

MESSAGE



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GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT
(DEPARTMENT OF WOMEN & CHILD DEVELOPMENT)

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Shastri Bhawan, New Delhi-110001, Dated

FOREWORD


The Centrally Sponsored Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) scheme aims at holistic development of children in the age group of 0-6 years belonging to the economic and socially backward sections of the society. Under the scheme, a package of services is delivered consisting of pre-school education, supplementary nutrition, immunization, health check-up, nutrition/health education and referral services.

The pre-school education component under the ICDS is a crucial component aimed at providing a learning environment for the promotion of social, emotional, cognitive physical and aesthetic

development of the child through a non-formal, play way method. It fosters school readiness and positive attitude towards education. The pre-school activities at the anganwadi centres free the elder siblings, especially girls, from child-care responsibilities during the time. The strengthening of pre-school education in anganwadi centres will go a long way in promoting the national goal to achieve universal primary education. Recognizing the two-fold significance of early childhood development – its direct influence on development of child through early stimulation, and its potential contribution to the goal of universal elementary education – the Government of India has recently decided to improve the quality of the pre-school education in the anganwadi centres through provision of pre-school kits.

I am indeed happy that WFP along with the government of Madhya Pradesh has implemented a pilot project on pre-school activity in Dhar district of Madhya Pradesh. While it is realized that the pre-school component of the ICDS is a very important activity for the holistic development of children, its effective implementation in state especially which have low literacy is to be substantially improved. Proper implementation of this component can have dramatic impact in the development of children, and also positively affect the literacy rates.

I would like to congratulate WFP and the District Administration of Dhar in successfully implementing this pilot project. I would also like to thank UNESCO for the contribution they have made to this useful activity.



(Rekha Bhargava)

FOREWORD

Approximately 170 million of India's population is under six years of age, the largest number for any country in the world. Thirteen million of these children are expected to receive pre-school education through the social sector programme Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) considered vital for a strong foundation for proper physical, psychological, cognitive and social development.

The ultimate delivery of this non-formal education depends on a cadre of over 500,000 women workers called Anganwadi Workers (AWWs). Their dedication to the programme is admirable, but many of them are at low levels of literacy themselves or are illiterate. There is therefore a need to help these women perform their education role in spite of their literacy level and to give to all of them a good model of interactive pre-school education to deliver to the children of the centres.

This pilot project conducted by WFP with assistance from UNESCO and in close collaboration with the District Administration, Dhar (Madhya Pradesh), and the ICDS team was a response to the above need. Vikramshila Education Resource Society (VERS), Calcutta and Bal Niketan Sangh, Indore were the two NGOs responsible for the implementation of the pilot.

The initial results from the implementation of the pilot project have been encouraging. Two surveys conducted after about six months from the training of the AWW, have revealed an increase in attendance of children at the centres, children's recall of activities and items in the kit, ability to categorize items into shape, size and colors. The anganwadi workers were also putting what they have learnt to practice and the pre-school activities increased substantially in many of the centres.

Besides the increase in attendance, there has been a change in the behaviour and approach of the AWWs and children to the pre-school education component. The interest level of children has

gone up and the AWWs were now confident of engaging the interest of the children during the three hours prescribed for preschool education every day.

Request for replication of this initiative is a demonstration of its success. The pilot project demonstrated that it is possible to bring about a significant difference to the pre-school education component of the ICDS with **very little investment of approximately one dollar per child per year**. The cost for subsequent years could be even lesser as refresher trainings are not needed on an annual basis and several items in the pre-school education kit can be made locally.

We are confident that the Department of Women and Child Development (DWCD) will be able to replicate this in the ICDS across the country, with a priority to the backward districts of the most food insecure states. We also request the donor community to look at the model and assist in enabling a proper environment for the pre-school education of children living in poverty, mainly in rural India.

And finally we would like to thank Dr. Rekha Bhargava, Joint Secretary, DWCD, Ms. Rina Ray, former Director, DWCD, Mr. Gopal Krishna, Director, DWCD, and Mr. O.P. Rawat, former Commissioner, Mahila Bal Vikas, Madhya Pradesh, for their support and guidance to the pilot project.

Special thanks are due to Mr. Rajesh Rajora, District Collector, Dhar, Mr.S.C.Choubey, District Women and Child Development Officer, Dhar and their team for their support and cooperation for the implementation of the pilot. We also thank Bal Niketan Sangh and Vikramshila Education Resource Society, the two NGOs, the pillars of the pilot project, for their commitment and dedication. We would be failing if we do not acknowledge the efforts of all the anganwadi workers and supervisors who came long distances to attend the residential programme, and participated whole-heartedly. We would like to value the contributions of WFP staff members especially J.K Raman and Kalpana Tawakley for conceptualizing and implementing a replicable model.



Christine van Nieuwenhuysse
Deputy Country Director, WFP



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INTRODUCTION



On a typical morning in India, nearly 13 million children in the 3-6 year age group are expected to reach the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) centres known as anganwadis (AWs). At these AWs they are to be befriended, looked after and provided pre-school education by a female worker recruited from the vicinity - rural or urban. Known as anganwadi workers

(AWWs), these women are the mainstay of the *largest government run integrated programme in the world* aimed at providing six basic services – supplementary nutrition, health and nutrition education, health check-up, immunisation, referral services, and pre-school education (PSE) to children and pregnant/nursing mothers .

Set up in 1975, the ICDS is the *biggest social sector programme* of the Government of India (GOI) serving as a vital safety net for the most vulnerable sections of the population living in poverty. It currently covers over 4,300 development blocks (administrative units) of the country and benefits nearly 27 million children under 6 years of age, and over 5 million women.

The **World Food Programme (WFP)** supports the GOI's ICDS programme primarily through the provision of supplementary nutrition (SN) in some food insecure areas of the country. WFP also undertakes pilot programmes for the strengthening of other ICDS components which together with SN make for a basic integrated package essential for normal development of children. The **Madhya Pradesh Pre-School Education (MPPSE) pilot** is one such initiative aimed at *setting up a cost-effective model of strengthening the pre-school component of the ICDS*

NEED FOR THE INTERVENTION



While the importance of early childhood education in establishing a good foundation for overall development (physical, social, emotional and cognitive) of children is well recognised, the **skills and tools** available to the AWWs for the purpose are often very limited.

Typically an AWW, especially in States such as Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan is at very **low levels of literacy** or at times totally illiterate. This negatively affects not only her ability to undertake all the tasks required of her role, but also impacts the community's perception of her as a 'teacher'. Further, she is not able to 'teach' what the community expects a typical 'teacher' to do.

As per the established procedures AWWs, are supposed to receive a **training** to equip them for the tasks they are expected to handle, which also includes the pre-school education component. However, many States are faced with training back-logs, and sometimes AWWs continue working for years without undergoing any formal training for conducting pre-school education.

Even when the training has been received, in the absence of quality supervision /feedback and lack of community involvement in ICDS, they often do not put all that is learnt to use and the children have to make do with a very limited range of activities.

Non-availability of **teaching aids or funds** for purchase of teaching/learning material is a serious constraint. Thus a number of AWWs do not even conduct the pre-school education (PSE) activity and consequently the communities largely perceive the AWs as food distribution centres. The attendance is often poor in cases where the PSE is conducted. Many times the AW does not even open for the three hours prescribed for PSE.

The problem is further compounded by the fact that the AWW is expected to handle, and meaningfully conduct PSE single-handedly (with limited help from the anganwadi helper), for about 30-40 children ranging from 3 to 6 years who are enrolled at the AW. In a majority of the centres she has been provided with no tools/ PSE material, nor funds for procurement of the materials. Where such materials are received they are often not sufficient to take care of all the children (even in groups), leading to quarrels amongst the children. Usually the AWW is also fearful of losing/spoiling the material and thus opts to keep it securely locked in a cupboard, or out of the reach of children !

The AWs, especially in States such as Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan, often function from the AWW's **one roomed hut**, or at times from under a tree. This has an inhibiting influence on her ability to conduct PSE in a manner that is interesting for the children and may require for instance, hopping like a rabbit, or roaring like a lion- behavior not associated with adults.

THE INTERVENTION



This pilot intervention was designed to address some of the above mentioned constraints faced by the AWW. It was primarily aimed at giving her training to enhance her skills of engaging a multi-age group of children with the help of a PSE kit. Other important aspects to be touched upon included issues affecting the framework in which PSE is delivered such as cleanliness, punctuality and community involvement. Since skills alone do not necessarily translate into good performance, it was felt necessary to address the issues of commitment, and a resolve by functionaries to enhance their performance levels, through an oath-taking ceremony.

The pilot involved the stages enumerated below:

- Reviewing of the existing curriculum for pre-school education in ICDS.
- Designing and implementing a training programme for angan-wadi workers and supervisors in order to enhance their skills in conducting pre-school education.
- Selection and provision of an appropriate pre-school education kit to support the anganwadi worker in her work.
- Monitoring, evaluating and documenting the intervention to facilitate the replication of the intervention.

Details regarding the selection of the training-kit and the training programme, are given in the annexure.

THE LOCATION AND THE PARTNERS

District Dhar, a tribal district of Madhya Pradesh was identified as the location for implementing the pilot. Three ICDS projects- Tirla, Dhar (rural) and Nalcha with 429 AWWs and 26 Supervisors were selected. The District Collector and the ICDS team were closely involved in the planning/ implementation of the project and contributed both financially and administratively to the pilot.

Vikramshila Education Resource Society (VERS), Calcutta is a NGO engaged in innovative educational training for teachers serving disadvantaged sections of society. They have also designed a number of PSE tools for vulnerable groups. They were responsible for the selection of an appropriate kit and designing of the training programme in consultation with all the partners, and for monitoring and evaluating the pilot.

Bal Niketan Sangh (BNS), Indore was chosen for the production of the education-kit and for conducting the training programme. This NGO has a long association with the ICDS. It is a trainer of middle level ICDS functionaries (Supervisors) and also designs and produces PSE material. WFP played the role of a manager, catalyst, and co-funder with UNESCO.

THE IMPACT

The training programme was conducted during the period January to April 2000. The monitoring visits to AWWs were conducted **two times** one immediately after the training programme, in March-May and subsequently in November 2000, by a team from VERS, with the following objectives:

- to assess the outcome of the training programme.
- to provide clarifications to the AWWs directly in the field.
- to provide and receive feedback from the project personnel.

Twenty three percent of the AWWs covered by the pilot (100 out of 429 AWWs) were monitored in the first round, and 29% of the total (124 AWWs) in the second. The surveys involved on-the-spot visits to the AWWs, and meeting with the communities.

The results of the intervention, as gauged through the two rounds of surveys, have been very positive. Some of the salient observations are as follows:

- There was a substantial increase in the percentage of AWWs graded as **very good** in implementing what they learnt at the training programme, and the children's performance - from **10%** in the first round to **26%** in the second round (increase of **16 percentage points**), between the two surveys.
- On the whole, **35%** of the centres visited in the first survey were **graded as good or very good**. This figure rose to **42%** in the second survey (an increase of **7 percentage points**). About 44% of these were situated in remote areas. A special effort had been made to reach them. It was found that supervisors had started making visits to these centres following the suggestions made during the first visit.

- While **24%** of AWWs were found **closed** in the first visit, only **17%** of the centres visited were found closed in the second round- a **reduction of 7 percentage points**.
- There was an overall improvement in children's attendance
- The interest level of children had gone up and the AWWs were now confident of engaging the interest of the children during the three hours prescribed for PSE everyday.
- A marked change had come about in community perception – many guardians expressed the need for pre- school education and had come to realise that the ICDS centres were more than nutrition centres.
- A better utilisation of existing resources by the AWW for conducting PSE was evident.

Good results were also obtained through yet another larger intensive monitoring exercise conducted by WFP/GOI just at the time when the training was given, and 6 months later, in the district. The sample was drawn from the entire district and was not restricted to the centres covered by the pilot intervention. The results are included in Table 1 and corroborate the findings of the two surveys conducted by VERS.



Table 1 : PSE Information: Findings from WFP Intensive Monitoring in District Dhar, Year 2000.

Indicators	March /April (%)	October /Nov (%)	Increase Percentage point
Average enrollment (as per AW records)	29	30	1
Attend PSE (Data from beneficiaries)	46	95	49
Attend regularly (Data from beneficiaries)	33	69	36
Use of variety in teaching methods during the day	75	87	12
Use of PSE supporting material	75	88	13
Children's recall of activities with PSE supporting material used in last month	71	86	15
Children' s familiarity with supporting material available	67	89	22

The demand for the replication of the pilot has come from other districts and States. WFP enabled the districts of Jhabua in Madhya Pradesh and Banswara in Rajasthan to do a similar exercise for nearly 200 AWs each. Jhabua district is planning to cover all its anganwadi workers with the same training programme.

HOW MUCH DOES THE INTERVENTION COST _____

A single PSE kit costs Rs.900 (US\$ 20) and a five day residential training about Rs.1,320 (US\$ 28) per anganwadi worker. Thus, with a modest total amount of Rs.2,220 (US\$ 48) per anganwadi, the PSE component of ICDS can be made effective. Considering the fact that about 40 children can benefit from this, it translates to a cost of about ***Rs. 55 (US\$ 1.2) per child in a year, or Rs.4.58 (US\$.1) per child per month for the first year. The subsequent year costs could be even lower as only a few items in the kit will need replacement, and refresher training may be required once in 3-4 years.***

Thus, at a cost of barely ***Rs. 4.58 (US\$.1) per month per child***, each AWW can help reach about 40 children with basic skills, attitudes and competencies that result from PSE – thereby building a sound foundation for their primary education. It is for the development planners to conclude whether this is a justifiable investment on which returns are clearly astronomically higher.

ANNEXURE

The Training Programme and the PSE Kit

The Training Programme

A Training Programme was designed in conformity with the PSE curriculum prescribed under the ICDS. The training module was designed bearing in mind the basic principles of adult learning. The contents were organised around ‘problem areas’ as opposed to the conventional ‘subject-centric’ approach.

It was agreed that the trainers will wear the mantle of ‘facilitators’ and that the entire process will be participatory, harnessing on existing knowledge-base/skills of the participants.

An intensive five-day residential training programme was organised for the purpose of impressing upon the need for pre-school education amongst the participants, and for equipping them with skills and tools for conducting effective PSE. Other important factors such as cleanliness, timeliness, regularity, community participation etc. which form the framework for pre-school education were also touched upon. A batch size of 25-30 participants, preferably each supervisor with her team of AWWs was composed.

A number of the AWWs were illiterate. Some were even unable to sequentially count the numbers up to ten. Practical work at the training showed that some had difficulty in handling scissors for the preparation of teaching/learning material. The participants said that their inhibition/shyness was a major factor constraining their ability to conduct the PSE sessions. There was a strong

demand for the programme to focus on giving them **intensive hands-on experience** of conducting pre-school education, and **in the use of the PSE kit**.

The original schedule and module was fine-tuned while conducting the first batch of the training in order to make it more suitable to the needs of the participants, their educational level and feedback. The final *module is available on request from WFP,53 Jorbagh, New Delhi-110003*.

A large chunk of time each day was spent in learning by doing- in preparing and using a variety of Teaching Learning Material (TLM). The PSE Kit was given on the first day itself along with a quick demonstration regarding the use of the contents. The use of resource kit in preparation of the TLM was initiated on the same day. Each day, this preparation of TLM continued as evening assignment, much after the programme concluded for the day. In order to maximise the use of the time available to the participants, a facilitator from VERS was made available to the participants even in the evenings (beyond the training hours) so that they could continue to practice the skills that they were acquiring.

The visit to a well run AWC and BNS's own Pre-school education centre was very fruitful. The participants saw how PSE could be made interesting and meaningful with limited resources, but with a little bit of imagination and commitment.

The final day was used to exhibit all the TLM prepared by each participant and a demonstration of their use.

The final day was also used for the preparation of an action plan by the supervisor with her team of AWWs aimed at running ideal AWCs. They were asked to draw upon discussions in the five days regarding issues of punctuality, cleanliness, conducting good PSE, enhancing attendance, seeking community participation etc. They were also urged to promote literacy amongst AWWs, many of whom had easy access to education through family members.

The action plans created by the groups were compiled in the form of an oath which was read as the participants held each others hands in a commitment to march collectively towards running good AWs with a strong PSE component.

This oath was signed by both the AWWs and Supervisors and carried back by each one of them. They were encouraged to prominently display it in their AWCs as constant reminder to them, and as information for those who visit them.

The Supervisor's oaths had an additional dimension of ensuring that her monthly meetings with the AWWs are used to discuss problems and solutions and new techniques of doing work, encouraging those who are found to be doing good work at their AWs and those who are taking steps towards further development through education etc. The supervisors were encouraged to use their AW visits to ensure prompt repair/maintenance of the kit being provided.

The Pre-School Education Kit

The primary concern was to provide an **effective set of material** at **low cost** with a view to be able to replicate the intervention on a larger scale. This necessitated the selection of items which were both low cost and lent themselves to **multiple usage**, wherever possible. Both **indoor** as well as **outdoor activity** material were selected. A number of items lent themselves to usage for **individual, small groups or collective activities**.

A degree of **durability**, and **ease of repair** at the AW level was also considered important as the items were to be repeatedly handled by children/ AWWs. A mix of ready- to- use items and raw material for the preparation of low cost teaching-learning material was sought. Thus a special feature of the kit was the inclusion of a **teacher's raw material resource kit** containing items such as a pair of scissors, gum, sketch pens, crayons, colors, story/animal/bird charts, clay etc. This material could also be used for repairing of some of the worn out PSE items. The AWWs were given many exercises in use of this material.

Boxes with pictures of items and usage are on the following pages.

Ready to Use PSE Kit @Rs.575 (US\$ 13) per kit



1. Pocket board with 200 printed cards (Rs125)

Used to display cards with pictures/ alphabets/numbers for matching, sorting, story telling etc.



2. Dhaphli (Rs. 40)

May be used in many ways – to provide music and rhythm for a number of games and songs

3. Rope (Rs.20)

Could be used for a number of games- walking on the rope, crawling below, or jumping above, etc.



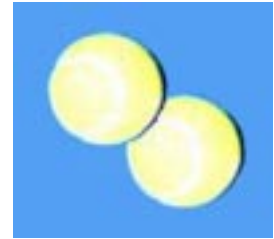
4. Feely bag (Rs.20)

Each child is asked to put a hand inside the bag, feel one of the objects inside and guess as to what it is.



5. Ball (Rs.10)

Many catching/throwing/bouncing games are possible.



6. Football (Rs. 50)

Many catching/throwing games are possible.



8. Set of six fruit/vegetable puppets (Rs. 125)

Story-line- Each fruit/ vegetable is to emphasise its good properties to the princess while asking for her hand in marriage.



7. Set of four rod puppets with four bags/gloves (Rs.80)

Additional gloves can easily be prepared by the AWWs for any story/song/ rhyme.



9. Threading boards (Rs.50)

Children learn to use their fingers for threading the boards



10. Tyre (Rs.25)

A number of games are possible – rolling on the ground/ around the body, crawling through tyre, throwing things into the tyre etc.



11. Ring (Rs. 30)

Many catching, throwing rolling games are possible.