UNIT 4 NEEDS AND RIGHTS OF CHILDREN

Structure

4.1 Introduction
4.2 Need for Physical Care
4.3 Need for Stimulation
4.4 Need for Love and Nurturance
4.5 When Needs are Not Met
4.6 Children with Special Needs
4.7 The Rights of Children
  4.7.1 UN Declaration of the Rights of the Child
  4.7.2 Directive Principles of the Indian Constitution
  4.7.3 National Policy for Children
4.8 Child Care Services
  4.8.1 The Need for Child Care Services
  4.8.2 Components of Child Care Services
4.9 Summing Up
4.10 Glossary
4.11 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Human beings in their present form have been known to have existed on planet earth for over a million years. Fossils that have been discovered give indications of events of ages ago. There are fossils, which date back to more than a million years ago, of a family leading a child across a mud plain in Africa. Family life seems to have begun with the very first people on earth. That children need special care and nurturance is a fact as old as our civilization. A newborn child needs the care and protection of adults if she is to survive. She has many abilities which help her to adjust to her surroundings—she can see, hear, feel, taste and smell. She is able to make sounds to attract the attention of people. She can make movements and can suck at her mother’s breast. She has a brain which helps her to understand what is happening around her. But in spite of these abilities the child cannot survive if left alone. She must get care and protection from adults. The need of the child for physical care is apparent and obvious to most of us. What is sometimes forgotten is that children also need love, affection and stimulation.

Objectives

After studying this Unit, you should be able to:

- discuss the importance of the child’s needs for physical care, stimulation, love and affection
- recognize that some children have special needs
- identify the rights of children
- be aware of the measures in India for meeting the needs of children
- explain the components of child care services

4.2 NEED FOR PHYSICAL CARE

Physical care of the child is essential to ensure her survival. During infancy the child is totally dependent on the caregiver. She must be fed, clothed, bathed, attended to, provided a safe place for sleeping and resting and protected from harm and accidents. At the child grows older, she learns to do many things on her own—she can eat by herself, take off some clothes, walk and run. But even though she is learning to do some tasks on her own, she still looks to adults for help in other tasks. For example, by age five the child is familiar with her immediate surroundings and can find her way
without guidance. But when the caregiver takes the child with her to the market, she needs to hold the child’s hand. The child has to be cared for at all ages, though the kind of care changes with age and setting.

Good health is important to ensure optimal development of the child. The child must be protected from sickness and disease as these can slow down her development. A sick child is not interested in her surroundings and is often listless and irritable. Insanitary living conditions, unsafe drinking water and unhealthy ways of cooking and eating food can breed disease.

The child needs food for survival and development. It is important that the child eats food which contains all the nutrients in the amounts required by her body. As the child grows she naturally needs more food. You will read more about the type, quality and quantity of food that the child requires at different ages in the subsequent Blocks.

4.3 NEED FOR STIMULATION

To understand what is meant by stimulation, try a small experiment. Sit in a closed room which is bare of all belongings. It should not have things like pictures, calendars, books and magazines. There should be no other person in the room. There should only be a mat or a chair on which you can sit. The windows and doors of the room should be closed and should have curtains drawn so that you cannot see outside and are not able to hear. Thus there is nothing inside or outside the room which can attract your attention. Now sit alone in the room without doing anything. You will find it very difficult to sit there for more than a few minutes unless you are trained in meditation!

If you really do sit in that closed room for a few hours, it is possible that by the end of it you will feel strange. Perhaps you will spend some time imagining different things and probably sleep for some time. After a few hours you will probably want to run out, meet people and talk to them, listen to the sounds of birds, read a magazine or do something else. In short, you will want to go out and participate in an activity. What does this experiment tell you about yourself? All of us need and seek events and experiences that we find interesting, that cause us to think and respond. At all times our senses provide us information about our surroundings. People and surroundings provide stimulation to us and we are attracted to the unfamiliar and the more exciting. One may say that we need ‘food for thought’. But this does not mean that one constantly needs stimulation. There are times when you are tired and need rest. The need for stimulation is interspersed with the need for rest. But once rested you begin to seek out people and events again.

During the course of the day many events take place around you but you give your complete attention only to some events. Others are ignored or attended to only partially. As an example consider making a trip to the market from your house. For the major part of the trip you concentrate upon reaching the market taking care to avoid an accident, planning your shopping and other activities associated with it. Perhaps you might notice that a child carrying a bucket slips, that the sky is becoming cloudy or that a new building is coming up. But there are many other events which you do not notice. You attend to events that are important to you in that situation or attract your attention in some way. In other words, you respond to the stimulating events in the surroundings selectively.

Let us now understand what we mean by stimulation in the context of the child. Any event that causes the child to respond is stimulation. The father’s smile, his words of encouragement and his embrace stimulate the child. They give the child the information that the father loves her and stimulate the child to respond to him. The touch of a hot object is a stimulus which helps the child to reach the conclusion that touching hot objects is painful and they must not be touched. The activities of running, hopping and other games are stimulating to the child. A toy, a book, a tree, a loud noise, the stars, the river — all stimulate the child. The entire environment is full of events, people and things, each one of which can be a stimulus.

However, what the child finds stimulating and how she reacts to that event changes with age as her abilities and thinking become more complex. When a nine month old child
picks up a flower, she feels it, tries to put it in her mouth and shows it to the person standing beside her. The adult probably responds by saying, “Yes, this is a flower but do not put it in your mouth!” The child may examine the flower closely but after a few minutes she may drop it to attend to something else. At three years of age the same flower makes the child ask, “What is the name of this flower?” By the time this child is five years old she wants to know how plants grow. She becomes interested in the variety of plants and learns that plants have different shapes, colours and sizes. At eight she may try growing a plant and is interested in observing how it grows from week to week. She learns that plants are living things. As a college student she may become a scientist specializing in Botany. Thus as the child grows, her thinking becomes more complex and she attends to more details. Some more examples will make this clear. A three year old child enjoys singing rhymes. A nine year old, however, may prefer to read a short story to singing a rhyme. However, one does not expect this child to read a book which is beyond her capabilities and, therefore, not meaningful. Three year olds like to jump from low heights because they have just mastered the skill and enjoy practising it; six year olds, on the other hand, would experiment hopping on one leg. It must be clear by now that stimulation refers to providing the child a variety of experiences that are meaningful.

The child’s need for stimulation leads her to explore. You have read in the first Unit that children are curious by nature. Exploration is the way the child learns about the world. It gives the child a sense of wonder about people and things. The play activities of children provide opportunities to find out about the world. Children learn during the course of play. It is curiosity and the desire to explore that have led people to making discoveries. At no other age is this urge more apparent than in childhood. This urge is the starting point of all educational programmes.

Let us now see how stimulation and exploration foster development. When a one-year-old points to an object and looks at the person standing beside her, the latter responds by saying, “This is a balloon. Do you want it?” In this process the child’s language develops. She has come to know that the object is called a balloon. Even though she cannot speak as yet, she has begun to understand simple speech. She has also heard a statement and a question and will realize that structure of language contains questions and answers.

The child’s social and emotional traits develop from her daily interactions with people and the stimulation she gets from them. The smile of the caregivers, their playful interactions in feeding, talking to and dressing up the child help her to form relationships.

Stimulation is essential for cognitive development. During infancy the caregiver and other adults talk to the child, tickle her, sing with her and play games such as hide and seek. Such playful interactions are the basis for learning. A stimulating environment during the preschool years, where the child has a variety of experiences and opportunities to explore and adults who help her understand her experiences and answer her queries, promote the child’s development. In the later Blocks you will read about the play activities that children find stimulating and that foster development.

4.4 NEED FOR LOVE AND NURTURANCE

Love and nurturance are central to the development of the child. Who is a loving and nurturing caregiver? A loving caregiver attends to the child’s needs promptly and with concern. When the infant cries, for example, she tries to find the reason for it and comforts her. The caregiver also anticipates the child’s needs and thus reduces her distress. Some acts of nurturance are talking with the child, playing and singing with her, listening to what the child has to say and spending time with the child. Love and warmth can be communicated while answering the child’s questions, appreciating and praising her or explaining to her when she does something wrong. Let us now see how love and nurturance help in development.

Love and nurturance lay the foundation for social and emotional development. As you know, the infant develops an attachment to the person who looks after her. This attachment forms the basis for all later relationships. If the infant finds the experience with this person rewarding, she feels it is worthwhile to form relationships and begins to
relate to other people. Every new relationship adds to the child’s experience and influences her attitude towards others.

A loving caregiver conveys feelings of love, warmth and security

In Unit 3 you have read what may happen if the child is not able to form a loving relationship in the first few months. Nurturance also influences the child’s feelings about herself. When the child is cared for, she feels she is important to people around her and is recognized and accepted. This adds to her confidence. You have read earlier that feelings of confidence are important as they influence one’s attitude towards success and failure. These feelings are important for another reason also. They influence the child’s exploratory behaviour. It is only when the child feels confident about adult protection and security that she tries to do something new or different. A child who is confident that caregivers will come to her when she needs them will take a new step. The one who feels insecure will cling to the parents. In short, language, mental and physical development are fostered by a caregiver who provides a variety of experiences to the child and does so with affection.
Check Your Progress Exercise 1

1) Read the following statements carefully and state in the brackets whether they are True or False.

a) As the child grows older, she becomes increasingly capable of fulfilling some of her physical needs. ( )
b) We respond to all the events that happen around us. ( )
c) Stimulation refers to providing the child with a variety of experiences that are meaningful for her. ( )
d) Stimulation is important only for cognitive development. ( )
e) Children like to explore their environment and in this process learn about the things and people around them. ( )
f) A loving caregiver tries to fulfil all the needs of children. ( )
g) Love and affection foster confidence and influence the exploratory behaviour of the child. ( )

"Can I Jump? Should I try? Yes, I will!"
A child who feels secure is willing to take on challenges

4.5 WHEN NEEDS ARE NOT MET

The fulfilment of the needs of the child will ensure her optimal development. If the child is not provided good physical care, it can lead to sickness and disease. In extreme cases, this may result in a handicap such as loss of sight or hearing. An undernourished and sick child has less energy and gets tired easily. She does not take interest in her surroundings and is irritable. This has a negative influence on all aspects of development.
Similarly, when the child lacks opportunities for exploration and has no affectionate caregiver, disturbances in development may result. You have read that if the child is not able to form an emotional bond with a caregiver in the first few months of life, her social development can suffer. Her cognitive, language and physical development may also be slowed down due to lack of stimulation. When the child lags behind in development, it may lead to low self-esteem and lack of initiative.

The needs of children are interrelated and all of them have to be met consistently and continuously. If love and nurturance are not forthcoming from the caregiver, the child’s development is most likely to be slowed down despite adequate amounts of food and stimulation. Usually these needs of the child are met by the family and primarily by the mother. In the normal course the family provides an optimal environment for the development of the child. If the child does not get affection from the family but is able to form a loving relationship with any one person, her development will not be adversely affected.

By now you must have realized that an optimal environment is necessary to ensure normal development of the child. An optimal environment would include adequate physical care, a variety of experiences and opportunities to explore which will stimulate the child. A loving and nurturing caregiver is absolutely important. Some children may be deprived of such an environment. Deprivation means a lack of something and in this field of study it has come to represent a state where children are continuously in want. Poverty usually causes a state of deprivation.

**Developmental changes in the needs of the child:** As the child develops, her needs change and become more complex. When the child is born she has to be fed, clothed, bathed and attended to. By four months of age she begins to turn over on her side. She can move from one corner of the bed to another and the mother must be careful because the child may fall. Thus at each stage of development the child needs a caregiver though the nature of the care changes. You will be able to recall many such examples from your own experiences and from observation of children. Similarly, you have already read that what the child finds stimulating changes with age.

### 4.6 CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

There are some children who have needs other than the ones discussed till now. Children with a disability need more care. Children who have a physical disability such as an inability to see, hear or speak or those whose cognitive and language development is slower or those who have an emotional problem have to be given special attention. These children must be provided special education in keeping with their abilities. A deaf child will not be able to benefit from the usual method of school instruction. Learning and teaching for her should take into consideration her inability to hear. Children with disability also need counselling for a vocation, patience on the part of the caregivers and assistance for health check-ups. Love and affection, so crucial for development, become all the more important in the case of such a child. The child already knows that she is different from others but she must not be made to feel inferior. A positive feeling about herself is important for the child in order to manage the disability and realize her potential. This is possible only when she is accepted and treated with affection.

### 4.7 THE RIGHTS OF CHILDREN

The needs of a large number of children in our country are not fulfilled. A large number of children born in India die within a few years of their birth. Even survival is not ensured. Many others suffer from ill health and disease and are handicapped throughout their lives. The reasons are many: inadequate food, living environments which breed disease and lack of money to avail of health facilities.

Many children find themselves in distressing situations such as being orphaned, separated, abandoned or neglected by the caregivers. Some of these children may be placed in institutions but others have to learn to fend for themselves from a very early age. A considerable number of children do not receive education because of one reason
or another. Many work long hours under dangerous conditions. The environment of such children is not stimulating and they do not get enough opportunities for play and exploration.

In the light of the fact that the needs of children in many parts of the world are neglected, some measures have to be taken to remedy the situation. It is necessary to do so because each child has the right to a happy childhood. This is possible only when all the basic needs are met. Secondly, children are future citizens and they must be helped to develop abilities and capacities that will enable them to be useful to society. Protecting children from the ill effects of poverty becomes a responsibility of the Government. Keeping these aspects in mind, the 'Declaration of the Rights of the Child' was formulated in 1959 by the United Nations. The declaration is a guideline for Governments and people working with children to plan programmes for them. It is not, however, legally binding.

4.7.1 UN Declaration of the Rights of the Child

The declaration states 10 rights. The Government of India has accepted the declaration and is a signatory. Let us read in brief the contents of the declaration.

Right to equality: All children are equal and are entitled to these rights without discrimination on account of race, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, birth or other status whether of himself or his family.

Right to special protection: The child will be given special protection and will be given opportunities and facilities to develop physically, mentally, morally, spiritually and socially in a healthy and normal manner and in conditions of freedom and dignity.

Right to name and nationality: The child shall be entitled from birth to a name and nationality.

Right to health, adequate nutrition, housing and medical facilities: Towards this end special care and protection will be given to the child and the mother including prenatal and postnatal care.

Right to special care for children with special needs: The child with special needs will be given the special treatment, education and care required by his particular condition.

Right to love and understanding: The child, wherever possible, will grow up under the care of parents and, in any case, in an atmosphere of affection and security. Society has the duty to extend particular care to children without a family and without adequate means to support themselves.

Right to education: The child will be provided with education which would enable the development of abilities, individual judgement and sense of responsibility and enable the child to become a useful member of society. The child will be given full opportunity for play and recreation.

Right to be the first to receive protection and relief in times of danger and calamity.

Right to be protected from all forms of neglect, cruelty and exploitation: The child will not be allowed to take up employment before a certain age and, in no case, will be recruited in any occupation harmful to physical, mental or moral development and which interferes with education.

Right to be protected from practices which may foster racial, religious or other forms of discrimination: The child must be brought up in a spirit of understanding, tolerance and peace and friendship among people.

Let us now read about the measures that have been taken in our country towards fulfilling the needs of children.
4.7.2 Directive Principles of the Indian Constitution

Even before the Declaration of the Rights of the Child in 1959, the framers of the Indian Constitution realized the importance of the needs of children. Consequently, they provided guidelines in the Constitution which, if followed, would contribute towards meeting the needs of children. These provisions in the Constitution are guidelines and not laws. The three guidelines with reference to children are:

- No child below the age of fourteen years shall be employed to work in any factory or mine or engaged in any other hazardous occupation.

- The Government shall ensure that the tender age of children is not abused and that they are not forced by economic necessity to do work unsuited to their age. Children will be given opportunities and facilities to develop in a healthy manner and in conditions of freedom and dignity. They will be protected against exploitation and abandonment.

- The Government shall try, within a period of ten years of the commencement of this Constitution, to provide free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of fourteen years.

The Government has, however, been unable to reach these goals. A large section of our population is unable to make use of facilities for education. Primary education is free in all states, but still only half the total number of school-going children attend school. Despite various legislations children continue to work in difficult and dangerous jobs. The employers find loopholes in the law and the children are forced to work because of poverty.

4.7.3 National Policy for Children

Realizing that despite many efforts and measures on the part of the Government and voluntary organizations, the needs of the children of a large section of our population were still unfulfilled, the Government adopted the National Policy for Children in August, 1974.

The policy states that children are a “supremely important asset” of the nation. Their care is the responsibility of the country. To meet these objectives the policy stated a number of measures among which are—the Government shall launch programmes for meeting the health, nutritional and educational needs of children and will protect them from cruelty and exploitation. You will read about some of the programmes for children in our country in Block 7.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

Answer the following questions briefly in the space provided.

1) Describe what may happen if the child lacks opportunities for exploration and does not get a stimulating environment.

............................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................

2) What is meant by the term ‘optimal environment’?

............................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................
3) What measures have been taken in our country to meet the needs of children?

4.8 CHILD CARE SERVICES

By now you must have realized that there is a need to plan programmes for children that would help meet their needs and see that their rights are ensured. While planning services one has to keep in mind the age of the children for whom they are intended, the duration of the services and the inputs that would be provided. The services may be for children living with their families or for abandoned or orphaned children or those with special needs; they may be provided for a few hours in a day as in a preschool, for eight hours a day as in a creche/day care centre or the services may be residential in nature; the services may provide any or a combination of the inputs of health care, nutrition and education.

This Course, as you know, aims at enabling you to plan services of a creche or a preschool for children up to six years. Creches provide a full day's care to children. A preschool is a centre for three to five year olds. Preschools are called by various names: anganwadis, balwadi, vikaswadi, nurseries, kindergartens and play centres. In creches and preschools one would need to provide the inputs of health care, nutrition and play activities for children since the needs for physical care, stimulation and nurturance must all be met for optimal development. In other words, creches and preschools provide early childhood care and education.

4.8.1 The Need for Child Care Services

You are aware that the Government has started programmes for early childhood care and education. Some of these programmes provide services of day care centres and preschools. Providing these services is important because a number of families lack the resources to fulfil all the needs of children. However, these services are able to help only a limited number of children. There is a need for increasing the number of such services.

Creche services are needed because the number of women who work outside the family setting is increasing. In such a situation the mother, who is outside the home for a major part of the day, has four options regarding the child:

i) She can leave the child with a hired help at home.
ii) She can take the child to her place of work.
iii) She can leave the child with another adult member of the family.
iv) She can leave the child with an older child at home.

However, each of these options has its limitations. The first alternative is open only to those who are able to afford hired help. When the mother takes the child with her to her place of work, the child is left on her own while the mother works. She may play with other children there, if any, but her opportunity for interaction with caring adults is limited. The third alternative is possible only if there are other adult members in the family. However, among families of lower socio-economic groups, where these services are most required, there is rarely an adult who can stay at home to look after the children since all adults go out to earn. The fourth possibility of leaving the infant with an older child deprives the older child of education and is one of the reasons for the low literacy levels in our country. Besides this, the older child may not be able to look after the younger one adequately. If child care facilities are provided in the primary schools, the older children will be able to leave their younger brothers and sisters in the creche/day care centre for the duration for which they are in school. This would also benefit the younger children since they would avail of the various services at the child care centre.
How does preschool education help a child? Is it useful to attend a preschool? You will read about this aspect in the following subsection.

4.8.2 Components of Child Care Services

Let us briefly discuss the nature of inputs that should be provided in the child care centre. The subsequent Blocks will deal at length with the needs of children in the different age groups and how they can be met in a child care centre.

Health: Health is an essential part of total development. Regular health check-ups to ensure that the child is developing normally and immunization against preventable diseases are necessary. Referring the child to the hospital in the case of complaints which cannot be treated at the local health centre and first aid facilities are also important aspects of health care.

Nutrition: Adequate nutrition is important for the health of the child. It is known that a number of children do not get the amount of food they need. Many others do not eat the right type or adequate amount of food. Depending upon the duration of their stay in the centre, children should be provided snacks or meals.

Education: You know that education is important for the child. What do we mean by education for the young child? We mean providing stimulation to the child by allowing opportunities for play since this is the way children learn.

From birth to three years of age the child comes in contact with parents, siblings, other members of the family and neighbours. Stimulation is provided by these people and this is the way the child learns about herself, develops language, acquires physical and motor skills and learns about the world around her. By the time the child is about three years old she is physically mobile, has acquired language and can communicate her wants. Her thinking has further developed. The child's world broadens and she begins to take an active interest in everything around her. She wants to know why it rains, what the names of objects are and why things move. During the preschool years the child learns a variety of concepts during the course of play and through the events and experiences in her environment.

Some parents enrol their children at three years of age in a preschool. This is the beginning of preschool education. However, there are several wrong ideas about the nature of education to be given at this age. Many believe that education begins only when the child enters Class 1. Before that it is expected that the preschool child will learn a few rhymes and stories, identify some vegetables and animals, learn to draw and paint and get into the habit of sitting quietly on a chair or a mat. On the other hand, there are parents who force their children to memorize names of colours, alphabets or numbers and to read and write. They feel that these years are not to be wasted but must be used for formal learning. They do not realize that the child is not yet ready for this type of rigorous formal instruction. This emphasis on learning becomes a burden for the child and she begins to fear school.

Parents who think that nothing much happens in preschool years miss a critical period in the child's life when opportunities for play and exploration help the child to grow in mind and body. Those who feel that these years are important for formal learning make learning a burden for the child. What then is the meaning of preschool education?

Preschool education aims at the all-round development of the child, i.e. physical, motor, cognitive, language, social and emotional, by providing the child stimulating experiences and opportunities for play and exploration. Of course, a loving and warm caregiver is absolutely important. Children's play should be the medium of learning in a preschool. Preschool education becomes important because it provides a setting for a child to learn to relate to others, make friends and do things in a group where she imbibes the values of sharing and cooperation. The child becomes confident about herself. This will help her to adjust to a bigger group in the primary class and to cope with being away from home. Besides promoting social and emotional development, preschool education is important for physical, cognitive and language development as well. It has been seen that children who have had some kind of stimulation during the early years are more likely to do well in primary school and less likely to leave school after the first one or two classes. For a child who has not attended a preschool, primary school is unfamiliar. She may be unprepared for the formal routines of school. Finding
school unpleasant she may wish to leave it. She, therefore, does not stay long enough in school to learn to read, write and count. Thus preschool education prepares the child for formal schooling.

You have read in this Unit that children find stimulation through play. It has been said that play should be the medium of learning in the early years. In the next Unit you will read about the role of play in development.

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

Answer the following questions briefly in the space provided below.

1) What are the three factors that necessitate providing child care services?

............................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................

2) What should be the purpose of preschool education?

............................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................

4.9 SUMMING UP

In this Unit you have read that the child needs physical care, stimulation and love from the caregivers. All these needs of the child must be met simultaneously to ensure optimal development. Usually these needs are met by the family, primarily by the mother. The family provides an optimal environment for the development of the child. However, these needs of the child can also be met by persons outside the family. For many children in the world basic needs are neglected. Recognition of this fact and the realization that this must be remedied led to the Declaration of the Rights of the Child in 1959. The Directive Principles of the Indian Constitution and the National Policy for Children adopted by the Indian Government provide guidelines for ensuring a happy childhood for all children. The fact that an increasing number of women have started working outside the home has made it necessary to provide creches. Preschools prepare the child for formal schooling and foster all round development. Creches and preschools should meet the child’s need for health care, nutrition and stimulation.

4.10 GLOSSARY

Rewarding: Any event, thing or behaviour that is satisfying and pleasurable to the child. In this particular case, rewarding refers to a satisfying emotional relationship with the caregiver.

Signatory: One who has signed a document or an agreement.
4.11 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

1) a) True
b) False. We respond to the events in the surroundings selectively.
c) True
d) False. Stimulation is important for cognitive, language, social, emotional, physical and motor development.
e) True
f) True
g) True

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

1) If the child lacks opportunities for exploration and does not get stimulation, her development in all areas will suffer. This can lead to low self confidence and lack of initiative.

2) Optimal environment means an environment that meets all the needs of the child. If the environment is optimal, the child’s development will proceed according to the norms. An optimal environment will include adequate physical care, opportunities for exploration and loving and nurturing caregivers.

3) The Directive Principles of the Constitution and the National Policy for Children have been framed. Based on these, the Government has launched programmes for meeting the health, nutritional and educational needs of children.

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

1) i) A number of families lack resources to fulfil all the needs of their children.
   
   ii) Many of the families where both parents are working do not have adequate arrangements for the care of younger children during the day. Therefore, provision of creches becomes necessary.

   iii) Preschool education becomes important because it prepares the child for school and fosters all round development.

2) Preschool education should enable all round development of the child. This is possible by providing the child stimulating experiences and opportunities for play.