

**PROMOTING
EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION
THROUGH ICDS CENTRES IN PURI**



Humara Bachapan Trust

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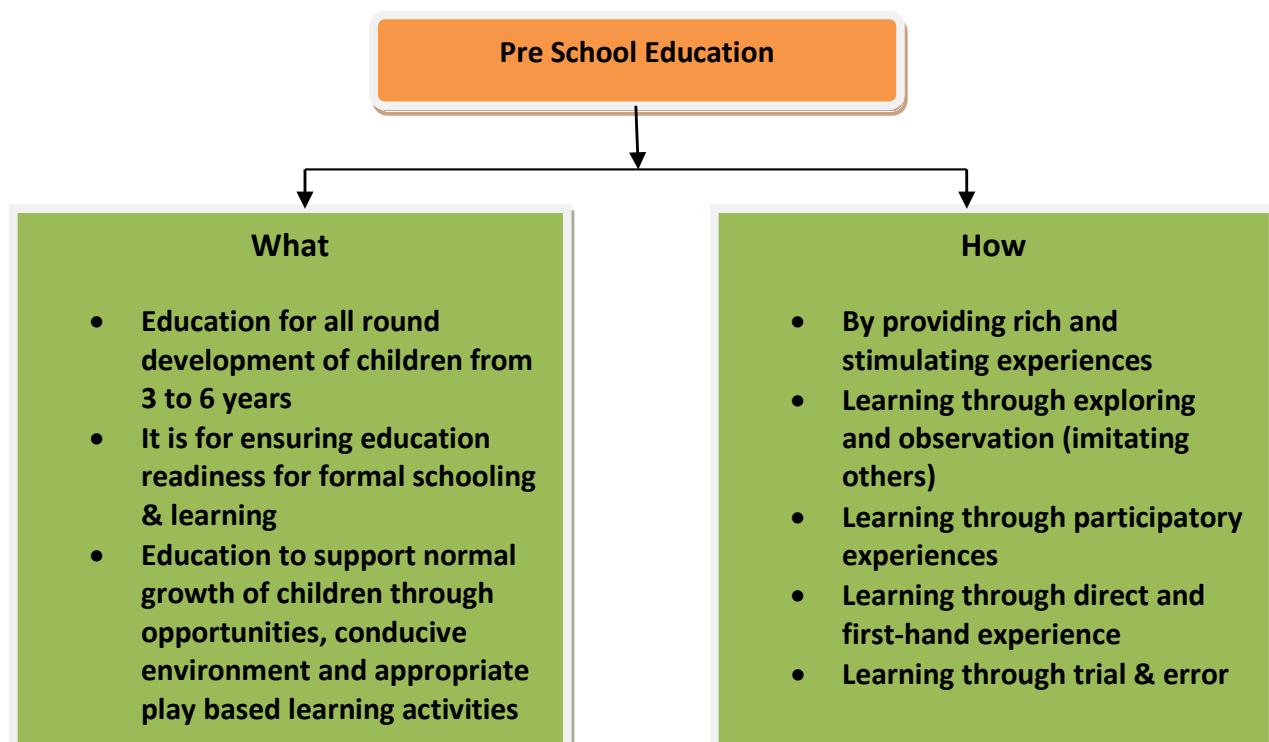
Promoting Early Childhood Education through ICDS Centres in Puri

Background & Relevance

Early childhood is the most rapid period of development in a human life. The ultimate goal of Early Child Development Education (ECDE) programs is to improve young children's capacity to develop and learn. A child who is ready for school has a combination of positive characteristics. He or she is socially and emotionally healthy, confident, and friendly; has good peer relationships; tackles challenging tasks and persists with them; has good language skills and communicates well; and listens to instructions and is attentive. ECDE programs change the development trajectory of children by the time they enter school. A child who is ready for school has less chances of repeating a grade, being placed in special education, or being a school dropout.

Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS), scheme is the world's largest program for promotion of maternal and child health and nutrition and providing preschool education to children from 3 to 6 years, is getting implemented by Government of India since 1975. The ICDS services are provided through ICDS centres, popularly known as Anganwadi centres.

Pre-school Education implemented in a non-formal way is an important component of the ICDS programme. This initiates and causes all round total development of the children. Thus, Anganwadi centres are the first school for the children as it initiates children's development in different aspects and also prepares them for better adjustment in formal schools. The Anganwadi centres therefore should be equipped with child friendly infrastructure, proper learning environment, playing and learning materials and with trained and motivated teachers to provide non-formal preschool education.



Humara Bachpan's ECCD Interventions:

Humara Bachpan Early Childhood Care & Development (ECCD) intervention strategy is focused on Articles 3, 6 and 18 of the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and designed to

- Enhance the quality, accessibility and equitable distribution of services for children during the early childhood
- To promote play based, experimental and child friendly provisions for early education and all-round development of young children
- Recognize the parents and family members as the primary caregivers and healthcare providers and empower and support them to ensure their roles for early childhood brain development
- To involve communities and eliciting community participation in the monitoring process of early childhood services

HBT's ECCD interventions focus on promoting all round development of children in terms of physical, social, emotional, creative, language and cognitive development through a quality play-based, developmentally appropriate set of programs.

HBT's involvement in ICDS centres has the objective of making children ready for school through some specific kinds of play based, cognitive and language related activities and experiences which will foster in them skills and concepts related to readiness for learning of the 3R's i.e. reading, writing and arithmetic, prior to their entry to primary schooling.

HBT works to provide enabling environment in the Anganwadi centres so that learning at this early stage must be directed by the child's interests and developmental priorities, and should be relevant to their family and social context and should not be academic and formal in content and method. The 'Building as Learning Aid' (BaLA) framework is followed to develop model Anganwadi centre by exploring and using uniqueness of three dimensional space and environment as a child-friendly resource centre for learning and development. Our work creates an interface between architecture and developmental needs of children.

Promoting ECDE in the Anganwadi Centres

HBT is intervening with ten city based Anganwadi centres of Puri to promote enabling environment for children's holistic development which will ultimately lead children towards successful transition from home to preschool and preschool to formal primary school. This pilot program has the following priorities.

- To provide quality non-formal pre-primary education to children living in urban poverty in a playing and learning mode
- To equip the Anganwadi centres with a different vision to discover, plan and implement preschool education component for overall quality enhancement and prepare children for school
- To develop low cost innovative strategies package for the teachers to enhance the child friendly environment in Anganwadi centers
- To promote children's rights to play through a range of outdoor activities which will boost their physical development, cognitive and socialization skills

Methods Followed and Implementation Plan

HBT conducted a survey of eighty city based Anganwadi centres of Puri Municipal area in the aftermath of severe cyclone 'FANI' to assess the damages made to Anganwadi centres and facilities. The survey identified some gaps in terms of facilities and infrastructures required for providing services of early childhood care and development. Based on the findings HBT recommended to build child friendly Anganwadi centres which can provide high quality pre-school education services with child focused teaching learning methodology referring to BALA framework.

Moving ahead, district administration entrusted HBT to build ten Model Anganwadi centres which will cater the above mentioned services to children living in urban poverty.

The activities to be undertaken under this pilot program are

- Selection of Anganwadi centres which will be built as model Anganwadi centres in consultation with District Social Welfare Officer (DSWO) & Child Protection Officer (CDPO)
- Mapping out the centre specific requirements
- Making necessary infrastructural changes to build model Anganwadi centres following BaLA framework
- Providing an playing and learning environment in the centres with support of playing and learning materials
- Handholding support to Anganwadi workers to conduct the preschool education activities through playing and learning materials for Physical, cognitive, language, Social and Emotional development of the children
- Building less expensive outdoor play space through 'Kabbad Se Juggad' program
- Involving communities in the process and generating community ownership

The Anganwadi centres selected in the urban communities of Puri for the intervention are as follows.

1. Srikhetra Nagar
2. Mali Sahi
3. Dhoba Sahi
4. Bijaya Nagar (A)
5. Penthakata (G)
6. Hatisala
7. Goudabada Nolia Sahi
8. Goudabada Bidhaba Ashrama
9. Chitrakara Sahi
10. Binoba Nagar

Three levels of interventions were made to develop the Anganwadi centres as model Anganwadi centres translating child-friendly BaLA concept to a reality.

- Transform interior settings for joyful learning experiences
- Reinforce concepts of ECE curriculum and support free play activity through TLM kit
- Develop the outdoor free space as playful environment

Transform interior settings for joyful learning experiences

The architecture of the Anganwadi centre needs to be accessible and joyful with adequate space for children to move around. While developing the interiors of the Anganwadi centres, the designing was made innovatively treating the space and the built elements. The following transformations were brought in the centres.

Infrastructural maintenance of the centre: The severe cyclonic storm FANI had impacted the Anganwadi centres. The major repair work was done by the administration. However, the Anganwadi walls were found to be cracked, colour faded and developed with fungus. Colour in small doses is appealing and adds to the attractiveness of the Anganwadi environment. The maintenance and colour washing work is done for all the centres to give an attractive look. In Noloia Sahi Anganwadi centre, the floor of the classroom was damaged; the levelling work is done followed by colouring of the floor to make the sitting place better.

Child-friendly writing boards: Children love to scribble and this habit also develops their writing skill. To promote this among the children, low height green boards are prepared in each Anganwadi classrooms. To give more children the chance to write or scribble work same time, segments of green boards are made on the walls, allocating one segment for each child.

Children Activity Board: Displays of the children's art work give children pride in themselves while offering good decoration for the classroom. In each classroom, a children activity board is prepared at children's eye level, where the Anganwadi teacher can pin the drawings or any other creations done by the child. This will foster self-esteem, as children will feel their work is valued. Parents also will feel proud of their children and take a more active interest in their education.

Shelves: Shelves have been prepared in the class rooms to hold manipulative toys, puzzles and other learning materials for children to explore. The lower parts of the selves are kept empty where children can keep their bags, their creative items and other belongings.

Wall Painting: Wall paintings are done in the study room to make the environment attractive and child friendly.

Display Learning Materials: To convert the Anganwadi walls and teaching aid tools, picture boards based on the pre school curriculums are prepared and fixed to the walls. It is important to create a print-rich environment and draw attention of children to animal, flowers, fruits and vehicles etc in their immediate environment. The display materials include the followings.

- * Pictures of Flowers
- * Pictures of animals
- * Pictures of fruits
- * Pictures of vegetables
- * Pictures of birds
- * Types of insects & flies
- * Types of vehicles
- * Stores of 'Friendship (Bird & Ant)', 'Strength of unity'



Two story series also are put as display learning materials for children in the Anganwadi centres. It is best to label pictures as this helps young children understand that written words can be used to represent objects. The visual learning is more useful for children to see and remember. The display learning materials are placed at eye level for children.

Before



After



Bidhaba Ashram AWC

Before



After



Bijay Nagar(Balia panda) AWC



Reinforce concepts of ECE curriculum and support free play activity through TLM kit





In developmentally appropriate Early Childhood Education (ECE) programmes through ICDS centres, the presence of play and learning materials have a very important role. Young children learn through play and by interacting with their immediate environment. To promote the pre-school learning program appropriate for the young children, HBT developed and provided a range of developmentally appropriate playing and learning materials to the 10 model Anganwadi centres. The TLM materials are developed considering the following objectives.


- To encourage inquisitiveness, imagination and promote a sound foundation for learning
- To promote cognitive skills such as concept of shape, size, color, sequential thinking and pattern making
- To support the child's holistic development which include physical and motor skills, cognitive skills, language and communication skills, socio-emotional development and creativity

Given the importance of play and play materials, HBT prepared Pre-School Education Kit for the model Anganwadi centres following the guidelines. The TLM materials should be

- ❖ Multi-purpose and multi-domain to foster holistic development — all domains such as sensory, fine and gross motor, cognitive, social, emotional, personal, and creativity need to be fostered
- ❖ Safe for children (Non-toxic material and colours, smooth edges and large enough to prevent swallowing)
- ❖ Durable and sturdy
- ❖ Culturally and environmentally appropriate
- ❖ Balanced to equip different activity corners
- ❖ Adequate in quantity, with a variety of different materials available, There should not be too few, preventing all children from playing, nor too many, preventing children from learning to share, cooperate and wait for their turn
- ❖ Flexible so children can extend their play by bringing materials from one area to another. Materials that reflect the diversity of children's family lives
- ❖ Easily accessible to children so that they can use and choose the material during free play and individual activities

TLM Materials with its Use & Impact on Child's Development

Name of the TLM Tool	Use of TLM	Outcome	Image of the TLM
Blocks	By playing with blocks, children begin to learn about shapes, sizes, and colours. They may compare the blocks, arrange them in some shapes (e.g. railway track) etc. Blocks motivate children to think in creative ways as they build different kinds of structures. Moreover, children build a structure cooperatively, which requires them to communicate with each other and work as a team.	To help children understand relationships between objects, apply reasoning, as well as develop spatial concept To lay foundation for understanding ordinal positions	
Picture Puzzle cards	Learning to match, sort, classify, and put objects in order develop number sense in children. A variety of experiences, both guided and free, to handle and explore objects help children understand relationships between objects, apply reasoning, as well as develop spatial concept.	To improve cognitive development of child To identify & understand the number and Alphabets	
Color Sticks & Colored pebbles	Matching sets of objects with cardinal numbers and using one count term for each stick improves numerical skills among children, Identifying colorful sticks and sequencing them according to the color help children learn to compare and analyze, which helps to develop in them a scientific temper	To improve fine motor skills. To improve eye, hand & mind coordination To improve creative thinking, ideas & imagination	
Colour Sand Board	dry sand to be spread over base of the board that of the board should not be visible and children do draw any shape, or write any alphabet or any pattern on the base by using fingers and small twigs(stick) will improve the figure movement, enhance the writing skill within a limited area	To improve fine motor skill, To promote creative skill (expressing through art), emergent writing (free drawing)	

Masks	An animal face mask for children is basically meant for entertainment of children. Wearing mask play activity can be performed that will hold the attention and interest of children and will give pleasure and delight.	
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Develop the outdoor free space as playful environment

Children’s outdoor play is being increasingly recognized as essential for their healthy development. Recognizing the importance of play in children’s lives and their development, Humara Bachpan Trust (HBT) created inexpensive outdoor play spaces in nine Anganwadi centres of Puri district. The aim of the initiative is to give children in the early childhood a chance to get access to services that will develop their creative and imaginative skills through playing and recreation. The idea is to transform the open space available in the ICDS centers to a playtime paradise for which there is no requirement for big budgets or fancy materials, just a little outside the box thinking and commitment with the use of open ended and recycled materials like tins, pipes, tubes, tins, drums and wooden boards etc. We name this initiative ‘Kabbad Se Juggad’ which justifies the purpose of the intervention.

The outdoor play spaces are built with a range of play units such as Swings, slides, Sea-saws and balance structures constructed from loose materials

Objectives

1. To promote children’s rights to play through a range of outdoor activities which will boost their physical development, cognitive and socialization skills
2. To share practical ideas on how to embed outdoor play in early childhood care and development services to ensure the quality and appropriateness of the program

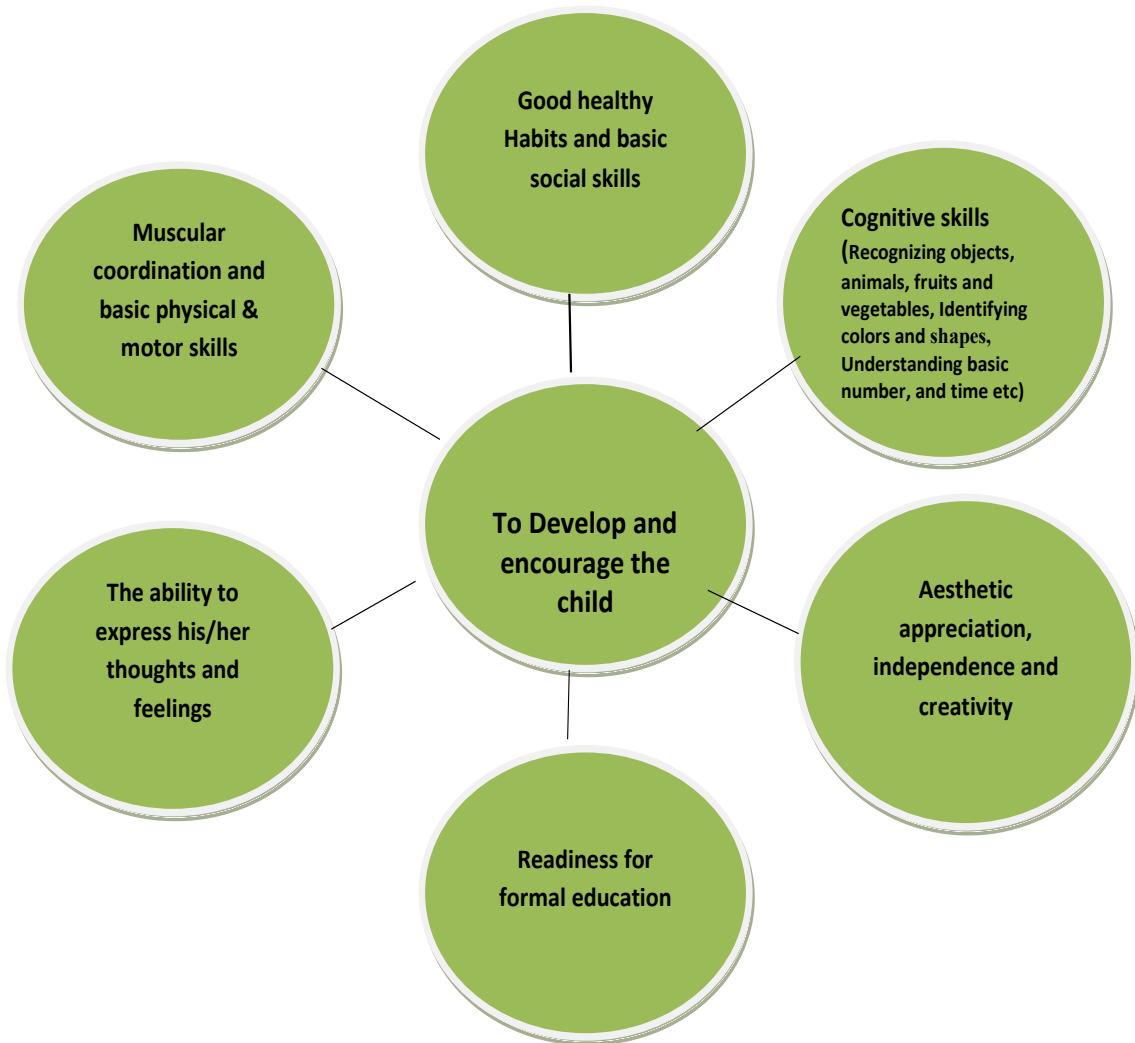
The range of outcomes is expected from the intervention.

- While playing outside, children will benefit from being exposed to sunlight, natural elements, and open air, which contributes to bones development, stronger immune system and physical activity.
- Physical activities like jumping, running, kicking, crawling, balancing and throwing are good for their health, fitness and physical development.
- The specific features and stimulus of the outdoor environment provide for different play opportunities that can hardly be replicated inside.
- From an early age, the possibility to experience several opportunities for unstructured play, in which children can decide what to do, with whom and how, will promote positive self-esteem, autonomy, and confidence.



Outcome of the Intervention

In order to make the games and activities rewarding HBT built the TLM materials considering the competencies of a child at different ages. Every game and activity can be played with certain variation to suit the child's age and competence level. The intervention of building model Anganwadi centres in Puri is planned according to the pace of child's growth aims to help the child at each stage to grow to his optimum. With this three phased initiative, a holistic competency growth is envisioned. The following figure explains the expected development among the Anganwadi children.



Picture Gallery

DhobaSahi AWC

Before



Before



After



After



Hatishala AWC

Before



Before



After



After



Bidhaba Ashram AWC

Before



Before



After



After



Malisahi AWC

Before



Before



After



After



Bijaya Nagar Balia Panda

Before



Before



After



After



Chitrakara Nagar AWC

Before



Before



After



After






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