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Children and teacher at the Creche supported by the Lanka Mahila Samiti (The Women's Institutes of Ceylon).

The Lanka Mahili Samiti

One of the prime interests of the Lanka Mahili Samiti is the operation of over seventy creches and nursing schools throughout the island of Ceylon. The purpose of establishing these creches and nursing schools is to provide the small children with suitable environment for education and growth and also has the intention of freeing their mothers during the daytime hours to enable them to do productive work. The women's movement operates milk feeding centres, vaccination campaigns and health education programs in the rural areas with the assistance and cooperation from the Island's Department of Health. In the last few decades the Women's Institutes have achieved tremendous success in maintaining better personal and environmental sanitation in the rural areas. They also receive assistance not only

from the various government departments but also from a number of foreign organizations.

The creche in the village of Wewala is typical. It has an average attendance of twenty pre-school children. A young girl of twenty-two who has received her training at the Institute's Training Centre at Kaduwela runs the day to day affairs of the creche under the direct supervision of the Women's Institute Headquarters at Colombo, the capital of Ceylon.

The Women's Institutes of Ceylon (W.I.C.) which is a charitable organization, were started by an Ontario woman, Dr. Mary Rutnam, about forty years ago. During the past years the W.I.C. has played a decisive role in the welfare and development of the rural women in Ceylon and now the Women's Institutes are credited with having over two thousand branch societies scattered throughout the island. At all times the Women's Institute has worked in close cooperation with the government of Ceylon in common national endeavours.

The Women's Institutes have always been mindful of the vital role played by agriculture in the economy of the island. They have intensified their agricultural programs in keeping with the present national urgency in agricultural development and food production. The rural women were encouraged to expand their home gardens and community plots where vegetables and subsidiary crops are grown

Rice seedlings being transplanted in a paddy by rural women in Ceylon.

