



INDIA

Every Child Learns

UNICEF Education Strategy 2019–2030

ECE, systems strengthening

Scaling up quality early childhood education in India by investing in ongoing professional development for officials at the state, district, and local levels

Problem:

In India, 70 per cent¹ of boys and girls aged 3 to 6 years attend some form of early childhood education (ECE), but it is not always of high quality. This results in low school readiness levels, and, in turn, poor learning outcomes at the end of Grade 3. Approximately, 53 per cent of Grade 3 students did not achieve grade proficiency for language, and 47 per cent performed below grade level in mathematics.²

Solution:

In India, quality is coming to the fore. UNICEF's efforts have thus focused on strengthening education systems to deliver quality ECE to all children, including support for developmentally appropriate ECE curricula and learning materials. Another critical aspect of quality, which will be the focus of this case study, is ongoing professional development to strengthen officials' ability to deliver quality programmes at scale. As India is a federal state, the national level plays an overarching regulatory role and sets policy which states then adapt. Implementation occurs at the district and local levels.

¹ The national Rapid Survey on Children 2014 commissioned by the Ministry of Women and Child Development also indicated that 70 per cent of children aged 3-6 were attending some form of pre-school education.

² National Achievement Survey, 2017 conducted by National Council of Education Research and Training (NCERT)

Ongoing professional development to deliver quality ECE:

The Indian government's main delivery platform for ECE is the Integrated Child Development Services, a centrally-funded and state-administered early childhood development programme. ECE is the weakest of the six basic early childhood development services delivered through a system of 1.37 million anganwadi centres (AWC).³

UNICEF supported the central government in developing its National Early Childhood Care and Education Policy in 2013 and a national curriculum framework. Following this, it helped 15 state governments to create age- and developmentally appropriate ECE curricula and learning materials. The current focus is strengthening professional development for government officials responsible for implementing ECE programming at the state, district, and local levels to ensure quality ECE is delivered at scale in keeping with the recently adapted state curricula. This is part of strengthening Ministerial leadership.

Enabling environment for an effective pre-primary subsector



UNICEF has supported the state governments to offer two different models of professional development systems, both of which are in the process of scale up. The first from Chhattisgarh involved forming a state level group of master trainers responsible for developing and delivering incremental recurrent trainings (nine phases) and monitoring the quality of training at each level. This model was taken state wide in 2017 by the state government, through more than 50,000 AWC covering approximately 770,000 pre-school aged children and has since been adopted by the States of Bihar, Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh.

The second model from West Bengal focused on setting key quality benchmarks for ECE classes to be rolled out progressively across the 116,000 AWC in the state. These include: classroom organization and display to promote children's participation; a sample daily routine; resource banks comprising of games, stories, rhymes, songs and teaching-learning materials; and an emphasis on storybooks and story-telling. The master trainers in this second model were organised into 1 state and 19 district resource groups. Progressively, the resource groups are supporting and overseeing the process of turning all of the State's AWCs into model centres that have adopted the quality benchmarks for ECE. As of 2019, 32,000 of the total 116,000 AWCs have become model centres, serving approximately 960,000 pre-school aged children. By 2024, all centres in West Bengal expected to be model centres benefitting approximately 2.72 million boys and girls.

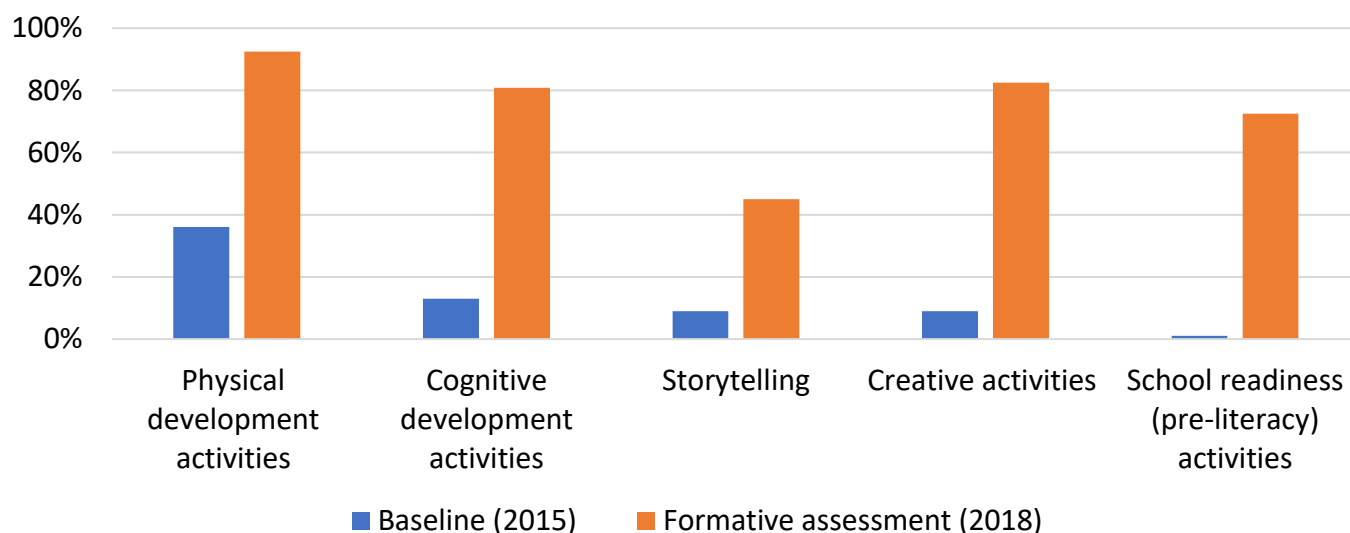
Preliminary results, lessons learnt and next steps

UNICEF made a seed investment of US \$200,000 in each state to carry out the State level trainings, which the Government will roll out at the district and local levels. As of 2019, Chhattisgarh and West Bengal, the training workshops have reached 82,000 AWCs that serve 1,730,000 pre-primary aged boys and girls. Once all AWCs are covered, over 3.4 million pre-primary aged children will benefit from improved quality ECE.

³ Anganwadi centre is a type of child care centre in India, set up to deliver the six services of the Integrated Child Development Services. Anganwadi means "courtyard shelter" in Indian languages.

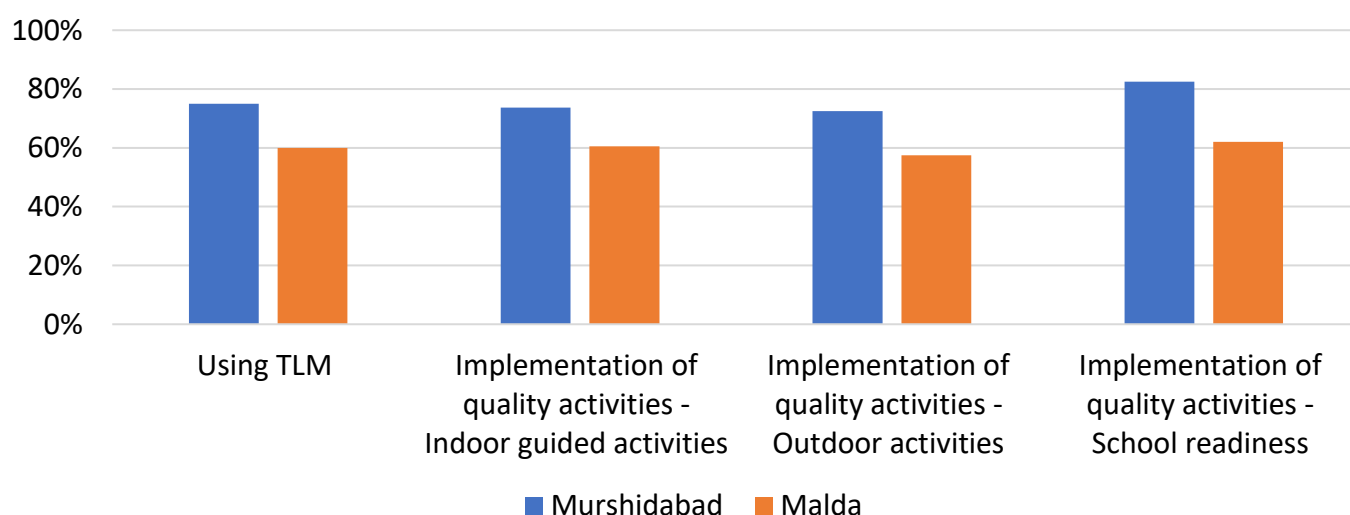
An assessment conducted in Chhattisgarh in 2018 after the first training workshop showed significant improvements in quality compared to the baseline.

% of AWC centres implementing quality ECE activities- Chhattisgarh



Monitoring data from December 2019 from two districts in West Bengal also paints a similar picture:

% of AWC demonstrating quality ECE programme in Murshidabad and Malda districts, West Bengal



Lessons learnt:

The points below summarise the key lessons observed thus far:

- Professional development of ECE professionals must be a continuous process and not a one-time activity.
- Trainings need to be practical hands-on sessions where desired practices are modelled and practised.

- Future trainings would benefit from multimedia materials. This would create a record that previously trained ECE professionals could return and consult would also expand the potential reach of the training to those who were not able to attend an in-person training workshop.
- Ongoing training workshops need to be supplemented with mentoring.

Next steps:

- Support the ongoing professional development programmes in Bihar, Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh using experiential learning methods and training videos and other audio-visual materials.
- Continue to support the process of model AWC to demonstrate quality ECE programmes.
- Strengthen post-training mentoring and programme monitoring.

Cost effectiveness:

In both Chhattisgarh and West Bengal States, UNICEF invested approximately US \$200,000. Government funding was leveraged to roll out the professional development workshops at district and local levels. Chhattisgarh invested approximately US \$150,000 for training of more than 50,000 anganwadi workers and continues to fund the second phase of the programme being rolled out in 2020. West Bengal has invested US \$1.5 million so far to develop the 32,000 model AWC centres, including training of anganwadi workers, their supervisors and local officials. It is committed to support all 116,000 AWCs to become model centres by 2024.

Continuous professional development of government officials builds systemic capacity to deliver and support quality ECE programmes so that **“Every Child Learns”**.



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