Early Childhood Education Initiative
Sangareddy, Telangana

A Brief Overview
The Early Childhood Education Initiative at Sangareddy helps Anganwadi Teachers develop as capable and caring practitioners, such that their Anganwadis become vibrant learning centers for holistic development of 3 to 6 year old children. Azim Premji Foundation initiated the intervention in 2012 to understand and strengthen the Early Childhood Education (ECE) provided under the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) scheme, a public sector programme for children.

The initiative started with an exploratory study, on the basis of which 40 Anganwadi teachers across 4 sectors in Sangareddy were chosen. Within these chosen centres, a multi-modal approach was used to build the capacities of the Anganwadi Teachers. After 5 years of experience and learnings, the work has now been expanded to reach teachers across the entire district, with specific intensive engagement with 200 teachers.
1. Supplementary Nutrition
2. Immunization
3. Health Check-up
4. Referral Service
5. Pre-school Education
6. Nutrition & Health Education

The Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS), launched in 1975, is a government welfare scheme that offers six services at Anganwadi Centres for children under the age of 6 and their mothers:

- Children under 6 years
- Pregnant & Lactating Mothers
- Children 3 - 6 years
- Women 15 - 45 years

Until recently the programme has been focussed on the areas of health and nutrition. But over the past few years, the need for quality preschool education has also taken a position of prominence. Our study across the district of Sangareddy revealed an absence of trained professionals and an inadequate system for in-service ‘teacher capacity building’ to deliver an effective Pre-school education programme. The need for additional support from external organizations thus became apparent.

ECE Initiative on the Ground

Involved in direct & continuous engagement with 200 centres (and teachers) across the entire district since 2018.

ICDS AT A GLANCE - SANGAREDDY

| No. of ICDS Projects | 5 |
| No. of Sectors | 58 |
| No. of Anganwadis | 1,504 |
| No. of Anganwadi Teachers | 1,496 |
| No. of Children (0-3 years age) | 68,616 |
| No. of Children (3-6 years age) | 48,630 |

NHT S Data, July 2018

Spread of initial set of 40 centres (engaged since 2013)

AWC Anganwadi Centre
ECE Initiative Timeline

**STUDY PHASE**
- 2012 - 2013: Exploratory Study
- 2014: Baseline Study (leading to selection of 40 centres)

**PREPARATORY PHASE**
- 2014: Centre Level Engagement started
- Developmental Assessment tool for young children introduced

**INTERVENTION PHASE**
- 2016: Developmentally Appropriate Curriculum created
- Capacity building:
  - Workshops
  - Sector Meetings
  - Teachers Seminar
  - ECCE Day
  - Bala Mela
- Objectives mapped to local context
- Multi-modal approach:
  - Teacher Magazine
  - Project Meetings
  - Teachers Mela
  - Exposure Visit

**EXPANSION PHASE**
- 2017: Direct & Continuous engagement with 200 centres across all 5 projects
- 2018 - 2019: Developmentally Appropriate Curriculum created
- Capacity building:
  - Workshops
  - Sector Meetings
  - Teachers Seminar
  - ECCE Day
  - Bala Mela

**Multi-Modal Approach**
- **Engagement with 200 selected teachers**
- **Engagement with teachers across the district**
- **Support offered at platforms organised by ICDS**

**KEY**
- ICDS Supervisors
- Anganwadi Teachers
- Functionaries’ Workshop
- Teachers’ Workshop
- Teachers’ Magazine
- Teacher’s Seminar
- Teacher’s Mela
- ECCE Day
- Bala Mela
- Intervention at Anganwadi
- Sector level Meeting
- Project-level Meeting
- Teachers’ Magazine
- Teachers’ Workshop
- Teacher’s Seminar
- Teacher’s Mela
- ECCE Day
- Bala Mela

The following slides showcase some of these efforts and experiences from field.
Foundation members provide on-site support to Anganwadi teachers to build their capacity. They demonstrate new ECE activities, aid in planning weekly schedules and connect with the community during their visit to the centre.

Initially the teachers had the children remember rhymes only through phonetic repetition. They now include actions, enabling the children to understand the rhymes that they recite. In addition to singing and playing, the teachers now also focus on conversation, storytelling and concept related activities.

Learning from Nature

Members motivate teachers to explore various ways of teaching young children. Nature walk is one such way in which children learn about different kinds of plants, their parts, and their uses by observing their surroundings.

Time spent by teachers in ECE has increased from 1 hr to 2.3 hrs per day
Weekly Plan

Strengthening the Curriculum

Foundation members support Anganwadi teachers in planning classroom activities during afternoon visits to the centre, when children are sleep. They discuss various Early Childhood Education concepts and the merits of each curricular activity. Members then help teachers to contextualize the activities to suit specific children in her classroom.

Teachers’ Workshop

Peer Learning

As a supplement to the ICDS trainings the Anganwadi Teachers attend the quarterly Teachers’ Workshop which is organized over 3 days as part of continuous capacity building, bringing into focus the teachers’ knowledge, skill and understanding.
**Functionaries’ Workshop**

**Building Together**

ICDS Supervisors participate in team building activities as part of capacity building. The two days’ residential workshop is held once a quarter for Supervisors to strengthen their perspectives on ECE and to enable them to coach Anganwadi teachers.

**Sector-level Meetings**

**Practicing Curricular Activities**

Foundation members demonstrate ECE activities for the next month’s curriculum at the monthly sector-level meetings. Members also help the teachers understand the significance of each activity to the child’s development, further supporting them in delivering an effective ECE programme at their Anganwadis.

Monthly:

480 Teachers attend meetings across 16 Sectors
Project-level Meetings

Learning ECE Concepts

Foundation members address Anganwadi teachers on ECE concepts in their monthly project-level meeting. 90 minutes are set aside in each meeting for teachers to engage with pedagogical aspects and functionary-suggested requirements, to help them effectively implement a quality ECE programme.

~300 teachers attend project meetings

Teachers’ Mela

Learning from Each Others’ Successes

The Anganwadi Teachers’ Mela is a site of enthusiasm where new ideas, and good practicies are shared. A large number of teachers gather to attend the 8 workshops that run concurrently. Each workshop, facilitated by 1 teacher and 3 Foundation members, relates to a different domain of child development. The Mela leaves the teachers with a high level of motivation to translate their learnings into practice.

About

250 - 400 Teachers gather at each Mela
Low-cost Teaching-Learning Materials

Learning by Creating

Orientation programmes on creating low-cost teaching-learning materials are conducted by Foundation Members at the Teacher Resource Centre, Sangareddy District Institute. Short videos describing the step-by-step method of creating the materials have also been produced.

Mobile Library

Sharing Stories

A collection of 40 children’s books from various publishers are exchanged between Anganwadi centres on a fortnightly basis, and the teachers are encouraged to create various opportunities for the children to use the books. Foundation members observe the child’s interest, book selection, and their narration to others in order to guide the teachers to address the child’s specific developmental needs.
Bala Mela

Children’s Fest

Parents and children participate in ECE activities at the Bala Mela event, where Anganwadi teachers sensitize the community on the importance of child developmental aspects. The Children’s Mela offers an important opportunity for the teachers to strengthen their connect with the community.

Monthly ECCE Day

Interaction with the Community

Foundation members support teachers in orienting parents on the importance of early years and early childhood education during the monthly Early Childhood Care and Education Day (ECCE Day). The event connects the Anganwadi Centres to the community for better delivery of services, including Early Childhood Education. Teachers demonstrate ECE activities along with the children, and also showcase their work. This has helped in increasing the retention and regularity of the children.
Reading co-teachers’ experiences
Teachers go through articles written by fellow teachers on their practices in Toliadugulu (First steps), the quarterly teacher magazine.

Peer-learning across States
Sangareddy Anganwadi teachers were sent to observe the methods followed by teachers at a Maharashtra Anganwadi centre, which is supported by Centre for Learning Resources, Pune.
An Anganwadi teacher shares her noteworthy field practices with district wide co-teachers, other ICDS officers and Project Directors at the Anganwadi Teachers Seminar, a platform where Anganwadi teachers can share their learnings. So far two seminars have been held with participants from across the district.

**Some Effects of the ECE Initiative**

1. **Supportive Indoor Learning Environment**
   - Minimal learning materials and empty walls
   - Now charts are at eye level, materials are accessible & organised

2. **Developmentally Appropriate Activities**
   - Focus was on writing
   - Focus is now on activities leading to holistic development

3. **Space Demarcation**
   - Cluttered space with mixed learning materials
   - Learning corners created, materials grouped by components (conversation, story, concept, etc)

**Learning corners created, materials grouped by components (conversation, story, concept, etc)**
## How are the Anganwadis Doing?

### Key
- **Engaged Centres**: Centres that have scored above 60% on the ECEQAS assessment scale.
- **Un-Engaged Centres**: Centres that have scored below 60% on the ECEQAS assessment scale.

### Time for ECE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Time for ECE (min)</th>
<th>Centre Score (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2014 - 15 (Baseline Study)</td>
<td>42.25</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015 - 16</td>
<td>50.14</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016 - 17</td>
<td>52.76</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017 - 18</td>
<td>53.14</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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### Steps to Improve ECE in Anganwadis: Our Learnings

1. **Teachers**
   - Most Anganwadi Teachers work under difficult circumstances, and strive to do a good job. What the Teacher needs from us is trust and support.
   - Teachers are integral to the learning experience. An Anganwadi Teachers’ job is as complex as that of a School Teacher.
   - Professional qualifications are necessary for new Anganwadi Teachers. Existing Teachers need a continuing in-service program for them to become better educators.

2. **Curriculum**
   - A developmentally appropriate curriculum is necessary for the holistic growth of the child.
   - Hands-on experiences through interactive teaching, play-based exercises, outdoor activities and engagement with materials need to be included.

3. **Infrastructure**
   - Young children need a physical environment that is spacious, welcoming and safe for their learning and development.
   - Essential features of an early learning environment should include sufficient floor space, hygienic toilets, running blackboards, learning corners, seating circles, and so on.
   - In addition, children need a plethora of visual, tactile and textual materials for learning and play, both indoor and outdoor.

4. **Family**
   - Family is an important part of the child’s learning and development ecosystem.
   - It is important to develop harmonious relationships and reciprocal linkages between the Anganwadi Centre, parents and community.
Early childhood education is foundational to the growth of the child; improving Anganwadis is therefore a national imperative. While the overall ECE system needs fundamental structural changes, our experience shows that it is possible to improve the quality of early education by addressing first-level issues of infrastructure, curriculum, learning materials and community participation. Sustained efforts to empower Anganwadi Teachers by implementing mentoring mechanisms for their professional development can go a long way in strengthening the Anganwadi experience.

Summary

Early childhood education is foundational to the growth of the child; improving Anganwadis is therefore a national imperative. While the overall ECE system needs fundamental structural changes, our experience shows that it is possible to improve the quality of early education by addressing first-level issues of infrastructure, curriculum, learning materials and community participation. Sustained efforts to empower Anganwadi Teachers by implementing mentoring mechanisms for their professional development can go a long way in strengthening the Anganwadi experience.

Glossary of Terms Used

**ECE** : Early Childhood Education  
**ECCE** : Early Childhood Care and Education  
**AWT** : Anganwadi Teacher  
**ICDS** : Integrated Child Development Services Scheme of the Women and Child Development department, Government of India  
**Centre / Sector / Project Levels** : ICDS at the district level is divided into Projects which are further divided into Sectors for administrative purposes. Each has about 30 – 40 Anganwadi Centres  

**Foundation Members** : Team members of the Early Childhood Education Initiative team at Sangareddy District Institute of Azim Premji Foundation  
**Multi Modal Approach** : An approach to capacity building that uses frequent and varied modes of training  
**ECEQAS** : Early Childhood Education Quality Assessment Scale - a tracking tool developed by Centre for Early Childhood Education and Development (CECED), Ambedkar University, Delhi