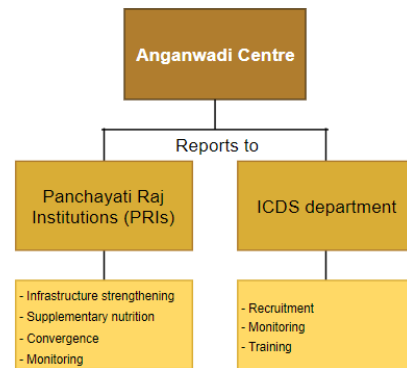


Convergent Anganwadi Management, Kerala

In Kerala, Anganwadis have a dual administration process. The ICDS department as well as Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) oversee its functioning. PRIs oversee infrastructure, supplementary nutrition, monitoring of the work of the Anganwadi Worker (AWW)/Anganwadi Helper (AWH), and the convergence between different line departments in the Anganwadis. A nutrition mix called the Amrutham for children of age group 6 months to 3 years is prepared by Kudumbashree. The ICDS supervisor is provided funds by PRIs to procure raw material for take-home rations. PRIs monitor facilities provided in the AWC and ensure convergence between different departments like health, water and sanitation through various committees and meetings. The ICDS department is responsible for overall monitoring, recruitment, and trainings of the AWW and the AWH.



Decentralising powers to PRI

In Kerala, powers for running the AWC have been decentralised to panchayats to ensure effective functioning. PRIs are involved in various aspects of working and monitoring of the AWC, including:

- Infrastructure strengthening:** PRIs are primarily responsible for infrastructure strengthening of the AWC. Every year, a budget is allocated to the AWCs by PRIs. To decide development priorities in its area, a gram sabha is organised before budget allocation. Participation from community members, various departments, PRIs and other important stakeholders is ensured in these meetings through community mobilisation. In these meetings, discussion takes place on the needs of the AWC. Apart from the gram sabha, the grading process is undertaken by the ICDS supervisor annually. AWCs are sorted into four ranking categories by the ICDS supervisor based on various indicators, like infrastructure, efficiency of workers, number of beneficiaries, quality of pre-school education, safe water and sanitation facilities and community participation, immunisation status of children, Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) work and nutrition status of children. Once the grading is done, the supervisor informs the PRI committee about the gaps in infrastructure, and PRIs allot the budget for its better upkeep. The AWCs, which have excellent infrastructure, can also become model AWCs—a source of pride for the concerned PRI. To ensure sufficient funds, the ward members, along with the AWW, engage in fundraising activities with the community and private and public sector organisations in their area.
- Supplementary nutrition:** PRIs are primarily responsible for supplementary nutrition to beneficiaries. In addition to funds provided by the ICDS department, each PRI makes its own contribution. The ICDS supervisor procures raw materials for take-home rations. PRIs also decide menus for the AWC in their area, to cater to the need and palate of the population.
- Supervision and monitoring:** Monitoring is done through frequent visits of the concerned ward member to different AWCs. Anganwadi-level monitoring committee meetings are conducted once in three months, under the leadership of the PRI chairperson. In this

meeting, well-wishers of the AWC, AWW, parents and health staff discuss issues and needs of the AWC and monitor its working. A PRI member is also in the panel for recruitment of AWWs.

Community Participation

Community participation is important for effective functioning of the AWC. It is done to generate awareness, engage with the community and inculcate a feeling of ownership among them. Various ways to ensure their participation are:

- **Social audits:** Kerala is the first state to have conducted social audits for AWC. A social audit committee is formed comprising of PRI members, Kudumbashree members, parents, adolescent girls and an ASHA worker. This committee's members are trained to conduct social audits across a hundred indicators like physical infrastructure, data recording, growth monitoring and ECCE, among others. The report drafted by this committee is presented and discussed in the gram sabha. A consolidated report from each panchayat is submitted to the ICDS department. A gap analysis is done, and an implementation plan devised to make amends in different areas on priority basis. Social audits ensure community participation and increase the uptake of services due to awareness generation.
- **ECCE training involving community:** Community members are trained to become master trainers to ensure their participation in the functioning of the AWC. Usually, a retired schoolteacher or any interested community member is trained in the component of pre-school education for the Anganwadi children. These master trainers, in turn, train the AWW and AWH in their location, and provide refresher training, thus acting as local resource groups. This process ensures frequent trainings for the workers in a resource-effective manner.

Innovations in AWCs

In Kerala, the AWC pilots many innovations depending on their need, capacity and financial ability. Some of these are:

- **Third generation (3G) AWC:** 3G AWC enables interaction and learning between three generations—i.e. elderly, adolescents/young mothers and children. AWCs that are infrastructurally fully equipped are selected to become 3G AWCs. The elders in the locality spend time in the AWC. They also hold cooking and sewing classes for adolescent girls. A basic health check-up is also conducted for elders in the AWC.
- **Interventions in tribal areas:** Children in tribal areas suffer from malnourishment. To prevent this, many interventions are piloted in tribal areas. A community kitchen has been initiated in the tribal location of Palakkad in Attapady to ensure hot cooked meals are provided for beneficiaries like children, adolescent girls and the differently-abled. A special tracking of the vulnerable children in the tribal area of Attapady was also done to prevent infant mortality. Regular height and weight monitoring of children from 0 to 5 years was conducted, and severely malnourished children were identified. These children were provided special care and supervision, and convergence was ensured with the health and social justice department for the same.
- **Nutrition mix fortification:** To combat anaemia among children, the nutrition mix produced by the Kudumbashree women's groups for children in the 6 months to 3 years age group is being fortified with micronutrients. The programme was first piloted by the World Food Programme and is now being scaled across the state. Kudumbashree staff

producing the nutrition mix have been trained in the process and are monitored by the ICDS supervisor. Along with supply of fortified nutrition mix, mothers are mobilised by the AWW through various interactive sessions. Using flip books and colour-coded flyers, they are informed about the importance of the nutrition mix, age-appropriate food and hygienic practices for the health of the children to induce behaviour change among them.

- **Teacher bank:** To prevent vacancy of the AWW and the AWH positions, a concept of teacher bank has been initiated by the ICDS department. Individuals with requisite qualification, who are interested to work in the AWC, are encouraged to apply for the position. These candidates are recruited and deployed based on need and availability in an AWC. This pool is also useful to fill temporary vacancies in case of maternity leave of the AWW or the AWH.

Career trajectory for the AWW and the AWH

Kerala has instituted a system of in-job promotions, rewards and recognition to enhance the motivation level of the AWW and the AWH. These incentives ensure that they have a job progression to look forward to in their service.

- **Promotions:** Permanent AWWs who are graduates and have 10 years of experience can become ICDS supervisors, on qualifying a public service commission exam (supervisor exam). Around 40 per cent supervisors are former AWWs. Similarly, an AWH who has passed class X, and has 10 years of experience, can become an AWW.
- **Rewards and recognition:** Every year, awards are given to high-performing AWCs, AWWs and AWHs in each district. Indicators on which the performance of an AWW and an AWH are evaluated are job responsibility, social interaction, percentage of immunisation growth and data registers, among others. A form is filled by the AWW and the AWH, corresponding to these indicators. The supervisor evaluates these forms and submits it to the Child Development Project Officer (CDPO), who visits all AWCs to confirm performance evaluation. The CDPO's report is submitted at the block and district level. The best AWW in the district is provided a cash prize of Rs 10,000 while the best AWH wins a cash prize of Rs 7,000.

Impact

- The state has 82.1% coverage of fully immunised children against the national average of 62% (NFHS 4)
- Stunting among under-five children is 19.7% in Kerala against the national average of 38.4% (NFHS 4)