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Early Childhood Education in India *A Suggestive Roadmap- 2014*

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Foreword

Every child deserves a chance to excel, and the World Bank is deeply committed to investing in early childhood education (ECE) that has the high potential to help achieve the World Bank's twin goals of eliminating poverty and increasing shared prosperity. Investing in young children is one of the best investments that countries can make: to address inequality, break the cycle of poverty, and improve a wide range of outcomes later in life. The quality of a child's early learning experience makes a difference for school preparation, participation, completion, and achievement. Increasing preschool enrollment to 50 percent of all children in low- and middle-income countries could result in lifetime earnings gains from \$14 billion-\$34 billion, making it a compelling cause for countries to invest in early learning.

ECE is an area located in a policy environment that is complex and multi-sectoral; inhibiting efficiency in designing successful policies and scalable programs in this area. Coordination within sectors and across institutions would greatly enhance effective service delivery. India in recent years has seen a shift in the Central Government's policy and planning efforts as well as State Governments' actions towards improving the quality of education. The Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD) has developed a National Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) policy in 2013. Early-grade reading, writing, and mathematics in primary education have received an impetus under the recently launched 'Padhe Bharat Badhe Bharat' program of the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) of the Government of India. These are all very welcome steps. Going forward, a greater convergence of ECE with the formal education system would ensure that children transition smoothly from pre-primary to primary schools, and are indeed 'ready' for school. Firstly, India's massive network of anganwadi centers under the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) that are co-located in the primary schools offer a unique opportunity for the schools to engage more substantively in the ECE provision at the anganwadis. This system should be strengthened for effective convergence between the anganwadis and the formal primary schools for ECE provision. Secondly, the primary schools themselves could explore offering a focused 60-90 days of school readiness package that could contain the critical foundational skills and readiness that the child needs to possess in order to transit to formal primary schooling. Lastly, the decentralized and state led model that some states have been exploring of providing a year of pre-school education under the formal primary system may be strengthened and adopted by other interested states for scaling up.

Through the World Bank's Technical Assistance (TA) to MWCD on Early Childhood Education, a Roundtable was organized with various stakeholders from Government as well as private sector and NGOs to deliberate upon the areas and initiatives that should be prioritized in order to improve ECE in India. This report has emerged from the Roundtable discussion and simultaneous additional research from available resources. It is hoped that the Report would be useful for a diverse set of stakeholders and provide a way forward for a constructive discussion and action on moving towards holistic ECE available to all sections of the society.

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The Report includes case studies on select organizations, and the team would also like to extend a special word of thanks to all of them for their support while drafting the case studies.

Photo credits: Centre for Early Childhood Education and Development, Ambedkar University (Coverpage), Vinyas (case study on Building as Learning Aid)

Executive Summary

The first six to eight years of a child's life, known as early childhood, have been globally acknowledged to be the most critical years for life-long development of children. Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) refers to a holistic and integrated program encompassing inseparable elements of care, health, nutrition, play and early learning, within a protective and enabling environment. One of the key elements of ECCE is Early Childhood Education (ECE). The National ECCE Policy, released by the Ministry of Women and Child Development, India, has defined ECE as *'pre-school informal education for children in the age group of 3-6 years to prepare them before start of formal schooling'*.

India has ~164 million children in the age group of birth to 6 years and ~75 million children in the age group of 3-6 years. The challenge of ensuring the well being of this important section of the population is well acknowledged, and the importance of providing them a high quality, developmentally appropriate education cannot be overstated. There is a strong correlation between attending a high quality ECE program and the overall holistic development of children, including several cognitive, social and psychomotor competencies.

ECE improves children's school readiness, which leads to higher enrolment in elementary education and better learning outcomes, as well as improves benefits from nutrition programs targeted at young children. Well-targeted ECE programs cost less and produce more dramatic and lasting results, hence resulting in a higher rate of return than education investments at any other level. Overall, in order to work towards a productive adult workforce, there is a strong case for governments to focus on ECE.

To take forward the journey towards effective ECE in India, The World Bank organized a Roundtable discussion on **"Needs Assessment for outcome oriented action in ECE"** that was attended by relevant stakeholders from Central Government, State Governments, NGOs and academia on the 25th of November 2014. This Report has emerged from the discussions during the roundtable and has been supplemented by a review of research available from existing resources on ECE. The Report highlights the importance of ECE, discusses the current landscape of ECE provision in India and the challenges faced by both the public and private sectors, and finally, recommends interventions to counter the challenges. The document concludes by providing a **suggestive roadmap for ECE and lays out a specific 'call to action' for various stakeholders.**

In India, ~60-80% of all eligible children receive some form of ECE: ~50% children go to government-run Anganwadi Centers (AWCs) and ~10-30% children attend private preschools. ECE is delivered in the public system at AWCs, as part of the Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS), the flagship welfare program of the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD). There have been significant budget allocations for ICDS annually, but there is a need to provide further impetus to the education component of the scheme and ensure that AWCs are sufficiently focused on ECE. At the same time, quality of non formal pre-school education provided by the unregulated and rapidly growing private sector and NGOs is

also uneven and varies from a minimalist approach to an accelerated academic program. As a result, very often when 6 year old children migrate to primary schools, their ability to absorb competencies and skill sets at that level is quite limited.

Recognizing the challenges being faced in the enormous task of providing quality ECE services to ~75 million eligible children, MWCD released the National ECCE policy in September 2013. The policy has a vision of "*achieving holistic development and active learning capacity of all children below 6 years of age by promoting free, universal, inclusive, equitable, joyful and contextualized opportunities for laying foundation and attaining full potential*". Subsequently, MWCD has also released **The National ECCE curriculum Framework (NECF)**, which provides guidelines for age appropriate ECE curriculum, and **Quality Standards for ECCE**, which provides guidelines to assess effectiveness of ECCE programs. However, a lot more needs to be done to ensure on-the-ground understanding and implementation of the guidelines recommended in these documents, and address the key challenges being faced by both the public as well as private providers.

Firstly, it is important to **ensure universal and equitable access** to ECE for all eligible beneficiaries, including underserved segments of the population (e.g. urban slums, children with special needs (CWSN), etc.). Secondly, **quality of services** provided at the ECE centers needs to be significantly improved. Quality includes implementing a developmentally appropriate curriculum and pedagogy, ensuring availability of adequate teaching learning materials at ECE centers, ensuring adequacy of staff both in terms of strength and capability, providing enabling infrastructure and overall, defining certain non-negotiable quality standards across all these elements that are monitored. Further, **community and parental engagement** is critical for success of an ECE program. Awareness amongst caregivers regarding importance of developmentally appropriate ECE programs can enable them to demand high quality ECE services as well as provide a more stimulating environment to children at home. Lastly, given the scale of ECE services in India, **efficient program management** becomes indispensable. This involves a review of the overall structure of the State and District level organizations responsible for ECE delivery, and the monitoring and supervision processes. Moreover, mechanisms to achieve desired convergence and coordination amongst various ministries, departments and policies need to be looked into. Lastly, research capabilities in the field of ECE, and sharing of information and best practices among stakeholders, need to be analyzed.

This report looks at each of the above described four areas, that is, Access, Quality, Community Engagement and Program management of ECE delivery in detail, and proposes emerging ideas for interventions that have been finally summarized as part of "**A Suggestive Roadmap for ECE in India**".

The Roadmap has three components. Firstly, it describes interventions to enable and strengthen the individual units of ECE delivery, that is, the AWCs as well as the private ECE centers. Secondly, to be able to achieve improvement at scale, it discusses interventions to bridge gaps in the systemic capabilities

of the ICDS network, for example large scale training capacity. Thirdly, it describes possible ways to govern and manage ECE programs more effectively.

Finally, to facilitate implementation of the recommendations of the Roadmap, the report suggests specific action areas for all key stakeholders, including the Central and State Governments, the private sector and academia. For example, Central Government has the critical role of providing the requisite top-down focus and policy direction for ECE, of monitoring the performance of States, and of building platforms to facilitate convergence and collaboration between relevant ministries. At the same time, State Governments need to thoughtfully develop and implement a comprehensive 'ECE transformation roadmap', in line with the Suggestive Roadmap described above, but contextualized to the specific needs of the State. The Roadmap must have well-defined, measurable, and time-bound outcome orientated goals that should be rigorously tracked. Lastly, NGOs, academia and funders should support the State Governments in implementing their state-wide transformation agendas, while also promoting innovation and indigenous research in ECE that can guide effective policymaking and implementation. A more comprehensive set of action areas for each important stakeholder is detailed in the report.

1 Early Childhood Education (ECE) and Its Importance: International Evidence

The first six to eight years of a child's life, known as early childhood, have been globally acknowledged to be the most critical years for life-long development of children, when the pace of development is extremely rapid. Early experiences at home, in communities, and at other care settings play a crucial role in brain architecture development and lay the foundation for lifelong development potential of children. This growth in the early years supports a range of early skills, including cognitive skills like early language, literacy, and numeracy; social skills like empathy, persistence, attention, and self-regulation; and executive function skills like the voluntary control of attention and behavior.¹

The National Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) policy of India, defines ECCE as a holistic and integrated program encompassing inseparable elements of care, health, nutrition, play and early learning within a protective and enabling environment. It caters to pregnant and lactating mothers and children from prenatal to 6 years of age. One of the key elements of ECCE is Early Childhood Education (ECE) which refers to *"preschool informal education for children in the age group of 3-6 years, with the objective of preparing them for start of formal schooling"*². India's National ECCE Policy states that a developmentally appropriate ECCE program for 3-6 years old children should include "Protection from hazards, healthcare, nutrition, attachment to an adult, developmentally appropriate play-based preschool education with a structured and planned school readiness component for 5-6 year olds".

The importance of Early Childhood Education cannot be overstated, and several global studies point towards it from multiple dimensions. First and foremost, there is a strong correlation between attending a high quality ECE program and the overall holistic development of children, including several cognitive, social and psychomotor competencies. ECE also improves children's school readiness, which leads to higher enrolment in elementary education and better learning outcomes. Further, there is evidence that ECE is necessary to achieve the desired benefits from nutrition programs targeted at young children. Multiple studies have proven that children receiving ECE services along with nutrition services score better on all development indicators, including health, as compared to children who receive nutrition services alone³. Lastly, there is evidence that well-targeted ECE programs cost less and produce more dramatic and lasting results than education investments at any other level.

¹ Harvard Center on the Developing Child (2007). The science of early childhood development: Closing the gap between what we know and what we do.

² As defined by the National Early Childhood Care and Education Policy released by Ministry of Women and Child Development

³ Investing in Young Children: An Early Childhood Development Guide for Policy Dialogue and Project Preparation by The World Bank

The subsequent sections detail out each of the above stated benefits of Early Childhood Education along with substantiating evidence in more detail.

1.1 Impact of ECE on Overall Development and School Readiness of Children

The High Scope Perry Preschool Study, conducted in the United States (profiled in Box 1) and The Effective Provision of Preschool Project⁴, conducted in the UK, both confirm that a high quality preschool program for young children living in poverty contributes to their intellectual and social development in childhood, their social success and economic performance in adulthood, as well as reduced probability of committing crime later in life. Further, studies in Brazil, Indonesia, Jamaica, Peru, the Philippines, and South Africa, among several others, have shown that linguistic and cognitive development delays can accumulate rapidly among preschool aged children, if not addressed in time. The time and opportunity for development lost in these crucial years of brain formation is difficult to compensate for in later years.

One of the critical dimensions of development strengthened by a high quality ECE program is School Readiness, which is the degree to which a child is prepared to learn and succeed in school⁵. Higher school readiness supports universalization of elementary education as well as higher learning level outcomes. Research has increasingly shown that children's school readiness depends on their cognitive skills upon entering primary school as well as on their physical, mental, and emotional health, and their ability to relate to others.⁶ Research also demonstrates that cognitive abilities are as strongly affected by the quality of the environment and the amount of stimulation and learning opportunities that children are exposed to from birth, as they are by genetics⁷. Similarly, children's socio-emotional development and physical capacity are also strongly influenced by their early environment. Through ECE, such stimulation and learning opportunities can be provided to children in a structured manner, hence advancing their school readiness.

The High Scope Perry Pre School study conducted in the United States with 123 low-income African-American children found that children with exposure to a high quality ECE program have 28% higher chances of graduating from high school when compared to children without ECE exposure. Further, a recent study by Centre for Early Childhood Education and Development (CECED) of Ambedkar University, conducted in three Indian states, Andhra Pradesh (AP), Rajasthan and Assam⁸, also found

⁴ Sylva, Kathy, et al. The effective provision of pre-school education (EPPE) project: Final Report: A longitudinal study funded by the DfES 1997-2004. Institute of Education, University of London/Department for Education and Skills/Sure Start, 2004; available at: <http://eprints.ioe.ac.uk/5309/1/sylva2004EPPEfinal.pdf>

⁵ Ackerman and Barnett 2005

⁶ Hair et al. 2006

⁷ Fernald et al. 2009

⁸ Study on "Quality and Diversity in Early Childhood Education" conducted across three states, Assam, Andhra Pradesh, and Rajasthan by Center for Early Childhood Education and Development, Ambedkar University, India.

strong correlation between quality indicators of an ECE program and school readiness of children participating in the program.

1.2 Impact of ECE on Nutrition Benefits and Vice-Versa

Young children cannot reach their full potential through good health and nutrition alone. Indeed, children who have access to adequate nutrition sometimes fail to eat and grow properly because they lack stimulation and attention at an early age. These cases may lead to a spectrum of conditions called “failure to thrive”⁹. Evidence from a study in Jamaica demonstrates the cumulative effects of nutrition and child stimulation among 9 to 24 month-old stunted children. Those children who received both nutritional supplements and stimulation scored higher on developmental tests than those who received only one or neither of the interventions. After two years of implementing the intervention that involved providing 1 kg of milk-based formula per week and 1-hour weekly home visits by community health workers to improve mother-child interactions through play, the Development Quotient (DQ) gap between stunted and non-stunted children was nearly erased among those malnourished children who received both nutrition and stimulation interventions.¹⁰ A study in Vietnam yielded similar findings. Staged interventions involving nutrition provision between ages 0 and 3 years, and stimulation between ages 4 and 5 years produced improved cognitive outcomes among children compared to those who received only the nutrition intervention.¹¹

There is a strong case that emerges for government services that support child development to deliver on an integrated program of health, nutrition and education, with adequate emphasis on each element. Negligence of either of the elements is likely to lead to developmentally insufficient and inadequate milestones in young children.

1.3 Social Rate of Return of ECE Programs

Benefits of quality preschool education typically come in two forms. First, in the form of cost savings, such as reduced spending for special education and grade retention, as well as lower involvement in child protection, welfare, and criminal justice systems. Second, benefits may flow from greater economic productivity, especially higher earnings as adults. It is also important to note that these benefits accrue not only to the individuals who directly participate in preschool programs, but also to society, e.g. through reduction in crime¹².

⁹ Lozoff 1989; Tanner 1990

¹⁰ Investing in Young Children: An Early Childhood Development Guide for Policy Dialogue and Project Preparation by The World Bank

¹¹ Watanabe, K., R. Flores, J. Fujiwara, and L. T. H. Tran. 2005. “Early Childhood Development Interventions and Cognitive Development of Young Children in Rural Vietnam.” *Journal of Nutrition* 135 (8): 1918–25.

¹² Society for Research in Child Development, *Investing in Our Future: The Evidence Base on Preschool Education*

Many international preschool programs have conducted a cost benefit analysis of their services and have found a benefit to cost ratio ranging from 2 to 16 times. According to findings from Karoly and Bigelow (2005) who studied the cost of expansion of a preschool program for all children in the state of California, Early Childhood Development (ECD) investments generated USD 2.62 for every dollar invested in the specific programs under their review. Similarly, The Carolina Abecedarian Project¹³ in the United States estimated a return of USD 3.78 for every dollar invested; Chicago Child Parent Centers estimated USD 7.14 for every dollar invested; and High Scope Perry Pre School Program discussed earlier estimated a return of USD 16.14 for every dollar invested¹⁴. Details of the HighScope Perry Pre School Study are given in Box 1 below.

Box 1: HighScope Perry Preschool Study

Background and Scope of the study – The HighScope Perry Preschool Study was done with a sample of 123 low-income African-American children who were considered to be at high risk of school failure. 58 randomly selected children were provided a high-quality preschool education at ages 3 and 4 and 65 children did not receive any preschool program. In the study's most recent phase, 97% of the study's participants, who were still living, were interviewed at the age of 40.

Findings: The study found that adults at age 40 who went through the preschool program had higher earnings, were more likely to hold a job, had committed fewer crimes, and were more likely to have graduated from high school than adults who did not receive preschool. Some of the key findings of the study were:

- 77% of children who had received quality ECE exposure (Program Group children) completed high school as compared to 60% from among those who had not (Non Program Group children). Program Group children over performed Non Program Group children in various intellectual and language tests at various age levels.
- 76% of the Program Group Children were employed at the age of 40 as against 62% employment rate among Non Program Group children. Program group children also had higher median income as compared to Non Program Group children.
- The preschool program was also found to have positive impact on prevention of crimes in the

¹³ The study enrolled children born between 1972-1977 in an ECE program and traced outcomes till the age of 21; Leonard N. Masse and W. Steven Barnett, A Benefit-Cost Analysis of the Abecedarian Early Childhood Intervention, New Brunswick, N.J.: National Institute for Early Education Research, 2002. Available for download at: <http://nieer.org/resources/research/AbecedarianStudy.pdf>

¹⁴ Investing in Young Children: An Early Childhood Development Guide for Policy Dialogue and Project Preparation by The World Bank

form of fewer lifetime arrests for Program Group children as compared to Non Program Group Children.

The study further estimated an economic return to society of USD 244,812 on an investment of USD 15,166 per participant, which amounts to a return of more than 16 times per USD invested.

Overall, there is a strong case for governments to invest in providing high quality Early Childhood Education to all children in the age group of 3-6 years, in addition to providing nutrition services, in order to ensure their long term holistic development and a productive adult workforce for the country.

2 ECE - The Indian Context

2.1 The Policy Context

India is home to the largest number of children in the world. India has ~164 million children in the age group of birth to 6 years and ~75 million children in the age group of 3-6 years. The wellbeing of this vast population has been a well acknowledged concern and has been a part of India's developmental planning since 1951¹⁵. The amended Article 45 of the Indian Constitution directs that "*the State shall Endeavour to provide ECCE for all children until they complete the age of 6 years*".

Until the Third Five-Year Plan, ECCE continued to be within the purview of the voluntary and private sector. It was only in 1968, when the Ganga Saran Sinha Committee highlighted the need to provide preschool education, that it was included within the purview of the government. The Fifth Five-Year Plan saw a major breakthrough in the concept of child development with a shift in approach from welfare to development and the declaration of the National Policy for Children in 1974. In pursuance of the policy, the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) Scheme was launched in 1975, which continues to be the largest service provider for ECE services in the country. The National Policy on Education (1986) has also emphasized the need for Early Childhood Education. Various Five Year Plans of the country have reaffirmed Government's commitment to providing quality early childhood services including ECE. The eleventh five year plan has also acknowledged the importance of early childhood as a stage that lays the foundation for lifelong development and realization of a child's full potential, and directs that "*all children be provided at least one year of preschool education in the age group of 3-6 years*".

The Right to Education Act (RTE), which became effective from 1 April 2010, provides for free and compulsory education for all children in the age group of six to fourteen years. The Act also suggests that "*with a view to prepare children above the age of three years for elementary education and to provide early childhood care and education for all children until they complete the age of six years, the appropriate government may make necessary arrangement for providing free preschool education for such children*". Internationally, Convention on Right of the Child (CRC), 1989 and Education for All (EFA), 1990 have postulated ECCE as the very first goal to be achieved for Education for All, and India is signatory to both the Conventions.

The Central Government recently launched the '*Padhe Bharat Badhe Bharat*' program under the *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan*. This program has been designed to improve comprehensive early reading, writing and early mathematics in children in Classes I and II (detailed description in Box 13. In order to successfully meet the goals of the '*Padhe Bharat Badhe Bharat*' program, it is important that learning goals and pedagogical practices adopted in ECE centers converge with the goals and practices in primary schools,

¹⁵ Position Paper by National Focus Group on Early Childhood Education

such that a smooth transition to formal education in early primary grades is made possible and children are set-up for success.

The Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD) has been mandated with the responsibility for the subject of care of preschool children, including pre-primary education¹⁶. The Ministry's larger mandate is to provide the much needed impetus to the holistic development of women and children, and is hence responsible for formulating plans, policies and programs; enacting and amending legislation; and guiding and coordinating the efforts of both governmental and non-governmental organizations working in the field of women and child development. The National ECCE Policy has also provided that MWCD be the nodal ministry for overseeing ECCE program and services, along with their state level counterpart departments. As part of the efforts to advance the interest of women and children, MWCD runs the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) scheme with an aim to provide a variety of packages comprising of, supplementary nutrition, immunization, health checkup and referral services, preschool and non-formal education. The essence of the scheme is convergence and coordination with other ministries such as the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) and others, and presents an immense opportunity for coordinated and convergent action.

2.2 Landscape of Players Providing ECE

Two channels are working in parallel to provide ECE services to children in India. First is the Government channel via the ICDS scheme, and second is a large number of private players, including non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

Government schemes and programs serve as the primary channel with multiple governing schemes; however, ICDS continues to be the largest among all. MWCD data, as of 31 March 2014, indicates that ICDS covered ~103 million beneficiaries for health and nutrition services and ~37 million beneficiaries for preschool education services through a network of 1.34 million Anganwadi centers (AWCs) across the country.¹⁷ There are four key packages in the ICDS scheme, as per the ICDS Mission a Broad Framework for Implementation¹⁸:

- Early Childhood Care, Education and Development including Preschool Education and Supplementary Nutrition
- Care and Nutrition Counseling, including Infant and Young Child Feeding (IYCF) Promotion and Counseling, Maternal Care and Counseling, Nutrition, Health and Hygiene Education

¹⁶ Ministry of Women and Child Development web site <http://wcd.nic.in/>

¹⁷ Ministry of Women and Child Development – note on achievement during last 4yrs (25.04.2013) as on 30.09.2013

¹⁸ ICDS Mission a Broad Framework for Implementation released by Ministry of Women and Child Development to restructure and strengthen ICDS Scheme

- Health Services including Immunization and Micronutrient Supplementation, Health Checkups and Referral Services
- Community Mobilization, Awareness, Advocacy and Information Education and Communication (IEC), including IEC campaigns and drives.

Anganwadi Centers (AWCs) are the delivery vehicle for all the above mentioned components of the ICDS scheme. These AWCs are managed primarily by Anganwadi Workers (AWWs) and Anganwadi Helpers (AWHs) with support from other functionaries such as Auxiliary Nurse Midwife (ANM), Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHAs) and Medical Officers, particularly for the health related functions.

In addition to ICDS, programs for universalizing elementary education such as the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), and the National Program for Education of Girls at Elementary Level (NPEGEL) have also supported setting up of ECCE centers, attached to primary schools in certain districts of the country as a convergent arrangement till AWCs are universalized in the area. Some government schemes also provide Crèche services to children below six years of age. These schemes include, Rajiv Gandhi National Crèche Scheme for working mothers and crèches mandated under laws and acts such as the Mines Act (1952), Factories (Amendment) Act (1987), Plantations Labor Act (1951), Building and Other Construction Workers' (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act (1996), and the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (2005)¹⁹

In addition to ICDS and other Government schemes, there is a large unregulated private network, both organized and unorganized, that provides preschool education. These players operate at various scales ranging from large organized chains of private preschools which have as many as 900+ centers across 300+ cities in the country, to preschools operating from small rooms in urban as well as rural areas. In addition, various NGOs run relatively smaller scale initiatives which are largely supported by trusts, societies, religious groups or international funding agencies. Some of these NGO run programs have experimented with innovative ideas to provide quality ECE, predominantly to underserved segments. For example Mobile Crèches, an NGO working for children in urban poor settlements for over two decades, is working for of construction workers in Delhi; Pratham, the largest NGO working in the education space in India, has evolved a model of community run Balwadis; and Centre for Learning Resources, a Pune based NGO, has extensively worked in capacity building of ECE teachers and Supervisors in the country.

The quality of services provided by the Private players is not regulated and hence, is highly inconsistent. Lately, many private players have also been increasing their outreach to rural areas across the country. There is a need today to harmonize, and ensure high quality of efforts, across both the Government and Private channels.

¹⁹ National ECCE Policy

2.3 ECE – Policy Priorities Going Forward

Given the enormous task of providing quality ECE services to ~75 million eligible beneficiaries in the age group of 3-6 years, Government of India has recently taken some steps to provide the necessary policy support.

Recognizing the challenges being faced with ECE, MWCD released the National Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) policy in September 2013. The policy has a vision of "*achieving holistic development and active learning capacity of all children below 6 years of age by promoting free, universal, inclusive, equitable, joyful and contextualized opportunities for laying foundation and attaining full potential*". The Policy outlines 11 priority areas as follows:

1. Providing universal **access to ECCE, with equity and inclusion**
2. **Ensuring quality** of ECCE service and promoting developmentally appropriate practices
3. **Strengthening capacity** of various institutions responsible for ECCE training
4. Strengthening **monitoring and supportive supervision** of ECCE programs
5. **Advocacy** with parents and community regarding developmentally appropriate ECCE
6. **Convergence and coordination** among various policies governing ECCE
7. Strengthening research and documentation capabilities
8. **Institutional and implementation arrangements** for ECCE
9. **Building partnerships** necessary to advance ECCE
10. **Increased investment** towards ECCE
11. Ensuring **review** of the ECCE policy every five years

Key aspects of these priority areas are detailed in the Box 2 below.

Box 2: ECE Priorities, as identified by The National Early Childhood Care and Education Policy

Priority Areas for ECCE as Defined in National ECCE Policy (September 2013)

1. **Access with Equity and Inclusion** – Providing universal and equitable access to ECCE for all children through a contextualized and decentralized approach. The policy emphasizes that ECCE centers should be functional as per population norms (1 for every 800 population) and preferably within 500 meters. It also provides that the AWC be repositioned as "a vibrant child friendly Early Childhood Development (ECD) centre" with adequate infrastructure, financial and human resources. In order to ensure inclusion of all children, it suggests measures for early detection and interventions with appropriate adaptations and referrals where necessary, for children at risk of developmental delays and disabilities. It also provides for developing a differentiated strategy for urban slums.
2. **Ensuring Quality** – Promoting developmentally appropriate practices of ECCE through a multi pronged approach which includes elements such as developing curriculum framework, provision of

adequate play material, ensuring mother tongue interaction, conducting program assessment and child assessment, promoting use of technology and setting up quality standards with non negotiable quality indicators. The policy also provides for setting up of the National ECCE Council as well as State Councils with responsibility for registration, accreditation and regulation of all ECCE service provisions in the country. It also provides for defining a regulatory framework for ECCE to ensure basic quality inputs and outcomes, across all service providers.

- 3. Strengthening Capacity** – Strengthening all training institutes and establishing new ones wherever needed, including, NIPCCD (National Institute of Public Cooperation and Child Development), Middle Level Training Centers, Anganwadi Workers Training Centers, State Council of Education Research and Training (SCERT), State Institute of Education Research and Training (SIERT), District Institute of Education and Training (DIET) etc. The policy also talks about the element of parent education and capacity building regarding good child care practices.
- 4. Monitoring and Supervision** – Implementing a framework based on tangible and easy to measure input and output indicators specified for ECCE quality. The policy also asks for establishing a sound system for data generation and collection, and information management across the country to allow regular compilation and analysis of data on ECCE.
- 5. Research and Documentation** – Focusing on research to strengthen the link between policy, research and practice. This includes research in the area of early childhood, as well as research to generate indigenous knowledge and to ensure a more evidence based approach towards planning, implementation and monitoring of ECCE programs and interventions.
- 6. Advocacy and awareness generation** – Using media and inter-personal communication strategies, including, folk, print and electronic media, to reach out to parents, caregivers, professionals, and the larger community particularly the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs)
- 7. Convergence and Coordination among policies and programs** – Children's needs are multi-sectoral in nature and require policies and programs across diverse sectors including education, health, nutrition, water and sanitation, labor and finance. The policy emphasizes the need for encouraging regulatory, operational and financial convergence between related policies, programs and schemes, for optimal utilization of resources. It specifically provides for achieving higher degree of convergence with Ministry of Human Resource Development as a significant number of 5 to 6 year olds are in primary schools in many states. The convergence is also necessary for the adoption of child centric and play based approaches, and to extend the school readiness interventions for children of 5 plus years of age.
- 8. Institutional and implementation Arrangements** – Establishing appropriate structures at national and state level to ensure efficient implementation of ECCE programs. The policy suggests that appropriate institutional mechanisms and active community participation be utilized as two key strategies for achieving the desired outcomes. It also recommends establishing an ECCE Cell within MWCD and a National ECCE Council along with State Councils for implementation of a high quality ECCE program.
- 9. Partnerships** – Forming resource groups, voluntary action groups of experts and professionals and

higher learning institutions at regional, state, district and sub-district level to support the government in monitoring, supervision and capacity building for ECCE.

10. Increased investments towards ECCE – Ensuring adequate funds are available and are spent on quality ECCE interventions.

11. Periodic Review – A review of the implementation of the National ECCE Policy every 5 years to assess progress, and to make mid-course corrections.

Subsequent to releasing the National ECCE Policy, MWCD has also released two additional documents.

First, **the National ECCE curriculum Framework (NECF)**, published in January 2014, which provides guidelines and a structure for age appropriate ECE curriculum. It lays down developmental goals for each age sub-group (3-4 years, 4-5 years and so on), along with recommended activities without use of formal instruction in early years. It also provides for pedagogical practices necessary to promote optimum learning and development of young children.

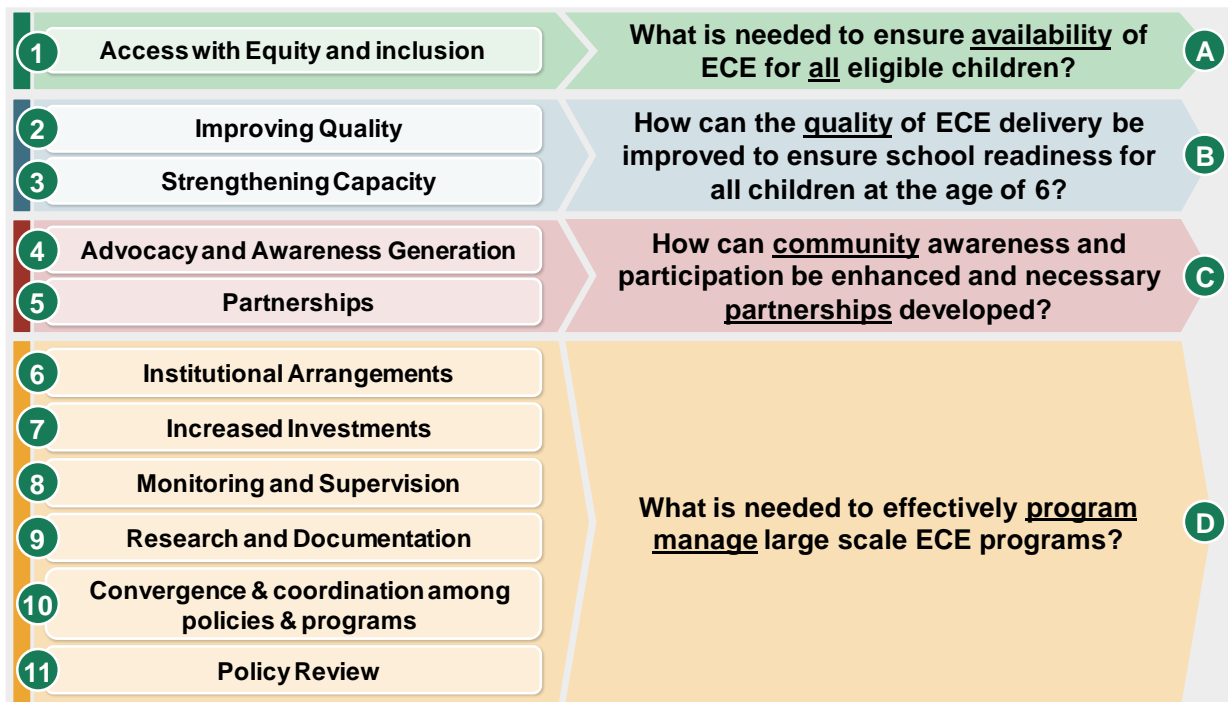
Second is a document on the **Quality Standards for ECCE**, published in January 2014, which provides guidelines to assess effectiveness of ECCE programs. The document outlines a framework of quality standards identifying the key principles, indicators and exemplary good practices required for assuring quality in ECE services. The framework is meant for use in ensuring effective implementation of ECCE programs across the country by assisting the ECCE centers and service providers in developing and maintaining dynamic quality programs, as well as providing a monitoring mechanism to authorities to ensure that the standards and practices of the programs are being maintained on a regular basis.

These documents outline the principles necessary for delivering high quality ECE in the country and all efforts towards quality improvement in ECE need to be guided through them.

3 A 'Needs Assessment Framework' for Early Childhood Education

To take forward the journey towards high quality Early Childhood Education (ECE) in India, there is a need to clearly identify a few priority areas for ECE and detail out specific interventions to be undertaken within each area. With this objective, as a part of its technical assistance to the Ministry of Women and Child Development (GOI), the World Bank organized a Roundtable discussion on "**Needs Assessment for outcome oriented action in ECE**". The Roundtable was conducted with about 30 relevant stakeholders from Government, NGOs as well as academicians on 25th November 2014. A Needs Assessment Framework was developed to provide structure to the discussions in the Roundtable, consisting of four categories which map to the 11 priority areas identified in the National ECCE Policy as shown in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: Early Childhood Education Needs Assessment Framework



3.1 Access with Equity and Inclusion: What is needed to ensure availability of ECE for all eligible children?

First need of the hour for ECE in India is ensuring universal and equitable access for all eligible beneficiaries, through either the government or private channels. This entails provision of ECE services at the doorstep of children, irrespective of their socio- economic background, gender, physical capabilities and language.

The next chapter, Chapter 4 of this document, looks at this aspect in detail. The chapter presents an analysis of the available supply of ECE services, in terms of the reach of the Anganwadi Center network and enrolment of children from amongst the eligible population. It assesses the need to bolster the strength of the ECE network, selectively, and also looks at some of the challenges associated with serving specific segments of the population that are yet underserved.

3.2 Quality: How can the quality of ECE be improved to ensure school readiness for all children at the age of 6?

Quality of services provided at the ECE centers must go hand-in-hand with provision of access. Many global studies have emphasized that higher quality ECE programs have larger impact on children's development than any other education intervention, and are more likely to create sustainable gains. Quality involves multiple aspects including, implementing a developmentally appropriate curriculum and pedagogy, ensuring availability of adequate Teaching Learning Materials (TLMs) at ECE centers, ensuring adequacy of staff both in terms of strength and capability, providing enabling infrastructure and overall, defining certain non-negotiable quality standards across all these elements. Chapter 5 of this document captures the current situation across all these critical elements of quality, and highlights the challenges that need to be addressed along with emerging ideas for interventions.

3.3 Community Engagement and Partnerships: How can community awareness and participation be enhanced and necessary partnerships developed?

Community and parental engagement is critical for success of any ECE program. It is critical to generate demand for Early Childhood Education in the first place by educating and influencing parents to send their children to ECE centers. Awareness amongst parents and community regarding developmental needs of their children, and an understanding of developmentally appropriate ECE programs and practices, can also enable them to demand the appropriate services from the government as well as private players. Moreover, with this awareness, parents can themselves provide a more stimulating environment to children at home. At the next level, community and parents can themselves get involved in operations of ECE centers. They could volunteer their time, skills and other resources; proactively participate in decision making at the ECE centers; or even support effective monitoring of services.

Chapter 6 of this document details out the current situation, associated challenges and interventions needed to improve community engagement in ECE services.

3.4 Program Management: What is needed to effectively program manage large scale ECE programs?

Implementation structure for ICDS alone consists of ~ 3 million government employees with an annual budgetary allocation of ~ INR 18,000 Cr (~USD 3 billion) in 2013-14. Additionally, there is a large private sector providing ECE services. Given the scale of ECE services in India, efficient program management of all the efforts is very important. This involves a review of multiple aspects, particularly a review of the overall structure of the State and District level organizations responsible for ECE delivery, including roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders, and the monitoring and supervision processes. Moreover, mechanisms, if any, to achieve desired convergence and coordination amongst various ministries, departments and policies need to be looked into. Lastly, research capabilities in the field of ECE, and sharing of information and best practices among stakeholders, need to be analyzed.

Chapter 7 of this document reflects the current status and approaches for program management with regard to these dimensions, along with the associated challenges and potential ways forward.

4 Access with Equity and Inclusion: What is needed to ensure availability of ECE for all eligible children?

The National ECCE Policy has emphasized the need for provisioning "*universal and equitable access to ECCE to all children through a decentralized and contextualized approach.*" It has also provided that "*ICDS Scheme, in convergence with other programs of government and initiatives by non-government players shall ensure provision of ECCE centers as per population norms and preferably within 500 meters*". To ensure that all children, including children from weaker sections and disadvantaged groups, are given admissions in the neighboring ECCE centers the Policy has also provisioned for "*no admission test for gaining admission into ECCE centers*". While provision of ECE is a federal subject implying a federal responsibility shared with states, the policy has also recommended that the "*Government can additionally explore supporting the not for profit or for profit service providers to supplement and complement the services being provided by government.*"

The subsequent sections provide a picture of the current supply of ECE services in India and associated challenges.

4.1 Overview of Supply Side Availability of ECE Services

A comprehensive survey of all the 75 Million children in the eligible age group for ECE i.e. 3-6 years is not available in the country. As a result, no accurate data is available on the total enrolment of children for ECE. However, some sample based studies estimate that ~ 80% of the eligible population is enrolled in ECE services, provided either by the government or by private players. As per the Center for Early Childhood Education and Development (CECED), Ambedkar University study titled "Quality and Diversity in Early Childhood Education" conducted across three states, Assam, Andhra Pradesh (AP), and Rajasthan, covering 2767 children, ~ 83% children were attending some or the other ECE program regularly. Similarly, an annual survey done by Annual Status of Education Report²⁰ (ASER) in 2013, covering 550 rural districts and 15,941 villages across the country, estimated that 65-80% of children in the age group of 3 to 6 years, in the rural parts of the country, were attending preschool or primary school.

The largest network providing ECE in the country is the government-run Anganwadi centers, which has been growing rapidly in the last few years, and currently enrolls ~47-49% of the eligible population. Figure 2 below shows the year on year increase in the network of AWCS and Figure 3 shows the year on year enrolments in these Anganwadis. As is clear from these Figures, the network of AWCs has grown rapidly, from ~0.65 million AWCs in 2004 to ~ 1.34 million in 2014, and correspondingly, enrolments have gone up from ~ 20 Million beneficiaries to ~37 million beneficiaries in the same time period. Further, as per MWCD published data, ~ 93% of these centers have a formal provision of ECE services.

²⁰ ASER center is an autonomous unit within Pratham (the largest NGO working in Education in India). It uses simple yet rigorous methods to generate evidence on the outcomes of social sector programs

Figure 2: Number of AWCs in India across Years

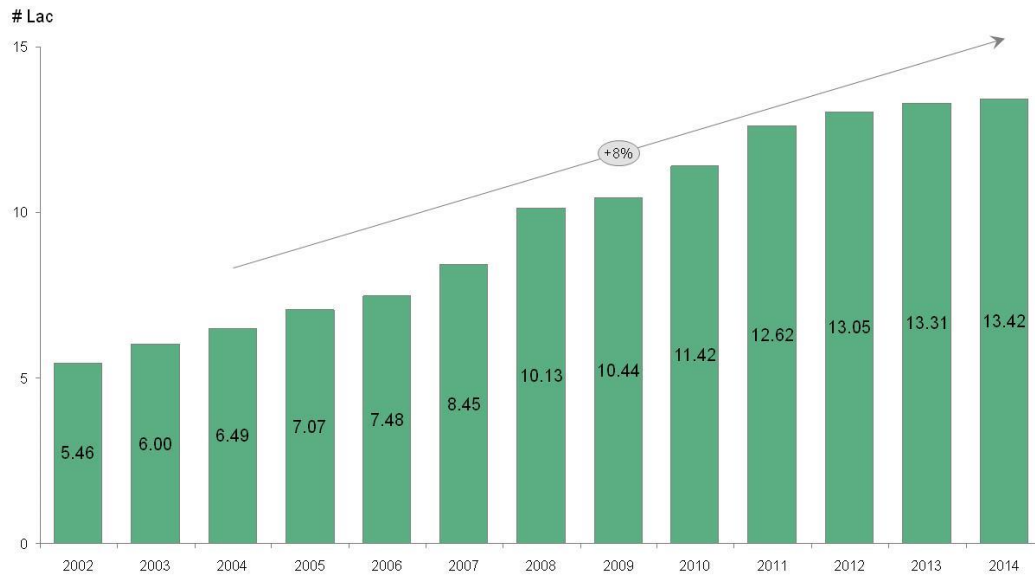
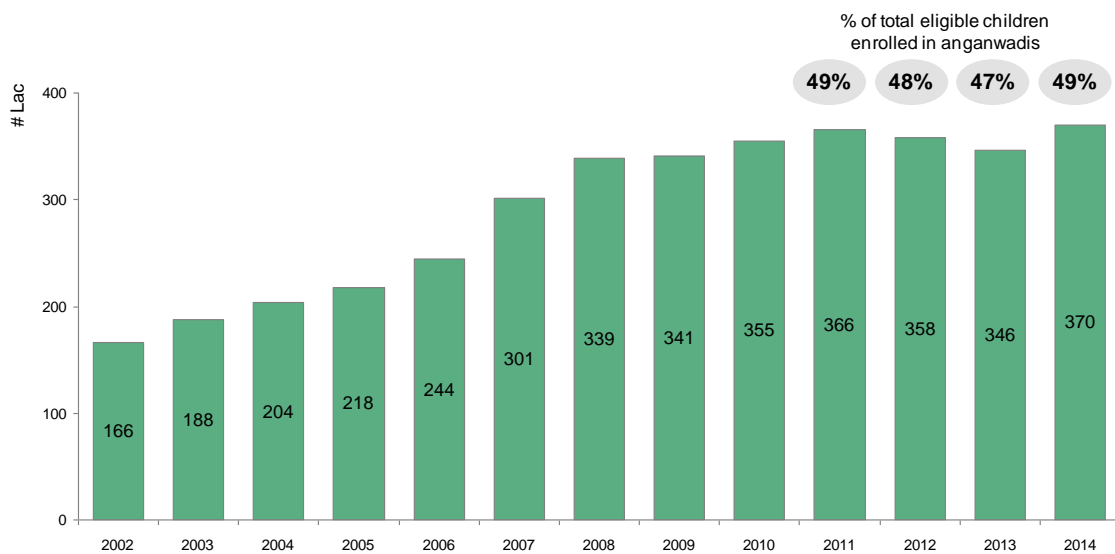


Figure 3: ECE Beneficiaries Enrolled in AWCs across Years



Since the total enrolment is estimated at ~60-80%, and enrolment in AWCs is ~ 47-49% of the eligible population, it can be estimated that the remaining enrolment, to the tune of ~10-30% of the eligible population, is with a combination of private players (predominantly) and government pre-schools. The private channel, which was originally confined to the upper and middle classes in cities, has today spread

to small towns, villages, semi-urban areas, urban slums, etc. reflecting the unprecedented demand and popularity of such services²¹.

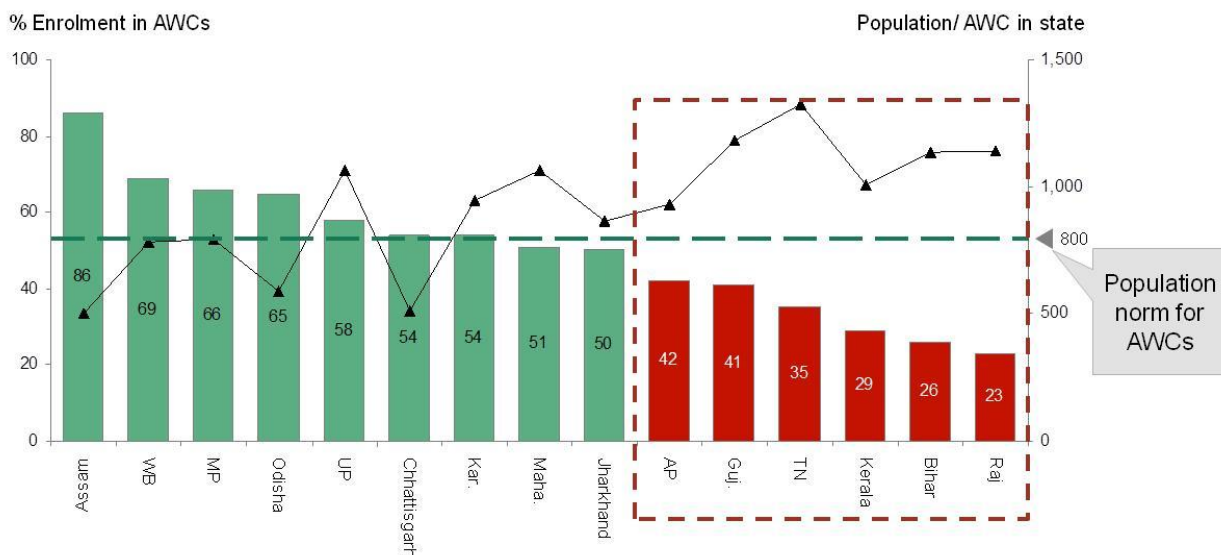
While significant progress has been made in enhancing the supply of ECE services in the country over the last 10 years; however, there is a need to continue working towards universal access for the entire eligible population.

4.2 Potential to Further Strengthen the Anganwadi Centre Network

Population norms defined by MWCD for setting up of AWCs provide that there should be an AWC for every 800 population and a mini AWC for every 400 population. However, a disaggregated study of the current AWC network across different states reveals that in many states the network is not compliant with the suggested population norms. As is expected, states with better population to AWC ratios also have higher enrolment through the ICDS network.

Figure 4 shows the percentage enrolment in AWCs across states. Additionally, the line chart in the Figure shows the ratio of AWCs to population in the state.

Figure 4 : Strength of AWC network across States²²



Clear variations in the strength of the AWC network across states can be observed. For example, while Assam has an AWC for every 500 population and enrolls 86% of the eligible population, Rajasthan, on the

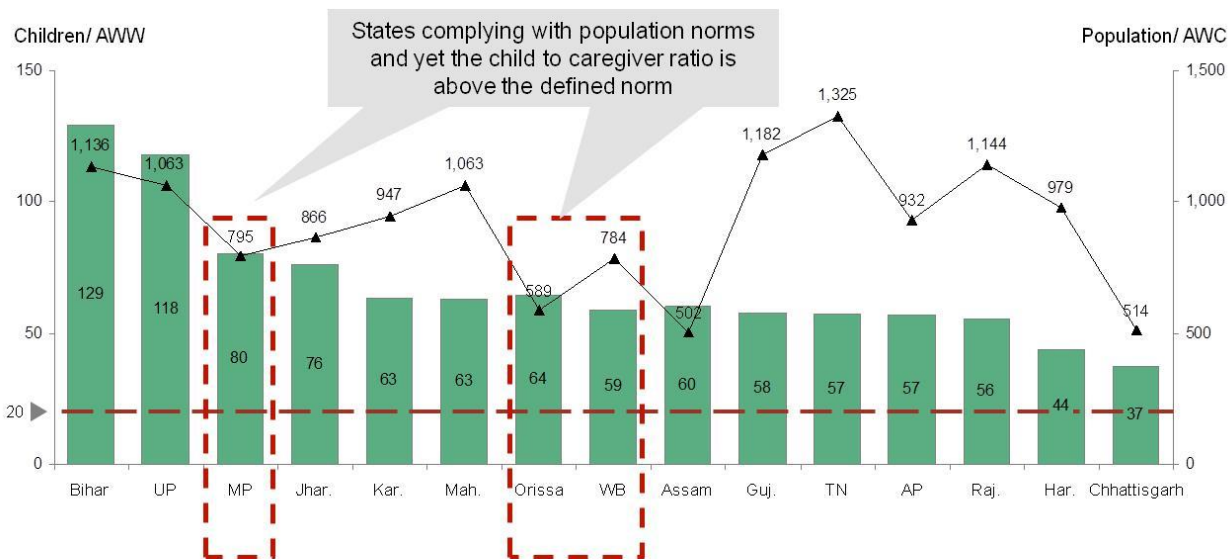
²¹ Position Paper by National Focus Group on Early Childhood Education

²² MWCD published data, Census 2011

other end of spectrum, has an AWC to population ratio of more than 1100 and enrolls only 23% of the eligible population. In states like Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Bihar and Rajasthan, the AWC network enrolls less than 50% of the eligible population. It is also likely that the private channel is playing a larger role in these states.

In addition to defining the population norm, The National ECCE Policy and The Quality Standards for Early Childhood Care and Education, released by MWCD in January 2014, provide that in all ECE centers, adult (or caregiver) to child ratio should be 1:20 for 3-6 year old children and 1:10 for children under 3 years of age. A study of children enrolled in AWCs and sanctioned posts of AWW (assuming 100% posts are filled) at a state level highlights that most states fall short of these norms. In Figure 5, the bar chart indicates the number of children per sanctioned caregiver post of AWW in the state, and the line chart indicates the population covered by each AWC.

Figure 5: Child to Caregiver Ratio across States



Note: Enrolments include all enrolments in the centre. For children in 3 – 6 years they can be enrolled in either or both the services of supplementary nutrition (SN) and PSE, for the purpose of this analysis higher of the enrolments between PSE and SN are considered.
Source: MWCD published data

It's worth noting that even in states such as West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh, and Orissa where the AWC network meets the population norm of one AWC for every 800 population, the care giver to child ratio is much below the desired ratio of 1:20. For example, the State of Madhya Pradesh has one AWC for every 795 population and hence is compliant with the population norm at the state level. However, with the current network, every AWW is managing close to 80 children, which is much above the desired ratio of 1:10 or 1: 20. This implies that the demand for AWCs is high and there is a need to relook at the population norms for setting up of AWCs and further strengthening the AWC network, or alternatively

providing required physical and human resources to the existing AWCs to be able to run multiple sections within one center.

To ensure that the network of AWCs is geared to fulfill community demand, while also meeting the desired adult (or caregiver) to child ratio, it is essential to first have an estimate of the demand for ECE service, which in turn requires accurate data on the eligible population and their status of enrolment for ECE services. In the absence of such data, it is currently difficult to plan the AWC network strength appropriately.

4.3 Access to ECE for Specific Population Segments

4.3.1 Urban Settlements, Especially Urban Slums and Migrant Population

As per Census 2011, nearly 65 million people live in slums in India. Insufficiency of current ECE services in these areas has been highlighted by many studies. In 2012, Mobile Crèches, an NGO working for children in urban poor settlements for over 2 decades, along with *Neev* (Delhi Forces), a network of grass root NGOs working for children under 6 in the urban poor settlements, conducted a study titled "Ignored and Unheard", which assessed the effectiveness of various services provided in urban settlements in Delhi. The study found that less than 25% children (0.272 million out of 1.2 million surveyed) living in informal urban slums have access to ECE services.

Urban settlements have multiple unique challenges. Firstly, given the higher population density, availability of adequate space is a big challenge. Many AWCs are running from small rented premises which do not have sufficient space for sitting and conducting ECE activities. Many centers are housed on higher floors of multi-storey buildings and are often situated at a considerable distance from children's homes. Children have to often travel a long distance, amid heavy traffic on roads, to reach these centers. This raises serious concerns on their safety.

Secondly, a larger proportion of women living in urban slums step out of their home to earn a living. This results in a need for day care facilities for young children. A Kenyan study²³ showed that increasing maternal wages (which implies a higher proportion of mothers stepping out of home to work) would likely lead to an 11 percent increase in the school enrolment of boys in the family but a 10% decrease in school enrolment of girls, as adolescent girls took over more home responsibilities. Alongside, the study also showed that reducing the cost of child care increased school enrolment of girls in the family. It is therefore important that in urban settlements provision of relatively low cost day care services is made so that mothers can work more freely, and girls' enrolment can also be kept up in parallel.

²³ Lokshin, Glinskaya, and Garcia 2000

The National ECCE Policy has also recognized the need for a differentiated provision for urban settlements. It provides that, *"An urban strategy will be developed/ adopted to address specific unmet needs of children in urban slums and to expand access to all urban settlements/ slums etc..."*

Some innovative programs are being run by state governments as well as by NGOs which provide mobile ECE centers to cater to the needs of urban settlements. For example, Mobile Crèches has been operating in and around Delhi to provide crèche facilities in underserved slum areas. Various aspects of their operating model are detailed in Box 3 below.

Box 3: Day care Centers at Construction Sites, by Mobile Crèches

Objective – Mobile Crèches provides day care facilities including Nutrition, Health, Education and Community education in the underserved slums of Delhi

Target Population – Children in the age of birth to 12 years, living in slums and construction sites

Operating model

- Set up crèches at building sites and operate them with partial funding from builders
- Crèches to be community based i.e. run by local women, trained by the organization to be child care workers
- Crèches to focus on children's learning since birth with different development goals for each stage
 - Birth to 2 years: Providing colorful environment, songs, cuddling and interactive play
 - 3 to 5 years: Social, cognitive, and motor development through games, puppets, stories.
 - 6 to 12 years: Non formal education including rudiments of reading and math, and preparation for transition to formal school.
- Procure teaching learning material (TLMs) locally
- Support women's groups and community based organizations (CBOs) to hold appropriate government agencies accountable for delivery of quality ECCE programs

Current scale of operations – Mobile Crèches currently operate in eight urban settlements including Seemapuri, Madanpur Khadar, Shadipur, Khanpur, Kirby Place and Trilokpuri in Delhi and Daskshinpuri and Harolla Basti in Noida, Uttar Pradesh. In the year 2013-14, Mobile Crèches provided holistic childcare services to more than 13,000 children at 53 construction sites in these settlements. This included more than 4500 children in the age group of 3-6 years who were provided ECE services.

There is a need to review the operating models and successes of such innovative programs, and evaluate the possibility of structurally scaling up some of them at a State or even National level.

4.3.2 Children with Special Needs (CWSN)

As per census 2011, ~ 2% of the Indian population or ~22 million people have special needs. However, the participation of CWSN in the current ECE programs continues to be low. As per the CECED study²⁴, only 23 out of 298 surveyed ECE centers had any enrolments of children with special needs, highlighting the need for urgent action and implementation of differentiated program for Children with Special Needs (CWSNs). Programs for CWSN need to have multiple components to service their unique needs. Firstly, they need to be able to ensure early detection of children's special needs, preferably through a process which involves children's families. Further, there is a need for a referral plan to help parents seek appropriate diagnostic and therapeutic services to support their child's well-being and development. Early detection can dramatically increase the child's chances of participating and flourishing in inclusive and mainstream ECE programs. In fact, evidence suggests that one in three infants and toddlers who receive early intervention services do not present later with a disability or require special education in a preschool.²⁵

In addition, ECE centers need to be adequately equipped with resources and manpower. They need infrastructural facilities for physical handicapped and appropriate Teaching Learning Material (TLM) for blind children. Specially trained personnel are also required to guide the ECE teachers on providing ECE to CWSN and proactively help the AWW handle their special needs more effectively.

The National ECCE Policy has also recognized the need for all these elements to be woven into the current programs. It says that *"To ensure inclusion of all children, measures will be undertaken for early detection and interventions with appropriate adaptations and referrals where necessary, for children at risk of developmental delays and disabilities. Appropriate linkages with concerned programs/ sectors would be established to facilitate participation of children with special needs in the ECCE program."*

Appropriate on the ground strategies for the implementation of these national policies with sufficient ownership at every level would be essential for the ECCE policy and quality standards to have a visible and tangible impact in the system.

4.4 Emerging Areas for Interventions

In order to ensure universal provision of ECE service to all segments of children, equally, the following action areas need to be prioritized.

²⁴ Quality and Diversity in Early Childhood Education" study conducted by Center for Early Childhood Education and Development of Ambedkar University, across 3 states, Assam, Andhra Pradesh, and Rajasthan

²⁵ UNESCO Policy Brief on Early Childhood, Inclusion of children with disability, an Early Childhood Perspective

4.4.1 Build a robust database of children under the age of 6

There is a need to develop a comprehensive database for children under the age of 6, which captures all necessary information with respect to Early Childhood Education of these children. It should capture information for every single eligible beneficiary including their status of attending ECE, that is whether enrolled in a government AWC or a private preschool or none, along with basic background information e.g. gender, location, whether a CWSN etc. This way we will have robust information on the eligible population and enrolments at district by district level and be able to make appropriate policy decisions with respect to access, and specific provisions requirement for sub-segments of the population.

In addition, it should contain information on AWCs at as granular a level as possible for a centralized database. For example, it could include a distribution of Anganwadi Centers by geography, information on the eligible population covered by an AWC, its enrolment, whether basic facilities such as separate toilets for girls and boys, drinking water etc. are available or not, whether an AWW and an AWH is available or not, and accordingly, the ratio of children per caregiver in the AWC, among other things.

Lastly, relevant information on ECE teachers and ECE teacher training must also be available. For example, the database could include the available training infrastructure and capacity at state or district level, number of workers trained each year, number of newly joined workers trained v/s number of workers trained as part of the biennial refresher trainings, etc.

Some of this data may be best managed at a State level rather than in a centralized national level database. However, each dimension needs to be carefully deliberated on and parameters for which data is required but is better maintained at State level should be clearly communicated to the States. Once the data fields are identified, the process for collection, authentication and analysis of the data needs to be carefully defined to ensure accurate data in the system at all times. Providing standardized proformas with specific definitions of all required fields, and providing training to officials who will update the information will be critical. Further, the process should be designed such that it leverages technology to the extent possible and requires minimal manual intervention.

This database will be helpful while framing policies, planning interventions, monitoring programs, measuring impact, etc. At the very onset, it will allow an accurate estimation of the demand for AWCs and hence work towards universal access. Several lessons can be drawn from a similar database that is maintained for children in the age group of 6-14 years under the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan of the Ministry of Human and Resource Development, called the Unified District Information System for Education (UDISE). Details of the UDISE database are captured in Box 4 below.

Box 4: Key Features of the Unified District Information System for Education (UDISE) Data Base

Introduction – UDISE is the primary source of information for education planning and assessing the progress of the education sector in India, especially under the Government-funded Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan programme. It collects information on enrolment, availability of infrastructure, teachers and other facilities available in all schools in the country. UDISE has the school as the unit of data collection and district as the unit of data dissemination. It is under implementation in all districts of the country.

Process of data collection

- The system covers eight years of schooling in all primary and upper primary schools as well as primary/upper primary sections of the secondary and higher secondary schools.
- Each school is given a unique ID and data is gathered at a school level. The responsibility of data collection lies with the head teacher / principal. The Cluster Resource Centre (CRC) Coordinator is responsible for providing the necessary support to schools for ensuring accurate collection and reporting of UDISE information.
- The basic data is collected from the primary schools, is verified by the Block Education Officer/Block Resource Coordinator for its completeness, and delivered to the District Educational Management Information System in-charge/ District Primary Education Program Project Coordinator who maintains records of all forms. The data is first computerized and analyzed at the district level, and then aggregated at the State level.
- The concept and definitions of educational variables involved therein have been standardized at the national level and are uniformly followed by all districts and states.
- Manual aggregation of data at different levels is completely replaced by computerized data entry and report generation system.

Content of the UDISE database

- It provides time-series data at school, village, cluster, block and district levels.
- It provides data on school location, management, rural urban, enrolment, buildings, equipment, teachers, incentives, medium of instruction, children with disabilities, exam results and student flows.
- Detailed data on individual teachers, para-teachers and community teachers and their profile, including data on in-service training received, is collected and made available.
- This data is available to all online on the UDISE website
- The states/districts have flexibility of adding supplementary variables as per their specific requirements. No additional software for computerization of state/district specific data is required.

4.4.2 Expand network of Anganwadis in areas of low access and to underserved population segments

Data illustrated in the chapter indicated that even in states which comply with the population norm of 1 AWC per 800 population, the desired children to caregiver ratio of 1:20 is not achieved. There is potentially a need to revisit the population norm of 800 per AWC or make provisions such that multiple centers can be run in one Anganwadi.

Select underserved segments need targeted solutions which can cater to their unique needs. For example, specific strategies could be created to provide ECE services for urban settlements. The strategy, and hence program design, may take into account the space constrained environment of urban cities and also provide for day care facilities for children of working mothers.

Similarly, a program for CWSNs may be carefully explored for implementation with a strong element supporting early identification of the special needs of children with referral services to ensure supportive interventions. Such programs also need to include a component of guidance and support to the officers responsible to educate and sensitize them on how to work with CWSNs effectively.

5 Quality: How can the delivery of ECE be improved to ensure school readiness for all children at the age of 6?

As described in chapter 1, school readiness is one of the key goals of an ECE program. Class 1 curriculum, as defined by National Council of Education Research and Training (NCERT), assumes that children entering primary classes have already gone through a high quality ECE program and hence, possess certain basic numeracy and literacy skills. However, in reality, often when most children enter class 1, they do not possess these competencies. This is because most of them have either not attended any ECE program or attended a substandard one. This gap, which is inherent right at the onset, starts widening over time, negatively impacting learning level outcomes at elementary level. It is widely known that learning levels at elementary level in India have been low and are in fact declining in many states.

The two key channels providing ECE services in India, that is Government and privately run preschools or NGOs, vary a lot in their approach towards ECE and present different challenges. Private preschools tend to be too academic with programs which are largely a downward extension of the early primary curriculum and follow rote learning methods with minimal activities. On the other hand, government run AWCs are found to be minimalist in their approach with no structured curriculum to ensure holistic development of children. This has been highlighted by many studies and has also been acknowledged by MWCD in *the National ECCE Policy*.

Multiple elements need to be put in place together to ensure delivery of a high quality ECE program. Firstly, there is need for a developmentally appropriate curriculum, for each sub stage of development, along with an engaging pedagogy including activities based learning, adequate teaching learning materials (TLMs) displayed in classrooms, and engaging classroom practices. Secondly, there is a need to provide enabling infrastructure in AWCs, including adequate indoor and outdoor space, aesthetics and cleanliness, safety and approachability of the center, and toilet and water facilities. Thirdly, to deliver the program well, there is a need to have adequate staff at each level – Anganwadi Workers and Anganwadi Helpers at AWC level, Supervisors at cluster level, Child Development Project Officers at block level and District Project Officers at district level. Additionally, the staff needs to be adequately trained such that they understand the need and philosophy of ECE and appropriate practices. Lastly, certain quality standards including non-negotiable criteria around physical facilities, play and learning materials, principles of curriculum development, teacher profile etc. need to be put in place that serve as guidelines for AWCs as well as criteria against which to monitor performance.

The study done by Centre for Early Childhood Education and Development (CECED) of Ambedkar University titled "Quality and Diversity in Early Childhood Education" has studied the impact of various elements on school readiness of children and found a strong correlation of school readiness with certain quality indicators for an ECE program. Details of the study are described in Box 5 below.

Box 5: Quality and Diversity in Early Childhood Education – A Study by Center for Early Childhood Education and Development (CECED), Ambedkar University

Background and objective of the study – The Center for Early Childhood Education and Development, Ambedkar University, conducted a longitudinal study to estimate trends in participation of 3-6 year old children in ECE programs, and variations among different ECE programs. The study also examined the immediate impact of early childhood education experiences on school readiness levels of children at the age of entry to school, and its sustained impact on primary level educational and behavioral outcomes.

Coverage of the study – The study covered 362 villages, 1616 centers and 13868 children. A subset of the study analyzing variations in the quality of different ECCE programs has already been published. The published report is based on 75 villages, 298 centers and 2767 children.

The study highlights three main categories of factors that impact school readiness of children - Classroom Planning, Teaching Process, and Curriculum Transaction. Details of relevant factors for each category are as follows:

Classroom planning

- Age/developmentally appropriateness of activities ensured by teacher
- Weekly/Daily schedule followed by teacher
- Individual planning for children

Teaching process

- Introducing a new lesson/concept/activity innovatively
- Asking children questions and encouraging children's questions
- Promoting Higher order thinking

Curricular transaction

- Opportunity for all children in creative activities
- Opportunity for children to participate in both individual & group creative activities
- Opportunities for divergent thinking
- Teacher provides opportunities for free choice play & interact with children during play
- Classroom arrangement & time provided by teacher for free play
- Activities conducted for number readiness and learning maths concepts

The study finds that in order to improve the quality of ECE, greater focus is required on the above mentioned factors.

Various challenges with respect to delivering a high quality ECE program across multiple dimensions described above are detailed in the following sections.

5.1 ECE in the Anganwadi Centers: Optimizing on the Opportunity

An AWC operates for 6 hours a day, and provides all core packages of the ICDS scheme, which include:

- Early childhood care, education and development including preschool education and supplementary nutrition
- Care and nutrition counseling, including Infant and young child feeding (IYCF) promotion and counseling, maternal care and counseling, nutrition, health and hygiene education
- Health services including immunization and micronutrient supplementation, health checkups and referral services
- Community mobilization, awareness, advocacy and IEC, including IEC campaigns and drives.

An AWW, along with the AWH, is responsible for all of these packages except Maternal Care and Counseling and Immunization and Health Services. This is clearly a wide scope of activities for the AWW and AWH to manage. In addition, the AWW needs to undertake certain activities in the community, outside the AWC. These activities, as defined in the role definition provided by MWCD, in December 2013, are –

- Home visits for 2 hours every day to provide IYCF, guidance to parents on early stimulation and development, counseling for pregnant and lactating mothers
- Organizing village health and nutrition day
- Organizing ECCE day
- Participation in Village Health Sanitation and Nutrition Committee
- Coordinating across departments such as health, panchayat, education, drinking water etc. for improved health and nutrition status of people in the village
- Organizing monthly meeting at AWC or in the village for health nutrition and sanitation education

In addition, the AWWs are entrusted with various other responsibilities from time to time, such as, supporting the census process, verification of voter IDs before elections and multiple other data collection requirements.

With such a vast scope of responsibilities, ECE becomes one of the many things that an AWW needs to work on, and hence tends to get deprioritized. The CECED report²⁶ states that, in many cases it was

²⁶ "Quality and Diversity in Early Childhood Education" conducted across 3 states, Assam, Andhra Pradesh, and Rajasthan by Center for Early Childhood Education and Development

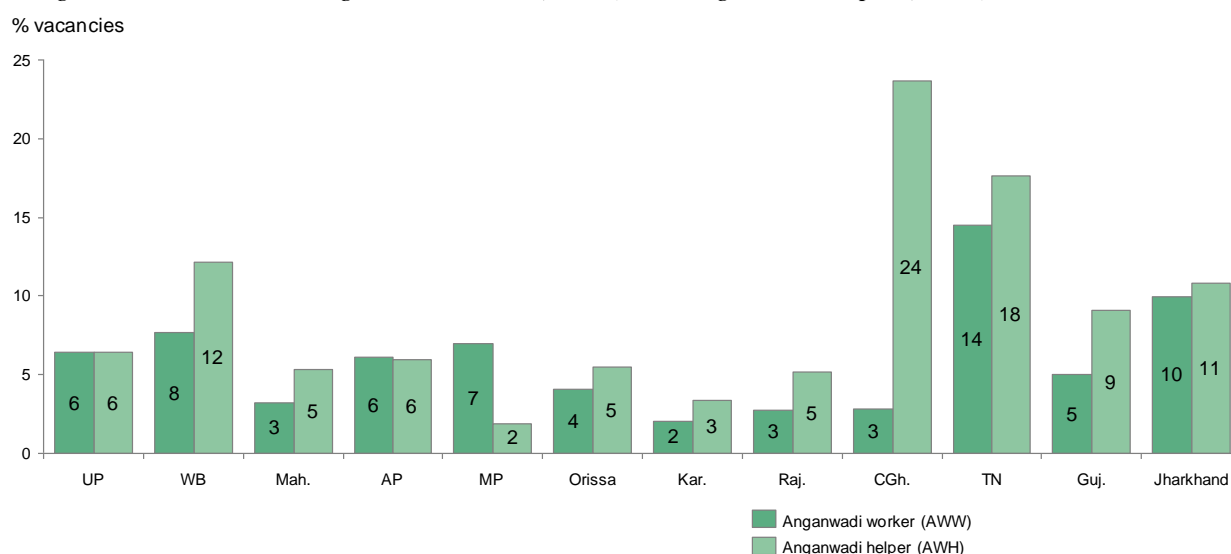
observed that the AWCs open only to distribute mid-day meal, with children going to the center only to collect food. The study mentions that, "Since in Rajasthan, the AWCs are considered to be primarily health and nutrition centers, the common understanding among the community is that the main function of AWC is to distribute food and immunize young children. Preschool education is not considered to be a priority function of the AWC. "

Recognizing the vast scope of work of an AWW, MWCD has provided for an additional AWW, as nutrition and care counselor, in 200 high burdened districts. Further, AWW can solicit support from multiple other functionaries such as Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHAs), Auxiliary Nurse Midwife (ANM), and the Supervisor. However, to ensure a coordinated effort by all these stakeholders, a clear definition of roles and responsibilities of each player in the system along with a programmatic structure, needs to be provided, which is currently lacking.

Further, the role of an AWW is designed as a voluntary role and she is paid an honorarium of INR 3,000 (USD 50) per month (contribution from the Center) and a variable contribution from the State / Union Territory. The honorarium of the AWH is even lesser, with the Center contributing a meager INR 1500 (USD 25) per month along with a variable contribution from the State / Union Territory. As a result, the role does not command a professional status or stature in the society. In fact, in some cases, AWWs and AWHs themselves do not appreciate the importance of their role in ensuring overall development of children through ECE.

The lack of attention to ECE gets further aggravated due to vacancies at AWW and AWH level, where about 5-7% positions of AWWs and AWHs are vacant at national level. This number goes up to 25% in some states. State wise vacancies at AWW and AWH level are depicted in Figure 6 below.

Figure 6: Vacancies at Anganwadi worker (AWW) and Anganwadi helper (AWH) Level across states



In summary, children spend about 4-6 hours a day in the Anganwadi Centers or private preschools, and it is a lost opportunity if this long duration of time is not utilized gainfully for delivering a high quality ECE program. Hence, adequate attention towards ECE from AWWs is crucial so that the early years of a child are best utilized to make them joyful, and based on early stimulation efforts that create a base for optimal socio-emotional and cognitive readiness to face the curricular requirements in later years.

5.2 Implementing Developmentally Appropriate ECE Curriculum and Pedagogy

The National Early Childhood Care and Education Curriculum Framework (NECF), developed by MWCD in January 2014, provides guidelines and structure for ECCE curriculum. It lays down developmental goals for each age group along with recommended activities without use of formal instruction in early years. It also provides for pedagogical practices that would promote optimum learning and development of young children. After the Framework was released, a pilot was conducted across 16 States to see how the curriculum could be contextualized and implemented. With encouraging results from these pilots, it was decided that all States were to develop an annual contextualized and detailed curriculum, to meet the needs of their children, families, and local community, while adhering to the broad principles outlined in the framework.

Most states have started developing the curriculum and many have also completed the task of defining an annual program. For example, the state of West Bengal has defined their annual contextualized curriculum through a consultative process to achieve convergence between Department of Women and Child Development and Social Welfare, and Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) of the Ministry of Human Resources Development, in partnership with UNICEF. The State has defined an activity based, thematic curriculum emphasizing on school readiness instead of the 3Rs i.e. reading, writing and arithmetic. Details of the ECE curriculum developed by West Bengal are provided in Box 6 below.

Box 6: ECE Curriculum, West Bengal

Objectives of the new curriculum – The state government of West Bengal has developed a new curriculum that adopts an activity based approach focused on school readiness and early language learning instead of the 3Rs of Reading, Writing and Arithmetic.

Process followed to design the curriculum

- A State level core team comprising members from Department of Social Welfare (DSW), SSA and UNICEF worked together to develop the curriculum
- Department of Social Welfare and Department of Secondary Education, NCERT, and NIPCCD together finalized the **guiding principles** of the new curriculum through a 2 day consultative workshop.
- An extensive 5-day workshop was organized for curriculum development and finalization.

Key features of the new curriculum

- The new curriculum adopts an activity-based approach
- The focus remains on school readiness and overall development of children
- A handbook is given to AWWs that details out a daily 4-hour ECE schedule to be followed, along with activities to be performed and TLMs to be used.
- ECE kits have also been developed to aid ECE activities in class.

Implementation – The state first piloted the revised curriculum in 2012-13 across 50 rural and 50 urban AWCs. Currently, it is in the process of implementing a larger pilot across 1000 AWCs (50 AWCs each in all 20 districts of the state).

- Training: Cascade model of training has been followed. First, a group of 80 State Resource Group (SRG) and then, a group of 320 District Resource Group (DRG) personnel have been trained through a 5-day residential training that concluded in December 2014. DPOs, CDPOs, and Supervisors, part of these groups, were made to manage AWCs for few days to include an element of practical exposure to the trainings.
- AWWs are now being trained across the 1000 centers and the trainings are expected to be completed by April 2015.
- Implementation of the new curriculum across the 1000 AWCs is expected to begin in May 2015.

While an annual contextualized curriculum is ready for most states, its successful implementation remains a challenge. Some of the challenges associated with the high quality roll out are detailed in the following paragraphs.

- **Capacity and resources required for state wide roll out**

States that have now developed a new curriculum are planning for pilots in select districts involving relevant AWCs, AWWs, AWHs, Supervisors, Child Development Project Officers (CDPOs), and District Project Officers (DPOs). However, a subsequent state wide roll out of the curriculum will require much more capacity and resources for training of people, a system for monitoring and supervision of its implementation, and transparent mechanisms for assessment of results. At present, there is limited planning around such requirements for state wide roll out.

National Institute for Public Cooperation and Development (NIPCCD) has been designated as the nodal agency for imparting ECE related trainings, as per the National ECCE Policy. NIPCCD along with its 4 regional offices has been working to provide training on guidelines of the new curriculum. Training of the State Level Master Trainers (SLMTs) has been completed, who are in turn required to train District Level Master Trainers (DLMTs), who will finally train the AWWs and AWHs. The cascade of trainings by SLMTs is yet to begin. Even after completion of the training, constant onsite monitoring and support for AWWs and AWHs, as well as structured evaluation of the outcomes of a revised curriculum, will be critical.

- **Need for child friendly engaging pedagogy**

While a new curriculum may be ready in some states, its transaction using an engaging and play based pedagogy is even more critical. ECE classrooms structurally present a challenging environment to deliver quality in, since children from different age groups (3-6 years) and hence, at different stages of development and with different development needs, need to be catered to together. The National ECE Curriculum Framework (NECF) explicitly recognizes different developmental goals for children in the 3-5 years age bracket versus children in the 5-6 years age bracket. In this complex scenario of inherently multi-level classrooms, grouping of children and other classroom management practices become crucial for effective curriculum delivery. However, as highlighted in the CECED study²⁷, most ECE centers do not follow basic classroom management practices like grouping of children and only 21% centers surveyed during the study had children sitting separately as per their age category either in the same, or a separate, classroom.

Briefly touching upon curriculum and pedagogy in private preschools, it continues to be a challenge area as well. As mentioned previously, these preschools tend to be more academic in their approach, focusing on literacy and numeracy through rote learning methods with limited activities. They are

²⁷ "Quality and Diversity in Early Childhood Education" conducted across 3 states, Assam, Andhra Pradesh, and Rajasthan by Center for Early Childhood Education and Development

often found to follow a curriculum which is a downward extension of the early primary curriculum, i.e. a reduced version of class 1 and class 2 curricula.

The CECED study²⁸, observed how a typical day is spent at an ECE center.

The study observed that "In Private Preschools, the day starts with a prayer, generally recited / sung by a group of elder children while the other children repeat what was being sung. After prayers, in the assembly itself, there is a question answer round wherein the teachers asks the children different questions pertaining to general knowledge, language, math, etc. In the class, the children are generally taught formal subjects such as Mathematics, English and Hindi with a different teacher for each subject. At times, different songs and rhymes were sung subject to teachers' consciousness in it. At meal times, the children mostly move back home to have their lunch and many a times, the children of the pre-classes do not return after the meal time. The AWCs act as a place wherein the children come to collect their mid-day meal. There is generally no activity going on in the Anganwadi centers. When the children come in, they play among themselves on their own."

Clearly, detailed and strategic activities for ushering in the much needed pedagogical elements including developmental activities are required. Anganwadis and private play schools could use play way learning methods, group children by age or learning levels, and better manage indoor and outdoor classroom space for optimal results.

- **Need for adequate Teaching Learning Materials (TLMs)**

To deliver an ECE curriculum effectively, one needs ample interaction with play and learning materials. Evidence indicates that teaching learning materials (TLMs) are either unavailable or inadequate in most ECE centers in the country. Lack of appropriate TLMs is a problem that needs to be addressed. Under the national program for Universalization of Elementary Education, the *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* (SSA) for instance, teachers are provided training to prepare low cost TLM from the local surroundings that are engaging, easy to make and relevant to the cultural context of the child. Infusion of such detailed and minutely planned educational interventions within the ICDS program as part of strategic bottom-up planning would be helpful. The SSA systems could be appropriately leveraged in areas where the anganwadis are co-located with primary schools to ensure that the educational materials, teacher practices and training systems are fully availed of, and there is optimal and meaningful convergence with the education sector.

²⁸ "Quality and Diversity in Early Childhood Education" conducted across 3 states, Assam, Andhra Pradesh, and Rajasthan by Center for Early Childhood Education and Development

AWWs should similarly be trained and encouraged to develop low-cost TLMs by securing materials from the local surroundings. In one such instance, Bodh Shiksha Samiti, an NGO based in Rajasthan, has attempted an innovative model of procuring TLMs from the community itself. Most of the TLMs are derived from games that children play and make use of materials that are locally available. From their experience over the years, a significant pool of TLMs including games, puzzles, cards, worksheets, charts, etc. has been developed, tested in AWCs, and modified based on lessons from the centers.

- **Challenge of ECE transaction in multiple languages**

One other aspect to look at is the medium of interaction at ECE centers. NECF provides that the medium of interaction in ECE centers should be the home language or mother tongue of children. However, in several areas, where the population is multilingual or speaks multiple dialects, it is possible that the classroom consists of students with multiple mother tongues. Further, primary education is undertaken in the state language, and hence there is merit in exposing children to the state language early on.

This is a complex issue to address and reflects the compelling need to promote the use of multiple languages at ECE centers (to the extent possible), and maintain a balance between using mother tongue as the primary medium of instruction, while also preparing the children for state language interaction in primary schools. Orissa has developed a curriculum specifically for multi lingual population in tribal areas. Details of the curriculum are provided in Box 7 below.

Box 7: Curriculum for Multi Lingual Population, Orissa

Objective and background of the program – Studies have shown that instruction in a dominant language often leads to learning and teaching difficulty for children from minority indigenous communities. This ultimately results in high dropout rate, and develops the vicious cycle of lower literacy and unemployment. While Mother tongue-based bilingual programs during early childhood use the child’s first language, allowing the learner adequate scope of understanding in their home-based language, it also creates understanding and participation in the classroom setting. Later on, this becomes a platform for learners to gradually transfer skills from the familiar language to the unfamiliar one.

In Odisha, tribal communities constitute ~22% of the population. A study funded by Bernard van Leer Foundation (BVLF) found that teachers imposed their own culture and value systems on tribal children, which was most often alien to these communities. The content of the books and learning materials were alien to the tribal children, being non-contextual. Further, it was found that in general, children were less likely to attend and more likely to drop out from centers where the facilitators speak only in Oriya and were from non-tribal communities, which was the case in most ICDS centers. Most centers reported a need

for more learning materials, especially for beginning preschool students, in the mother tongue.

As per the National ECCE Policy, *“The mother tongue or home language of the child will be the primary language of interaction in the ECCE programs. However, given the young child’s ability at this age to learn many languages, exposure to the national/ regional language and English in oral form as required, will also be explored.”* With this background, BVLf supports mother-tongue based ECE programs in Odisha that cover 300 Anganwadi Centers.

Key features of the program

- The program integrates mother-tongue of the child in ECE, along with an introduction to Oriya, Hindi and English. This helps the child learn his mother tongue as well as helps him pick up the more common language (Oriya, Hindi, etc.) used in the State.
- The program consists of two components: home-based care (0-2 years of age) and centre based care (2-6 years of age).
- At the centre, the program provides mother-tongue based ECE to children. Between 2-4 years, there is focus on mother-tongue only. Between 4-6 years, the child is introduced to other languages as well - including Oriya, English and Hindi.
- ECE curriculum and relevant TLMs have been contextualized and translated to four local tribal languages to begin with. It is important to note that local folk songs, games, traditions of the tribal community have been incorporated while creating content in the specific language.
- An important component of the program is involving caregivers in delivering multi-lingual ECE. This is achieved by regular home visits, meetings with parents / caregivers at the center, engaging parents at the center during delivery of ECE, etc.

Impact of the project

- Currently, a longitudinal impact assessment is being conducted to assess the impact of multi-lingual ECE. 500 children are being assessed over 4 years till they reach grade 2 for learning outcomes.
- Besides, the program supported the Odisha Adivasi Manch to advocate for multi-lingual ECE for tribal communities in Odisha. As a result, Odisha was the first state to pass a resolution in July 2012 to introduce multi-lingual ECE across AWCs in the state. Since then, ECE curriculum in 10 local dialects has been developed and shared with ICDS functionaries.

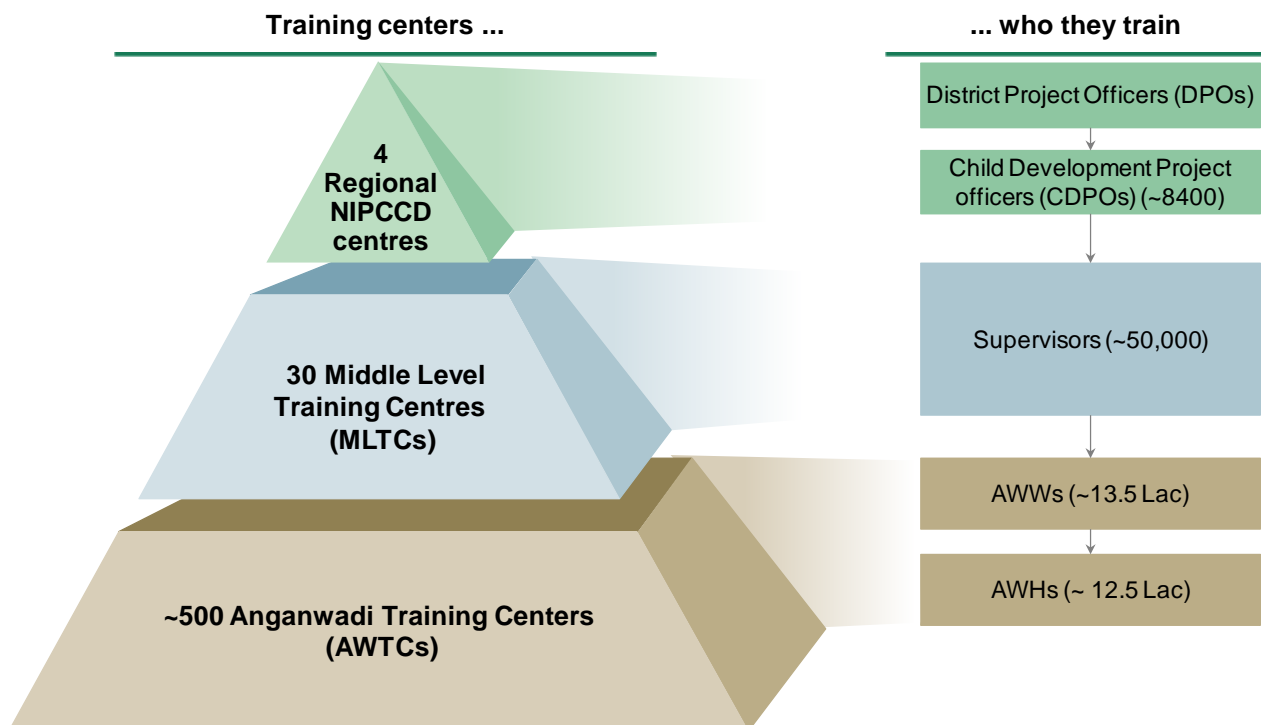
5.3 Capacity Building of ECE Teachers

5.3.1 ICDS Training Approach for Anganwadi Workers and Anganwadi Helpers

The National ECCE policy has designated National Institute of Public Cooperation and Child Development (NIPCCD) as the main child development resource centre to provide continuous training and support to ECCE personnel.

Currently, the training of ECCE personnel happens at three levels. Firstly, NIPCCD and its regional centers are responsible for training the District Project Officers (DPOs) and the Child Development Project Officers (CDPOs). This is done through the four regional centers of NIPCCD located in Guwahati, Bangalore, Indore and Lucknow. At the next level, 30 Middle Level Training Centers (MLTCs), located in various colleges, are responsible for training of Supervisors that operate at cluster level within a Block. Out of these only 5 MLTCs are managed by the government and the rest are managed by NGOs. Finally, ~500 Anganwadi Worker Training Centers (AWTCs) exist which are responsible for training of AWWs and AWHs. Only 100 of these centers are managed by the government, and the remaining centers are managed by NGOs.

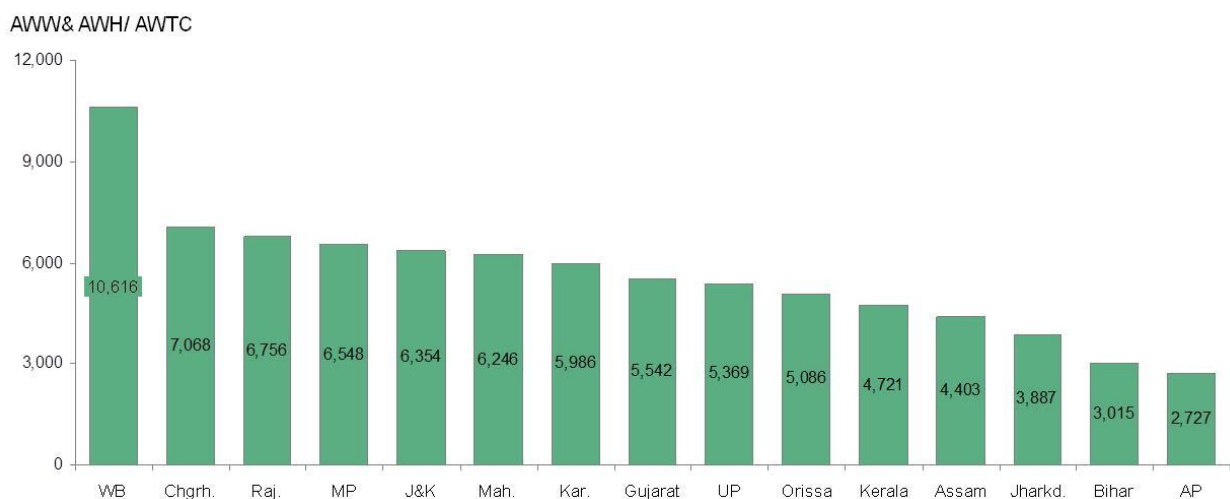
Figure 7: ICDS training infrastructure



The training infrastructure, as described above, is inadequate to meet the requirements of the system. Let's take the example of trainings for AWWs through the Anganwadi Training Centers (AWTCs). AWWs are

supposed to undergo three training programs through the AWTCs – an induction program of four days, followed by a Job Training course of 26 days, followed by 5 days of refresher training once in two years. Since there are ~ 1.4million AWWs in the ICDS system, ~0.8-0.9 million personnel need to undergo refresher training every year. In addition, very large number of new Anganwadi workers is hired each year that need to undergo the 4-day induction and 26-day job training. An estimate of NIPCCD itself indicates that ~1200 AWTCs are needed across the country to deliver this quantum of trainings planned, which is 2.5 times of the current infrastructure. In addition, there are many districts that don't have even one Anganwadi Training Centre, and hence the needs of AWWs/ AWHs in those areas are not sufficiently met. Figure 7 below, shows the average number of AWWs and AWHs served by an AWTC in a state. It is evident from the Figure that the workload on AWTCs varies heavily across states, ranging from ~2700 AWWs and AWHs in Andhra Pradesh to more than 10000 AWWs and AWHs for every AWTC in West Bengal.

Figure 8: AWWs and AWHs for Every AWTC across States



ECE training in the ICDS program: Other than infrastructure, there is significant room for improvement in the content and delivery of AWW trainings as well. Of the 4 day Induction program that AWWs go through, only 2 hours are devoted to ECE, while the rest of it focuses on various other elements of the ICDS scheme. Further, of the 26 days Job Training Course, which is offered to each AWW within a year of being inducted, only 4 days are allocated to ECE.

The training duration is too short, and moreover, the content itself is inadequate and largely theoretical, with little planning or time allocation for practical exposure to the transaction of ECE with sufficient exposure to instructional planning, use of TLM, and appropriate tracking of the developmental milestones of the child. Even within the theoretical aspects, the content misses out on critical elements that are contained in the new national documents defining standards for curriculum and quality in ECE released by

MWCD. As a result field practitioners have insufficient exposure to the national guidelines and it is difficult to expect that their curricular practices at anganwadi level reflect those requirements. This needs to be addressed through greater academic leadership and institutional support.

The contrast comes out more strongly when one compares requirements and trainings for elementary teachers with those of Anganwadi workers. Elementary teachers are required to complete a 2 year pre-service training diploma with mandatory internship in real classroom settings, and are thereafter mandated to undergo 20 days of in-service training each year under *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* of Ministry of Human Resource and Development. In contrast, eligibility for AWWs is simply completion of class Xth with no requirement of a pre-service training as such, and further, only 4 days of induction training on ECE.

In addition to the training structure and design, challenges exist with respect to the quality of trainers imparting these trainings, especially in the NGO run AWTCs where the role of trainers is not permanent and they are hence paid a monthly honorarium instead of a fixed salary. As a result, the attrition rate among NGO-run AWTC trainers is very high, and the available experience and expertise is poor.

Lastly, there is very limited capability in the present system to roll-out and track trainings on a large scale. A simple example is the absence of even a basic Training Management System, and hence lack of basic data like who has undergone training, on what, when and hence, what should they be trained on further. In the absence of such a system, there is limited visibility on who is trained, and who is not.

5.3.2 Trainings Structure and Approach at Private ECE Centers

There is a large network of institutions providing ECE teacher training in the country. However, no organized data on the total number of institutes and their management structures is currently available. A sample based study conducted by Ambedkar University and National Council for Teacher Education titled "Preparing Teachers for Early Childhood Care and Education", done with 93 ECE teacher training institutions across the country, found that ~ 50% of the surveyed centers were private centers, ~ 8% were higher learning institutes offering ECE training program, ~ 22% NGO run centers, ~12% distance learning institutes and a very small proportion of ~ 8% were government institutions.²⁹

National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) is the statutory body responsible for recognition of all teacher training institutions in the country, including ECE teacher training institutes. It lays out certain guidelines for institutions running ECE programs, including guidelines on duration of courses, intake eligibility and admission procedure, teacher to pupil ratio and teacher qualifications, infrastructural facilities etc.

²⁹ Preparing Teachers for Early Childhood Care and Education by Ambedkar University and NCTE

However, a large number of unrecognized teacher training institutes exist in the ecosystem today. The previously mentioned study, conducted by Ambedkar University and NCTE, found that ~ 58% centers (59 out of 93 surveyed institutions) were not recognized by NCTE, and hence may or may not be following the guidelines prescribed.

Moreover, even those private institutes that are recognized by NCTE depart significantly from the required norms. To begin with, duration of the programs offered by various institutions is highly inconsistent. While the NCTE mandate says that ECE teacher training courses be of two years duration; in reality, the courses offered vary from 2 months to 2 years. There is evidence of several recognized institutions offering courses of 9 months duration, which is a clear violation of the NCTE recognition criteria. In the absence of regulation of privately run preschools, many teachers without any formal ECE teacher training are also hired as staff. We quote the Ambedkar University study: *"almost 70% of the teachers in private preschools did not receive any training for teaching children. Of those who did have training experience, most got pre-service training and only a few got in-service training or induction training"*

Overall, it is evident that the capacity building set up needs improvement, both in terms of infrastructure, as well as the training content and delivery, and this holds true for ICDS as well as for private training institutes. We also need to come up with more flexible, part time courses. Today, more than 75% of the courses offered are full time and hence, cannot be undertaken by those already in a job.

Center for Learning Resources (CLR), an NGO that has been working in the Dharni block of Madhya Pradesh to provide sustainable high quality early childhood education, has executed a project titled "Ankur". As part of the project, CLR has worked extensively to develop capacity in the ECE ecosystem. The project was based on a peer learning model, whereby, 19 Anganwadis were chosen and called Observatory Anganwadis (OAs). Their AWWs and AWHs were trained extensively on ECE by the CLR team. These AWWs and AWHs then further trained the AWWs of nearby AWCs. The project was able to demonstrate significant improvement in learning levels of children. Details of the project are provided in Box 8 below.

Box 8: Ankur Project, by Center for Learning Resources

Objective and scope of the project – Bringing sustainable and good quality ECE in 250 AWCs in the Dharni block, Madhya Pradesh.

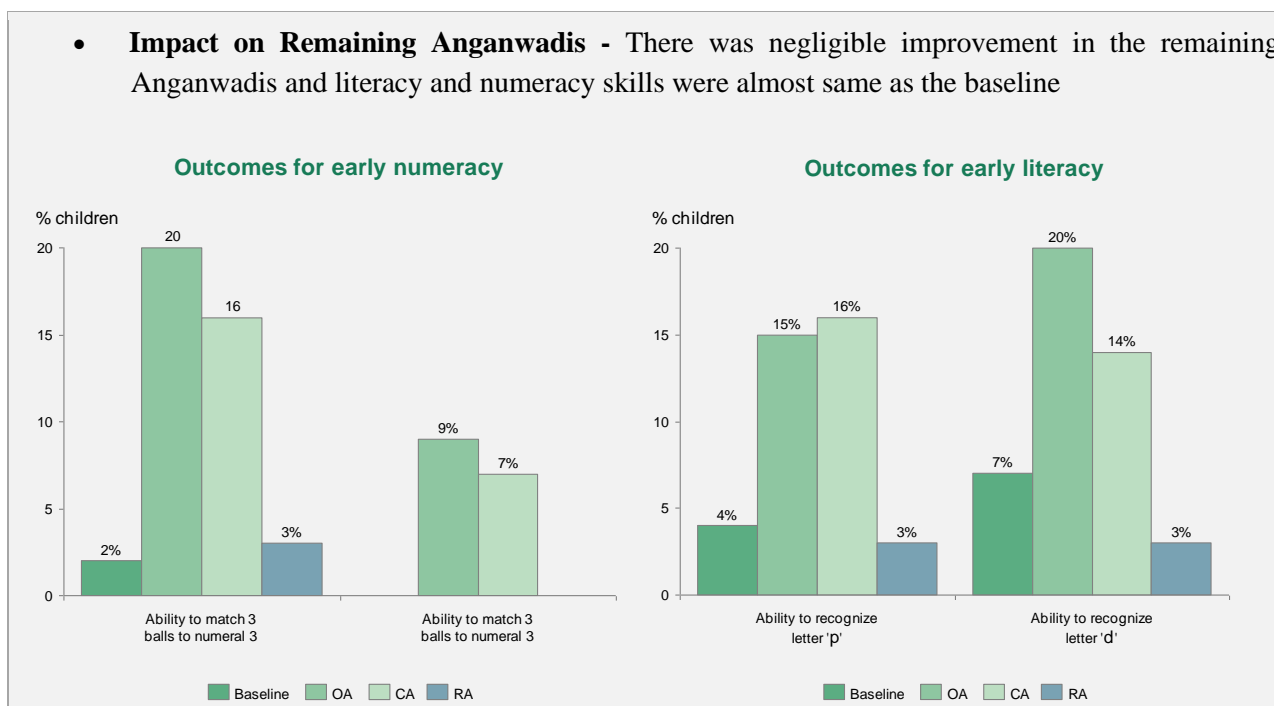
Approach – The project adopted the following approaches to achieve its stated objective:

- Developed model AWCs called **Observation Anganwadis (OAs)**, total 19 in number, through intensive CLR involvement to demonstrate good ECE practices.
- AWCs close to the OAs, called **Contiguous Anganwadis (CAs)**, also benefitted from the program as the OAs worked to diffuse good practices and learnings to these CAs through extensive involvement of Supervisors and AWWs from OAs. The program covered 72 CAs.
- Further, the CLR coached Supervisors worked independently (without much involvement from CLR) in the 159 Remaining Anganwadis (RAs) of the block, mainly by providing training to AWWs in monthly block level meetings.
- Intensive training for AWWs, and Supervisors was conducted on good ECE practices.
- Training was cyclical, 3-4 times per year, and lasting ~5 days per training. Content of ECE training included understanding children's developmental needs and rights, activity-based learning, creating a developmentally conducive learning environment, and making and using TLMs.
- The training model was decentralized, wherein Supervisors built capacities of AWWs incrementally through periodic trainings
- Peer training model was also adopted wherein well trained AWWs (from the OAs) trained other AWWs (from CAs). The model further ensured that the well trained AWWs from CAs and OAs would further train the AWWs from RAs.

Impact achieved – The program measured early literacy and early numeracy skills of children. At the start of the program only 2% children were able to demonstrate early numeracy skills (demonstrated by being able to match 3 balls with number 3), and only 7% children had early literacy skills (demonstrated by being able to recognize the letter 'd'). The end line evaluation was conducted 2.5 years later. Children taking part in the study were matched for age (pairing subjects from baseline and end line by age) and early numeracy and literacy scores were compared. It was found that there was significant improvement in both early numeracy and early literacy skills as compared with the baseline.

- **Impact on Observatory Anganwadis** : Post completion of the program 20% children were able to perform the numeracy task (matching 3 balls with number 3), while 20% children could perform the literacy task (recognizing the letter 'd').
- **Impact on Contiguous Anganwadis** - Post completion of the program 16% children were able to perform the numeracy task while 14% children could perform the literacy task.

- **Impact on Remaining Anganwadis** - There was negligible improvement in the remaining Anganwadis and literacy and numeracy skills were almost same as the baseline



5.4 On –Site Support for Anganwadi Workers and Helpers

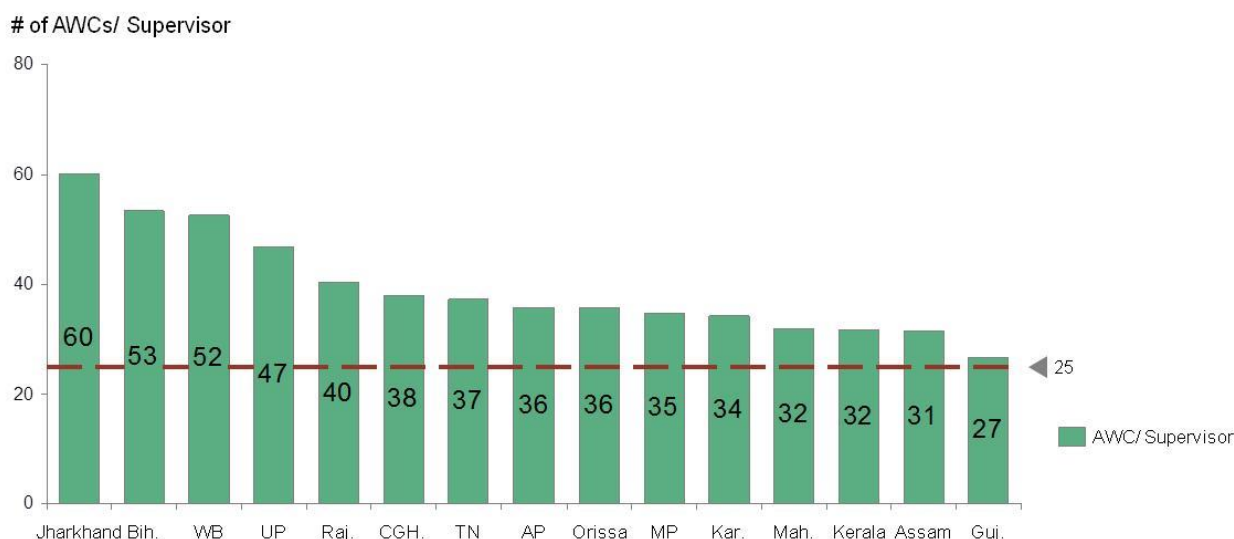
District Project Officers (DPOs) at district level, Child Development Project Officers (CDPOs) at Block level and Supervisors working with a cluster of AWCs are the key functionaries involved in the process of providing necessary monitoring and mentoring support to AWWs and AWHs. In this chain of functionaries, the Supervisor's role is the most critical, as he or she works the closest to the Anganwadi.

A Supervisor performs multiple functions. Firstly, he or she is responsible for **planning and administration** of the AWCs under his or her domain. This includes planning activities of the AWC and performing other administrative tasks such as supplying food, medicine, ECE kits etc., and verifying any data submitted by AWWs. Secondly, Supervisors are responsible for **capacity building** of AWWs and AWHs by planning and organizing for their induction training as well as providing ongoing supervision for activities like enrolment of beneficiaries, identification of severely malnourished children, organizing preschool activities, conducting family surveys, distributing supplementary nutrition etc. The third key component of Supervisor's role is **monitoring and evaluation**, including, assessing the functioning of AWCs, the skills and performance of AWWs, preparing annual and quarterly action plans and assessing shortfalls in achievements, reporting the information to Child Development Project Officers and suggesting corrective measures etc. Lastly, Supervisors are also responsible for effective service delivery of certain niche elements under ICDS, including growth monitoring of children, management of childhood illness identification and treatment, referral services and prevention and early detection of disabilities.

This is clearly a vast scope of work for Supervisors, and each aspect of the role is extremely critical to ensure that the AWWs get the right level of mentoring and training support, as well as to make sure that the status and progress of AWCs are appropriately tracked and reported. This is the most critical leverage point in the system, and the extent and quality of onsite supervision and mentoring at this level needs to be improved significantly.

The span of control, defined as the number of Anganwadi Centers that a Supervisor needs to manage, is a key determinant of whether her role can be delivered effectively or not at each AWC level. As of date, ~ 30% of the sanctioned posts of Supervisors under ICDS are vacant. Taking into account only those posts that are filled up, Figure 9 illustrates the average number of AWCs for every supervisor across various States. It is evident that in most of the states, Supervisors handle ~35-40 AWCs, going up to as much as 60 in Jharkhand.

Figure 9: Number of AWCs per Supervisor across Different States



Given the vast scope of work of Supervisors, such a large span of control makes it inherently impossible to provide effective mentoring and supervision. There is an urgent need to fill up vacancies at the supervisor level, such that each supervisor handles not more than 20-25 AWCs and is hence enabled to deliver on his or her role effectively

5.5 Availability of Physical Infrastructure

The Quality standards for Early Childhood Care and Education released by MWCD in January 2014 lay down specific standards for infrastructure at an ECE center, including:

- Adequate indoor and outdoor space - 35 square meters for classroom, and 30 square meters of outdoor space for a group of 30 children
- Separate space for cooking and distributing food, space for children to keep their belongings etc.

- Standards for aesthetics and cleanliness of ECE centers, safety and approachability and other hygiene conditions.
- Indoor and outdoor play and learning equipment

The current status of infrastructure at ECE centers is nowhere close to the desired level, with only 46% centers operating from pakka buildings, 21% from semi-permanent buildings, 15% from makeshift temporary buildings and 9% from open spaces³⁰. Figure 10 shows the poor physical infrastructure in some anganwadis.

Figure 10: Poor infrastructure in Anganwadis visited



While restructuring the ICDS scheme, MWCD recognized the need for infrastructure improvement in AWCs at two levels. Firstly, AWC buildings need to be constructed for ~0.7 million centers that are operating from rented premises. Secondly, the infrastructure at existing AWCs buildings needs to be augmented to make it developmentally appropriate.

Some innovative pilots have been conducted, largely by NGOs, to provide required infrastructure and play and learning materials at Anganwadis in a cost-effective way. The Building As Learning Aid (BALA) model is one such model which lays out a framework to utilize the three dimensional space and environment available in the AWCs as a child friendly resource for learning and development. The model is focused not only on bridging the basic infrastructural requirements, but also on creatively creating settings for playful learning and a developmental environment. For example, it recommends utilizing the window grill that exists in each Anganwadi Centre as a learning tool for children. Details of the BALA model are provided in Box 9 below.

³⁰ Planning and Developing Child Friendly Anganwadi, Handbook for Officers, Administrators and Planers by ECCE Cell, MWCD

Box 9: BALA (Building as Learning Aid) Model for Innovative and Cost Effective ECE Center Environment

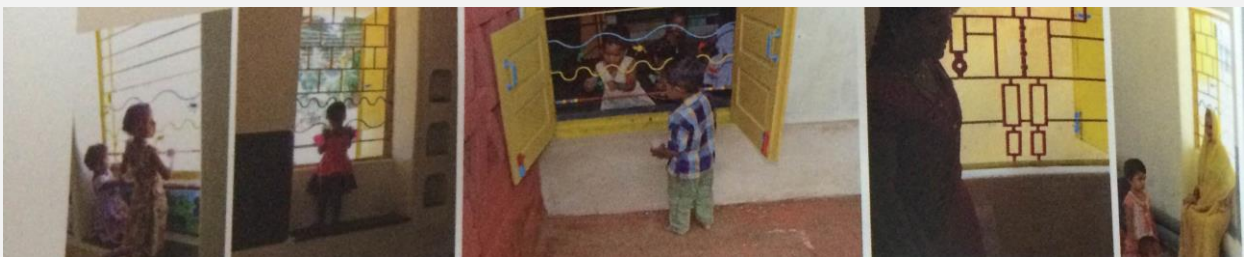
BALA, Building as Learning Aid, is an innovative set of settings and resources to utilize the physical space in ECE centers as a resource for learning and child development. The environment of AWCs today provides little opportunity for children to develop their creativity and imagination. BALA settings and resources can be very helpful in stimulating such creativity and providing a development friendly environment to children.

Examples of BALA settings and resources

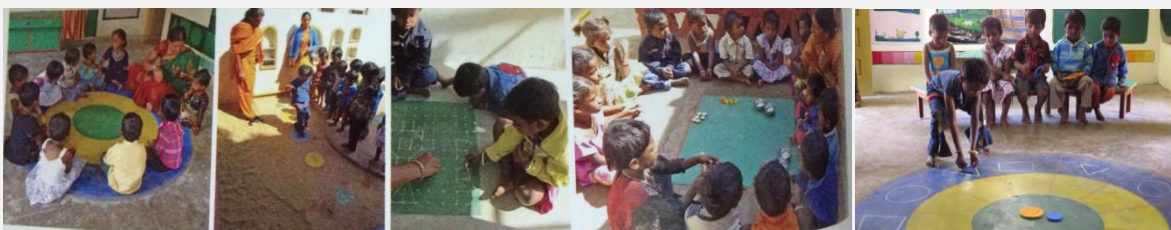
- **Multipurpose table** – Each ECE center can develop a multipurpose table which can be utilized for sitting, small group sitting and for outdoor activities.



- **Pre- writing window grill-** Window space can be utilized for sitting, standing, observing the environment, playing and many other purposes



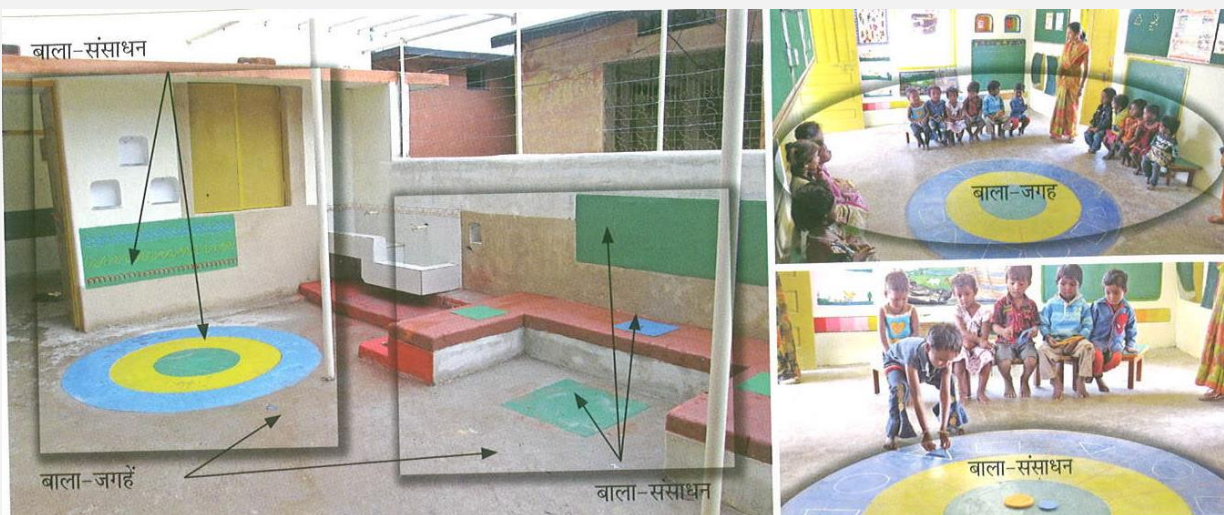
- **Floor** - Floor space can be used as a writing slate or to provide many child friendly learning objects such as multicolor, multi-shape drawings, etc.



- **Courtyard** – Courtyard can be used for several child-friendly activities such as outdoor activities, playing multiple games, etc. providing a conducive learning environment



- **Area inside and outside the Anganwadi** – This area can have designs with various shapes, colors and textures aiding several activities to enhance child learning



- **Drinking water and toilet facilities** – Other infrastructural improvements such as setting up child-friendly toilets and drinking water facilities don't directly aid learning but add to the enabling environment for children



5.6 Emerging Areas for Interventions

In order to deliver a high quality ECE program across the country, the following quality related interventions need to be prioritized –

5.6.1 Strengthening the current capacity building infrastructure and approaches

There are around 3 million ICDS functionaries including DPOs, CDPOs, Supervisors and AWWs and AWHs. The enormous task of providing training to these people is with the National Institute of Public Cooperation and Child Development (NIPCCD), whose current facilities for training include ~500 Anganwadi Training Centers, ~30 Middle Level Training Centers and 4 regional centers, together with a capacity to train few thousand people annually as against the requirement to train a few lakh people annually. The current training capabilities therefore need to be strengthened across multiple dimensions:

- Firstly, the training infrastructure needs to be significantly bolstered to enhance the annual training capacity. Process of setting up new AWTCs and MLTCs, or enhancing the physical infrastructure of existing centers needs to start immediately. Variation in training capacity between different states is large and priority needs to be given to states with poor training infrastructure.
- Secondly, the training strategy, duration and content needs to be augmented to provide the required orientation and guidance to various functionaries on ECE. The current provision of 2 hours of training on ECE during induction of AWWs, and 4 days of training on ECE during on the job training is inadequate. Dedicated long duration training for ECE needs to be institutionalized, including strong elements of practical, hands-on experiences for AWWs, AWHs, Supervisors, CDPOs and DPOs. The training modules for Supervisors need to additionally have a greater focus on supportive supervision and on-the-job mentoring.
- Lastly, to ensure consistent quality of ECE training for government and non-government ECE center teachers, the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) needs to be supported in effective regulation of the mushrooming pre-school centers. Processes to provide recognition need to be improved such that all private teacher training institutes can either be recognized or asked to shut down or comply with norms within a certain period of time. NCTE recognition norms could be made more adaptive and open to recognizing a diverse range of programs with varied input requirements and high quality outcomes.

5.6.2 Need for a Consortium of current training institutions

The above laid out interventions, including additional training infrastructure and revised training content, will not bear fruit unless the capacity of those imparting the training, that is the trainers, is enhanced. Today there are very few institutions/ NGOs that either have good trainers themselves, or have the capacity to develop them.

One of the mechanisms to achieve the larger capacity building objective is to formulate a consortium of existing quality capacity building institutions and professionals working on ECE, at the national and State Levels. The consortium would form a supportive concentric institutional framework that could help in capacity building and advocacy around ECE in the country, including support in revision of training content, strengthening training infrastructure and developing trainer capacity. It will facilitate collaborative working among its various member institutions to achieve its goals. The consortium should have representation from government agencies such as NIPCCD, NCERT and NCTE, as well as from independent persons or organizations that have done impactful work in the area to develop ECE capacity across levels, starting from AWWs all the way to District Project Officers.

5.6.3 Providing structure and daily routines for AWWs and AWHs, with clear role clarity for various stakeholders and optimally filled positions

As elaborated in previous sections, AWWs and AWHs have a vast and ambitious scope of work to manage across education, nutrition and health, including a large number of activities to be conducted outside the Anganwadi Centre. In the entire gamut of activities, ECE tends to get deprioritized. In order to enable the AWWs and AWHs to give the necessary focus to ECE, it is important that a detailed program structure and a daily schedule is shared with them, which helps them organize their various activities and understand the relative priorities and time required for each.

Alongside, there is a need to clearly establish the roles of multiple stakeholders who are involved in the activities of an Anganwadi e.g. the roles of the AWW vis-à-vis what can an AWH do; similarly areas for convergence in the services of ASHA and ANM for optimal leverage of existing systems. This will help AWWs to better coordinate various functions within their role and also manage their time more efficiently. Given the criticality of ECE services, the need for a dedicated AWW for ECE itself may also be considered. One step further, the eligibility requirements for AWWs and the temporary status of AWWs may also be re-assessed.

Lastly, ensuring sufficient strength of resources at each level in the ICDS hierarchy is critical. Supervisors, CDPOs, and DPOs must also have manageable spans of control to effectively support and monitor the performance of AWCs. As of date over 30% vacancies exist at Supervisor, CDPO or DPO level. In addition, ~7-8% vacancies exist at AWW and AWH level. These shortages need to be filled at the earliest to ensure efficient functioning of the ICDS system, especially in districts with low access and high vacancies.

5.6.4 Developing a low cost, scalable infrastructure model

In addition to expanding the network of AWCs, the existing network also needs significant infrastructure improvement – not just better physical infrastructure, but also a developmentally appropriate teaching and learning environment for children. In order to bridge the gap in a short span of time, it is important to

develop and implement low-cost and scalable models, such as the Building as Learning Aid (BALA) model discussed earlier in the report. Through low-cost, innovative interventions a lot of engaging play and learning spaces and tools can be provided to children. Drawing in resources from the wider community and involving them in development of these spaces must also be explored.

6 Community Engagement and Partnerships: How Can Community Awareness and Participation be Enhanced and Necessary Partnerships Developed?

Community Engagement refers to the connections between ECE services and all forms of inputs and contribution by community to ECE³¹. Similarly, parental engagement refers to any formal or informal relation that parents have with the ECE services. Various studies have found significant impact of parental behavior and community engagement on the outcomes of ECE programs.

The Effective Provision of Preschool Education (EPPE) project done in the UK with 3000 children emphasized that strong parental involvement, especially ensuring shared understanding of educational goals of ECE programs with parents, along with regular reporting and discussion with them about their child's progress has the best outcomes in terms of socio-cognitive development. A federally funded Chicago Parent Center's program in the United States found that *"parent participation has a major impact on children's' academic success and social development, and that it is an effective strategy for reducing the dropout rate. Each year that parents took part in the program increased the chances of their child completing high school by 16%. For students whose parents were involved for the whole six years of the project, more than 80% graduated from high school, compared with 38% of students whose parents did not participate."*^{32,33}

The World Bank undertook a technical assistance activity with the Government of Madhya Pradesh in 220 villages of Bajna Block, Ratlam district to improve early childhood development outcomes. The foundation of the program was community led interventions with decentralized planning, and it observed major improvements in children's enrolment, school readiness as well as learning achievements. The pilot aimed at involving the community in preparing a plan for their village and getting that incorporated in the district levels plans of various schemes like ICDS for ECE, *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* (SSA), and Reproductive and Child Health Program. This led to a much greater involvement from the community in the implementation of those plans and progress tracking against defined objectives. Details of the project, its approach and results are given in Box 10 below.

³¹ Litjens, I. and M. Taguma (2010), "Revised Literature Overview for the 7th Meeting of the Network on Early Childhood Education and Care", Paris: OECD

³² OECD report titled "Encouraging Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care, Research Brief : Parental and Community Engagement Matters"

³³ Reynolds, A. J. & Clements, M. (2005). Parental involvement and children's school success. In E. N. Patrikakou, R. P. Weisberg, S. Redding, and H. J. Walberg. (Eds). School-family partnerships for children's success. New York: Teachers College Press.

Box 10: The World Bank's Bachpan Project

Background and scope of the program – The World Bank worked with the Government of Madhya Pradesh in 220 villages of Bajna block of Ratlam district for 30 months between 2005-06 and 2009. The key objective of the program was to improve learning outcomes of children in the age group of 3-5 years. The project was inspired by The World Bank's report, "*Reaching Out to the Child: An Integrated Approach to Child Development (2004)*", which had recommended development of a Village Plan for Children (VPC) i.e. a community led, decentralized and cross-sectoral planning approach, implemented with cross sectoral coordination. The pilot project was named "Bachpan" by the community, with a vision to ensure happy, healthy and learning childhood for all children.

Key Components of the Program – The program focused on multiple components of child development, including health, nutrition and education. Key elements of the program included:

- Provision of information, and educating the community, on child development issues.
- Community mobilization aimed at bringing parents and service providers on common platforms to discuss child development and service delivery issues.
- Formation of Village Resource Groups (VRGs), called Ekta Samuhs (Unity Groups), to discuss child advancement issues, identify gaps and requirements, and formalize them in the form of Village Plans. Further, interactions between VRGs, and block and district level health, nutrition and education officials were facilitated, so that the village plans could feed into district plans for Reproductive and Child Health Program (RCH), ICDS and SSA.
- Provision of specific services such as a fixed day health checkup.
- Provision of training to frontline service providers (health workers, anganwadi workers, and teachers) to manage service delivery records, deliver effective services, and sensitize them to ensure enhanced accountability.

Impact of the program on ECE: The project assessed the impact of the program across multiple dimensions of health, nutrition and education. Impact was measured by comparing results from the Bajna Block to the results in the adjacent Sailana Block (control block), where all other government schemes were being implemented in a manner similar to Bajna block except for the Bachpan Project. In a household survey done in both the blocks ~ 35% respondents from Bajna Block felt that the AWC services had improved significantly, while only 7% respondents in Sailana block felt any improvement in AWC services. Other key achievements of the programs are detailed below:

1. **Increase in enrolment and participation:** Both Bajna block and Sailana Block saw a similar increase in enrolment and participation. Enrolment in Bajna block increased from 67% to 91% (36% increase), while enrolment in the Sailana block increased from 59% to 83% (40% increase).
2. **Improvement in school readiness:** This is where there was a major difference in the performance of the Bajna and Sailana Blocks. Improvement in Reading skills among children of the Bajna

Block was 1.75 times the improvement seen in Sailana Block. School readiness score in Bajna block increased from 50% to 67%, while in Sailana block the improvement was from 60% to 65%. Similarly, the number skills of children in Bajna block increased from 64% to 78%, while in Sailana block it remained stagnant at 78%

- 3. Improvement in learning achievements:** Improvements were more in Bajna as compared to Sailana. Mean score of children's learning achievements increased from 55% to 74.5% (38% increase) in Bajna and from 64.63% to 72.63% (12% increase) in Sailana.

A key learning of the project was that greater progress is made through invigorating the local community and service providers by enabling them to make their voices heard, than through projects implemented in a top-down fashion. Further, community participation is ensured when there is enough awareness and empowerment. This requires change agents or catalysts, and this necessitates involving civil society organizations.

The National ECCE policy also recognizes the importance of community engagement and a key objective of the policy is to *"Raise awareness and create common understanding about the significance of ECCE and promote strong partnerships with communities and families in order to improve the quality of life of young children through institutional and programmatic means and appropriate use of technology"*

Parental and community engagement needs to happen at two levels. First, parents need to appreciate the importance of ECE and understand what constitutes high quality, developmentally appropriate ECE. Second, they need to be involved in provision of ECE services, at ECE centers as well as at home. There is a need to provide some structured systems for community engagement in the ICDS program. Drawing upon a cognate program under the SSA and its structured community participation modalities and systems would be a good learning for ICDS. Each school under SSA has a School Management Committee that has representation from the parents, teachers, elected representatives at the local level, SC/ST and women members etc. They have been mandated to provide critical support in tracking enrolment, retention, facility management and financial rigor through social audit. ICDS would benefit from such structured community participation systems for social audit of the performance of anganwadis.

6.1 Parental Awareness of Developmentally Appropriate ECE and Its Importance

The first aspect of parental and community engagement is to educate parents regarding the importance of ECE and its associated benefits. This awareness is critical to generate the necessary demand for ECE services and to ensure that parents willingly send their children to ECE centers.

Some progress has certainly been made in this direction, as reflected by the fact that ~ 60-80% children in the 3-6 years age group are now enrolled in ECE services. There is also some evidence that parents are

sending their children to ECE centers for the right reasons. As per the CECED study³⁴, 95% of ~ 2000 parents surveyed send their children to an ECE center to make them learn to adjust to a classroom environment and follow instructions that should prepare the child for primary school. Only 5% of parents send their children to an anganwadi centre for food.

Along with awareness of the importance of ECE, informing parents about what constitutes a developmentally appropriate program is also important. In the early years of life, it is important that the child is exposed to a learning environment through play and activity based learning and not taught through formal instruction. The 'National Early Childhood Care and Education Curriculum Framework' (NECF) also highlights the harms of formal education in early years and has provided for play-based learning programs only. It states that *"The risks of early formal instruction are both short term and long term; the short term risks include the manifestation of stress and anxiety symptom among children and long term risk include far reaching effects on the children's motivational, intellectual and social behavior"*. However, these egalitarian principles enunciated in the ECCE Framework need to have appropriate mechanisms put in place which can enable their implementation at decentralized levels. It is also important that parents know of such enabling provisions of the ECCE policy to be able to distinguish between a good and a poor ECE provider, and to be able to demand developmentally appropriate services from them.

Evidence indicates that parents' awareness around ECE continues to remain a challenge. They are often not aware of the specific development needs of their children and the importance of play-way learning. The CECED study also found that more than 70% parents expect their children to learn reading, writing and arithmetic even in preschool, and they believe that rote based methods are most suitable for children's learning. A large number of parents also believe that private centers are better for their child's development as opposed to an Anganwadi Centre. This is despite the fact that many private preschools follow an academic approach to early childhood education and use rote learning methods along with corporal punishments. One reason for parents sending large number of children to the private pre-schools is the continuity that they find in the private pre-school center leading to the next stage that is primary school, available in the same school or premise.

6.2 Parental Involvement in Delivery of ECE – at ECE Center and at Home

Children spend a majority of their time outside of the ECE center and hence, their development cannot be the sole responsibility of the center itself. Parents play the primary role in providing a strong foundation for their child's future development and should be equally involved in determining the child's development goals, and reviewing her performance against these goals. This will also enable them to provide a relevant stimulating environment at home themselves.

³⁴ Quality and Diversity in Early Childhood Education" conducted across 3 states, Assam, Andhra Pradesh, and Rajasthan by Center for Early Childhood Education and Development

Even after controlling for the quality and quantity of care that children receive outside their home, family background variables, especially maternal education, continue to be among the strongest predictors of children's cognitive and socio-emotional development, and of their academic performance in primary school³⁵. Almost all of the center-based ECE interventions that have been rigorously evaluated and found effective in the United States included some parent education or home-visit component, along with the center-based care³⁶. Many low- and middle-income countries also have added a parenting component to their center-based interventions. Hence, a strong parent education program is important to ensure that the environment at home and in community settings is as stimulating for children as at the ECE center.

As per an OECD study titled 'Encouraging Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care - Parental and Community Engagement Matters', *"The Continuity of children's experience across environments is greatly enhanced when parents and staff members exchange information regularly and adopt consistent approaches to socialization, daily routine child development and learning"*.

In line with similar thinking, The Quality Standards Framework released by MWCD has provided for a couple of ways in which parents can be kept involved in the overall progress monitoring of the child. It says that *"ECE centers should conduct parent teacher conferences in which there is exchange of information about the child and the knowledge is used to follow up appropriately."* It further provides that *"ECE centers should keep a notebook on each child where staff and parents exchange information about child's interests, needs etc"*. Implementation of these standards is however yet to be accomplished.

At the next level, parents can be involved in operations of ECE centers through either volunteering to contribute their skills and time towards delivering ECE, or by taking active part in decision making at the ECE centers. Parents' contribution to center's operations is useful in overcoming resource constraints and also helps generate the desired awareness among parents on early learning practices. Strong parent bodies and Gram Panchayats can play a crucial role in collectively advocating for high quality of ECE services. Being closest to the socio cultural background of the village or block, their involvement is important to promote decentralized decision making at ECE centers.

Recognizing the need for higher community and parental involvement in ECE centers, the National ECCE policy provides that *"Extensive use of media and inter-personal communication strategies will be made, including folk print and electronic media, to reach out to parents, caregivers, professionals and the larger community particularly the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRISs) and the Urban Local Bodies (ULBs). Parent and community outreach programs will be strengthened to enable them to get involved, advocate, plan and monitor ECCE program."*

³⁵ Montie, Xiang, and Schweinhart 2006; Downer and Pianta 2006

³⁶ Karoly, Kilburn, and Canon 2005

Further, The National ECCE Curriculum Framework provides that *"In the context of involvement and active partnership of the community members, women and men from the local community, having good understanding of the socio cultural context can be chosen to support the teachers in the preschool centersMore so she can take the role of local resource person who provides valuable information to women, adolescent girls and other care givers on the issues related to health, child care and early learning."*

Current levels of community involvement in operations of AWCs or of other ECE centers continue to be low. In addition, there are no defined structures for community engagement efforts as such, except that the National ECCE policy provides for the celebration of an ECCE days in villages. However, in the absence of any guidelines on celebration objectives and modalities, there are wide variations in the way these days are celebrated across the country and the impact they have.

Few NGOs have implemented some innovative models to involve the community to a larger extent. Community run Balwadis operated by Pratham and the Bachpan project of the World Bank are a few to name. The Balwadi model, operated by Pratham, one of the largest NGOs working in the education space in India, is focused on mobilizing the community to provide ECE services in the relatively underserved areas. The Pratham team identifies areas that are not covered by the ICDS network, and with the help of community members sets up Balwadis to provide quality ECE services to children. Details of how Pratham engages the community in these Balwadis are outlined in Box 11 below.

Box 11: Community Run Balwadis, by Pratham

Objective and background of the program – Pratham has been working to provide preschool facilities in underserved areas since 1994. They work closely with the community to run community managed Preschools called "Balwadis". Pratham operates more than 1100 Balwadis and provides ECE services to more than 21000 children. Besides, it works with 1200+ government-run anganwadis that serve 42,000+ children.

Key features of the program – Pratham operated Balwadis are rooted in the community. The operating model is as follows:

- Based on a survey of "out of preschool net children" in a particular area, a Balwadi is set up to meet the demand. In addition, in some states, existing anganwadis are strengthened by training AWWs / providing trained volunteers.
- Volunteers interested in taking ECE classes are identified from the local community. These volunteers are trained by the Pratham team. Pratham also enrolls them in the Preschool education training courses at IGNOU or Andhra Mahila Sabha to further improve their skills.
- Community spaces such as a temple or a community hall is taken up for running the Balwadi
- Focus of the program is on physical and motor development, cognitive development and social

and language development of children

- Mothers are engaged and informed about progress of their children and their support solicited in ensuring the children's holistic development. For this purpose, regular meetings are conducted with the mothers and the wider community in the Balwadis. In these meetings, caregivers are updated on the progress of their children, issues that come up in class, and tasks that the caregivers can do at home with their children. Home visits are also conducted as part of the program, especially of those children who are irregular or seem maladjusted.
- In the numerous interactions with caregivers, volunteers or the AWWs are encouraged to discuss topics that caregivers can teach at home to supplement the efforts at the AWCs.

Rationale behind community engagement – Community engagement is a key component of ECE at Pratham Balwadis and supported anganwadis. Stress on caregiver education is based on a research study conducted by Pratham with JPAL in which it was found that (a) adult literacy classes for mothers or (b) training for mothers on how to enhance their children's learning at home or both in conjunction improve math scores in children from primary schools in India as compared to the control group. Further, to generate evidence for impact of engaging caregivers of children of age 3 years or less, Pratham and ASER have launched a program in Orissa to reach out to caregivers of this age group. The focus is on creating awareness around, nutrition, health and overall development of the child.

Impact of the project – The project has resulted in an increase in children's attendance and confidence, and has solicited greater engagement from mothers and Balwadi workers, who are community members themselves. Pratham is currently undertaking several research studies to measure the impact of innovations in ECE. A randomized control trial mentioned above on engaging caregivers in Orissa for children under 3 years of age is under progress. Similarly, a study with The Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab testing the impact of pre-numeracy activities in anganwadis on math scores in primary schools is under progress.

6.3 Emerging Areas for Interventions

Community engagement needs to be thought of at two levels. Firstly, how can we bring parents to the ECE centers and make them spend more time there. This is important to ensure that parents understand the developmental needs of their child and understand appropriate ECE practices. Secondly, how do we take ECE to the community i.e. spread education and awareness about the importance and benefits of ECE and what constitutes high quality ECE. A few ideas that emerged from the stakeholder workshop to achieve this were:

6.3.1 Bringing parents to the ECE centers

- Identifying specific days, say one in each quarter, where for a pre-decided objective, parents are required to come to the AWC can be an effective strategy to engage parents. ECCE day is one

such annual occasion identified by the National ECCE policy, but more frequent opportunities e.g. periodic Parent Teacher meetings could be structured. As for the ECCE day, providing appropriate funding as well as some guidelines around objectives and key activities to be conducted at a state level could drive greater impact.

- Leveraging parent bodies and associations could be another lever to influence parents and the wider community to get involved in activities of ECE centers. A structured program to build strong parent bodies/ associations and to educate them on their role to advocate for high quality ECE services as well on the contribution that they can make by participating in decision making for the benefit of their children is critical.
- Contributions made by parents or parent bodies/ associations should be recognized as a way to encourage parents to contribute to ECE operations.
- Another way to engage parents could be through providing them with opportunities to volunteer in class activities. Parents can volunteer during day-to-day activities (e.g., story-telling, reciting rhymes, etc.) and during special events organized at the anganwadi (e.g., cultural day, sports day, etc.).

6.3.2 Taking ECE to the larger community

Strong campaigns to build awareness and to educate parents and community members are needed to reach out to a wider audience, besides the parents of children enrolled at the ECE centers. Such campaigns can also educate parents on the importance of providing a stimulating environment at home.

Governments have experience of managing awareness campaigns at a large scale for various issues. For example the campaign on malnutrition named "Kuposhan Barat Chhodo", is India's biggest ever nationwide Information, Education and Communication (IEC) campaign developed by the Government in partnership with Mr Aamir Khan, UNICEF, McCann Advertising and Citizens Alliance against malnutrition which highlights the importance of proper nutrition in the first two years of life. Such experiences need to be leveraged to design an IEC campaign for ECE as well. Different strategies to build visibility and awareness at the village level, such as pasting posters at prominent locations in the villages, talking about the importance of ECE and the role of parents and the community at large during village panchayat meeting and other public gatherings, etc., can be tried to engage the community effectively.

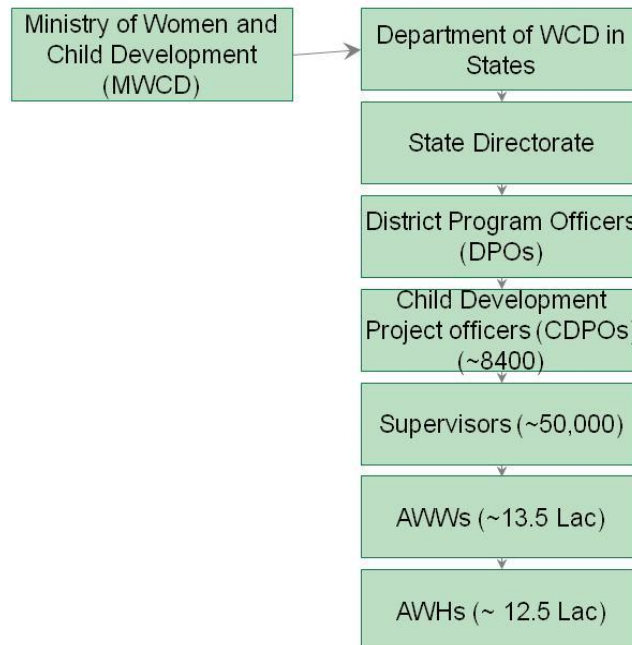
Though there is growing evidence of positive impact of parental education programs on performance outcomes in ECE centres, operational feasibility of such programs should be evaluated, especially when implemented on a large scale.

7 Program Management

7.1 Need for Effective Program Management

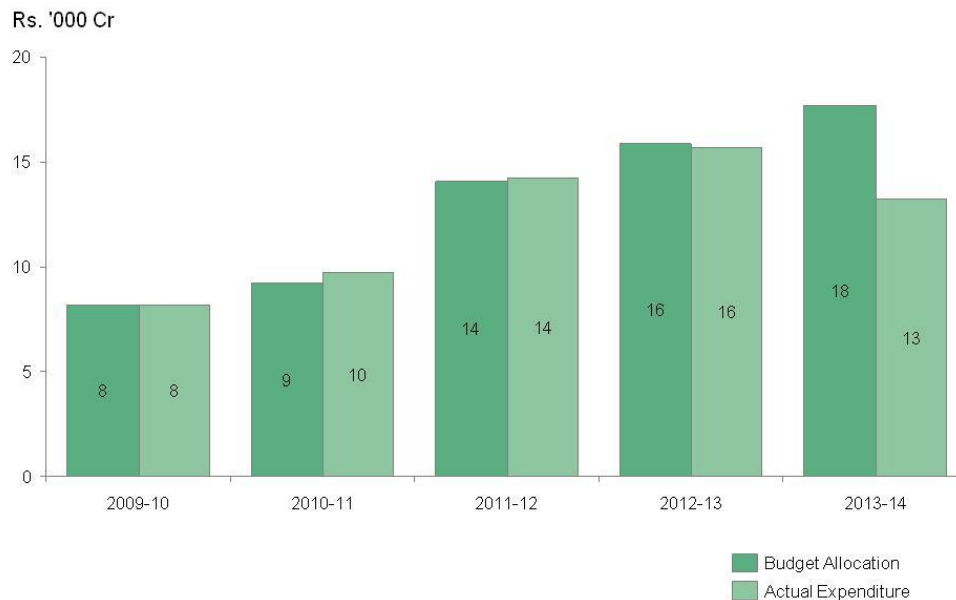
The eco system for ECE delivery in India is quite large, understandably as it needs to cater ~ 75 Million children in the age group of 3-6 years. The ICDS scheme alone comprises of 1.34 Million Anganwadi centers, and is implemented through a large, on-the-ground structure employing ~3 million people at district, block, cluster and AWC level, as shown in Figure 10 below.

Figure 10: Implementation Structure for ICDS



ICDS being such a large system also receives a significant budget allocation annually. The allocated amount for 2013-14 was ~ INR 18,000 Cr. (~USD 3 billion) and has been increasing over the last few years. In fact, in the last 5 years, the budget allocation has more than doubled. Figure 11 shows the annual budget allocation made to ICDS in the last 5 years and its actual utilization.

Figure 11: Annual Expenditure on ICDS



Note: Expenditure in 2013-14 is as on 30 November 2013
Source: MoWCD

Managing such a huge system with a large employee base and significant resources needs strong program management practices. MWCD, the nodal ministry for the ICDS scheme, and its respective departments in different state governments, need to have an effective and accountable governance system in order to deliver on their stated objectives.

Further, there is no formal data available on the number of private schools and the total number of children enrolled in these centers. However, as discussed earlier in the Access with Equity and Inclusion section of this report, these private pre schools cover ~ 10-30% of the eligible population. Clearly, the scale of the private network is also very large. Moreover, it is also highly fragmented and hence very complex to quality control.

Effective program management for any large scale set up involves three key aspects. Firstly, a robust monitoring and supervision system including, an enabling organization structure with clearly defined responsibilities and accountabilities, and MIS processes to ensure data driven decision making. Secondly, achieving convergence among various departments, policies and processes to ensure coordinated efforts and leveraging synergies. Thirdly, a strong research and documentation process is required to identify best practices and share them across the system. This will also help inform future policy changes as well as strengthen ongoing program management capabilities.

Current status of each of these three elements and associated challenges are detailed in the subsequent sections.

7.2 Recommended Monitoring and Supervision Structure and Processes

The National ECCE policy recognizes the need to strengthen the monitoring and supervision process at the national as well as state level. The Policy provides for two structures to be created for this purpose.

First, it recommends creation of an ECCE cell within MWCD, comprising of technical experts, to oversee the implementation of the National Policy imperatives and to act as an interface for multi-sectoral and inter-agency coordination, both at the national and state level, for example, coordination with the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare for nutrition and health components of the ICDS program. The Cell is also responsible for ensuring that the quality norms and benchmarks are followed across states.

Secondly, it recommends establishment of a National ECCE Council, which would be the apex body for guiding and overseeing the implementation of The National ECCE Policy. The council has been established at the national level and is responsible for establishing a comprehensive ECCE system and facilitating interventions such as, modalities of training, developing curriculum framework, setting quality standards, promoting action research etc. States were also mandated to set up counterpart Councils responsible for implementation of the policy imperatives at the state level, within 18 months of the notification of policy, i.e. by March 2015. However, many states are yet to set up these councils. As a result, while both a National ECE Curriculum Framework and Quality Standards have been released by MWCD, there is limited training, supervision and monitoring of the field team (AWWs, AWHS, and Supervisors) at the state level to be able to successfully implement them on the ground.

In addition to the National ECCE policy, the ICDS Mission³⁷ also provides for strengthening all the components of the program management process to strengthen implementation of the scheme. These recommendations are detailed in the 'ICDS Mission – A Broad Framework for Implementation' document released by the Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India in 2012.

Recommendations are as follows:

- Conducting a Common Review Mission (CRM) on the lines of National Health Mission (NHM) to provide inputs to annual mid course corrections in the implementation of the ICDS scheme. It is also recommended that, since National Health Mission / Ministry of Health and Family Welfare is responsible for 3 out of the 6 services provided under ICDS, the CRMs could be carried out jointly with the NHM CRMs. It is further recommended that such CRM teams should have representation

³⁷ ICDS Mission – The Broad Framework for Implementation (Ministry of Women and Child Development)

from both the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and the Ministry of Women and Child Development.

- Piloting a community owned accreditation system for AWCs, as also community based recognition and awards
- Displaying ICDS related indicators at village level at prominent areas such as AWCs, Health Sub Centers and Gram Panchayats, in the form of community charts.
- Encouraging use of technology in the process of data collection, analysis and decision making. The ICDS in Mission Mode has provided for an outsourced data entry operator at an AWC or sector level.
- Conducting periodic review of ICDS mission by an independent third party to review the impact of the program and identify mid-term course corrections needed.
- Defining a tiered structure for grievance redressal. Village Health, Sanitation and Nutrition Committee is responsible for grievance redressal at State / Union Territory level; Zila Parishad (District Council) lead/ District Magistrate/ Collector is responsible at district level; and Panchayat Samiti (Village Council)/ Standing Committee is responsible at block level
- Using a web based grievance redressal platform for registering grievances through a toll free number or submitting a written complaint.

While all of these are great provisions notified by the government; successful implementation of these is yet to be accomplished.

7.3 Current status of monitoring of anganwadi activities – need for greater attention to ECE

As part of the current monitoring process, MWCD prescribes that each AWC maintain 11 separate registers for different components of ICDS. This includes separate registers for Family Details, Supplementary Food Stock, Supplementary Food Distribution, Pre School Education, Pregnancy and Delivery, Immunization and Village Health and Nutrition Day (VHND), Vitamin A Biannual Rounds, Home Visits Planner, Referrals, Weight Record for Children and a Summary Register. The prescribed format of the register for preschool education asks for data on enrolment and attendance of children in different age groups (3-4 years, 4-5 years and 5-6 years) and a list of activities conducted on a daily basis.

In addition to these, every AWC creates a Monthly Progress Report (MPR). The format of the MPR asks for multiple data points related to birth, death, delivery of supplementary nutrition, VHND, Immunization, Referral Services, visits by various officials such as Supervisor, ANM, CDPO, etc., and non ICDS work done by AWWs and AWHs in the month. The only preschool education related information captured in the MPR is student enrolment and attendance, and the number of days when preschool education activities were conducted. The MPR form has multiple fields to be reported, it could be worthwhile to simplify the form further to make the data collection process easier for the AWW. Figure 12 gives a snapshot of the ECE section of the MPR.

Figure 12: Snapshot of recommended format to record preschool education-related data in the MPR

4. Pre-school Education Coverage (Residents)

a. Number of children 36-71 month old who attended for 16 or more days in the reporting month

Category	Girls	Boys	Total
ST			
SC			
Others			
All categories (Total)			
Minority			
Disabled			

b. Total Daily Attendance of Children

Age category	Girls	Boys	Total
3 – 4 yrs			
4 – 5 yrs			
5 – 6 yrs			
All Children			

c. PSE Attendance Efficiency

	Girls (36-71 m)	Boys (36-71 m)	Total (36-71 m)
I. Annual population totals (as in April)*			
II. Usual absentees during the month*			
III. Total present for at least one day during the month*			
IV. Expected Total Daily Attendance			
V. Actual Total Daily Attendance			
VI. PSE attendance efficiency (%)			

* Sum of numbers reported by all reporting AWCs

IV Expected Total Daily Attendance = (Sum of (III) from each AWC x no. of days when PSE was conducted, from that AWC (MPR) for all AWCs)

V Actual Total Daily Attendance = Sum of Total Daily Attendance reported by all AWCs

VI PSE Attendance Efficiency [(v/iv) x 100]

d. PSE Activities

	Total	Average
i. No. of days on which any PSE activity was conducted		
II. No. of days on which at least four PSE activities were conducted		

(For computing average, divide total by number of reporting AWCs)

Primary data collection and reporting work is done by AWWs under the supervision of Supervisors. While all these various detailed registers are required to be maintained at AWC level, the Monthly Performance Report (MPR) is the only document that gets aggregated at the cluster, block, district and state level.

There are several challenges with the current data collection and reporting process of ICDS as outlined above. Firstly, the monitoring templates (registers) lack any measurable outcome oriented performance indicators for ECE. They only capture enrolment, attendance and a list of activities conducted. There is a

need to measure and capture outcome metrics like student learning outcomes vis-à-vis the goals prescribed for preschool education and to use that data to drive up accountability and hence improvement in the outcomes over time. Secondly, the manner in which the data collection and aggregation process is run today is not very efficient. It is primarily a manual process with very limited technological intervention. The ICDS mission has provided for increasing the use of technology and ensuring real time information availability through web based platforms, however, that is yet to be implemented. Thirdly, for the data collection process to flow effectively, each stakeholder needs to appreciate the relevance of the data being collected and what decisions it might impact. However, since no real actionables come out of the monitoring process today, stakeholders do not appreciate or understand its purpose, and the data collection is simply a compliance process.

As for private preschools, there is no data available and limited or no monitoring process followed as such. In the absence of any regulation or accreditation, there is no information on the number of private preschools, their enrolment, or the quality of programs imparted.

Some states have implemented a technology based intervention for supplementary nutrition element of the ICDS scheme and those are worth learning from. For example, Gujarat has implemented a completely automated data collection and monitoring system for tracking the status of nutrition among children. Key features and approach of the program are detailed in Box 12 below.

Box 12: Gujarat e-Bal Vikas – Computerized system for data collection and monitoring

Objective and background for the system: e-Bal Vikas is a Management Information System specifically developed to collect essential information from individual AWCs in Gujarat. This was developed by the Women and Child Development Department of Gujarat has developed e-Bal Vikas with the technical support of NIC and BISAG (Bhaskaracharya Institute for Space Information and Geo Analytics). The system collects Geographical Information System (GIS) based location, performance, infrastructure and other information from each AWC. The mandate of the e-Bal Vikas system is to ensure that there is a continuous flow of good quality disaggregated data on ICDS functions and services to assist in local as well as state level monitoring, planning, implementation and impact evaluation.

Key Features of the system: There are 5 key features of the system. a) Automated child monitoring system to capture health and nutrition indicators of children b) A visit monitoring system for online monitoring of attendance as well as DPO visits at AWCs. c) Online MIS for monthly performance reports as prescribed by MWCD. d) Location-based decision support system to identify gaps and support planning initiatives at all levels – from the state to the individual AWC. e) Grading of AWCs based on the data collected.

Key lessons: ICDS in Gujarat is one of the pioneers in developing location-sensitive MIS to assist with progress tracking and planning. Though the system has a greater focus on nutrition, it does capture essential information (such as attendance, visits by DPOs, monthly performance reports, etc.) that is also relevant for ECE.

This MIS is a good starting point and can be further modified to track school-readiness indicators under ICDS going forward.

There is a need to evaluate the applicability of similar technology based monitoring and supervision interventions for ECE, and to scale them up to state and national levels.

7.4 Convergence and Coordination among Various Departments

Early childhood education is an area that inherently requires multiple ministries and departments to work together effectively, including, MWCD, Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), and Ministry of Health and Family Welfare in particular. One of the objectives of ECE is school readiness for children and hence, effective coordination with MHRD, the Ministry responsible for school education, at a national level as well as with its respective departments at state levels is critical.

As described earlier, The Right to Education Act (RTE) also suggests that *"with a view to prepare children above the age of three years for elementary education and to provide early childhood care and education for all children until they complete the age of six years, the appropriate government may make necessary arrangement for providing free preschool education for such children"*. Moreover, the Central Government recently launched the 'Padhe Bharat Badhe Bharat' program to improve early reading, writing and mathematics (details in Box 13 below). To enable the success of the program, learning goals and pedagogical practices adopted in ECE centers need to converge with the goals and practices in primary schools.

Box 13: Padhe Bharat Badhe Bharat – improving early reading, writing and mathematics

Objective and background of the program: Classes I and II are important stages for developing the important skill of reading with comprehension and writing with purpose. Children who fail to learn to read in the first two grades of school are likely to fall behind and have difficulty in learning other subjects as well. Poor readers cannot develop proper writing skills and are vulnerable to drop out of the education system undermining the quality of life and productivity of human resources.

The National Curriculum Framework – 2005 has clearly pointed out, "A majority of children have a sense of fear and failure regarding Mathematics. Hence, they give up early on, and drop out of serious

mathematical learning". A nationwide sub-program '*Padhe Bharat Badhe Bharat*' has been launched as part of SSA to improve language development by creating an enduring interest in reading and writing with comprehension, and to create a natural and positive interest in mathematics related to the physical and social world.

Objectives: The two tracks of PBBB are (i) Early reading and writing with comprehension and (ii) Early mathematics. Objectives of PBBB are:

- (i) To enable children to become motivated, independent and engaged readers and writers with comprehension with lasting reading and writing skills to achieve grade-appropriate learning levels.
- (ii) To make children understand the reasoning and enable them to independently solve problems in the domain of numbers, measurements and shapes
- (iii) To associate reading and writing with the experience of joy and real life situation
- (iv) To recognize social perceptiveness of home-school transition and the role of children's literature in the process of building independent and engaged readers and writers.

This is proposed to be accomplished by:

- (i) Initiating a dialogue with teachers, HTs, parents, administrators, and policy makers to improve pedagogy of early reading and writing, and early mathematics.
- (ii) Creating sensitization about the needs of children of classes I and II with reference to meaningful processes of reading and writing and early mathematics
- (iii) Creating a cadre of resource groups and teachers well acquainted with pedagogy of reading and writing, and early mathematics
- (iv) Creating a conducive and vibrant classroom and school environment

Proposed systemic components for PBBB: The various proposed systemic components essential for implementation of PBBB include:

- (i) Design relevant curriculum and associated pedagogy for early reading and writing with comprehension, and early mathematics by the Academic Authorities (NCERT and SCERT)
- (ii) Having clarity at the State level on the medium of instruction
- (iii) Incorporating the new curriculum in pre and in-service teacher training programs
- (iv) Capacity building of teacher trainers – State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT), District Institute of Education and Training (DIETS) and Resource Persons (RPs)
- (v) Capacity building of administrators – District Education Officers (DEOs), Block Education Officers (BEOs), etc.
- (vi) Relevant head teacher leadership training
- (vii) Capacity building of School Management Committees (SMCs)
- (viii) Development of locally-contextualized and interesting children literature in local language and

resources in mathematics

Key takeaways with respect to ECE: Focus on pre-primary education can help improve outcomes in elementary education as targeted by this scheme. Given similar objectives, collaboration between the two ministries (MHRD and MWCD) can contribute immensely to the success of the program.

In addition to cross department collaboration, there is a need to achieve convergence among various policies and schemes through which preschool services are provided in the country. ICDS is a large and well-resourced scheme, however there are also several smaller schemes such as the Rajiv Gandhi National Crèche Scheme for the children of working mothers; and other crèche schemes mandated by various acts such as The Mines Act (1952); Factories (Amendment) Act, 1987; Building and Other Construction Workers' (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act, 1996; and The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005. There is a need to ensure convergence across all these programs and schemes to ensure consistency in approaches and develop one strong network of ECE centers across the country.

MWCD has also recognized the need for better coordination and convergence across schemes and The National ECCE Policy identifies "Convergence and Coordination" as one of its eleven priority areas for action. It provides that *"the Government shall bring appropriate legislation for promoting integrated and comprehensive child development detailing age appropriate interventions to address various facets of care, education, survival, protection and development of all children under six years of age assuring the right of the child in early childhood to Integrated Child Development"*

Despite policy recognition, more effective coordination between Education departments and State Women and Child/ Social Welfare Departments would lead to sustained results at the decentralized levels. A structured mechanism for sharing goals, plans, expertise and best practices is required for effective working together of ministries and departments, and such a platform is currently not available.

Some states have tried achieving this convergence by physically co-locating ECE centers with primary schools. For example, in the state of Rajasthan, ~16,000 AWCs are located in primary school campuses. The potential benefits by co-locating primary schools and AWCs are mentoring of AWWs in ECE by primary school teachers / Head masters, increased enrolment and attendance in AWCs in the scenario where an elder sibling is attending primary school, and higher proportion of children transitioning from preschool to primary schools. While Rajasthan has seen some success, such pilots across states have not been able to generate similar or optimum outcomes due to lack of supportive functioning among the relevant departments.

Another model worth exploring is that of having pre-primary sections in primary schools, as in primary schools in Assam ("Ka-Shreni") and primary schools run by The Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai. The "Ka-Shreni" schools are present in ~15,000 primary schools in Assam. In Assam, in places where Ka-Shrenis are present, children move from AWC to Ka-shreni and finally to primary school. Ka-Shrenis are mandated to provide one year of ECE before the child enters primary school. The CECED study³⁸ found that in Assam "Ka-Shreni" schools, which are preschools co-located with primary schools, were providing good facilities in terms of classroom space, and other infrastructure facilities such as drinking water, toilets etc., however, there was a lack of teachers in classrooms due to which each class had more than 40 students. Ka-Shrenis were historically funded and managed by the Department of Education. However, due to withdrawal of the fund for innovation under SSA, the Education department has withdrawn funding support for K-Shrenis. Going forward, owing to a significant increase in funding over the years for universalization of ICDS, administration of Ka-Shrenis could be formally moved to the Social Welfare department in the state.

Co-location is clearly one model that needs to be studied further. In addition, there is a need to find ways to leverage MHRD's expertise in core areas of education like curriculum development and its implementation on a large scale, pedagogy, teacher trainings etc. MHRD has existing structures and institutions, including the National Council of Education Research and Training (NCERT) and also training institutes at district levels in each state (e.g. the District Institutes of Education and Training, the Colleges of Teacher Education etc.) whose capabilities and infrastructure can very much be leveraged by the ICDS system for the purposes of delivering high quality ECE.

7.5 Status of Research, Knowledge and Best Practice Sharing

Early Childhood Education is an evolving topic, and there is a constant need to invest in research to assess the impact of current practices as well as identify best practices in the space. Countries across the world have conducted many detailed studies in this area and have been successful in isolating the impact of various independent factors on the outcomes of early childhood education. A number of such studies have been quoted in different sections of this report.

The National ECCE Policy has also emphasized the need for continuous research in ECE. It provides that *"research will be promoted to generate indigenous knowledge and to ensure a more evidence based approach towards planning, implementation and monitoring of ECCE programs and interventions. Impact evaluation will be made integral to all interventions and action research will be promoted for generating innovative model"*.

³⁸ "Quality and Diversity in Early Childhood Education" conducted across 3 states, Assam, Andhra Pradesh, and Rajasthan by Center for Early Childhood Education and Development

The keyword to note here is indigenous. Though there is a lot of international research to refer to, there is limited research in the Indian context and needs to be promoted. The one indigenous study that we've quoted multiple times in this white paper is the one undertaken by CECED, Ambedkar University³⁹ with support from MWCD and Ministry of Human Resource Management, among others. This is a recently initiated longitudinal report to understand the current participation trends such as enrolment and attendance of children in ECE and their school readiness levels at 5 years of age, to analyze quality variations across ECE centers, public, private and NGO run, to identify significant quality variables in ECE that impact school readiness and primary school outcomes, and to study and evaluate some of the existing ECE models in-depth. The study is the first longitudinal study on ECE in the country, and there is a growing need for such an evidence base to make appropriate policy and implementation decisions for advancement of ECE.

Availability of information and a research-based evidence base is one part of the story. The other part is the ability to share information with various stakeholders such as State and Central Governments, various ECE service providers, the community etc. Since implementation of ECE takes place at a state level through a decentralized approach, each State could be using very different approaches in implementation of similar guidelines provided by the Centre. Further, there are many private players, both small scale and large scale, working for profit and not-for-profit, implementing ECE in smaller geographies or managing a small number of AWCs, who are indeed using a number of innovative ECE practices. There is a need to effectively share information across players and learn from their practices. As of date, there are no structured platforms or forums for information or best practice sharing across different players and these need to be encouraged.

Potential learnings can be drawn from a web based platform, called "Nutrition Resource Platform (NRP)", that has been developed by MWCD and National Institute for Public Cooperation and Child Development, with the aim to collect, collate and make available resources and materials on nutrition and child development to diverse stakeholders such as nutrition and child care professionals, frontline workers like AWWs, policy makers and implementers, academia, grass root organizations as well as National and International Organization working in the field of nutrition and child care. The Platform captures policies governing nutrition and best practices, and also gives an opportunity to various stakeholders to interact with each other. A snapshot of the NRP is captured in Figure 13 below.

³⁹ "Quality and Diversity in Early Childhood Education" conducted across 3 states, Assam, Andhra Pradesh, and Rajasthan by Center for Early Childhood Education and Development

Figure 13: National Resource Platform



MWCD should consider developing a similar platform for ECE. The MWCD's overwhelming priority to the area of nutrition is understandable given the high malnutrition rates in the country. However, appropriate recognition of the need for early learning in young children especially in the age group of 4-6 years is critical to ensure that the rapidly developing young brain is given enough early learning and stimulation to build on its potential for subsequent cognitive and co-scholastic development at the primary level.

7.6 Emerging Areas for Interventions

In order to achieve effective program management for ECE, the following areas were identified in the workshop:

1. Developing a robust monitoring and supervision process, supported by a comprehensive Management Information System (MIS)

There is a need to define an overall Monitoring and Supervision (M&S) process along with a Management Information System (MIS) to support the process. The first step in developing this system is to identify various "use-cases" for the information and data that will come through the monitoring process, that is,

what are the specific decisions that we want to make and hence what exact data or information is required to be collected. For example, use cases could include tracking learning levels of students to inform policy decisions as well as specific interventions to improve student learning outcomes. Data may also be required for various HR decisions related to the large number of personnel involved in the ICDS system, or for routine planning and budgeting or legal activities. All of these are valid use-cases for which centralized data should be available and easily accessible in a centralized MIS, at State level, some of which can also be aggregated at National level.

Once the use cases and hence the data fields required are identified, there is a need to outline a well defined process for data collection, aggregation, synthesis and analysis, as well ensuring its ongoing accuracy and usage. The process must ensure minimum transmission loss, automatic data cross checking and validation, supported by physical verification of data on a sample basis. It is also important to ensure that the system is easy to use so that it can be easily adapted by officers at various levels. Roll out of a new monitoring and supervision process will also require rigorous training of all stakeholders (AWWs, AWHs, Supervisors, CDPOs, and DPOs) to be able to feed in correct data as well as utilize the data available in the system to improve delivery of their everyday jobs. Further, ways to increase use of technology in the program management process could be explored, e.g. smart phone and web based applications to simplify data collection processes.

2. Accreditation and regulation for private pre schools

As mentioned previously in the report, private preschools are estimated to enrol ~10-30% of the eligible population, and they have a wide network spread across urban as well as rural areas. Absence of any sort of regulation of these private preschools has led to multiple challenges. Firstly, there is no visibility on the number of such centres and children enrolled. Due to this, an accurate picture of coverage of ECE services is not available and accurate demand estimation is also not possible. Secondly, there is no quality control over ECE services provided and programs vary largely in their durations, approaches and the kinds of personnel involved in delivering ECE. There is a need to implement a robust recognition or accreditation framework, potentially expanding the responsibility of National and State Councils, or perhaps, even considering a tighter regulatory framework for the large network of private preschools. This is necessary to ensure strict compliance to minimum quality standards.

3. Coordination between Ministry of Women and Child Development and Ministry of Human Resource Development

There is a need to build forums and platforms to facilitate collaboration between MHRD and MWCD such that the expertise of MHRD in imparting education can be leveraged for ECE programs. For example,

knowledge and expertise within NCERT can be leveraged by NIPCCD. The large existing training infrastructure of MHRD to impart teacher training systems at the state and district levels like the SCERTs and the DIETs could be utilized to meet the shortfall in training infrastructure for ICDS personnel. Many such areas for collaboration could be identified and implemented.

Further, it is crucial to ensure a smooth transition for children from preschools to formal schools. For that, children must undergo an integrated program of education right from early childhood that follows appropriate pedagogical approaches and where the goals achieved at the end of the ECE program are in sync with the requirements of primary schools. Effective convergence of the ICDS with the education sector through the SSA program will lead to tangible and positive gains for the program.

Two models to achieve the desired integration can be explored. Firstly, ECE centres can be co-located with primary schools (as in some schools in Rajasthan). As highlighted previously in the report, co-located ECE centres can potentially offer various benefits in terms of improving enrolment, children's participation and quality of ECE programs. A second model is having pre-primary sections in primary schools (as in Mumbai and Assam). These models have been tried at a smaller scale in different states and could be considered for rollout more widely after further impact research. However, we must learn from the challenges faced by the states that have tried these models, such as lack of availability of appropriate infrastructure, or inadequate staff to run the ECE classes, and address those challenges before implementation at a larger scale.

During the Roundtable, an issue that constantly emerged was the need for appropriate positioning of pre-school education. Where does it belong? Would it be more suitable to include it under the mandate of school education? This could help ensure that academic and administrative continuum from preschool education to early grade learning is maintained. The enabling provision of the Right to Education Act to provide a year of quality preschool education by appropriate government authorities could be helpful in ensuing better convergent action between both the sectors.

SSA practices in primary schools can be leveraged to ensure developmentally appropriate pedagogical approaches are followed with a year of focussed pre-school education so that the 5-6 year olds achieve appropriate school readiness by the age of 6 when they enter school. At the same time, Anganwadi Centres could continue to work closely with children in the 0-4 year age group, where age appropriate early stimulation could support the learning goals with a greater focus on nutrition.

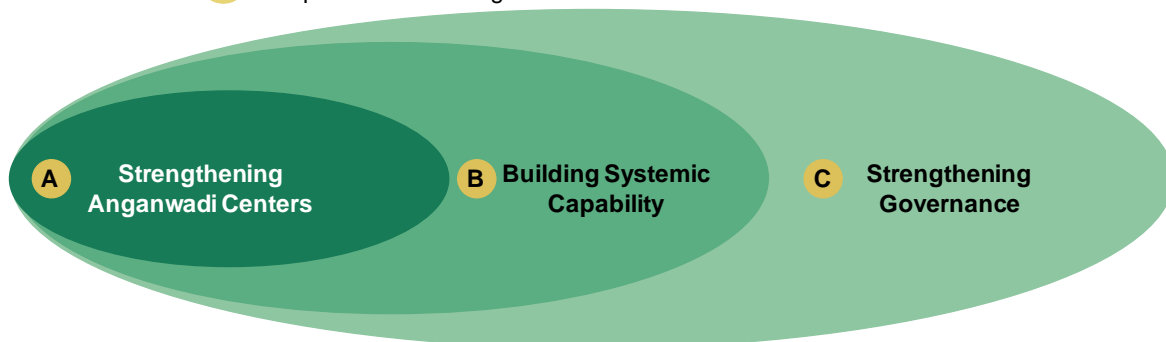
8 Suggestive Roadmap for ECE and takeaways for key stakeholders

The National Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) policy of India lists Early Childhood Education (ECE) as an important component of ECCE. The objective of ECE is to prepare children for start of formal schooling. The preceding sections outline the challenges faced by both the public and private sectors in delivering high quality ECE to children of all socio-economic backgrounds and proposed ideas for interventions to achieve it.

The proposed **Suggestive Roadmap for ECE**, described in Figure 14, has emerged from the Roundtable discussions and a review of research available from existing resources. In the latter half of the chapter, we list the implications emerging from the roadmap for key stakeholders.

Figure 14: Suggestive Roadmap for ECE

- A1** ECE curriculum and pedagogy (detailing curriculum and transaction approach, developing TLM, associated training of AWWs and supervisors, etc.)
- A2** Structure to the day in AWC with clear role definition and optimally filled positions
- A3** Community engagement with the Anganwadis
- A4** Adequate and enabling infrastructure in all AWCs



- B1** Strengthening "capacity building" capacity (training infrastructure, trainers' capabilities, training curriculum); forming a consortium of capability building institutions
- B2** Expanding network of AWCs in regions with low access
- B3** Strategy and capabilities for specific underserved segments
- C1** Program management process including MIS and clear responsibilities of stakeholders
- C2** Accreditation and regulation of private preschools
- C3** Data base of all eligible beneficiaries and status of attending ECE program
- C4** Coordination with MHRD and other ministries

The roadmap has three key components:

- **Strengthening Anganwadi Centers:** The Anganwadi Center acts as the primary 'theatre of action' for ECE services in India and must be strengthened to provide a developmentally appropriate and engaging environment for every child. To strengthen ECE services at the anganwadi, the ECE curriculum and pedagogy should be improved, a daily schedule with dedicated time for ECE

should be chalked out, the community and caregivers should be engaged, and finally, adequate and developmentally stimulating physical infrastructure should be made available.

- **Building systemic capability:** To be able to achieve improvement at scale, the gaps that exist in the systemic capabilities of the ICDS network must be bridged. These include, for example, developing large scale systemic capacity to train frontline workers, filling in vacancies in critical monitoring and support roles across levels, and ensuring greater access to ECE services, especially for certain currently under-served communities.
- **Strengthening governance:** ICDS is a huge public welfare program comprising ~1.4 million AWCs and ~2.7 million workers. Appropriate governance and management of ECE within the convergent ICDS program would lead to better return on the investment in the program. Some interventions to strengthen program management processes, clearly defining roles of each stakeholder, generating and leveraging beneficiary data, and ensuring better convergence with the education sector would lead to optimal results. Further, the requisite regulation of the rapidly growing private providers of ECE services needs urgent attention.

Each component of the roadmap is discussed in detailed in the proceeding sections.

8.1 Strengthening Anganwadi Centers

Given that an AWC is the implementing unit of ECE, it is central to the Roadmap. Quality of ECE transaction at the center determines the quality of ECE program to a large extent and to achieve high quality transaction, multiple interventions are required.

8.1.1 Implementing high quality ECE curriculum and pedagogy

Foremost, it is essential to implement a developmentally appropriate curriculum, for each sub stage of development, along with an engaging pedagogy that includes activity based learning, adequate teaching learning materials (TLMs) to be leveraged in classrooms, and engaging classroom practices.

Guidelines and structure for creating such an ECE curriculum have been provided by 'The National Early Childhood Care and Education Curriculum Framework (NECF)'. The framework lays down developmental goals for each age group along with recommended activities without use of formal instruction in early years. It also provides for pedagogical practices that would promote optimum learning and development of young children. States are expected to develop an annual contextualized and detailed curriculum to meet the needs of their children, families, and local community, while adhering to the broad principles outlined in the framework.

As a first step, States need to expedite the process of curriculum development in line with the proposed national guidelines, if not already completed. Once such a curriculum is designed and adopted, it needs to be coupled with requisite trainings to AWWs, AWHs on the curriculum, the pedagogy and process for using TLMs. Similar trainings also need to be provided to supervisors, CDPOs, DPOs to help them guide the AWWs and AWHs. Rolling out the curriculum and pedagogy state-wide would require considerable training wherewithal and strong on-the-ground implementation management. This is a challenging and complex task, and States need to plan for it rigorously.

8.1.2 Structure to the day in the AWC with clear role definition and optimally filled positions

An AWC operates for 6 hours a day and provides a diverse set of services including ECE, nutrition, health and nutrition counseling, certain health services (immunization, health check-ups, etc.), and community mobilization and awareness. AWWs and AWHs are responsible for carrying out most of these services, and with such a vast scope of responsibilities, ECE tends to get deprioritized.

It is thus important to provide AWWs and AWHs with a structure to the day, so that they can manage all their responsibilities efficiently. A daily schedule can have time earmarked for ECE activities. It is also important to guide the AWWs on how they can leverage other functionaries such as ASHA, ANM, Medical Officer, etc. for specific services (eg. maternal counseling, health services, etc.). Given that this would need coordination between different ministries, it is important, at the state as well as the local level, to clearly define roles and responsibilities of each stakeholder in the system. Providing an additional AWW dedicated for ECE provision can also be explored further.

Ensuring sufficient strength of resources at each level in the ICDS hierarchy is critical. Nationally, ~30% positions of CDPOs / Assistant Child Development Project Officers (ACDPOs) / supervisors are vacant. Given that they have the critical role of supporting AWWs and monitoring their activities, they must have manageable spans of control to carry out their duties effectively. For this, filling of critical vacancies is important. ~7-8 % vacancies also exist at the AWW and AWH level. These vacancies need to be filled at the earliest to ensure efficient functioning of the ICDS system, especially in districts with low access and high vacancies. In addition, the current manpower norms at AWW level, to meet the child to caregiver ratio, and at the supervisor level, to effectively monitor and mentor AWWs, must be revisited.

8.1.3 Community engagement at Anganwadis

Various studies have found significant impact of parental behavior and community engagement on the outcomes of ECE programs. To effectively engage the community in ECE, caregivers need to appreciate the importance of ECE and understand what constitutes high quality, developmentally appropriate ECE. Further, they need to be involved in provision of ECE, at ECE centers as well as at home.

Engaging caregivers should become an innate part of the ECE program. Local meetings, gatherings, etc can be used as a platform by the AWW to talk about the importance of ECE. Mass media campaigns can be leveraged at the local as well as at a state or national level to promote ECE awareness.

The National ECCE policy has recommended the celebration of an annual ECCE day. On the same lines, more frequent caregiver and AWW meetings should be organized, wherein parents can learn from each other as well as from the AWW. This provides a good platform to communicate what the parents can do at home to supplement efforts at the AWC. In addition, parents can be encouraged to volunteer in ECE activities at the AWC. Further, AWWs should also be encouraged to do personal home visits, especially to the house of children who need additional stimulation at the preschool and at home.

8.1.4 Adequate and enabling infrastructure in all AWCs

The current status of infrastructure at many ECE centers needs strengthening to come to the level recommended by 'The Quality standards for Early Childhood Care and Education' released by MWCD in January 2014.

Infrastructure can be thought through at two levels. Firstly, basic infrastructure may be ensured, including construction of AWCs in pakka buildings, providing adequate indoor and outdoor space, aesthetics and cleanliness, safety and approachability of the center, and toilet and water facilities. Secondly, developmentally appropriate teaching and learning environment for children needs to be provided. One such example is BALA (Building as Learning Aid), a model providing cost-effective developmentally appropriate learning environment at the AWCs that has been used both in preschools and in primary schools in different parts of the country.

8.2 Building Systemic Capabilities

Under ICDS, there are close to 1.4 million anganwadis and ~2.7 million workers. This vast system needs to be strengthened to optimally deliver ECE services. This includes ensuring universal access to AWCs for all communities, improving quality and capacity of training centers, and filling in critical vacancies in the system. Given the size of India, a country wide framework for capacity building is needed that states can tweak as per their requirements and contexts.

8.2.1 Strengthening systemic training capacity

There are four major challenges in training ICDS workers on ECE that need to be addressed urgently. Firstly, there is lack of adequate infrastructural capacity to train the ~2.7 million ICDS workers. Secondly, the ECE training itself (content, delivery, duration, etc) needs to be revised and strengthened further. Thirdly, there is a shortage of quality trainers in both the public and private sectors. Fourthly, there is no record, and hence, no data available, to track the ICDS functionaries who have undertaken the training.

The training curriculum needs to be revamped to reflect the recommended improvements to the existing curriculum and pedagogy for ECE. Simultaneously, the current training facilities need significant increase in capacity and quality of trainers. Given that this is a resource and time intensive task, a consortium of existing organizations providing trainings for ECE can be formed in the interim, till the time these capabilities are enhanced. This consortium could include existing good quality capacity building institutions and professionals working in ECE, both in the public and the private sectors. The consortium could be entrusted with the responsibility of identifying ways and means to enhance ECE capacity in the country, including revamping the training structure and content, strengthening training infrastructure and developing trainer capacity. The consortium could have representation from government agencies such as NIPCCD, NCERT, SCERTs and NCTE, as well as from relevant independent persons and private sector organizations.

Further, there is need to set up a state-level Training Management System, integrated with the state-wise MIS to track all trainings, i.e., induction, on the job and biennial refresher trainings. Data thus collected can be used for planning and monitoring purposes.

8.2.2 Expanding network of AWCs in regions with low access

It is estimated that ~60-80% children go to preschools, either public (~49-50%) or private (~10-30%). Over 20% eligible children are still outside the preschool net.

States such as Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, etc. have lower than recommended number of AWCs. In addition, most states fall short on the child to caregiver ratio as recommended by the 'Quality Standards for ECCE', even if the number of AWCs is adequate. For example, in West Bengal, Orissa, etc., though the Population per AWC is well within the recommended limit, the Children per AWC ratio far exceeds the recommended norms (by 100%-200%). This means that in such states, there is access to an AWC, and the population norm for setting up an AWC is being met, but the demand is even higher. The population norms for setting up an AWC should hence be relooked at, or the number of AWCs in individual centers should be increased, with corresponding upgrades to infrastructure.

~20% of children, who are currently out of the preschool net, need to be enrolled into AWCs. However, due to paucity of data around need and availability of preschool centers, more research is required to provide recommendations on ways to ensure universal access to AWCs.

8.2.3 Strategies for specific underserved segments

To universalize high quality ECCE services, it is important to take into consideration challenges faced by specific population segments.

A study points out that ~75% eligible children in Delhi slums do not have access to ECE services⁴⁰. The challenges faced by slums include unavailability of space for starting AWCs, very high density of population, poverty, etc. Similarly, a program for CWSNs needs to be thought through with a strong element supporting early identification of the special needs of children, and referral services to ensure supportive interventions. Such programs also need to include a component of guidance and support to the officers responsible to educate and sensitize them on how to work with CWSNs effectively. It is important to understand the challenges faced by such segments and address these challenges to universalize ECCE.

8.3 Strengthening Governance

It is critical to effectively govern and manage the ICDS program to improve the state of ECE. Further, it is important to regulate and govern the rapidly growing private provider segment of ECE services. To achieve this, some interventions are proposed in the following paragraphs.

8.3.1 Database of all eligible beneficiaries and status of attending ECE programs

Accurate and comprehensive data around ECE, AWCs and eligible children is not available. This data is critical to estimate demand, supply, utilization, infrastructure, etc. A robust database for children under the age of 6 (akin to UDISE for SSA) should be set up to track essential metrics.

The database should capture information for every beneficiary including status of attending ECE (govt. v/s private v/s none), along with basic background information, such as gender and location. As a result, we will have robust information on the eligible population and enrolments. The database should also include a distribution of AWCs by geography, infrastructure details, manpower details (AWW and AWH), number of children attending the anganwadi, etc. Relevant information on ECE teachers and ECE teacher training should also be collected. The National level database will be very useful while making decisions pertaining to policy, planning and operations within ICDS.

8.3.2 Strengthening program management processes

Currently, AWWs are expected to collect relevant data (e.g., family details, supplementary food distribution, ECE, etc.) via eleven separate registers. In addition, the AWWs create a Monthly Progress Report (MPR) that captures data related to birth, supplementary nutrition, etc. The only ECE related information captured in the MPR is student enrollment and attendance, and the number of days when preschool education activities were conducted. While all registers are expected to be maintained at the AWC level, the MPR data is aggregated at the cluster, block, district and state level. For many states, this data is aggregated manually, leading to errors and losses in transcription.

⁴⁰ A 2012 study titled "Ignored and Unheard", conducted by Mobile Crèches and Neev (Delhi Forces)

Going forward, there is a need to define an overall Monitoring and Supervision (M&S) process, along with using a technology based Management Information System (MIS) to support the process. This system should outline a well defined process for data collection, aggregation, synthesis and analysis. It is also critical to ensure accuracy, usage, minimum transmission loss, and automatic data cross checking and validation, supported by physical verification of data on a sample basis. The system should be easy to use so that it can be adapted at all levels. Ways to increase use of technology in the program management process could be explored. Roll out of a new monitoring and supervision process will also require rigorous training of all stakeholders to feed in data correctly, as well as to use this data to improve program planning, delivery and monitoring.

8.3.3 Accreditation and regulation of private preschools

Private preschools in India have a wide network in both urban and rural areas and are estimated to enrol ~10-30% of all eligible children. In the absence of any regulation, there is no visibility on the number of such centres and children enrolled. Due to this, an estimation of coverage of ECE services and existing demand is not possible. Further, there is no quality control over ECE services provided and no defined standards of curriculum and pedagogy.

Thus, there is a need to implement a robust recognition or accreditation framework, either nationally or at the state level. This is necessary to ensure strict compliance to minimum quality standards.

8.3.4 Coordination with the formal Education Sector (Ministry of Human Resource Development)

One of the primary objectives of ECE is enhancing school readiness of children. To improve quality of the ECE curriculum and pedagogy, there is a need to build forums and platforms to facilitate collaboration between ICDS and the education sector so that the expertise of the education personnel and practitioners can be leveraged for ECE programs.

Certain states, including Rajasthan and Assam, have tried co-locating anganwadis and primary schools to achieve better transition from preschool to primary school. In Assam, for example, children move from an AWC to a Ka-Shreni (i.e., pre-primary class) located in a primary school to the first grade of primary school. Such a model can be explored by other states if further impact evaluation research shows positive outcomes.

During the Roundtable, one of the recommendations that came up was to reassess the positioning of ECE. Academic and administrative continuum, from preschool education to early grade learning, could be ensured if ECE was to be delivered with greater coordination and collaboration with the SSA program such that the formal education system appropriately includes the responsibility of the pre-school child. This child base of 4-6 year olds is a critical entrant to primary schools and forms a key target group in the enrolment cohort that the education sector addresses.

This Suggestive Roadmap has emerged from the Stakeholder Roundtable discussion and highlights best practices in ECE in the country. The Roadmap is aimed at policymakers, private sector organizations, funders and academia, among others, and provides a way forward to improve ECE services in India. The key takeaways and action areas for various stakeholders, including the Central and State Governments, private sector, academia, funders, etc are summarized below.

1. Central Government

The following table highlights the key recommendations for the Central Government:

Category	Recommendation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthening Anganwadi Centers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure strong, top-down policy focus on ECE – mandate minimum requirements from AWCs and associated stakeholders for ECE delivery • Closely monitor implementation of NECF and Quality Standards for AWCs, as defined by MWCD, by the States • Review the need for an additional AWW for ECE (similar to provision made for 200 high-burden districts) • Conduct a national campaign for community and parental awareness on importance of ECE and drive-up their involvement with AWCs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building systemic capability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Form a national consortium to guide systemic capacity building efforts for ECE in the country and strengthen key organizations e.g. NIPCCD and NCTE • Review and revise current guidelines for recruitment and training of ECE / Anganwadi workers, as necessary. • Provide additional funding and support to establish new training infrastructure (regional training centres, MLTCs, AWTCs) to bolster intake capacity • Review norms and processes for recognition of private ECE training institutes; make norms accommodative to recognize a diverse set of programs • Form national strategies, and build necessary capabilities, to ensure universal access to ECE especially catering to the underserved populations (e.g. CWSNs)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthening governance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement a robust recognition / accreditation/ regulatory framework for private pre-school service providers • Develop and maintain a national database on all eligible ECE beneficiaries, AWCs, and ECE manpower (akin to UDISE for SSA, MHRD) • Define an overall Monitoring and Supervision (M&S) process for ECE, involving technology, and clearly outlining the role of various stakeholders • Review the role of MWCD and MHRD in ECE provision; facilitate collaboration and convergence between MWCD, MHRD, and other ministries

2. State Governments

The following table highlights the key recommendations for State Governments:

Category	Recommendation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthening Anganwadi Centers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create the necessary focus and accountability mechanisms around delivery of ECE at AWCs for the stipulated duration (4 hours per day); monitor rigorously. • Expedite the process of curriculum development as per NECF guidelines, if not already completed • Conduct curriculum-specific training for ICDS functionaries to roll-out new curriculum and associated pedagogy, teaching learning materials etc. • Clearly define roles and responsibilities of each stakeholder in the ICDS system at the State as well as local level – including AWWs, Supervisors, CDPOs etc. and functionaries under different ministries (MHFW, MHRD) • Conduct a state level campaign for community and parental awareness on importance of ECE and drive-up their involvement with AWCs • Ensure adequate infrastructure is available at each AWC
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building systemic capability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Form a state level consortium of experts/ relevant organizations to guide systemic capacity building efforts for ECE in the State • Strengthen ECE training curriculum and delivery, (hands-on content, longer duration, appropriate trainers etc.). • Establish additional training centers (MLTCs, AWTCs), as necessary, to increase training capacity • Set up state-level Training Management System to track status of trainings of ICDS functionaries • Fill vacancies at critical AWC/ block / district level roles, especially in high-burden districts and districts with high vacancies. • Set-up additional AWCs, as necessary, to meet demand or meet specified population norms, or caregiver to child ratio norms. • Develop state level strategies, and necessary capabilities, with support from the Center, to address issues of universal access to ECE, especially for the underserved populations (e.g. CWSNs)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthening governance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define a rigorous process for program management, monitoring and supervision of ECE delivery – including developing a technology enabled MIS system for the State to collect, aggregate, and analyze necessary data effectively • Define roles of and responsibilities of, and train, all key ICDS functionaries for monitoring and supervision of ECE

3. Private sector, academia and funders

Not-for-profit as well as for-profit private sector players, academia, funders, etc bring relevant technical expertise and funding support for ECE and can play a very strong role in supporting State Governments in a diverse set of efforts to improve ECE services. For example, they can support the States in developing and implementing new curricula and associated pedagogy, in improving training capabilities and increasing intake-capacity etc.

Further, the private sector must continue to foster innovation in different aspects of ECE, and bring those best practices to the Central as well as State Governments. In addition, there is very little indigenous research on ECE in India and academia and research institutes should support research in high-quality ECE provision that can inform effective policy making and practice.

Finally, the private sector should continuously engage the Central and State Governments in advocacy efforts to improve the state of ECE in the country, based on their lessons learnt from innovative pilots, indigenous research, etc.

In conclusion, it is necessary that all the relevant stakeholders including Central and state governments, private players, NGOs, and academicians achieve clear alignment on areas to focus on and strategies for action. They must then collaborate in formulating detailed implementation roadmaps and actually executing them to demonstrate on the ground impact.

Annexure I – List of attendees at the World Bank's Roundtable on ECE

Roundtable on ECE: Needs Identification for Outcome Oriented Action

S. No	Name	Designation	Organization
1	Mr. Shailendra Kureel	Under Secretary, ECCE	Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India
2	Prof. Venita Kaul	Director	Centre for Early Childhood Education and Development, Ambedkar University
3	Ms. Sandhya Sangai	Associate Professor	NCERT
4	Dr. D.D. Pandey	Dy. Director	NIPCCD
5	Mr. Swarup Paul	Additional Director	Government of West Bengal
6	Mr. Sunil Kumar Jha	Procurement Officer	Government of Bihar
7	Ms. Shweta Sahai	Monitoring Officer	Government of Bihar
8	Mrs. Mamta Sojitra	Asst. Director (admin)	Government of Gujarat
9	Ms. Shivangi Bhatt	State IEC Consultant	Government of Gujarat
10	Mr. Mahesh Sharma	Asst. Director	Government of Rajasthan
11	Mr. Tribhuvan Pati	Addl. Director	Government of Rajasthan
12	Mr. Hardhwardhan	Consultant	Government of Rajasthan
13	Ms. Meenal Sarda	Education Specialist	UNICEF
14	Mr. Kabir Vajpeyi	Founder	Vinyas
15	Ms. Aarushi Uboweja		Central Square Foundation
16	Mr. Azad Oommen	Executive Director	Central Square Foundation
17	Mr. Chittaranjan Kaul	Director	Centre for Learning Resources
18	Dr Mridula Bajaj	Executive Director	Mobile Crèches
19	Ms. Keerti Jayram	OELP Secretary and Director of ELP	Organization for Early Literacy Promotion
20	Samyukta Subramanian		Pratham
21	Ms. Ira Joshi	Vice President, Education and Research	Sesame Workshop India
22	Mr. Ashish Karamchandani	Executive Director	Monitor Deloitte, India
23	Mr. Tom Blathwayt	Senior Manager	Monitor Deloitte, India
24	Mr Krishnan Neelakantan	Founder and Joint Managing Director	Samhita

Glossary

ANM – Auxiliary Nurse Midwife

ASER – Annual Status of Education Report

ASHAs – Accredited Social Health Activists

AWCs – Anganwadi Centres

AWHs – Anganwadi Helpers

AWWs – Anganwadi Workers

BALA – Building As Learning Aid

BEO – Block Education Officer

BRP – Block Resource Person

CDPOs – Child Development Project Officers

CECED – Centre for Early Childhood Education and Development

CLR – Centre for Learning Resources

CRC – Convention on Right of the Child

CRC – Cluster Resource Centre

CRM – Common review Mission

CWSN – Children With Special Needs

DEO – District Education Officer

DIET – District Institute of Education and Training

DLMTs – District Level Master Trainers

DQ – Development Quotient

DRG – District Resource Group

DSW – Department of Social Welfare

ECD – Early Childhood Development

ECE – Early Childhood Education

EFA – Education for All

EPPE – Effective Provision of Preschool Education

ICDS – Integrated Child Development Scheme

IEC – Information, Education and Communication

IYCF – Infant and Young Child Feeding

M&S – Monitoring and Supervision

MIS – Management Information System

MLTCs – Middle Level Training Centres

MPR – Monthly Progress Report

MWCD – Ministry of Women and Child Development

NCERT – National Council of Education Research and Training

NECF – The National ECCE curriculum Framework

NIPCCD – National Institute of Public Cooperation and Child Development

NPEGEL – National Program for Education of Girls at Elementary Level

NRHM – National Rural Health Mission

PBBB - Padhe Bharat Badhe Bharat

PRIs – Panchayati Raj Institutions

RTE – The Right to Education Act

RP – Resource Persons

SCERT – State Council of Education Research and Training

SIERT – State Institute of Education Research and Training

SMC – School Management Committee

SRG – State Resource Group

SSA – Sarva Shiksha Abhiyaan

TLMs – Teaching learning materials

UDISE – Unified District Information System for Education

ULBs – Urban Local Bodies

UNICEF – United Nations Children's Fund

VHND – Village Health and Nutrition Day

VPC – Village Plan for Children