a good practice. Lack of proper storage space can results in wastage of food items.

## CONCLUSIONS

It can be concluded from the above findings that that high majority (90%) of AWCs were not running in their own buildings which has an adverse impact on implementation process of the ICDS scheme at grassroots level. About 70% of the centres were found to be located in pucca buildings which is a good sign regarding the building structure of the ICDS scheme. Nearly one third (30%) of AWCs had adequate sewage disposal system and physical surroundings. It was sad to find that a very high majority (93.33%) of the AWCs did not have sufficient three rooms space as per recommended norms. Shockingly, a majority 76.66% of AWCs did not have any storage space to store the SN ration. In view of this the study has recommended that as far as possible AWC should be built with community involvement, be of low cost design using local materials and indigenous construction techniques. Further, it should be owned

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and maintained by community/village panchayat/urban local bodies. This type of centre is also required to organize other activities related to different women's programmes, to provide forum for youth activities, to use for meetings of frontline workers and for gathering of mothers and children. Ministries of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj may play major role in collaboration with State Governments to provide this facility.

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