

LEADS DEVELOPMENT MODEL

Early Childhood Care & Development Initiative

MODEL ANGANWADI CENTRE

Background

Jharkhand has one of the largest tribal populations in India, with a significant proportion of children living in rural and socio-economically vulnerable communities. While Anganwadi Centres under the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) provide essential services for children aged 3–6 years, many centres continue to face challenges such as inadequate learning spaces, limited teaching-learning materials, poor infrastructure, irregular attendance, and low parental engagement. These gaps affect early childhood development and children's readiness for formal schooling.



The first six years of a child's life are the most critical for lifelong learning. Recognising this, the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, the National Curriculum Framework for Foundational Stage (NCF-FS) 2022, Poshan Abhiyaan, and Saksham Anganwadi all emphasise quality Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE), nutrition, health, and school readiness. Strengthening Anganwadi Centres is therefore essential to ensure that every child receives a strong foundation for learning and holistic development.

Concept

The Model Anganwadi Centre is a holistic Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) model developed by LEADS to strengthen existing Anganwadi Centres by integrating quality early learning, nutrition, health, hygiene, and community participation. The model incorporates the key provisions of ICDS, NEP 2020, NCF-FS 2022, Poshan Abhiyaan, and Saksham Anganwadi to create child-friendly, inclusive, and stimulating learning environments.

Each Model Anganwadi Centre is equipped with child-friendly classrooms, BALA (Building as Learning Aid) paintings, colourful learning spaces, age-appropriate Teaching Learning Materials (TLMs), indoor and outdoor play equipment, reading corners, child-friendly furniture, safe drinking water, child-friendly toilets, handwashing facilities, growth monitoring equipment, and a Poshan Vatika (Nutrition Garden).



These interventions create a safe, inclusive, interactive, and stimulating environment that encourages learning through play and everyday surroundings. The intervention promotes play-based, activity-based, and experiential learning, strengthening. Alongside early learning, the model strengthens supplementary nutrition, growth monitoring, immunisation convergence, health screening, nutrition counselling, hygiene promotion, parental engagement, and Mothers' Committee meetings (Maata Samiti), along with capacity building of Anganwadi Workers, creating a sustainable platform for holistic child development.

Steps of Implementation

Step 1: Baseline Assessment — An assessment is conducted of infrastructure, enrolment, attendance, ECCE practices, nutrition services, WASH facilities, and community participation.

Step 2: Infrastructure Strengthening — Infrastructure Strengthening – Develop child-friendly infrastructure through BALA (Building as Learning Aid) paintings, colourful classrooms, thematic learning corners, indoor and outdoor play equipment, child-friendly furniture, safe drinking water, functional child-friendly toilets, handwashing stations, growth monitoring space, and a Poshan Vatika (Nutrition Garden) to create an engaging and safe learning environment.

Step 3: Learning Resource Development — Age-appropriate Teaching Learning Materials (TLMs), toys, puzzles, storybooks, activity kits, and learning aids are provided, aligned with ECCE and NCF-FS guidelines.

Step 4: Capacity Building — Anganwadi Workers and Helpers are trained in ECCE pedagogy, play-based learning, FLN readiness, growth monitoring, nutrition counselling, child assessment, and record management.

Step 5: Early Learning & School Readiness — Daily play-based learning sessions are conducted, including storytelling, rhymes, creative art, physical activities, foundational literacy and numeracy readiness, and experiential learning.

Step 6: Health, Nutrition & Hygiene — Supplementary nutrition, regular growth monitoring, immunisation, deworming, health check-ups, nutrition counselling, handwashing practices, and hygiene education are strengthened.

Step 7: Community Participation — Mothers' Committee meetings (Maata Samiti), Parent-Teacher interactions, VHSNC meetings, Poshan Diwas, and School Readiness campaigns are organised to strengthen community ownership.

Step 8: Monitoring & Quality Improvement — Attendance, developmental milestones, nutritional status, learning environment, and service quality are regularly monitored for continuous improvement. A chart is placed having various component to run the AWCs and everyday, AW Workers and children has to put the tick mark for smooth running the AWCs. This controls the whole system and gradual development of AWCs.

(Note; We promote learning by doing in early stage of education in AWCs)



Outcome for Sustainability

1. Average child attendance increases from 60–70% to above 90% through child-friendly learning environments and active community participation.
2. BALA-integrated learning spaces, child-friendly infrastructure, WASH facilities, Poshan Vatika, and age-appropriate learning resources create an engaging environment that promotes joyful learning, regular attendance, and holistic child development.
3. Improved growth monitoring, nutrition counselling, and health convergence contribute to better child nutrition and overall well-being.
4. Anganwadi Workers strengthen their capacities in quality ECCE, child-centred pedagogy, and developmental assessment.

5. Parents become active partners in children's early learning, nutrition, and hygiene through regular engagement.
6. Child-friendly infrastructure, WASH facilities, Poshan Vatika, and learning resources create a safe and stimulating environment for holistic child development.
7. Strong community ownership and convergence with Government programmes ensure sustained quality improvement of Anganwadi Centres.

LEADS Experience

LEADS has established and strengthened 52 Model Anganwadi Centres across Jharkhand by promoting child-friendly infrastructure, play-based learning, school readiness programmes, Poshan Vatikas, WASH facilities, growth monitoring, and community participation. The initiative has significantly improved child attendance, learning environments, and the quality of Early Childhood Care and Education services.



Concluding Remarks

The Model Anganwadi Centre demonstrates how existing Government Anganwadi Centres can be transformed into quality Early Childhood Care and Development institutions through systematic improvements in infrastructure, pedagogy, nutrition, health, and community participation. By integrating the principles of ICDS, NEP 2020, NCF-FS 2022, Poshan Abhiyaan, and Saksham Anganwadi, the model creates a strong foundation for lifelong learning and holistic child development.



