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Renuka for PPP model for ICDS

By Venkat Parsa

New Delhi, Feb. 12: Union women and child development minister Renuka Chowdhary has proposed public-private partnership for strengthening the Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS). The partnership may include resource mobilisation for construction of anganwadi centres, creating facilities such as child-friendly toilets, kitchen, drinking water, pre-school education kits and regular health check-ups at ICDS health centres.

Addressing a national workshop on public-private-partnership in ICDS, Ms Chowdhury said, the ICDS is the single largest programme in the world for intervention to correct malnutrition among children. It caters to about 60.63 million young children through about nine lakhs anganwadis.

But still there were some gaps, which could be filled through the participation of other stakeholders of the society, especially private industry. Ms Chowdhary said that investment in children would provide better human resource to the industry and better citizen to the country.

Ms Chowdhary said, ever since the ICDS was initiated, it was envisaged purely as a governmental programme. However, with the passage of time and through field experience, it was felt that the programme could yield much better results if participation of private sector is also elicited in its implementation. As of now, the government has only collaborated with few voluntary organisations and panchayati raj institutions across the country, which has paid rich dividends.

Taking all these developments into consideration the government is of the view that ICDS could be developed as people's programme with the partnership of private sectors, which would be mutually beneficial to all concerned, she said.

Listing the areas for public-private-partnership, the minister said that the private sector could help the government to reach the remotest areas to create awareness about health and nutrition, provide training to enhance capacities of ICDS functionaries, make anganwadis more child-friendly, upgrade infrastructure and monitor the implementation of various ICDS schemes.