

SARVODAYA PRE-SCHOOL CHILDREN SERVICES PROGRAMME

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Introduction

An Overview of The Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement with Special Reference to Non-Formal Education Programmes.

The Philosophical Basis

The Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement ('Sarvodaya - awakening of all; 'Shramadana' - through the gift of time, thought and energy) is an indigenous effort of the people of Sri Lanka, particularly in the rural areas, to bring about self-development. It draws upon cultural and philosophical ideas familiar to the people of the country. The Movement is non-political in nature and devotes its entire efforts towards the development of man and society by non-violent methods of change.

According to this philosophy, the development of man as a member of a family, village or urban group is the foundation on which national development activities and world development efforts should be established. Therefore all the programmes and projects of the Movement have included spiritual, cultural, and social elements as a prerequisite to material development.

All Sarvodaya programmes originate from the grass roots level and extend upward with self-reliant and cooperative efforts on the part of the immediate beneficiaries. The Movement has thus succeeded in achieving a national character and is the largest non-governmental voluntary organisation in the country today, with a message to convey to the human being, Paurushodaya (personality awakening); to the village, Gramodaya (village awakening); to the nation, Deshodaya (national awakening) and to the world, Vishvodaya (world awakening).

Objectives and Methodology

The first ten years of the Movement (1958 - 1967) were devoted entirely to Shramadana (offering of labour) camps which were organised in all parts of the country, enabling hundreds of people including school children to participate in labour-intensive village reconstruction projects of direct benefit to the people. However, the major objectives of the organisers of the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement during this period were to :

- (a) awaken masses of rural people by concrete development action to exploit their own development potential through self-help and self-reliance;

- (b) bring about a general recognition of the value of utilising labour resources, which the people were voluntarily prepared to give for the development of the nation;
- (c) evolve in the country a grass roots leadership for development inspired by the people's traditional and cultural values and based on a knowledge of the science of village development gained through participatory experience; and
- (d) pave the way for a theory and practice of development with an integrated approach towards the development of the human person and of his or her community, nation and the world. This may be termed a 'non-violent revolutionary movement for changing man and society'.

The second ten years of the Movement began with the 100 villages development scheme, which was later extended to a 1000 villages development scheme. During this phase of activities of the Movement, strategies for people's participation in self-development such as Shramadana camps, family gatherings, group formation at grass roots, international village to village link-up programmes, self-employment schemes and development education programmes were developed. These activities resulted in the development of an integrated approach to bring about changes in ideas and attitudes, in methods and techniques in village development and organising activities at the grass roots level.

Programmes of Work Carried Out

The Movement has in varying degrees developed programmes that embrace every aspect of human life, and over the years has grown into a national as well as international movement having elements of welfare as well as development programmes, including increased productivity and economic growth and a broad range of social services.

At the village level, peer groups are organised and programmes carried out pertaining to pre-school children, school-going children and youth, out of school youth, mothers, farmers, craftsmen, Buddhist monks, dignitaries of other religions, foreign students, and government officials. All these programmes have spiritual, moral, cultural, social, political and economic elements integrated into a total approach to the development of man's personality and his social situation.

A clear philosophical basis, intelligible both to the ordinary people in a village community and to the development planning elite at the national as well as international levels, has been established. It became possible to identify hundreds of village level leaders of outstanding ability. Harmonious relationships were established with local and central government authorities and political leaders (several preliminary prejudices notwithstanding), and thus it was possible to make the Movement an organised, effective, people's development agency in the country, working towards supplementing the efforts of the government for national development. With time, the Movement was able to receive government recognition and co-operation, enabling it to obtain such assistance as tax exemptions,

grants and approvals for development in co-operation with other similar government and non-governmental organisations including those in other countries. There are nearly 4,000 villages in which programmes at various stages of progress are underway.

Admittedly many mistakes were made and the lessons learnt have been used for future programming. A major lesson learnt was the importance of non-economic factors in the carrying out of economic development programmes. Experience has clearly shown that mere economic development efforts do not create indigenous development. The Movement therefore emphasises the creation of a psycho-social infrastructure, before or during the implementation of economic activities.

Development of the Movement

The major inputs for the development of this Movement came from the people of the country, who gave their time, thought and energy which if computed would total millions of man-hours. Substantial financial and material assistance was also received from the villagers to conduct Shramadana camps and infrastructural construction and activities in villages. From 1969 onwards, financial and material assistance was also received from 16 agencies outside the country.

The legal position of the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement is derived from the Act of Incorporation of the Movement by Parliament in 1972 under the name Lanka Jatika Sarvodaya Shramadana Sangamaya.

The Movement is formed by the members of the Incorporated Sangamaya who are organised in Sarvodaya group formations (haulas), as children (7-15), youth (15 and above), mothers, farmers and general elders. Besides, there are members of various Sarvodaya societies; Sarvodaya Bhikku Conference, Sarvodaya Shramadana Societies, Sarvodaya Branch Societies, Sarvodaya Gramodaya Councils, Sarvodaya Deshodaya Council, Sarvodaya Shramadana International and Sarvodaya organisations in other countries.

The Sarvodaya Executive Council of 57 members is elected at the Annual General Meeting of the Sangamaya. The Annual General Meeting also selects the office-bearers and the Elders' Council who form part of the Executive Council.

The conceptual framework as well as practical programmes in pursuance of the concepts have been developed by the Movement. The objectives of the programme that are currently in operation can be summarised as: psychological infrastructure building, physical infrastructure building, basic human needs satisfaction programme, social infrastructure building, training in functional leadership, training in appropriate technologies, building participatory structures, organisation for economic justice, peaceful resolution of conflicts and strengthening Vishvodaya groups.

To realise the objectives enumerated above, the services carried out by the Movement are : (1) pre-school children's services, (2) school-going children's services, (3) pre-employment voluntary services for youth, (4) Shramadana camps, (5) rural technical services, (6) youth in agriculture and village industries services, (7) rural credit and savings services, (8) development education services, (9) rural housing programmes, (10) Sarvodaya Research Institute, (11) Shanthi Sena (Peace Army), (12) National integration programmes, (13) plantation workers development services, (14) model village and self-help and housing programmes, (15) library and recreation services, (16) community shops services, and (17) international development co-operation.

Two case studies - the Pre-school Children's Services and Shanti Sena (Peace Army) illustrate the involvement of the Movement in reaching services to the community through the pre-school child and the school age youth. (The latter case study is presented in the next section - see pp. 125-30.)

THE CHILDREN'S SERVICES PROGRAMME

The Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement of Sri Lanka initiated the Sarvodaya Children's Services Programme in 1972 recognising the necessity for an integrated approach to satisfy the health, nutrition and child-care needs of the rural population. In the past ten years, this programme has evolved and expanded into a comprehensive network of services touching the lives of over 100,000 pre-school children, 150,000 children between the ages of 6-14 and approximately 60,000 mothers all over the country. These pre-school centres are located in well over 4000 rural villages and cater for the education and social needs of children and mothers, specially from socially and economically deprived communities.

The general objectives are :

- (a) Development of a healthy and intelligent community of children with special attention to nutrition, health-care and psycho-social development.
- (b) Propagation of self-help and self-reliance amongst them as well as of the rest of the community.
- (c) Formation of a psychological and organisational infra-structure for growth and development.

To achieve the above, the Children's Services Programme has undertaken the provision of: (a) adequate nutrition for the pre-school child and the family; (b) preventive and curative health-care services for the pre-school child and the family; (c) pre-school education for children between 3 to 5 years of age; (d) nutrition, health-care and education programmes for pregnant and lactating mothers; (e) library services for the community; (f) health, nutrition, education, cultural and spiritual programmes for school-going children; (g) income-generating activities for members of mothers' groups, children's groups and pre-school teachers;

and (h) for the introduction of the Sarvodaya ideals of a righteous society based on respect for all life or Loving-Kindness (Metta), Compassionate Action (Karuna), Altruistic Joy (Muditha) and Equanimity (Upekka) in the community.

The Children's Services Programme, initiated in the year 1972, at the outset was conceived as a feeding programme for children. It was noticed that a large majority of children of the low-income groups in the rural and urban sector were ill-fed and undernourished. So a programme to provide a balanced meal for these children was given priority as a felt need. Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement at this stage mobilised and organised mothers of the respective groups of children to help meet the challenge. Groups of children, specially of the pre-school age, gathered in the mornings at a selected place in the village where the Sarvodaya workers with the assistance and co-operation of the mothers, and with local resources, fed the children. The meeting place was sometimes a hut in the village, a temple or any shady place. This feeding programme was organised in a very simple and modest manner and became very popular among the children and mothers. Mothers gathered round, children remained longer hours and the Sarvodaya workers were encouraged to move toward adding on other programmes in health, education, culture and so on, to the existing feeding programme. Mothers on their part organised themselves and gave their support. Specific sites were determined, physical structures were put up with local support and resources. Pre-school sevakas (workers) for each centre were selected from the village by the mothers themselves. The idea spread from village to village and the network of pre-school centres set up has today a total of well over 4000.

Activities

Nutrition Programme

(a) Community Kitchen : The community kitchen is housed in the Children's Services Centre in the village. All activities in connection with the community kitchen are planned and implemented with the guidance and assistance of the mothers' group. The members of the children's group participate by collecting firewood and conducting shramadana to maintain the community kitchen. Pre-school children also contribute by bringing a match-box full of rice each day to school. The rice is emptied into a pot each morning, and is used to prepare the mid-day meal. The services provided through a community kitchen are : (i) Nutrition for pre-school children. A nutritious meal prepared with greens and rice (kola kanda) is served daily at 8.00 a.m. in the pre-school. Again, at 10.00 a.m. a fruit drink, milk or triposha is served. Where resources are available a mid-day meal consisting of rice, breadfruit, potatoes, collected from the mothers, is also served. (ii) Members of the children's group, pregnant and lactating mothers, patients, the aged and the disabled are also provided with kola kanda and milk regularly. Vegetables and fruits that are used in the community kitchen are donated by the village community and are also grown in the home garden maintained by the Children's Services Centre.

(b) Home Gardening Programme : In fighting malnutrition, the Sarvodaya's experience has shown that the long-term solution for this problem to a great extent lies in maintenance of successful home gardens. Home gardening by the members of the children's and mothers' groups has not only met daily nutritional requirements of households, but also paved the way for the villagers to make an additional income by sale of the surplus vegetables and fruit. Even in the short-run, the villagers get an additional income by saving the amount they usually pay to the shop-keeper. The necessary plants and seeds are distributed from the Sarvodaya nurseries and the seed bank maintained in the Children's Services Centre. Arrangements have been made to provide technical assistance from the Government Agricultural Extension Services. Home garden competitions are organised in order to encourage the participants and marketing facilities made available by organising week-end fairs in the village.

The usefulness of maintaining compost pits is also stressed for this programme. Instructions on maintaining compost pits, and how they contribute to the home garden is provided by Sarvodaya workers.

(c) Nutrition Education : Education on food values, balanced diet, preservation of food, prevention of wastage, home economies, storing of grains and seedlings is provided to the mothers in the village.

(d) Health-care Services : (i) Personal hygiene - children in the pre-schools and day-care centres are taught to follow good health habits e.g. washing hands before meals, keeping their hair and nails clean. (ii) Environmental sanitation - campaigns are organised through shramadana to make people aware of the importance of a clean and beautiful environment, construction of latrines for the villagers (with the assistance from the Health Department), building systems for the disposal of garbage and unclean water, and by conducting health campaigns. (iii) Immunisation - children are immunised against polio, diphtheria, whooping cough and T.B. (iv) Health clinics - monthly health clinics are organised in the villages for monitoring the growth and development of the children and pregnant mothers. Government health officials are brought to the village for these activities. (v) Health education - is provided through campaigns, film shows, exhibitions and staging dramas which show how diseases are spread and what preventive measures should be taken. Health Department Officials are invited to talk to the mothers and the community on health and nutrition. (vi) First aid - treatment for minor ailments and first-aid is provided for the village community.

Pre-school Education Services

To bring about the physical, social, psychological, spiritual, and cultural development of the child between the ages of 3 to 5, the activities conducted under the pre-school education programme include the concept of numbers, recognition of shapes and colours, language arts (puppetry, dramatic play), environmental studies, creative art, free play, religious and cultural activities.

Maternal Welfare Services

Educational programmes emphasising proper diet and behaviour, (or for instance, seeing the doctor regularly), as well as child care are provided for pregnant mothers. Clinical services are also organised for regular check-ups for pregnant mothers.

Library Services

In order to increase the literacy rate amongst the village population, a village library has been established in every Children's Service Centre. Members of the children's group and youth group are encouraged to use the library services.

Income-generating Services

(a) Community Shop Programme : Former pre-school teachers are selected and trained to run community shops. The objectives of the community shop programme are: to save the poor villager from the grip of middlemen and the credit burden, to give him a fair price for his produce, and to make all consumer goods available in the village.

Maintaining the shop is the responsibility of the trained teacher. This includes purchase and sale and book-keeping of goods. These activities are conducted with the capital loan provided by the headquarters of the Movement and closely supervised and monitored by the special committee of the mothers' group.

(b) Credit and Savings Scheme : This scheme resulted from the success of the home gardens and cottage industries projects in the villages. The money earned by selling the surplus from home garden is deposited in the name of each child in the National Savings Bank. With the increase of the amount of savings in one particular district (Kegalle), Sarvodaya's own village level banking system was introduced to the villages.

(c) Cottage Industries : Industries such as dress-making, mat and basket-weaving are encouraged in the villages. Mothers are provided with the capital to buy raw materials and tools and equipment. The product is sold in the village itself in most cases. In the case of a surplus, the goods can be sold through the Sarvodaya Community Shops network.

Organisational Structure

The Children's Services Unit comes under the Sarvodaya Development Education Institute based in Moratuwa (see chart*). All activities conducted by the Children's Services Unit are monitored and co-ordinated by the Children's Services Committee consisting of 8 full-time Sarvodaya workers. In an effort to decentralise the services, this unit has trained approximately 27 district level children's services co-ordinators (trainers), 144 children's services supervisors, 182 community health workers and 3370 pre-school teachers.

* p. 124

For organisational and operational purposes, the entire project is structured at four levels namely national, district, gramodaya (village council) and village. The Children's Services Unit at the national level is headed by a Children's Services Committee consisting of eight members and staffed by a National Children's Services Co-ordinator and resource personnel. Their primary work is to monitor and co-ordinate all activities conducted by the Children's Service Centres at village level. Other activities are : training pre-school teachers, community health workers, children's services supervisors and children's services co-ordinators, conducting seminars and workshops for mothers' groups, children's groups, and pre-school teachers on nutrition, health care, child care, maternal welfare, production of play toys and materials and income-generating activities, and co-ordination of Sarvodaya's island-wide children's services activities.

The 27 children's services co-ordinators function at the 27 Sarvodaya administrative districts assisted by resource personnel. The main activities at the district level are : training of pre-school teachers (short-term) and community health workers (short-term); conducting seminars and workshops for mothers' groups, children's groups and pre-school teachers; and supervising community health workers and children's services supervisors.

At the gramodaya (village council) level are the children's services supervisors numbering 144 and community health workers numbering 182. The 144 supervisors look after the children's services activities at village level and conduct seminars and workshops. The community health workers conduct health-care and nutrition programmes at the village level. They also assist in the linkage of government health services with the village.

The 2500 Children's Services Centres at the village level are handled by the 3370 pre-school teachers whose primary activities are the provision of health care, nutrition and pre-school education to children below 5, health and nutrition education to the village community, library services to the village, and community development activities.

The Sarvodaya Pre-school Services organised and structured in this manner work in close collaboration with the existing development programmes of the state. Although the Sarvodaya programmes are generally of a non-formal nature, attempts are always made to link these services with existing formal development programmes at the village level. The Sarvodaya extension workers have always come forward to seek the assistance and co-operation of the government extension workers and link-up state services with those of Sarvodaya.

The state medical personnel and health extension workers visit the Sarvodaya Children's Services Centres and extend their services in such fields as health-care, immunisation and health education. In the field of maternal welfare and nutrition, family welfare officers of the state and the agricultural extension workers of the department of agriculture render very valuable services at these Children's Services Centres, by

being present and rendering all assistance possible in the form of lectures, talks, demonstrations and film shows. Adult education officers, school inspectors and teachers of the Education Department play an important role in assisting the Sarvodaya workers in non-formal education programmes organised for the child and the mother.

Banking and credit facilities of the state available at village level are utilised fully through the state officials. The income-generating activities conducted by Children's Services Centres at village level are closely linked with other similar state services. The services of state officials specially in the field of technology and marketing have become very useful in promoting cottage industries among the members of the mothers' group. Apart from the assistance and co-operation received from the state sector by linking these programmes with those of Government, the governmental sector too plays a vital role. Nutrition, library services and education programmes are largely linked with their development programmes. Agencies such as CARE, IYC, UNICEF have linked their programmes with those of Sarvodaya Children's Services and assistance in the form of materials, instruction and guidance is always forthcoming.

Arrangements for the Learning Situation

The pre-school teachers functioning at village level are generally identified and selected by the mothers' group. Originally their primary role was to act as a caretaker of children and assisting in the feeding programme. Though much emphasis is generally not laid on academic qualifications, most of the selected teachers have completed secondary education. The primary concern in the selection is the personality factor. The love and affection for children, willingness and dedication for work, ability to mobilise and organise the village community for development and community leadership are some of the major considerations. Pre-school teachers thus selected by the mothers' group receive periodical training of an organised nature at the headquarters based at Moratuwa. These training programmes provide opportunities for the trainees to obtain practical and theoretical knowledge and experience in such fields as child psychology, nutrition, health-care and primary education. As numbers grew and the system expanded, there was a need for a systematic supervision of the activities of the pre-school teachers. This task was entrusted to a Pre-school Supervisor functioning at gramodaya (village council) level, who was generally selected from among the pre-school teachers and to the co-ordinator of all children's services at the district level. The supervisor and co-ordinator were thus people with wide experience in the field of children's services and other related subjects. They too received periodic training at the headquarters. Government extension workers such as the Health and Agricultural Officers, staff from the Sri Lanka University and the Women's Bureau were used as resource personnel. Their services were obtained for the training sessions and, at informal field level, for activities conducted both centrally and in villages.

The training courses provided are of four types for:

- (a) Pre-School Teachers - A two week (short-term) residential training programme is conducted at district and divisional level and a 3 months (long-term) residential training programme at the children's services unit at headquarters.
- (b) Community Health Workers - This is a 3 months training programme basically meant for the village level staff and is centrally conducted at the headquarters.
- (c) Children's Services Supervisors' - This training programme is specifically designed for the supervisors and is of a months' duration centrally conducted at the headquarters.
- (d) Children's Services Co-ordinators - Co-ordinators at district level receive this training at the headquarters periodically.

All the courses are conducted with the full participation of the trainees. The course content is delivered through the lecture method followed by discussions. Much emphasis is generally laid on problem-solving in a participatory manner. Opportunities and guidance for practical experience are generally provided in a non-formal setting and emphasis is placed on field experience.

Resource Development

The primary objective of the training and orientation programmes is to provide the individual with practical knowledge and experience in relation to nutrition, health care, child care and maternal welfare activities. With the rapid decentralisation of the activities of the Movement, the required resource personnel are drawn from the district itself.

A primary concern is to obtain curriculum material based on the needs of the child and the trainee. One curriculum has been centrally developed with bottom up participation and is being used island-wide for all training and orientation programmes. However, flexibility being the key word, alteration of content and methodology to suit the target group and the conditions pertaining to districts and zones is given high priority.

Shortage of curriculum materials such as charts, pamphlets, books and handouts remains a major problem, specially in regard to its relevance to local and individual needs. Orientation and training programmes provide considerable time for the trainees to produce education materials during the course. Much stress is laid on local resources and traditional media. Materials thus produced as samples are centrally turned out on a larger scale and distributed among all pre-school teachers functioning at village level.

Use of Media

A noteworthy feature is the harmonious combination of traditional and folk methods with modern and scientific media. Though great emphasis is laid on traditional methodology and much use is made of puppetry, songs, dances, drama and folk stories, scientific media pertaining to the educational and psychological aspects of the child development also remain a major component. Films, slides, tape recorders and modern scientific methodology are always linked harmoniously with traditional media to bring about greater impact. One major constraint in the use of modern scientific technology is the absence of material in the local national language. Most of the film strips and literature available are in English. Most of the resource personnel and the extension workers at field level are not conversant with English and hence there is a considerable drawback in the utilisation of modern media. However, attempts are made to translate the available materials into the local language. This process though vital is a slow one and does not keep pace with the changing times.

Financing and Costs

As regards the financing and cost of Children's Services Programmes, self-reliance is important. The identification of needs of children and the programming of services are based on the modalities accepted by the community organisation which controls activities. Based on the Sarvodaya philosophy for the promotion of self-reliance among rural people, the mothers of the target groups have accepted the responsibility of bearing the main burden of maintaining the children's services activities. The mothers' groups are responsible for the physical infrastructure development, maintenance of feeding programmes and the payment of living allowances to pre-school teachers and extension workers. Much of the financing of orientation and training programmes is borne by the Fredrick Neumann Stiftung (F.N.S.) of the Federal Republic of Germany. The district centres too provide either funds or materials to meet the additional costs. The donor agency is involved only in respect of funding and evaluation. It is primarily a support service leaving the Sarvodaya Children's Services free to act on the basis of their philosophy and methodology. As an accepted principle in Sarvodaya, community development would depend primarily on community participation, and children's services remain basically in the hands of the community.

Evaluation and Monitoring

All Sarvodaya Children's Services activities are evaluated and the feedback sent to the Children's Services Unit at the headquarters. Village level education of the progress of the services is done by the mothers' group. Supervisors and co-ordinators evaluate at field level. The evaluation of the work of the staff at pre-schools is done by the instructors and supervisors at the district level and their work is in turn evaluated by the central unit at the headquarters. In addition to this process of evaluation, the Sarvodaya Research Unit undertakes periodic evaluation of activities conducted by the Children's Services Unit.

Reports of such evaluations are carefully examined along with field staff and action is suitably initiated either as a remedial measure or as a strengthening process.

There is an organised reporting and evaluation process within the children's services network. Reports of all activities are maintained at pre-school level and transmitted upwards to the gramodaya (village council) level, district level and finally to the headquarters. This information is collected on a quarterly basis, studied and analysed, published and distributed for information. This is followed by an annual report prepared in the same manner. The evaluation process operates on similar lines. The cost-effectiveness is studied for the purposes of rectification and future guidance in continuing the programme.

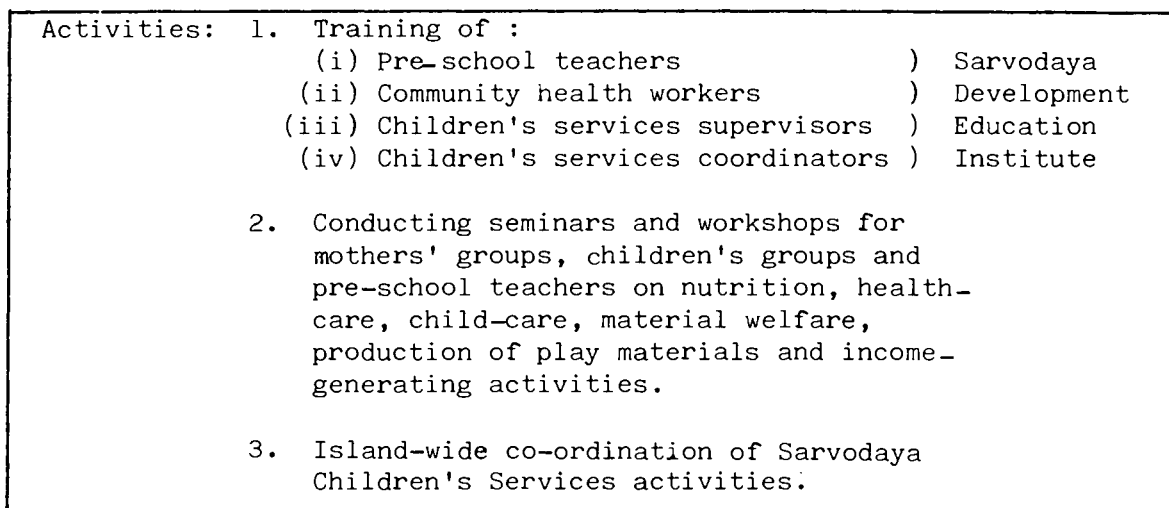
Continuing Education and Replication

The children's services of the Sarvodaya Movement are basically meant for the pre-school child. Apart from the variety of aims of the programme, one main factor for consideration is the harmonious transition of the pre-school child to the formal school system.

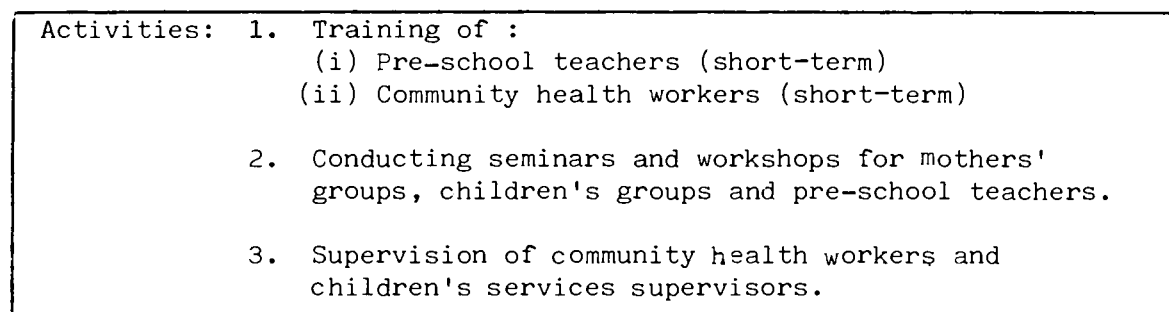
The skills, aptitudes, attitudes and physical health of the pre-school child promoted by the children's services stand in good stead for the rest of his life and facilitate continuing education in the formal system. The Sarvodaya services do not stop with the pre-school level. The community has been organised into structural categories like the children's group, youth group, mothers' group and farmers' group; each with its range of activities and development programmes. These constitute a continuing process of education and replication which cater for the future needs of the child through whom Sarvodaya aspires to form a new society.

/CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE/

NATIONAL LEVEL : Staff - National Children's Services Co-ordinator
- Resource Personnel



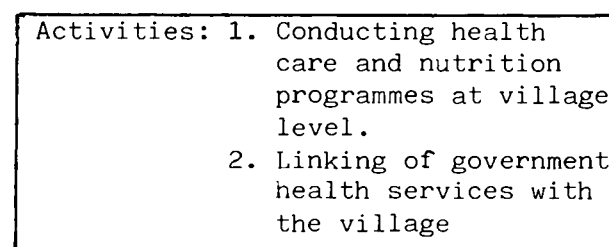
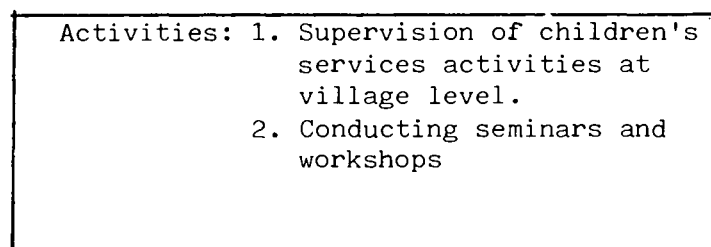
DISTRICT LEVEL : Staff - Children's Services Coordinators (Total No.27)
- Resource Personnel



GRAMODAYA LEVEL :

Staff - Children's Services Supervisors (Total No.144)

Staff - Community Health Workers (Total No.182)



CHILDREN'S SERVICES CENTRES
(Total No.500)

VILLAGE LEVEL:

Staff: Pre-school Teachers (Total No. 3370)

