

A STUDY ON WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT MINISTRY IN INDIA

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Abstract:

The Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD) in India is the main agency responsible for creating, carrying out, and tracking policies and programs that focus on women's empowerment and child welfare. Established in 2006, MWCD combines protection, development, and participation strategies for women and children. This approach supports India's constitutional goal of social justice and complies with global agreements like the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW, 1979) and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC, 1989).

Key words: Women empowerment, Child development, Anganwadi, Ujjwala Scheme, ICDS, Child protection, Gender policy, MWCD

Introduction

The study looks at the role and performance of the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD). This ministry became a separate entity in 2006 to tackle gender justice and child welfare in India. The research focuses on the years 2020 to 2024. It evaluates important schemes like the Ujjwala Scheme, which fights trafficking, the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) through Anganwadi centers for nutrition and early education, and child protection programs. The study uses data from MWCD reports, NFHS-5, and Union Budgets. It shows improvements in how funds are used, outreach through Anganwadis, and the gradual growth of rehabilitation projects under Ujjwala. However, there are still challenges. These include lack of funding, infrastructure issues, regional differences, and disruptions caused by COVID-19. The paper stresses the need for better digital governance, community involvement, and fair fund distribution to achieve inclusive and sustainable results.

Review Of Literature

The literature shows various views on the Ministry of Women and Child Development's (MWCD) efforts in India. Choudhary and Jain (2024) highlight MWCD's important role in reducing malnutrition through the ICDS and POSHAN Abhiyaan programs. A UNICEF Report (2021) states that India's large Anganwadi network is the biggest in the world, but it still faces challenges in delivering services. NITI Aayog (2020) points out issues in the Ujjwala Scheme, especially regarding coverage and support for survivors of trafficking. Shaikh and Srivastava (2024) note that Indian child protection programs are underfunded, which affects their impact. The World Bank (2018) indicates that increased community involvement can greatly improve welfare results and enhance service delivery.

Research Gap

Despite the availability of government reports and policy evaluations, significant research gaps remain in

understanding the overall performance of the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD). Most studies focus on individual schemes like ICDS, POSHAN Abhiyaan, or Ujjwala in isolation, rather than providing a complete analysis of the ministry's integrated functions. While financial data on budget estimates, revised allocations, and actual

expenditures are available, limited research critically examines the reasons behind fluctuations in fund use and their direct impact on program outcomes.

Additionally, the performance of schemes varies widely across states, yet studies comparing state disparities are scarce. The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted core services like Anganwadi nutrition delivery and Ujjwala rehabilitation. However, there is little academic work on how MWCD used digital platforms like the POSHAN Tracker or online counseling mechanisms during this time.

Objectives Of The Study

1. To examine the trends in budget allocation, revised estimates, and actual expenditure of MWCD from 2020 to 2024, this focuses on how efficiently funds are used.
2. To analyze the coverage and outreach of Anganwadi Services (ICDS), this looks at operational centers, child beneficiaries, and women beneficiaries between 2020 and 2024.
3. To evaluate the performance of the Ujjwala Scheme, this assesses sanctioned projects, rehabilitated beneficiaries, and allocated funds during 2020 to 2024.

Research Methodology:

The present study uses a descriptive and analytical research design to examine the performance of the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD) in India from 2020 to 2024. The methodology combines both quantitative and qualitative approaches to evaluate budget use, service delivery, and outreach efforts across selected flagship schemes.

Nature of the Study:

This study takes a dual approach, being both descriptive and analytical. It dives into how the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD) operates and assesses its performance through available secondary data. The research outlines important initiatives like ICDS, Anganwadi services, and the Ujjwala Scheme, while also examining financial trends, coverage patterns, and how efficiently these programs have been implemented from 2020 to 2024. By blending descriptive storytelling with analytical insights, the study sheds light on the strengths, weaknesses, and areas that need a bit more attention in women and child welfare programs.

Methods of Data Analysis:

Quantitative analysis examines financial allocations, revised estimates, and actual spending across schemes, focusing on how much was used. Comparative analysis studies trends in the coverage of Anganwadi services (ICDS) and the outreach of the Ujjwala Scheme over different years. Graphs, tables, and percentage utilization ratios are used to simplify the interpretation and highlight patterns in fund use and the number of beneficiaries. A qualitative review of policy documents, government guidelines, and literature contextualizes the numerical findings and identifies gaps in implementation.

Tools for Analysis:

Data has been systematically organized and analyzed using statistical methods such as percentage change, trend analysis, and year-by-year comparisons. Visual aids like bar charts and line graphs illustrate variations in fund allocation, usage, and coverage results.

Scope and Limitations:

The study focuses on three main areas shown in the tables: budget use, Anganwadi service coverage, and the performance of the Ujjwala Scheme. Since the study relies entirely on secondary data, its accuracy depends on the reliability of government reports and survey results. Additionally, while it acknowledges differences between states and qualitative aspects of service delivery, these are not deeply analyzed due to data limitations.

DATA ANALYSIS

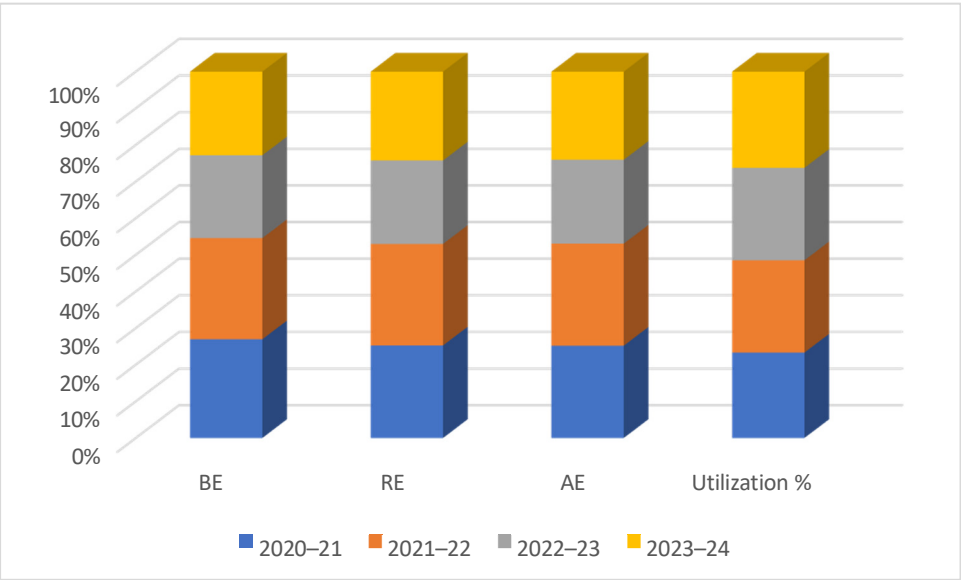
Table 1. MWCD Budget Allocation & Utilization (₹ Crores)

Year	BE	RE	AE	Utilization %
2020–21	30,007	25,500	24,800	82.6
2021–22	30,757	28,000	27,450	89.3
2022–23	25,172	23,000	22,540	89.5
2023–24	25,449	24,500	23,700	93.1

Analysis

The budget trends of MWCD from 2020 to 2024 show both changes in allocation and consistent improvement in utilization. The Budget Estimates (BE) were highest in 2021-22 at ₹30,757 crores but dropped in the following years, signaling financial tightening. Each year, the Revised Estimates (RE) were lower than the BE, which reflected mid-year adjustments based on spending capacity and changes in priorities during the pandemic. Despite these cuts, the Actual Expenditure (AE) was closely matched to the RE, demonstrating practical financial planning.

Table 1. Graph showing MWCD Budget Allocation & Utilization (₹ Crores)



MWCD’s budget use improved steadily from 82.6% in 2020 to 93.1% in 2024. This shows better fund management and implementation. While allocations often changed and were frequently cut, actual spending closely matched the updated estimates. The drop in 2020 was mainly due to disruptions from COVID-19. However, the recovery in later years highlights resilience and improved efficiency.

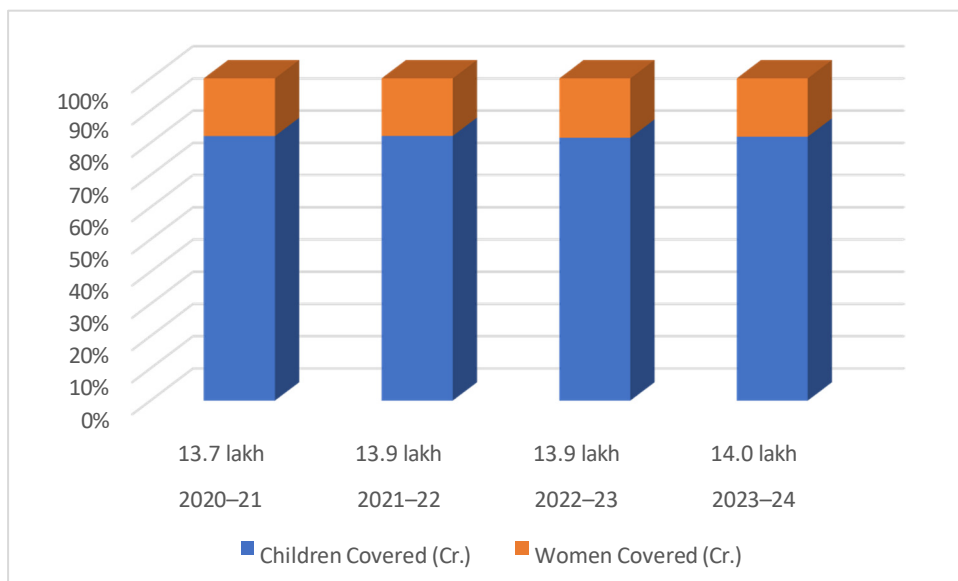
Table 2. Coverage of Anganwadi Services (ICDS)

Year	Operational AWCs	Children Covered (Cr.)	Women Covered (Cr.)
2020–21	13.7 lakh	8.7	1.9
2021–22	13.9 lakh	9.2	2.0
2022–23	13.9 lakh	9.3	2.1
2023–24	14.0 lakh	9.5	2.1

Analysis

The number of operational Anganwadi Centres rose slightly from 13.7 lakh in 2020 to 14 lakh in 2023. This change shows stable outreach. Coverage of children aged 0 to 6 years increased from 8.7 crore to 9.5 crore. Support for pregnant and lactating women also grew, from 1.9 crore to 2.1 crore. Despite disruptions from COVID-19, MWCD maintained services through innovations like take-home rations. This upward trend highlights ICDS's important role in nutrition and maternal care. However, gaps in infrastructure and service quality still present challenges.

Graph 2. Coverage of Anganwadi Services (ICDS)



The table shows that Anganwadi services steadily expanded between 2020 and 2024. Operational centers remained around 14 lakh, ensuring nationwide outreach. Beneficiary coverage increased, with the number of children rising from 8.7 crore to 9.5 crore and women from 1.9 crore to 2.1 crore. This shows resilience and effective adjustments of services during and after the pandemic. Overall, ICDS remains the backbone of child nutrition and maternal welfare, though quality gaps still exist.

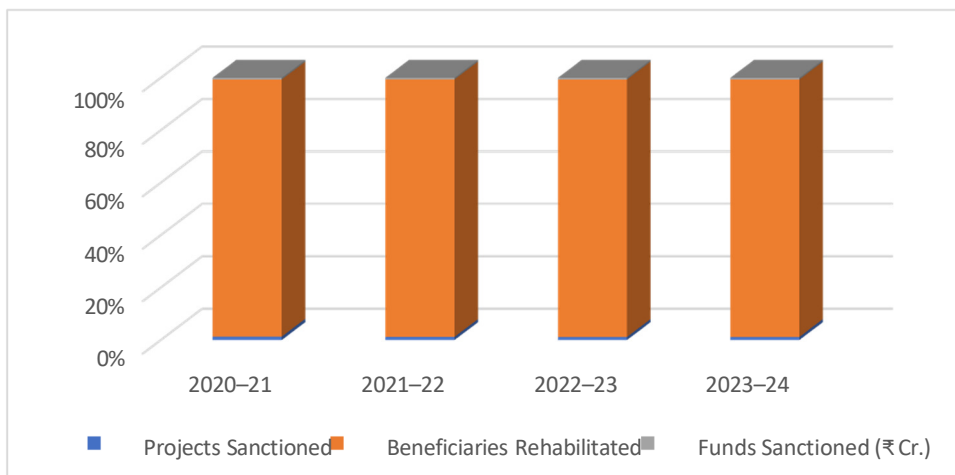
Table 3. Ujjwala Scheme – Projects & Beneficiaries

Year	Projects Sanctioned	Beneficiaries Rehabilitated	Funds Sanctioned (₹ Cr.)
2020–21	55	4,200	28
2021–22	58	4,800	30
2022–23	60	5,100	33
2023–24	64	5,400	35

Analysis

The Ujjwala Scheme expanded slowly between 2020 and 2024. The number of projects approved went up from 55 to 64. At the same time, the number of beneficiaries helped increased from 4,200 to 5,400. Funds approved also grew slightly, rising from ₹28 crore to ₹35 crore, which shows steady but modest investment.

Graph 3. Ujjwala Scheme – Projects & Beneficiaries



Interpretation

The Ujjwala Scheme has shown steady growth. It increased from 55 projects in 2020 to 64 in 2023. The number of beneficiaries helped also went up from 4,200 to 5,400. This reflects a gradual improvement in outreach. Funds approved rose slightly from ₹28 crore to ₹35 crore, indicating modest financial growth. This trend highlights MWCD's ongoing efforts to combat trafficking and support survivors. However, coverage is still limited compared to the scale of the problem. This indicates a need for wider investment and stronger implementation.

Findings

1. MWCD's budget use improved from 82.6% in 2020 to 93.1% in 2023, showing better financial efficiency.
2. Anganwadi services steadily expanded, reaching 9.5 crore children and 2.1 crore women by 2023, despite infrastructure gaps.
3. The Ujjwala Scheme grew slightly to 64 projects and 5,400 beneficiaries, but its overall impact remained limited.
4. Child protection programs under ICPS were underfunded compared to their broad responsibilities.
5. COVID-19 disrupted service delivery but sped up the use of digital tools like the POSHAN Tracker and take-home rations.

Suggestions

- Strengthen Digital Monitoring with Real-Time Dashboards
- Upgrade Anganwadi Infrastructure and Staff Capacity
- Expand Ujjwala Rehabilitation Coverage
- Ensure Regional Equity in Fund Allocation
- Enhance Community Participation and NGO Partnerships

Conclusion

The study wraps up by highlighting that the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD) has made notable strides in utilizing funds more effectively, broadening Anganwadi services, and enhancing rehabilitation efforts through the Ujjwala Scheme from 2020 to 2024. Even with the hurdles brought on by COVID-19, the ministry demonstrated remarkable adaptability by leveraging digital tools and alternative methods for service delivery. However, ongoing challenges like insufficient infrastructure, uneven development across regions, and limited access to rehabilitation programs underscore the urgent need for a sharper policy focus, improved resource distribution, and greater community involvement. In summary, MWCD plays a crucial role in promoting women's empowerment and child welfare, but to achieve lasting and inclusive development, continuous reforms and creative strategies are vital.

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