

## The Importance of Anganwadi Workers and their Demands



Source: <http://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/bangalore/anganwadi-workers-protest-enters-second-day/article17552056.ece>

## In This Issue

### *COVER STORY:*

- The Importance of Anganwadi Workers and their Demands

### *HEADLINE OF THE WEEK:*

- Fugitive Economic Offenders Bill needs tweaks: Analysts

### *SECTION 1: GOVERNANCE AND DEVELOPMENT*

- **Governance:** Delhi: After Month's Delay, Ration Shops Get Iris Machines
- **Health:** In 2015-16, Anganwadis Served more Children than a Decade Ago but Achieved Limited Outcomes

### *SECTION 2: SOCIETY*

- **Gender:** What are the Consequences of India's Falling Sex Ratio?; Nagaland Voters Yet Again Fail to Send a Woman MLA to the 60-Member House; Over 15 Years, India Slides on Key Marker Of Gender Parity
- **Social Justice:** Scheduled Tribes Are India's Poorest People

### *SECTION 3: INDIA AND THE WORLD*

- **International Affairs:** Myanmar Puts off Border Pact with India

## Lead Essay

### The Importance of Anganwadi Workers and their Demands

#### Introduction

It is a well known fact that India is home to a large population of malnourished, stunted, wasted and underweight people, especially women and children. In a joint study undertaken by ASSOCHAM-EY published last year, it was noted that India houses the largest number of malnourished children in the world. The study titled ‘Bridging the gap: Tapping the Agriculture Potential for Optimum Nutrition,’ revealed that towards the end of 2015, 40% of the Indian children were undernourished, about 37% of under-five children were underweight, 39% were stunted, 21% were wasted and 8% were severely acutely malnourished.<sup>1</sup> These conditions not only affect the physical development of children, but their mental growth too, reducing, for instance, their learning capacity, attention span, academic performance, etc.<sup>2</sup>

It is to combat these and other related issues that in 1975 the Government of India launched the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) Scheme. As the ICDS website reads, the scheme represents “one of the world’s largest and unique programmes for early childhood care and development,” symbolising the country’s “commitment to its children and nursing mothers, as a response to the challenge of providing pre-school non-formal education on one hand and breaking the vicious cycle of malnutrition, morbidity, reduced learning capacity and mortality on the other.”<sup>3</sup>

With around 10 crores beneficiaries, the scheme is implemented through a network of 13.55 lakh childcare centres, better known as anganwadis, with the help of nearly 24.5 lakh anganwadi workers (AWWs) and helpers (AWHs), who thus form the key functionaries of the scheme. But despite the immense significance of their labour, several governments have failed to pay heed to their concerns and demands.

The last year and the past few months have witnessed a number of strikes and demonstration undertaken by thousands of AWWs and AWHs, who have been demanding higher pay and better working conditions from the central and different state governments. Since these workers form the backbone of India’s public health system, it is imperative that they receive adequate and timely wages, proper social security benefits, and quality work conditions. The situation on the ground, however, tells a different story.

#### ‘Volunteers’ and ‘Honorary Workers’

One of the fundamental grievances of the workers and helpers is with the way in which the ICDS scheme identifies them. The Government has categorically stated several times that AWWs and AWHs are ‘honorary workers.’ This implies that neither are these workers entitled to minimum wages nor to any social security benefits. In fact, in a 2006 ruling of the Supreme Court, the court held that AWWs do not hold any “civil post” and the Minimum Wages Act is also not applicable to them. They are instead paid meagre “monthly honoraria” as decided by Government from time to time, which is not even indexed for inflation. The last time the honoraria of AWWs and AWHs was increased was in April 2011 – increased by ₹1,500/- & ₹750/- per month, raising it to ₹3000/- & ₹1,500/- per month respectively; for AWWs at Mini-anganwadi centres, it was increased to ₹2,250/- per month in July 2013.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.assochem.org/newsdetail.php?id=6565>

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.unicef.org/nutrition/files/Facts\\_for\\_Life\\_EN\\_010810.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/nutrition/files/Facts_for_Life_EN_010810.pdf)

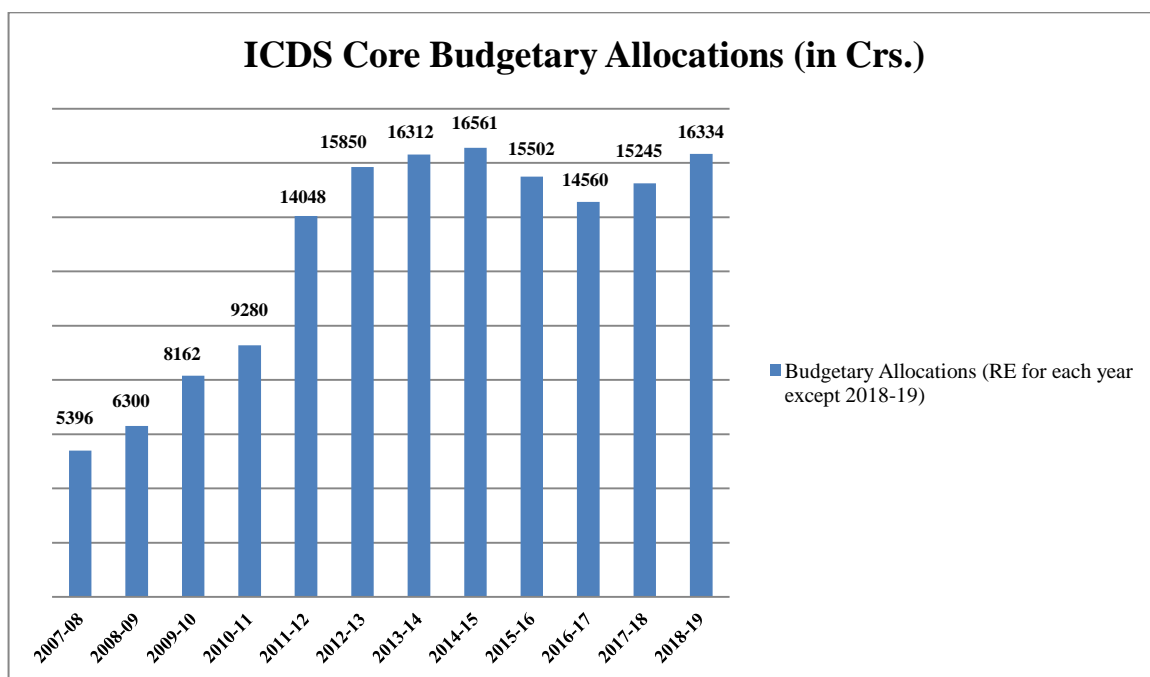
<sup>3</sup> <http://icds-wcd.nic.in/icds.aspx>

<sup>4</sup> <http://164.100.47.190/loksabhaquestions/annex/14/AS109.pdf>

## Lead Essay

What is worse is that even this meagre sum does not often reach the AWWs and AWHs on time. In a survey on the implementation of the ICDS scheme in six states in 2014, carried out by the Centre for Equity Studies, it was found that around one-third of anganwadi workers did not receive their salaries on time, while 40% had to use money from their own pockets funds to ensure the smooth functioning of the anganwadi centres.<sup>5</sup>

This also needs to be contextualised within the wider issue of dismal budgetary allocations for the ICDS scheme, especially since 2015. In the 2018 budget, the Government allocated Rs. 16,334.88 crores for the ICDS core (Anganwadi services) scheme. This is only a 7% increase from the 2017-18 year RE allocation figure of Rs. 15245.19 crore.<sup>6</sup> The picture becomes clearer if we compare the allocation figures on a 12-year scale.



Source: Union Budget, 2018-19 and *Indiaspend*<sup>7</sup>

Post the boost that the scheme received in 2011-12 and the positive increase in subsequent years, in the 2015-16 budget, the allocation saw a 6.39% cut as compared to 2014-15. The worse came in 2016-17, when the funds were further cut by 6.07%, the figure hitting a five-year low. It was increased in 2017-18 by a marginal 4.7% and in 2018-19 by 7.14%. Compare this with the total allocation to the Ministry of Women and Child Development, which increased by 16% from Rs. 21,237 crores in 2017-18 (RE) to Rs. 24,700 crores in 2018-19 (BE).

<sup>5</sup> [https://www.academia.edu/34406474/Progress\\_of\\_Children\\_Under\\_Six\\_POCUS\\_](https://www.academia.edu/34406474/Progress_of_Children_Under_Six_POCUS_)

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.indiabudget.gov.in/ub2018-19/eb/sbe98.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.indiaspend.com/cover-story/in-41-years-as-indias-economy-grew-21-times-infant-mortality-dropped-68-14976>

## Lead Essay

Adding to reduced allocations is the fact that as many as 11 states and four union territories have not announced any change in the additional honoraria, apart from what is disbursed by the central government, paid to AWWs and AWHs helpers since 2015, according to an analysis of central government data by *Indiaspend*.

S. No.	States/UTs	Additional honorarium to AWWs	Additional honorarium to AWHs
1.	Andhra Pradesh	1200	700
2.	Assam	1000	500
3.	Chhattisgarh	1000	500
4.	Dadra and Nagar Haveli	1000	600
5.	Daman and Diu	1000	600
6.	J&K	600	340
7.	Kerala	2000	2000
8.	Lakshadweep	1600	1000
9.	Madhya Pradesh	2000	1000
10.	Manipur	100	50
11.	Odisha	1000	500
12.	Puducherry	600	300
13.	Sikkim	2225	1500
14.	West Bengal	1300	1300
15.	Tripura	2865	1924

Source: Unstarred Question No. 2560, Rajya Sabha, 2015<sup>8</sup>; Unstarred Question No. 790, Rajya Sabha, 2017<sup>9</sup>; and *Indiaspend*<sup>10</sup>

### Poor working conditions

The report of the Centre for Equity Studies also highlighted the fact that with limited time, resources and capacity, AWWs and AWHs seem to be overburdened in most places. Many feel that there is too much work as compared to the

<sup>8</sup> <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1dvWpBfYRfhl9vU7NysnP3ibpAd5ZxoHq/view>

<sup>9</sup> <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1A0Y7ILCqwHhJz0li71ye3JBtLdMsv2yS/view>

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.indiaspend.com/cover-story/nearly-a-third-of-indias-statesuts-have-not-hiked-pay-to-women-who-form-core-of-health-services-55926>

## Lead Essay

inadequate support that they receive. Dipa Sinha, one of the authors of the report, notes that with the supervisors of the anganwadi themselves overburdened with administrative work other than routine stock-taking, maintaining of accounts,

etc., there is little support to workers and helpers to deal with challenges of their daily work. In fact, as of December 2017, out of the total 55,187 posts of supervisors/inspectors, 19318, or 35%, were lying vacant.<sup>11</sup> Further, as on March 2017, 39% of sanctioned positions for Child Development Project Officers –in-charge of supervising the work of the workers and ensuring logistical and coordination support with the health department – were lying vacant.<sup>12</sup>

Dipa Sinha further notes that, in the face of dismal budgetary allocations for the ICDS scheme, many anganwadi centres and schools do not have kitchens while some do not even function out of proper buildings, and medicines, supplementary nutrition, pre-school kits and funds are in short supply. Since the workers and helpers are the face of the programme, they are often blamed by the community for the poor quality of services. Many workers and helpers have claimed that not only are they burdened with the anganwadi affairs but also with extra work such as carrying out public surveys, solving interpersonal problems in the community, supervising quality of drinking water and food, going on inspection tours, etc.<sup>13</sup>

### Way Forward

The AWWs and AWHs form the key functionaries of the ICDS scheme to provide basic healthcare and nutrition to women and children across the country, thus playing a major role in combating issues such as stunting, malnutrition, wasting, anaemia, etc., thereby also helping India achieve some of United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals. A World Bank paper, titled 'India's Undernourished Children: A Call for Reform and Action,' noted that since the capacity of the workers and helpers to mobilise the community to support the ICDS and recruit eligible children are central to quality service delivery, it is necessary that their performance is not constrained by inadequate pay and the pressure of a large and diverse workload.<sup>14</sup>

In this direction, it is essential that the government immediately addresses the concerns of the AWWs and AWHs. In the ongoing protests and demonstrations since last year, some major demands that have been raised include regularisation of anganwadi work, treating the workers and helpers at par with regular government employees, stipulating a minimum salary of Rs. 18,000 per month, retirement pensions, and coverage under Employees' Provident Fund organisation (EPFO) and the state insurers Employees' State Insurance Corporation (ESIC) as per the recommendations of the 45<sup>th</sup> Indian Labour Conference. Moreover, the vacant positions of supervisors and Child Development Project Officers need to be filled up with immediate effect.

\*\*\*\*

### Prepared by:

Manas Raturi

<sup>11</sup> <http://164.100.47.190/loksabhaquestions/annex/13/AU1298.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.cprindia.org/research/reports/budget-brief-2018-19-integrated-child-development-services-icds>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.pressreader.com/india/the-times-of-india-mumbai-edition/20171003/281638190407924>

<sup>14</sup> [http://siteresources.worldbank.org/SOUTHASIAEXT/Resources/223546-1147272668285/undernourished\\_chapter\\_2.pdf](http://siteresources.worldbank.org/SOUTHASIAEXT/Resources/223546-1147272668285/undernourished_chapter_2.pdf)

## Headline

### **Fugitive Economic Offenders Bill needs tweaks: Analysts**

(Jayshree P. Upadhyay, *Livemint*, March 05, 2018)

The Union Cabinet recently approved the proposal of the Ministry of Finance to introduce the Fugitive Economic Offenders Bill, 2018 in Parliament. The aim of the Bill is to lay down measures to deter economic offenders from evading the process of law by remaining outside the jurisdiction of Indian courts. However, experts say that flaws in the proposed legislation could be used to challenge the law in courts. Some of the concerns around the proposed law include blanket ban on offenders contesting the confiscation of their properties through civil suits, sale of property without trial, deterioration in value of seized assets and finding suitable buyers.

Read more: <http://www.livemint.com/Companies/fjzxN4pbr0JSTPM2tdBSjL/Fugitive-Economic-Offenders-Bill-needs-tweaks-Analysts.html>

Date Accessed: 05.03.2018

## Governance and Development

### GOVERNANCE

#### Delhi: After Month's Delay, Ration Shops get Iris Machines

(Somya Lakhani, *The Indian Express*, March 04, 2018)

After a delay of over a month, the iris machines have been delivered across Fair Price Shops (FPS) in Delhi towards the end of February. The iris machines which are an alternative to electronic Point of Sale (e-PoS) machines in cases where biometrics do not match were made operational across the city from March 1. Regarding the Aadhar-linked e-PoS and iris machines, a government official said, "The government did not do away with the biometrics system altogether. It had said that the mechanism would be put on hold. The execution was at its pilot stage and the objective was to rectify the errors. The machines have come as part of that pilot project of the food department. But we will ensure the errors are done away with." As per Saurabh Gupta, secretary, Sarkari Ration Dealer Sangh, "We can use iris machines after three biometric trials on e-PoS machines fail. If iris scan doesn't work after two trials, we go for OTP (one time password) generation. Network is a big problem with the iris machines, just as it is with e-PoS machines. It takes very long. But at least we are not sending anyone home empty-handed."

Read More: <http://indianexpress.com/article/cities/delhi/delhi-after-months-delay-ration-shops-get-iris-machines-5085111/>

Date Accessed: 04.03.2018

### HEALTH

#### In 2015-16, Anganwadis Served more Children than a Decade Ago but Achieved Limited Outcomes

(Bhasker Tripathi, *Indiaspend*, March 02, 2018)

As per a December 2017 evaluation paper reviewing the growth of the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) scheme, during 2015-16 the programme failed to achieve desired outcomes like changing feeding behaviour of a family and improving the quality of preschool education. The paper titled 'India's Integrated Child Development Services Scheme: Challenges for Scaling Up' concludes that whereas, on paper, the scheme is excellent and contextually relevant, its implementation has not been accorded adequate priority, "perhaps due to weak institutional capacity and/or a lack of political will." Data also shows that during 2015-16, nearly 40% children received immunisation, 39.7% received health check-ups, and 38.2% received early childhood care/pre-school services, up from 20%, 15.8% and 22.8% respectively a decade ago.

Read more: <http://www.indiaspend.com/cover-story/in-2015-16-creches-served-more-children-than-a-decade-ago-but-achieved-limited-outcomes-59558>

Date Accessed: 03.03.2018



## Society

### **GENDER**

#### **What are the Consequences of India's Falling Sex Ratio?**

(Priyanka Pulla, *The Hindu*, March 03, 2018)

According to recent report from the NITI Aayog, the sex ratio at birth (SRB) nationwide dropped from 906 in 2012-2014 to 900 in 2013-2015. In all, 17 of 21 large Indian States saw a drop in the SRB, with Gujarat performing the worst, declining 53 points. While the NITI Aayog report used data up to 2013-15, a newer data from India's Sample Registration System show the SRB fell even further in 2014-2016, from 900 to 898. Its SRB is far lower than 952 because of the preference for the male child. This means we are killing girl children in the womb. As on today, around 63 million girls are estimated to be 'missing' in India because of such actions.

Read More: <http://www.thehindu.com/sci-tech/health/what-are-the-consequences-of-indias-falling-sex-ratio/article22920346.ece>

Date Accessed: March 4, 2018

#### **Nagaland Voters Yet Again Fail to Send a Woman MLA to the 60-Member House**

(The Wire Staff, *The Wire*, March 03, 2018)

The recently held Assembly elections in Nagaland were particularly important for Naga women. Last year, the state was rocked with large-scale protests opposing women's demand for 33% reservation in urban local body elections on the grounds of non-interference with customary laws. The Naga Mothers' Association (NMA), the women's body demanding reservations, was forced to withdraw its petition. This time, five women candidates were in the fray among the 196 contestants fighting the assembly polls; but none of them succeeded. The last elected woman representative from Nagaland was Rano M. Shaiza, who became a Lok Sabha member from the state in 1977.

Read more: <https://thewire.in/229331/nagaland-voters-yet-again-fail-to-send-a-woman-mla-to-the-60-member-house/>

Date Accessed: 04.03.2018

#### **Over 15 Years, India Slides on Key Marker of Gender Parity**

(Charu Bahri, *IndiaSpend*, March 03, 2018)

Today, girls in India are almost as likely as boys to attend secondary and senior secondary school and college. This was one of the key targets, 'Gender equality' under the United Nations Millennium Development Goal for 2015. However, India's level of progress towards the sustainable development goal on gender equality also spells out other pro-women targets, such as universalising access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights which is based on the maternal mortality rate, doesn't seem to be going in the right direction: While the maternal mortality rate, currently still vary significantly across India typically with women in the south being better off, violence against women rose 83% in India in the last decade. So, while Indian women now have much better access to education, they have a long way to go in terms of achieving real freedoms.

Read More: <http://www.indiaspend.com/cover-story/over-15-years-india-slides-on-key-marker-of-gender-parity-99592>

Date Accessed: 04.03.2018

### **SOCIAL JUSTICE**

#### **Scheduled Tribes Are India's Poorest People**

(Swagata Yadavar, *IndiaSpend*, February 28, 2018)

Scheduled tribes comprise 8% of India's population—104 million as per the 2011 Census—yet, they account for one-fourth of its population living in the poorest wealth quintile, according to a World Bank brief, 'India's Adivasis.' They are India's poorest people, with five of 10 falling in the lowest wealth bracket, according to the National Family Health Survey 2015-16 (NFHS-4) that shows that 45.9% of scheduled tribe members were in the lowest wealth bracket compared to 26.6% of scheduled castes, 18.3% of other backward caste, 9.7% of other castes and 25.3% of those whose caste is unknown. Further, social exclusion prevents these scheduled castes and scheduled tribes from accessing government health services and programmes and this worsens their health and nutritional status. As a result, in spite there been a decline of one-third in their poverty rate between 1983 and 2011, poverty rates remain high because of their low starting point

Read More: <http://www.indiaspend.com/cover-story/scheduled-tribes-are-indias-poorest-people-18413>

Date Accessed: 04.03.2018

## India and the World

### *INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS*

#### **Myanmar Puts off Border Pact with India**

(Vijaita Singh, *The Hindu*, March 04, 2018)

Citing “domestic compulsions,” Myanmar has indefinitely deferred signing an agreement with India which deals with streamlining the land border crossing to enhance economic interaction by ensuring free movement of people of the two countries. The agreement, approved by the Union Cabinet on January 3, has been deferred by Myanmar twice in the past seven months. In the agreement, the Centre has asked four states sharing an unfenced border of 1,643 km with Myanmar – Arunachal Pradesh (520 km), Nagaland (215 km), Manipur (398 km) and Mizoram (510 km) – to distribute “border passes” to all the residents living within 16 km from the border.

Read More: <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/myanmar-puts-off-border-pact-with-india/article22925706.ece>

Date Accessed: 05.03.2018

Issue Coordinator: Manas Raturi

Connect with RGICS at: [info@rgics.org](mailto:info@rgics.org); [www.rgics.org](http://www.rgics.org)



**Disclaimer:** This document has been prepared by the RGICS staff and has not been seen by the Trustees of the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation (RGF). Further, the views presented in this document in no way reflect the views of the RGF Trustees.

To unsubscribe, please write to us at [info@rgics.org](mailto:info@rgics.org)