



# Review of Pre-School Education within The Context of The ICDS Program In Medak District, Andhra Pradesh – A Summary

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Early childhood care and education lays essential foundations for lifelong learning, imbibing basic social values and has bearings on the success at the primary level of education. As per scientific evidence the development of brain in the early years is path way that influences physical and mental health, learning and behavior through the life. It is scientifically proven time and again that gap in early education and efforts to bridge the gap in later school years are directly proportional to each other.

It is essential that the quality of education focuses on the all-round development of the child. Excessive emphasis on the development of cognitive skills impedes development of non – cognitive skills for life.

Research says 0-8 years is the prime age for growth and development of the brain, on the condition that requisite stimulation, opportunities and support are provided by all those involved in the child's ecosystem.

ICDS (Integrated Child Development Services) scheme perhaps the world's largest programme aimed at providing health, nutrition, and psycho-social stimulation to young children, started on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 1975, in response to the provisions in Indian constitution, national legislations, international declarations which uphold early child education and safeguard child rights. As a result 33 projects were initiated as a pilot phase and currently there are about 7000 ICDS projects in the country. This programme is being executed for more than 3 decades with assistance from the World Bank. The Anganwadi Centers are the primary implementation arm of the ICDS programs.

Almost 73% of children in rural India are said to be enrolled in this programme across almost 14 million Anganwadi centers (AWCs). On the other hand children from affluent families are availing some or

other kind of ECCE facility, starting as early as two years of age with expansion of private schools particularly in urban areas. Rural areas also have seen an active proliferation of private pre-schools.

Azim Premji Foundation is interested in exploring useful programs and interventions in the area of early childhood education, as a natural extension of its current work on school education. Aligning with the Foundation's approach of research-based understanding of the field before undertaking programs and interventions, the Medak Early Childhood Initiative in Andhra Pradesh conducted an exploratory study. This study was undertaken to understand the role of Anganwadi Centers (AWCs) in the Early Childhood Education (ECE) space. The AWCs established under the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) program of the Ministry of Women and Child Welfare serve as the primary government channel of intervention in early childhood education. By studying the workings of the AWCs, this study attempts to understand some of the challenges in the field of early childhood education. There are eighty six thousand AWCs with 387 projects in Andhra Pradesh. Medak district has 11 projects with 3041 AWCs. A study was conducted in 270 AWCs in 14 Mandals of the Medak district of Andhra Pradesh.

The analysis and interpretation is based on qualitative and quantitative information gathered about the workings of the AWCs. Quantitative information was collected from the entire group of 270 AWCs included in this study. In addition, 78 AWCs were chosen from the larger group for detailed observation of ECE activities and functioning of the AWCs. The overall information gathered can be grouped into three broad categories:

1. Characteristics of the AWCs and the AWC workers;

2. Characteristics of AWC beneficiaries;
3. Assessment of the efficacy of the AWCs

**1. Features of AWCs and AWC Workers (AWWs):**

A majority of the AWCs centers lack adequate physical infrastructure. Only 22% of the AWCs studied run in their own premises. Most centers also do not have basic facilities such as toilets, own source of water etc. The space in most centers is allocated to storage of food and other materials. There is generally no separate demarcated area for pre-school activities. See table 1.

**Table 1**

Higher score on the facility index means greater facilities. Maximum possible score was 11

AW Facility Index	% of Main AWCs	% of Mini AWCs
0	2	36.36
1	12.8	22.73
2	14	22.73
3	25.2	9.09
4	25.6	0
5	13.6	9.09
6	4	0
7	2	0
8	0.8	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

About 12% AW Workers (AWW) do not meet the minimum educational qualification of matriculation pass. Only 55.81% are matriculation pass and 2.33% are not competent enough to read and write while few can just write their name. See table 2.

The training programme for the AWWs comprises of 26 working days of Induction training and a Refresher course for a week. Out of the 26 days, 4 days are allocated for training on the ECCE component. The training program overall is highly inadequate and the refresher course is seldom conducted.

**Table 2**

General education

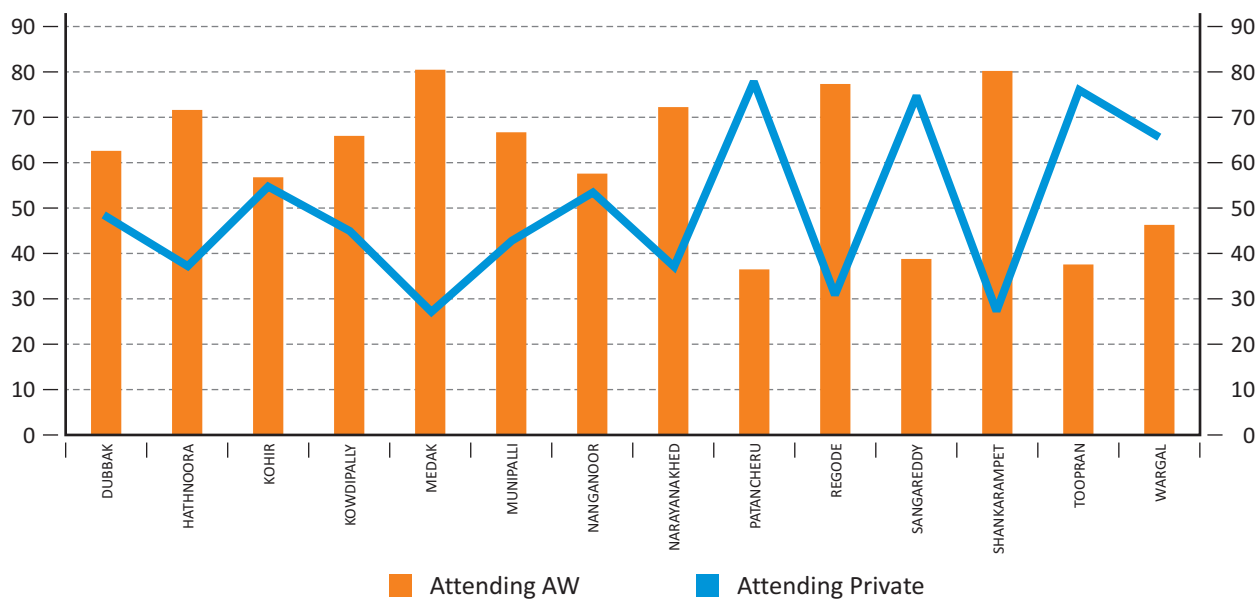
1. Up to class 5th	0.39
2. up to class 7th	1.55
3. Matriculation fail	10.08
4. Matriculation passed	55.81
5. Intermediate passed	19.38
6. Graduation passed	10.47
8. Just literates & illiterate	2.33
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>

## 2. Characteristics of AWC beneficiaries

AWC enrolment varies significantly with location. Enrolment is lowest in urban and more remote areas. The following graph shows enrolment in different Mandals. There are however further variations within a Mandal as some villages are remote while the ones near to the Mandal headquarters and town, are relatively more urbanized. Enrolment is higher in villages that are more vulnerable in socioeconomic terms. See chart 1.

Chart 1

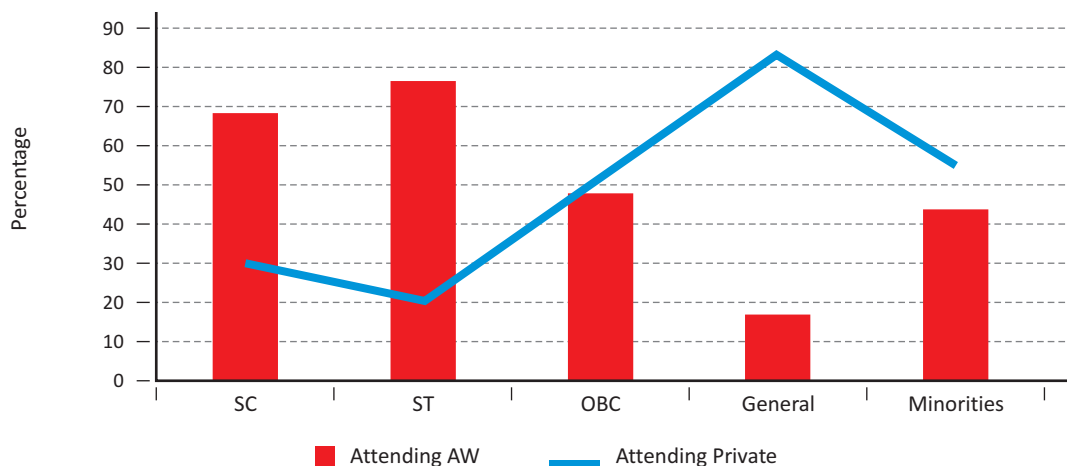
ENROLMENTS RATES MANDALWISE



Among children who are in pre-school, enrollment rate in AWC is greater for households with illiterate parents. Households with higher socioeconomic conditions are less likely to send their children to AWCs. Children of literate parents have higher enrollment rates in private schools rather than AWCs. Children of unskilled labourers have low enrollment rates in any kind of pre-school (AWC or private). Moreover 30% of children in the 3-6 years age group are currently not enrolled in any pre-school (government, private or AWC). See Chart 2 below.

Chart 2

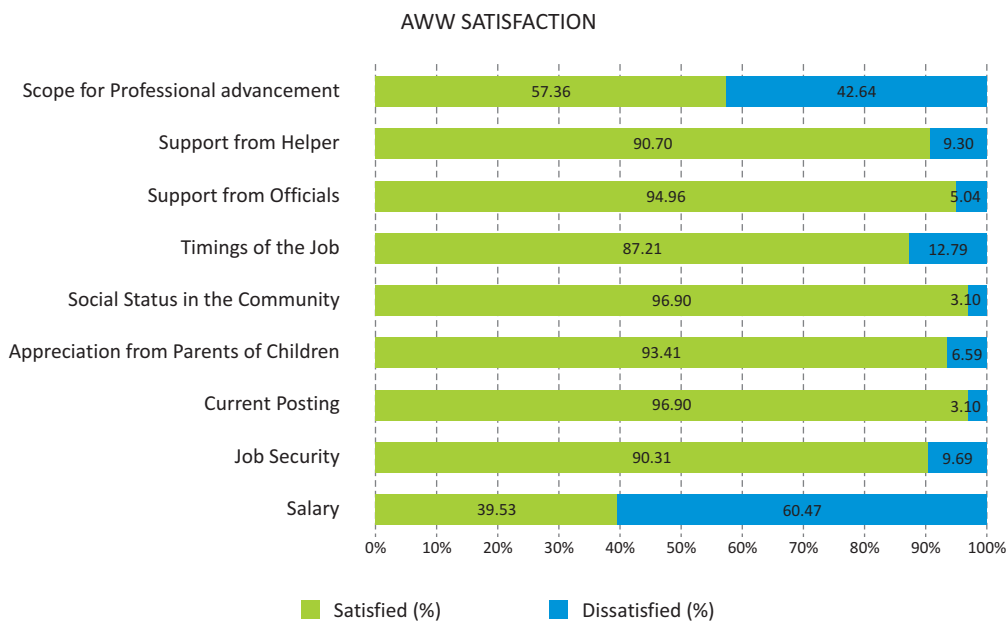
ENROLMENTS IN AW vs SOCIAL CATEGORY



### 3. Efficacy of the AWCs

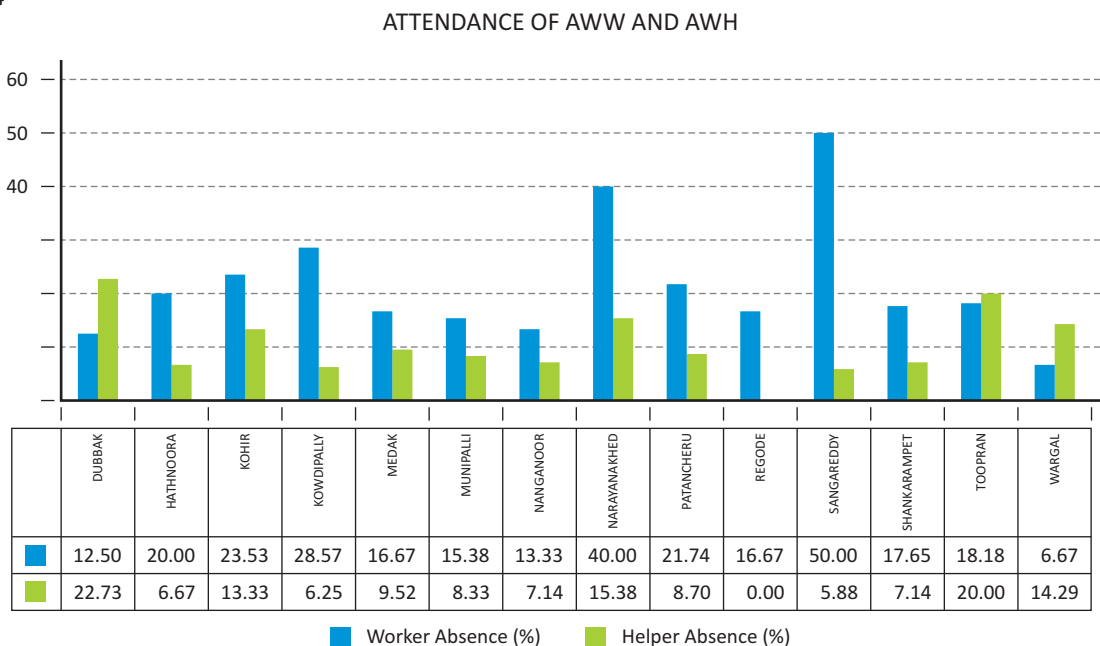
It is evident that not all the AWW are satisfied with their jobs. However aspects of greater dis-satisfaction are the salary and the professional development. Apparently they need further support to do their job proficiently. See Chart 3 below.

Chart 3



Irregular attendance is a major issue for the Anganwadi system in Medak. Only 43% of the enrolled students (3-6 age group) attend AWCs regularly.

Chart 4



Many workers also do not follow the scheduled times or the timetable of ECE activities. The qualitative observation of select AWCs indicates that the absence of AWWs affects activities related to pre-school education more than other services.

While Anganwadi workers (AWWs) self-report that they conduct a high level of pre-school education activities, this was not supported by the qualitative observations done as part of this study. The activities revolve mainly around conversations, rhymes and songs, games and good habits. Nearly 90% AW Workers conduct these activities daily. AW Workers report no difficulty in undertaking these activities. Creative activities including arts and crafts happen less regularly, about once a week in 70% of the AWCs. About 50% of the workers report that it is not feasible to conduct activities around scientific knowledge and cultural awareness 50% of the workers report that they follow the modules and instructional manuals, every day with another 38% doing it once a week.

41% of parents say that they are expecting good teaching from AWCs. Though only 5% of parents visit AWCs to seek information regarding the education of the child, which means there is negligible involvement of parents.

## CONCLUSION

The results of this study indicate some relationship between demand for pre-school education and the socio-economic conditions of the village and the parents. The exact nature of this relationship needs to be investigated further. There is a greater demand for AWCs from sections of society that are more vulnerable in socioeconomic terms. This may have an impact on the provision, sustenance and growth of the AWC and these implications should be kept in mind while planning any interventions.

The high worker absence is similar to the rates of school teacher absence across the country. This indicates that there may be some structural issues, which need to be tackled differently. AWWs receive very little training on ECE. A poor starting point (a total of 4 days of initial training given at the time of appointment) and poor subsequent support system, provides very limited scope for the sustenance of ECE activities. Any new training initiatives will also have to address the needs and constraints of the supervisors and CDPOs in adequately providing support to the AWWs.

## References

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4. National Early Childhood Care and Education Policy (Draft), Ministry of Women and Child Development GOI.
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## Abbreviations

- AWC** : Anganwadi Center  
**AWH** : Anganwadi Helper  
**AWW** : Anganwadi Worker  
**ECE** : Early Childhood Education  
**ICDS** : Integrated Child Development Service  
**CDPO** : Child Development Project Officer