

Evaluation Study on Short Stay Homes for Women and Girls (SSHs), 1999

The Scheme of the Short Stay Homes for Women and Girls launched in 1969 is designed to provide temporary shelter to women and girls who are in social and moral danger due to family problems, mental strain, violence at home, social ostracism, exploitation and other causes. The scheme provides a package of services to the inmates, such as: medical care, psychiatric treatment, case work services, occupational therapy, educational-cum-vocational training, recreation facilities and rehabilitation. The scheme is being executed through non-governmental organizations in different parts of the country. The NGOs receive grants from the Department of Women and Child Development, Ministry of Human Resources Development, Government of India.

The Evaluation Study

At the instance of the Department of Women and Child Development (D/WCD), the Programme Evaluation Organisation (PEO), Planning Commission, undertook the evaluation of the scheme of Short Stay Homes (SS Homes, henceforth) for women and girls to assess if the implementation of the scheme, the functioning of the Homes and the quality of services being rendered are in accordance with the guidelines and objectives of the scheme.

Methodology

Though the scheme is being implemented in almost all the States and Union Territories of the country, the study has been confined to 13 States, considering the time, manpower and financial constraints. The States were selected on the basis of the criteria of high incidence of crime on women, low literacy among women and adverse sex ratio (Chapter-2). In order to meet the aforesaid objectives of the evaluation study, information on a number of parameters relating to planning and implementation of the scheme, functioning of the Homes, the quality of delivery of services, the pattern of expenditure and sources of funds had to be collected from both primary and secondary sources.

The data base for the study was generated primarily through a sample survey. A stratified random sample design was adopted to select 36 Short Stay Homes, 177 beneficiaries and 105 ex-beneficiaries from 13 States. Some of the selected Short Stay Homes were found non-functional on the date of visit of the survey teams and had to be substituted by other Homes. The beneficiaries were selected randomly out of those who were found present in the Short Stay Homes on the date of visit. Three ex - beneficiaries and one knowledgeable person were selected from each home.

Structured questionnaires were designed and canvassed to elicit information at various levels. The Short Stay Homes schedule was designed to elicit information on various aspects relating to the functioning of the Homes and was addressed to the Short Stay Home Superintendents. An NGO Schedule was canvassed to elicit information on the characteristics of the NGOs authorised to run the Short Stay Homes. The profile of the inmates and their views on the functioning of the Homes and the quality of services provided were sought through the Beneficiary Schedule. Separate schedules were developed for ex-beneficiaries and knowledgeable persons for their views on the services provided by the Homes and for suggestions to make the delivery system more effective. The entire field survey was conducted by the field units of PEO. The officers of the field units were imparted the necessary training before the launch of the survey.

Planning, Implementation and Monitoring Process

The scheme of Short Stay Home for women and girls is executed by the 'Department of Women and Child Development' under the overall supervision of the Secretary of the Department. This scheme is being implemented through the NGOs. The scheme and its guidelines for implementation have not been publicised, nor are the State Governments involved in its implementation. As a result, only a few NGOs are running most of the Homes in the country. The guidelines for implementation do not reflect any scientific basis for selection of NGOs and location of Homes. Also, the PEO evaluators could not get any rational basis for the preparation of annual budget proposals for the scheme.

The administrative control of the Short Stay Homes rests with the Superintendent under the guidance of the Short Stay Home Managing Committee. The Superintendent is assisted by a social case worker, a vocational cum craft teacher, a part time medical officer, a part time clinical psychologist, a clerk-cum-accountant, a chowkidar and a peon. Almost all the Homes had the sanctioned staff strength, despite low salary levels. The Home Committee was non-functional in most cases, as is revealed by the information on the frequency of review meetings that are required to be held with definite periodicity.

The monitoring and inspection is another weak link in the implementation of this programme. There is no Monitoring and Evaluation Cell in the Ministry and no regular schedule for carrying out inspection. At times, the State Government and the officials of CSWB inspect the Homes, but no regular schedule or uniform pattern was found to be followed for the purpose of monitoring.

Allocation and Utilisation of Government Grants

As per the scheme guidelines, the grants are given by the Department of Women and Child Development to the concerned NGOs, who in turn, pass on the grant to the Short Stay Homes.

Each Short Stay Home receives an annual recurring grant of Rs. 1,87,300/- (calculated on the basis of the rent of the 'C' Class city), and Rs. 25,000/- as one time grant to meet the non-recurring expenditure. Implicit in the guidelines is the assumption that NGOs would use government grants along with their own resources to meet the objectives of the scheme, as the government funds alone may prove insufficient for the purpose. An analysis of the relevant information obtained from the sample NGOs revealed that most of the Short Stay Homes are running only on the government grant. However, a few NGOs such as religious trusts supporting multiple social activities, broad based and genuine women organizations and established NGOs which have infrastructure available with them were able to mobilise additional resources from other sources.

The sample Homes were found to be spending a disproportionately large part of their annual budget on establishment. Even though the staff are not adequately compensated nearly 50% of the total expenditure is on salaries of staff. The major reason for the high establishment cost is that the prescribed inmate- staff ratio is not being maintained by the Homes. While the scheme provides for paid staff for upto 40 inmates for administration of the Homes, it was observed that the sample Homes had about 22 inmates on an average, but are spending the entire money earmarked for staff salary.(Chapter IV para 4.7.2).

The Short Stay Homes complained of irregular and untimely release of government grants and cumbersome procedures for release of funds. It was observed that in a majority of the cases, there have been delays of various duration. The delays of longer duration were found to have been caused because of the failure of the Short Stay Homes in submitting the relevant documents. The delays of shorter duration are, however, due to cumbersome procedures required to be followed by the NGOs for release of the grants. Many of these could be simplified. (Chapter IV; para 4.8).

Performance

The performance of the scheme can be judged by the efficiency of the delivery mechanism and the level of satisfaction of the beneficiaries. The delivery mechanism is linked with the functioning of the Homes, while the impact could be judged from the opinion of the ex-inmates about the quality of psychological and economic rehabilitation of the beneficiaries of the scheme.

Some Short Stay Homes were found to be adhering to the guidelines for admission, while in others deviations were noticed. First, some Homes were found to have a disproportionately large number of accompanying children, while in some others no child was allowed to accompany the women. Second, in some cases, the inmates comprised destitute children and old women who are not eligible for admission. Third, a few Homes where capacity utilisation was found to be extremely low, complained that not many women had sought admission to the Homes. Fourth, some Homes were found to be running as vocational training institutes for women or as hostels for working girls and women. Discussions with the Homes' officials revealed that a section of them

were not fully aware of the procedures for admission and the objectives of the scheme.(Chapter V; para 5.1.4 to 5.1.7).

It may be mentioned that a few of the randomly selected Short Stay Homes were not found operational by the PEO field teams, while, according to the list provided by Department of Women and Child Development, these were functional. The Department is advised to examine if such defunct Short Stay Homes are still receiving government grants.

Medical examination, vaccination and inoculation of the inmates were not carried out in most of the cases at the time of admission. The majority of Short Stay Homes thought that such examinations were not necessary, while some opined that resources available for this purpose were inadequate. The inmates were not provided with proper medical facilities by the Homes. However, most of the Homes reported that services of Government hospitals and private practitioners were availed of, whenever required.

Board and lodging facilities were found to be more or less satisfactory, except in a few cases. Some Homes were located in remote areas due to low rental provisions, and in some others, rooms were congested/over-crowded and lacked regular maintenance. Inadequacy of resources was stated to be the primary reason for this.

The majority of the Short Stay Homes were operating independently. Only a few have made efforts to establish linkages with government Departments/agencies. A few of them were found to be taking advantage of other government programmes, such as training and employment generation programmes. Such Homes were found to be maintaining contacts with the district/local authorities (Chapter-IV).

For the majority of the Homes, the Home Committee was not functional. Though the guidelines stipulate that an officer of the Department of Social Welfare of the State Government should oversee the functioning of the Homes, this is not being complied with.

In order to get the views of the ex-beneficiaries regarding the performance of the scheme, three ex-beneficiaries were selected from each home. Since the PEO field officers were dependent on the Short Stay Homes for identification of ex-inmates, independent choice could not be exercised by the teams in the selection of ex-beneficiaries. At the time of analysis of the data, it was felt that there may be a bias in the data. Therefore, after the field survey was completed DWCD was requested to give the list of ex-beneficiaries for the Short Stay Homes to PEO for sample checking of the quality of responses received in PEO survey. Out of the available list, a sample of 53 ex-beneficiaries was selected randomly in the states of Assam, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan for assessing qualitatively their perception of the services being rendered by the Homes. While most of them found gaps in the delivery of services by the Homes, as reflected in the analysis of the functioning of homes, all of them were unequivocal about their

utility as a temporary shelter at times of distress for women and girls. They would have been happier, had the Homes provided better quality training and rehabilitative services (Chapter-6).

Suggestions

1. The findings of the evaluation study tend to suggest that, among other things, the characteristics of NGOs and the location of the Homes are critical to the performance of the scheme. As per records, three all India level NGOs are running most of the Homes selected for the sample survey. However, in some cases, the organisations running the Homes are not the same NGOs which have been authorised to run the Homes. It is not clear as to what terms and conditions govern the relationship between the two organisations, but there is need to ensure that sub-contracting does not take place. It is also not clear as to whether the geographical spread of the Homes is in accordance with the need.

Three steps are required to address these issues. First, the scheme must be well publicised through electronic and print media to attract local level NGOs. Second, a more direct involvement of the State governments is required in selection of genuine local NGOs. Third, the Department of Women and Child Development should appoint an Expert Group with representation from women organisations to identify the criteria for determining suitable locations, and ask the State Governments to identify these locations.(Chapter III; para 3.1.7).

2. The establishment cost of the Short Stay Homes is on the high side, even though the staff are poorly paid. The organisational structure of the Short Stay Homes needs rationalisation. A more innovative approach is needed, as marginal changes in emoluments and staff structure are unlikely to bring about the desired improvement in the functioning of the Homes. One way to address the issue is to think in terms of the possibility of convergence in the implementation of similar programmes for minimising administration cost and of linkage with other institutions (e.g., government hospitals and health centres, vocational training institutes, credit institutions etc.) for better facilities at low cost. (Chapter IV; para 4.7.4).

To ensure better utilisation of resources and improved functioning of Short Stay Homes, the following changes in implementation are required. First, the scheme needs to be administered through the Department of Social Welfare/ Social Welfare Board of the State so as to ensure the required linkage and co-ordination with the various agencies and government departments. Second, the Home Committees need to be restructured and made functional by inducting the local SHO, CMO and Deputy Commissioner as members of such Committees. Third, the concerned department (SW) of the State Government should be entrusted with monitoring and supervision of the scheme.

The NGOs running the Homes have complained of delay in the release of grants, excessive procedural requirements, complicated accounting system and inadequate government response to

their grievances. As these problems and unsatisfactory relationship between NGOs and government agencies/departments administering social programmes are common and widespread, some general recommendations for bringing about improvement in the NGO-Government relationship can be made.

- as the matters relating to voluntary agencies and scrutiny of periodic release of funds to them are given an extremely low priority, the D/WCD which implements a number of programmes through NGOs must have a separate NGO cell with adequate staff responsible for all matters relating to NGOs for speedy disposal of grievances and complaints and effective monitoring and control.
- guidelines for implementation of social sector scheme need to be made flexible, as many a time innovative approaches are needed. The implementing Ministries/ Department should encourage frequent open house interaction with NGOs so as to modify the guidelines for better impact of the programmes.
- the existing monitoring and inspection system is cumbersome and ineffective. A joint inspection team of officers of the Centre and States should examine the activities of a voluntary organisation in a broader framework of its contribution and impact in the context of the scheme and not depend on the reports prepared by the district level officers who may not be fully aware of the objectives sought to be achieved.