



# CURRENT AFFAIRS



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## ANGANWADI CENTRES

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THIS ARTICLE COVERS 'DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS' AND THE TOPIC DETAILS OF "ANGANWADI CENTRES" THIS TOPIC IS RELEVANT IN THE "GOVERNANCE" SECTION OF THE UPSC CSE EXAM.

**UPSC MAINS GS2 Syllabus:** Issues relating to Poverty and Hunger, Welfare schemes

### WHY IN THE NEWS?

Andhra Pradesh's anganwadi workers are on strike in protest of their pay and benefits. The protesting Anganwadi staff and assistants have been subject to legal action by the State government under the Essential Services and Maintenance Act (ESMA), 1971.

### ABOUT ICDS SCHEME

- The Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) initiative is the Government of India's flagship programme dedicated to fostering the holistic development of children under the age of six, pregnant women, and breastfeeding mothers.
- ICDS, founded in 1975, represents a holistic strategy to meet the complex needs of early children development, maternal health, and nutrition.
- The ICDS scheme's key goals include improving children's nutritional and health status, lowering infant and maternal mortality rates, and promoting early children's learning and cognitive development.
- The concept acknowledges the crucial role of the first six years in forming a child's physical, cognitive, and socio-emotional development, setting the groundwork for their future well-being.

# Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) Scheme

PLUTUS  
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Serving Children of 0-6 years and Pregnant & Lactating Mothers



## ANGANWADI CENTRES

- The **anganwadi centres**, which are administered under the Integrated Child Development Services system, are the village's first point of contact for nutrition, health, and early learning.
- Anganwadis are centres for early childhood care and education (ECCE). They additionally offer basic health-care services in Indian villages. It is part of India's public healthcare system.
- **Anganwadi staff and helpers**, who are generally local women, play an important role in service delivery and community reform. The ICDS scheme encourages participation from the community by including local leaders and volunteers in service planning and monitoring, resulting in a community-driven project.

## IMPORTANCE OF ANGANWADI SCHEMES

### • HOLISTIC DEVELOPMENT

Anganwadi centers serve as community hubs that offer a range of essential services, including supplementary nutrition, immunization, health check-ups, and pre-school education. By addressing multiple aspects of development, the scheme contributes to the holistic growth of children under six years of age.

### • NUTRITIONAL SUPPORT

One of the primary objectives of the Anganwadi Scheme is to combat malnutrition. The centers provide supplementary nutrition to pregnant women, lactating mothers, and young children, ensuring they receive the essential nutrients for optimal growth and development.

### • MATERNAL AND CHILD HEALTH

Through regular health check-ups, immunization programs, and antenatal care, Anganwadi workers play a vital role in monitoring the health of pregnant women and children. This proactive approach helps in reducing infant and maternal mortality rates and addressing health-related concerns at an early stage.

### • EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

The Anganwadi Scheme places a strong emphasis on early childhood education. Anganwadi workers conduct pre-school activities that focus on cognitive, social, and emotional development, preparing

children for formal schooling. This early stimulation is crucial for laying a strong foundation for lifelong learning.

- **POVERTY ALLEVIATION**

By addressing the health and nutritional needs of vulnerable populations, particularly in rural and marginalized areas, the Anganwadi Scheme contributes to poverty alleviation. Healthy and well-nourished children are more likely to perform better in school and, later in life, break the cycle of poverty.

- **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

The scheme promotes community participation and empowers local communities. Anganwadi workers, often recruited from the local community, act as a bridge between the government and the community, facilitating awareness and participation in health and development programs.

- **WOMEN EMPOWERMENT**

Anganwadi workers, predominantly women, are provided with employment opportunities through the scheme. This not only addresses the issue of unemployment but also empowers women by providing them with a platform to contribute meaningfully to the well-being of their communities.

## **CHALLENGES FACED BY ANGANWADI CENTRES**

- **NUTRITION AND HEALTH CHALLENGES**

Ensuring regular and adequate supply of nutritious meals and supplements is a persistent challenge. Supply chain issues, delays in procurement, and lack of awareness among beneficiaries about the importance of nutrition contribute to difficulties in achieving desired health outcomes.

- **INFRASTRUCTURE AND RESOURCE CONSTRAINTS**

Many Anganwadi centers operate in inadequate or substandard facilities, lacking proper infrastructure. Insufficient space, lack of amenities, and inadequate equipment hinder the quality of services provided. Limited resources, including funds and materials, often compromise the centers' ability to function optimally.

- **QUALITY OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION**

While Anganwadi centers are meant to provide pre-school education, the quality of early childhood education can vary. Insufficient training for Anganwadi workers in educational methodologies, lack of educational resources, and limited focus on skill development can affect the learning outcomes of children.

- **SHORTAGE OF HUMAN RESOURCES**

Anganwadi workers and helpers, who are pivotal to the functioning of these centers, often face challenges such as understaffing and inadequate training. The workload can be overwhelming, making it difficult for them to deliver services effectively. Additionally, there may be a lack of qualified personnel to handle specialized tasks like early childhood education.

- **COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION AND AWARENESS**

Limited community involvement and awareness about the services offered by Anganwadi centers pose a challenge. Mobilizing communities to actively engage with the centers and understand the importance of early childhood education, health check-ups, and nutrition remains a continuous struggle.

- **MONITORING AND EVALUATION**

There is a need for robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to assess the impact and effectiveness of Anganwadi services. Insufficient data collection, monitoring, and evaluation processes may hinder the ability to identify gaps and make informed policy decisions for improvement.

- **TECHNOLOGICAL INTEGRATION**

The lack of technological integration in managing data, monitoring services, and communication hampers the efficiency of Anganwadi operations. Introducing technology-driven solutions could enhance record-keeping, reporting, and overall management of the centers.

## REMEDIES TO DEAL WITH ISSUES IN ANGANWADI CENTRES

- **INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENT**

Invest in upgrading the infrastructure of Anganwadi centers, ensuring they have adequate space, amenities, and necessary equipment for effective service delivery.

- **TECHNOLOGICAL INTEGRATION**

Introduce technology-driven solutions for record-keeping, reporting, and communication. Implement digital tools for data management, attendance tracking, and resource allocation.

- **HUMAN RESOURCE STRENGTHENING**

Recruit and train additional staff to address understaffing. Provide regular training programs for Anganwadi workers and helpers, focusing on early childhood education, nutrition, and healthcare.

- **CAPACITY BUILDING FOR WOMEN EMPOWERMENT**

Implement programs that focus on empowering women within the community. Provide skill development and training opportunities for women to actively participate in the management and decision-making processes of the centers.

- **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND AWARENESS**

Conduct community awareness programs to educate parents and caregivers about the importance of Anganwadi services. Encourage active participation and involvement in monitoring and supporting the centers.

- **MONITORING AND EVALUATION MECHANISMS**

Establish robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to track the performance of Anganwadi centers. Implement data-driven decision-making processes for timely identification of issues and informed policy decisions.

## PRELIMS PRACTICE QUESTION

### Q1) Consider the following statements regarding the ICDS scheme

- 1) 0 to 5 years age group is the primarily target age group under ICDS scheme
- 2) Elementary education is provided by the Anganwadi centers under the ICDS scheme

Which of the following statements given above is/are correct?

1. a) 1 only
2. b) 2 only
3. c) Both 1 and 2
4. d) Neither 1 nor 2

**ANSWER: A**

### Q2) What is the main objective of the ICDS scheme regarding maternal health?

- 1) To provide prenatal care
- 2) To promote family planning
- 3) To reduce maternal mortality

Which of the following statements given above is/are correct?

1. a) 1 only
2. b) 2 and 3
3. c) 1 and 3
4. d) 1,2 and 3

**ANSWER: D**

**MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION**

**Q1) Assess the impact of the ICDS scheme on reducing malnutrition among children in India. Discuss the key strategies employed by the program and analyze the effectiveness of these interventions in addressing nutritional challenges.**

**Q2) Explore the socio-economic impact of the ICDS scheme on women in local communities. Assess how the involvement of women in Anganwadi centers contributes to their empowerment and discuss any challenges or barriers that may hinder this process.**

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