

Development of Women and Children

43. "Empowerment of Women" is now being considered as one of the major objectives. Suitable strategies have been adopted to ensure that benefits of development from different sectors do not bypass women and children. The strategies adopted for empowering women has been through employment and economic independence, education and training, health and nutrition cover, welfare services (support) and legal safeguards besides implementation of innovative programmes. A sum of Rs.1026 crore has been provided for various welfare schemes for women and children in 1997-98 (RE).

44. The on-going programme of STEP (Support to Training and Employment Programme) has given benefit to about 2.58 lakh women by January 1997. A budget provision of Rs.16 crore has been made for STEP during 1997-98 (RE).

45. The scheme, Employment and Income Generating Training-cum Production Centers funded by the NORAD (Norwegian Agency for International Development) to train women belonging to weaker sections of the society, extends financial assistance to public sector undertakings/corporations/autonomous bodies/voluntary organisations to train women in non-traditional sectors like electronics, electrical watch manufacturing, computer programming, printing and binding, garments making, tourism, bakeries and confectioneries, etc. A sum of Rs.17 crore has been provided during 1997-98 (RE) under the scheme of training-cum-production centers for destitute women.

46. "Rashtriya Mahila Kosh" set up in March 1993 as a national instrument for extending credit needs

of poor women in the informal sector, has sanctioned credit worth Rs.40 crore out of which an amount of Rs.28 crore has been released upto September 1997 to benefit 217846 women.

47. The "Mahila Samridhi Yojana" launched in October 1993, aims to promote thrift among rural women and to empower them with control over their household assets. Upto March 1997, a total of about 246 lakh women have been opened accounts with a total deposit of Rs.265 crore. It is proposed to revamp the scheme during 1997-98. A sum of Rs.39 crore has been provided in 1997-98 (RE).

48. A new scheme "Balika Samaridhi Yojana" has been launched on October 2, 1997. Under this scheme, the mother of a girl child born on or after August 15, 1997 in a family below the poverty line in rural and urban areas will be given a grant of Rs.500/-. Further, a scholarship will be given for education of the girl child when she attends school.

49. For holistic child development, Integrated Child Development Services Scheme (ICDS), the widely acclaimed and unique programme provides an integrated package of services comprising supplementary nutrition, immunisation, health check-up and referral services, pre-school non-formal education and health to children below six years. Started in 1975-76 with 33 projects, the scheme has expanded to 5614 ICDS projects covering 201 lakh children and 38 lakh mothers. Apart from ICDS, the other programmes for child development includes Early Childhood Education, Balwadi Nutrition Programme, Day Care Centres for children below 5 years and belonging to the weaker sections of society.