

Quality Improvement of Early Childhood Education in AWCs of Khalapur

Project Report
2025-2026

AAK



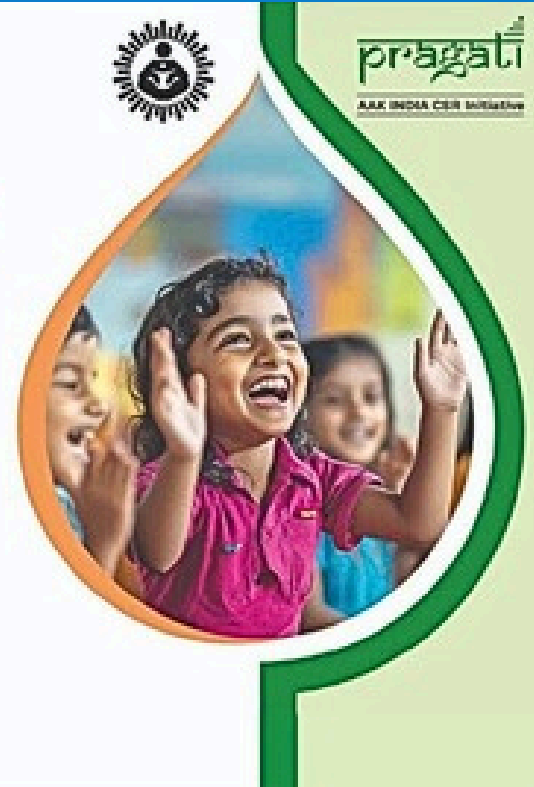
pragati
AAK INDIA CER Initiative

अंगणवाडी गुणवत्ता विकसन प्रकल्प

एकात्मिक बाल विकास सेवा योजना प्रकल्प,
खालापूर, जिल्हा परिषद रायगड


Anugraha
a life with grace

अंमलबजावणी संस्था - अनुग्रह फाँडेशन, पुणे





AAKIPL

AAK India is a leading manufacturer of specialty vegetable oils and fats, operating across South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa with a strong commitment to sustainable and responsible business practices. Through its Pragati Mission, AAK India channels its CSR efforts towards creating meaningful community impact.

www.aakindia.com

ICDS

Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS), implemented through a nationwide network of Anganwadi centres, serves as India's primary platform for early childhood care and education for children under 6. ICDS also caters to a wide range of services including health, nutrition, and welfare, making it the primary medium for delivering government schemes to the grassroots level.

www.icds.gov.in

Anugraha Foundation

A Not for Profit initiative working for Persons With Disabilities and Early Childhood Education. The organization has worked in the field of ECE by assisting ICDS in training Anganwadi personnel across the state of Maharashtra on concepts of Early Childhood Education in partnership with UNICEF.

www.afpune.org



Glossary

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About the Project

Khalapur tehsil in Raigad district has a population of @ **2 lakh** spread across 124 villages, with a literacy rate of 72.61%. Early Childhood Education (ECE), delivered through **Anganwadi Centres (AWCs)** under the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS), plays a critical role in **shaping the early development of children** aged 0–6 years. However, the quality of ECE in many centres is affected by challenges such as **limited training opportunities for Anganwadi Workers (AWWs), inadequate infrastructure, and the lack of age-appropriate learning materials.**

Research shows that more than **80% of brain development** takes place by the **age of eight**, making the early years crucial for building strong foundations for learning. Quality early education improves school readiness, strengthens cognitive and social skills, and has a lasting impact on a child's future. Recognizing this, national and global frameworks such as the **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020** and the **Sustainable Development Goals** emphasize the importance of strengthening foundational learning.

In Maharashtra, more than **1.19 lakh Anganwadi Centres** serve nearly **28 lakh children** under the ICDS scheme. Despite this wide reach, gaps remain in infrastructure, access to learning materials, and the capacity of AWWs to deliver engaging and inclusive early learning experiences. In response, this **project** aimed to **improve the quality of ECE in 56 AWCs across the Sajgaon (26 AWCs) and Devnhave (30 AWCs) blocks** of Khalapur. The initiative focused on **strengthening infrastructure, introducing toy and play-based learning materials, and building the capacity of AWWs to adopt activity-based and inclusive teaching practices aligned with the Maharashtra State Curriculum Framework**, with the goal of creating child-friendly learning environments that focus on school readiness of the child.



Our Vision

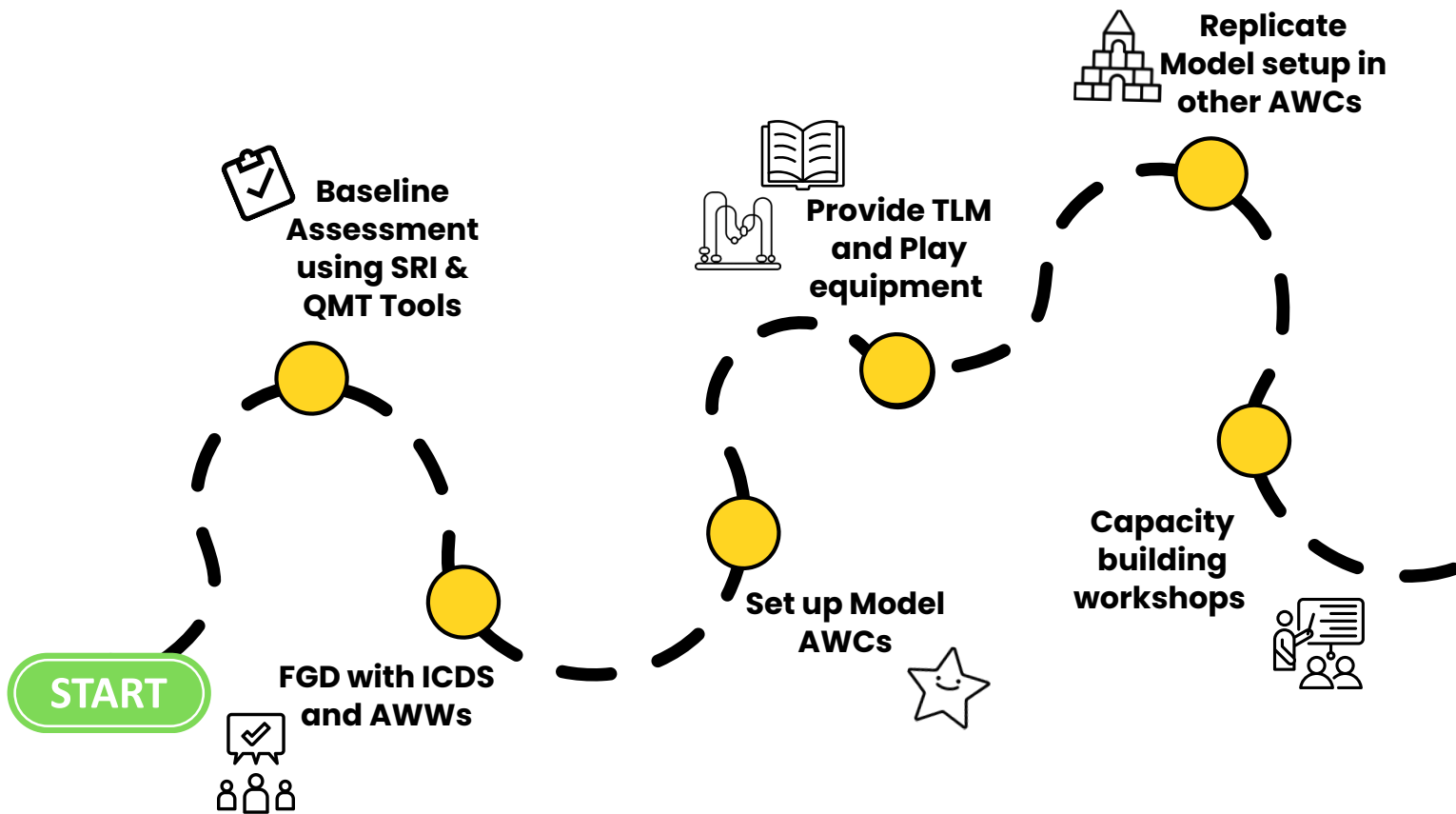
Support children to achieve age-appropriate learning outcomes by making AWCs more child-centric, inclusive, and aligned with the Maharashtra State Curriculum Framework.

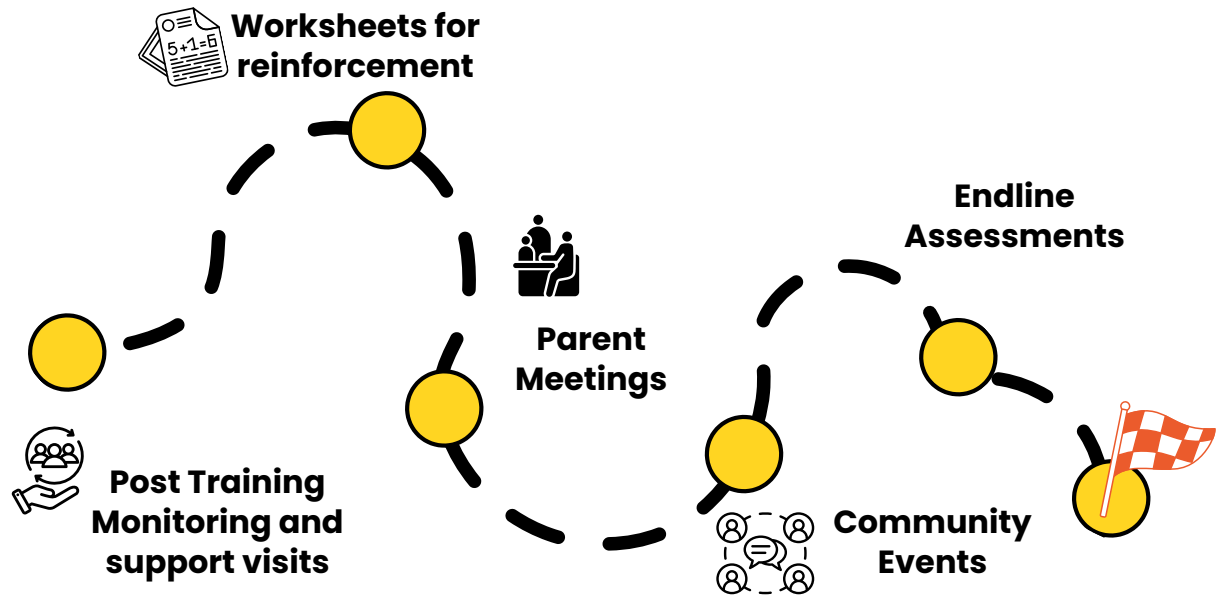
Our Mission

To strengthen the quality of ECE through:

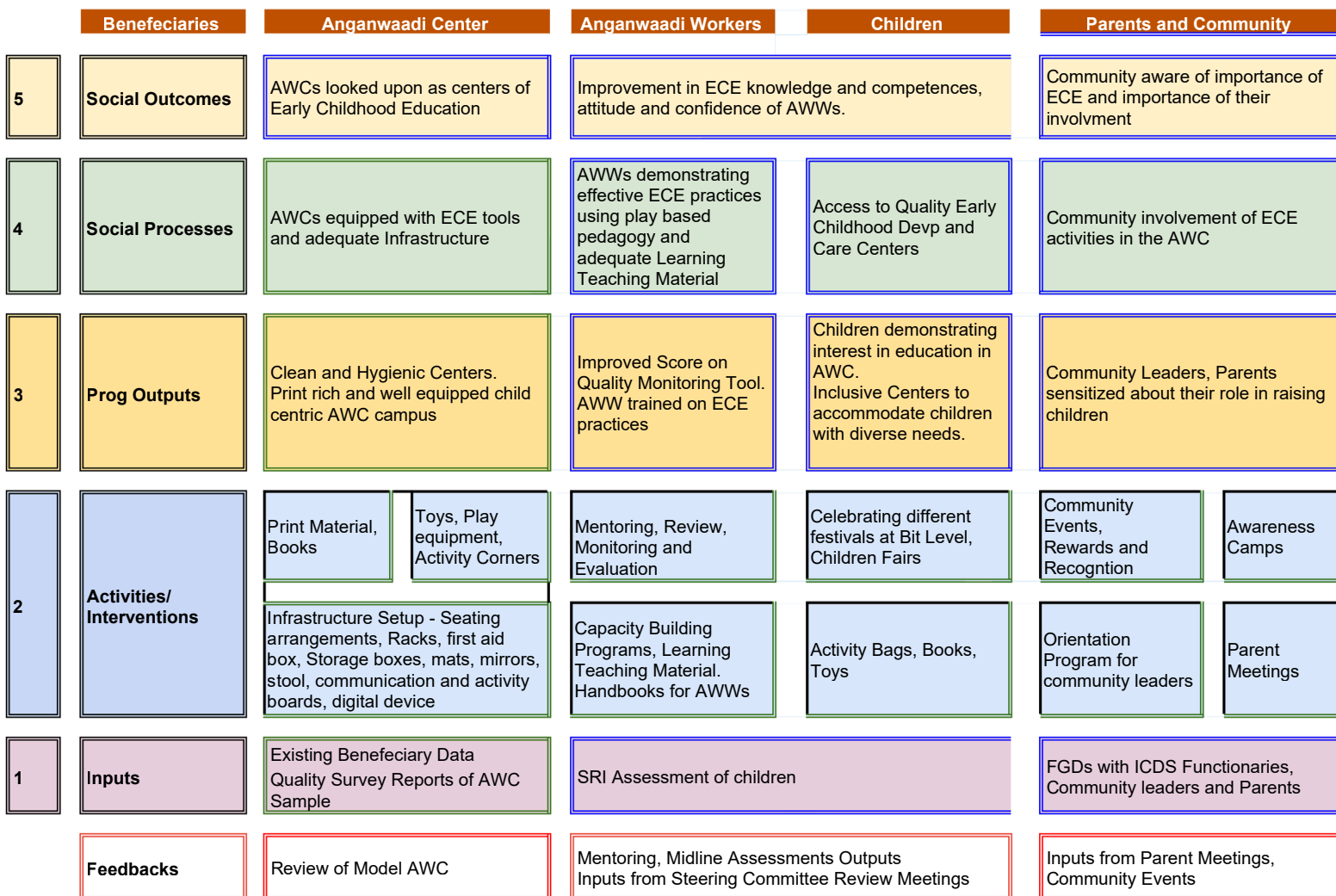
- Child-centric Anganwadi Centers equipped with appropriate play and learning materials.
- Empower Anganwadi Workers through capacity building in toy-based pedagogy and inclusive education.
- Improve child development to ensure age-appropriate learning outcomes and readiness for primary school.

Project Roadmap





Theory of Change





Model AWCs

Model AWCs

Model Anganwadi is set up to demonstrate high standards in infrastructure, early learning practices, child care, and community engagement, serving as an **example for other centres to follow**. It is designed to provide holistic development of young children. One AWC from each block which had adequate infrastructure was chosen.

1. Sangde AWC (Devnhave block) 2. Dheku (Sajgon block)

Steps Undertaken to Set Up the Model Anganwadi Centre (AWC)



- Targeted support was provided to set up and reorganize the AWC into a clean, safe, and child-friendly learning space with defined activity corners.

- The Anganwadi Centre was selected based on infrastructure, child enrolment, and worker attitude.
- A baseline assessment was conducted to identify gaps in infrastructure, classroom processes, and ECE practices.





Continuous mentoring and support was extended to the Anganwadi Worker to strengthen play-based pedagogy, daily routine implementation, and effective use of materials.



Age-appropriate play equipment, TLM, worksheets, and essential infrastructure materials were provided to enrich the learning environment and improve child engagement.

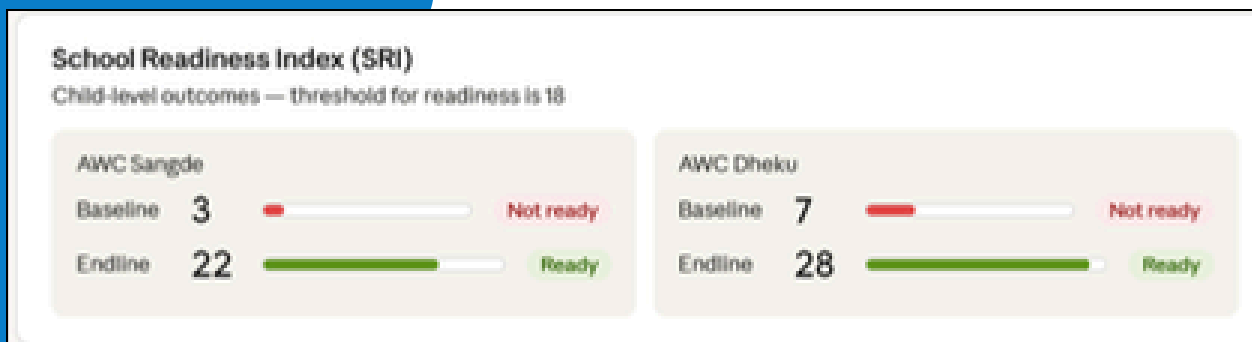
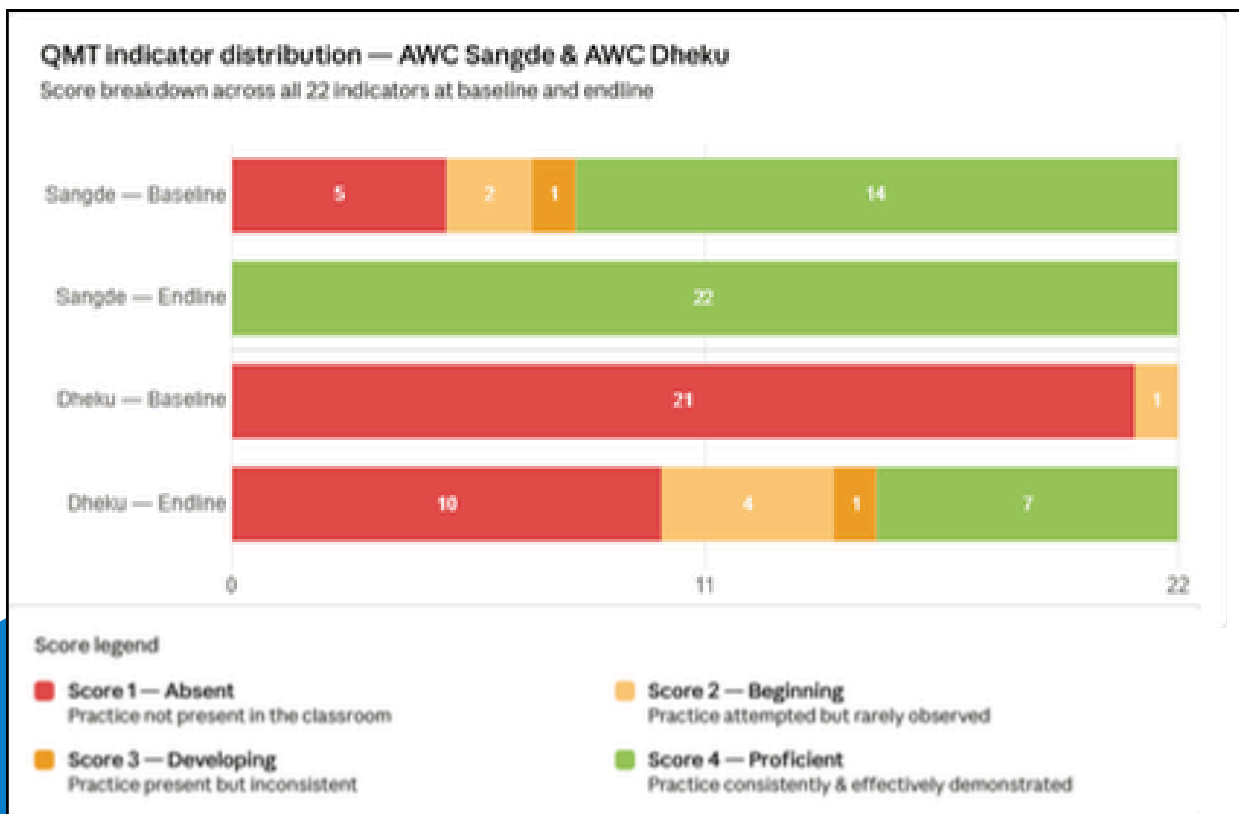


Parent and community engagement activities were conducted to strengthen home–centre linkage.



This resulted in Anganwadi Worker gaining greater confidence in conducting activities effectively using play materials and TLM, and facilitating more engaging, child-centred learning experiences at the centre.

Baseline and Endline Comparison for Model AWCs





Capacity Building Workshops

Training workshops

Beyond providing care and nutrition, Anganwadi Workers play a crucial role in shaping children's early learning experiences.

Recognizing the importance of this role, the project focused on strengthening the capacity of Anganwadi Workers to deliver quality Early Childhood Education (ECE).

Through structured training, the initiative aimed to support workers in creating more engaging, inclusive, and developmentally appropriate learning spaces for children.

The Pedagogy

Play-based, activity-oriented pedagogy.

Montessori Principles

Encouraging independence and self-directed learning.

The Curriculum

Aligned with the Maharashtra State Curriculum Framework for the Foundational Stage.

Key developmental areas



Social & Emotional Development



Language & Literacy



Early Math & Problem-Solving



Science & Discovery



Fine & Gross Motor Skills



Creativity & Imagination



Handson ECE Activities Capacity Building Workshop

Devnhave Block



Sajgaon Block



Play material and TLM kits

Play material and TLM

To support the implementation of play-based pedagogy, Anganwadi Centres were provided with play equipment and Teaching Learning Material (TLM). These resources enabled Anganwadi Workers to conduct structured activities that promote language, cognitive, and physical development through play and hands-on learning.

Teaching learning material provided :

Development Area	Material
Cognitive / Logical Reasoning	Different Flashcards , Dominos, Pattern Matching, Seriation, Puzzles
Mathematics	Number Names, Number cards, Quantity Matching, Counters
Language	Sight Reading Cards, Alphabets, Auditory Discrimination Cards, Picture reading chart
Books	Different books - Story Telling, Picture Reading, Vocabulary

Play based educational material provided :

Development Area	Material
Fine Motor Development	Maze Chase Game, Skipping Rope, Wooden Building Blocks, Nuts and Bolts Set, Lacing Boards, Magnetic Fish Game, Foam Stamp Set
Science and Environment	Magnifying Glass, Measuring ladles, Wooden Clock, Parts of the Body Puzzle Tray
Free Play	Stack-Up Tower, Doll Set, Wooden Building Blocks, Plastic Bat and Ball Set, Ping Pong Balls, Plastic Cone, Magic box
Art and Music	Musical Instruments Set, Whistle, Glove Puppets

Other supporting material provided:

Type	Material
Stationary	Chalk box, Portfolio Bags, Napkins, Writing pads, Domain activity charts for AWW reference, Papers, Notebook and pen for AWW. Painted Blackboard, Mats, Mirrors

Teaching Learning Material & Play equipment



बालशिक्षण साहित्य हस्तपुस्तिका

शैक्षणिक साहित्य कथासाठी?

मी ऐकलं - मी विसरले.
मी पाहिलं - माझ्या लक्षात राहिलं.
मी केलं - मला समजलं.

AAK

**अंगणवाडी गुणवत्ता
विकसन प्रकल्प**

एकत्रिक कला विकास सेवा योजना प्रकल्प,
खारलपूर, जिहा पोषक रणज

Sangraha
शिक्षण साहित्य

अंगणवाडी सेवा - अजुहा फौंडेशन, पुणे

Stationary Kit and Other materials provided



Stationary Kit



Mirror



Portfolio Bags for Children



Worksheets

Worksheets

The worksheets were designed as reinforcement tools to strengthen concepts introduced during classroom activities. They supported **practice, recall, and application** of learning through simple, child-friendly tasks.

Design Principles

Activity based and visually engaging

Aligned with Foundational Stage competencies (3–6 years)

Encouraged drawing, colouring, counting, and identification

Progression of Learning

Phase 1 Worksheets (10)

Goal - Introduce basic concepts

Focus Areas :

01 Observation

03 Counting objects

02 Colouring

04 Identifying more/less

Phase 2 Worksheets (10)

Goal - Strengthen early literacy and numeracy skills

Focus Areas :

01 Language sounds

03 Number order

02 Pre-writing skills

04 Creative drawing

Worksheet domain distribution	Domain Approx Coverage
Foundational Numeracy	45%
Cognitive Development	30%
Early Literacy	15%
Fine Motor Skills	30%
Creative Expression	10%

(Several worksheets support multiple domains.)

Key Learning Outcomes

Children were able to:

- ✓ Recognize numbers and quantities
- ✓ Identify beginning sounds of words
- ✓ Understand more vs less concepts
- ✓ Practice drawing and pre-writing shapes
- ✓ Express ideas through pictures
- ✓ Apply classroom learning in worksheet activities

The worksheets were distributed in phases to ensure that concepts introduced through classroom activities were revisited and reinforced multiple times, allowing children to practice, apply, and strengthen their understanding.



Solving Worksheets for reinforcement of concepts and increasing creativity



Field Visits to AWCs

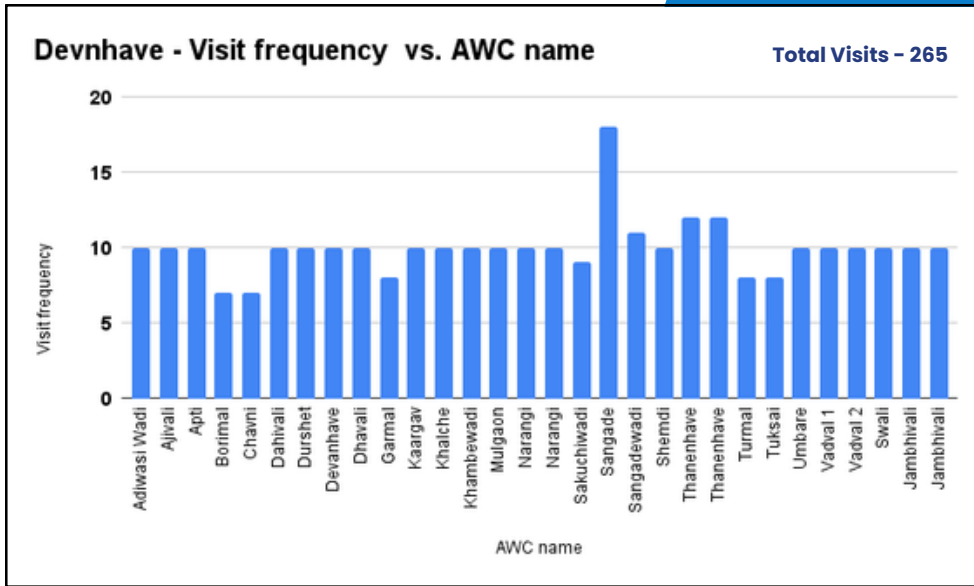
Field Monitoring and Support Visits to AWCs

Regular field visits formed a key component of the project's implementation strategy. The project team conducted structured monitoring visits to 56 Anganwadi Centres (AWCs) across the intervention area to provide continuous guidance, strengthen implementation, and track progress in improving Early Childhood Education (ECE) practices.

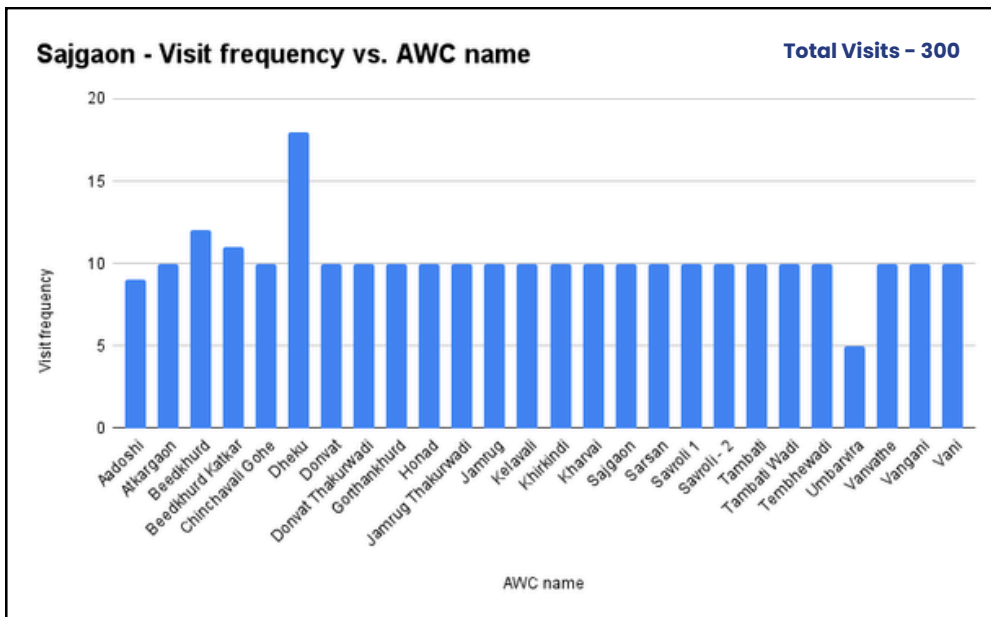
These visits were designed not merely as supervisory checks but as supportive mentoring opportunities for Anganwadi Workers (AWWs). During each visit, the field team observed classroom processes, reviewed the use of play-based learning materials, and supported AWWs in effectively implementing the activity-based pedagogy introduced during the training sessions.



Direct Intervention



Devnhave - Visits per AWC



Sajgaon - Visits per AWC



Parent Meetings

Strengthening the Home– Anganwadi Connection

Early childhood learning does not happen only inside the Anganwadi centre. It grows stronger when parents understand, participate, and support the child’s learning journey at home. Recognizing this, the project placed strong emphasis on building meaningful engagement with families.

During the first training workshop, Anganwadi Workers were introduced to the concept of structured parent meetings. They learned how to:

01 Communicate children’s development

02 Demonstrate simple learning activities parents can do at home

03 Encourage routines that support early learning

04 Address parents’ questions and concerns

These meetings gradually became spaces for conversation, learning, and partnership between families and the Anganwadi centre.

Parent Meetings in Devnhave Sector

30 Anganwadi Centres organized parent meetings during the year

- ✦ 24 AWCs conducted two or more meetings in the academic year
- ✦ Several centres held 3–4 meetings, showing strong engagement with parents
- ✦ Regular meetings helped create continuous dialogue between AWWs and families

Parent Meetings in Sajgaon Sector

21 Anganwadi Centres organized parent meetings during the year

- ✦ More than half the centres conducted two meetings in the academic year
- ✦ Parent engagement activities were initiated across most AWCs

Parent Meetings helped



STEP 1

Strengthen parent awareness about early childhood development



STEP 2

Encourage learning activities at home



STEP 3

Build trust between families and Anganwadi Workers



STEP 4

Create a supportive ecosystem for children's development



Parent meetings



Community Events for Awareness and Participation

Community Events

Strengthening Early Childhood Education requires not only trained Anganwadi Workers but also active participation from parents and the community. To build awareness and encourage engagement, the project organized three community events across Devnhave and Sajgaon blocks. These events transformed Anganwadi Centres into vibrant community spaces, where parents, children, frontline workers, and local leaders came together to celebrate learning.

Event 1 & 2 – Community Awareness Events

13 October | Thanehave (Devnhave Block) & Beedkhurd (Sajgaon Block)

Two community events were organized to introduce families to the importance of Early Childhood Education and positive parenting practices.

Participation Snapshot

Location	Parents	Children	Other Participants
Thanehave AWC	18	30	Community members
Beedkhurd AWC	25	40	Gram Sarpanch
Total	43	70	

Key Activities

- Skit on Positive Parenting – Highlighted the importance of understanding children's emotional and developmental needs
- Demonstrated supportive parenting practices
- Interactive Games – Jumping rope, Catching the ball in the cone, Memory games

These activities allowed parents to see how play supports learning, coordination, and cognitive development in young children.

Event 3 – Frontline Worker Interaction

23 January | Tambati Anganwadi Centre (Sajgaon Block)

The third community event focused on strengthening dialogue between frontline workers, government officials, and the community.

Participants	Numbers
Anganwadi Workers	51
Parents	20
Children	26
Local Leadership	Gram Sevak

Meaningful Engagement with Frontline Workers :

A key highlight was the interaction with Mrs. Sandhya Nagarkar (CDPO ICDS Pune and ECE Nodal Officer). She engaged directly with the Anganwadi Workers from Khalapur, creating a supportive platform where they could:





- Share field experiences
- Discuss challenges in implementing ECE activities
- Express practical needs from the system

This dialogue strengthened communication between frontline workers and the ICDS system.

Community Impact

These events helped create a shared understanding of early childhood development within the community.

Key Outcomes

-  Increased parent awareness about early learning and positive parenting
-  Stronger community connection with Anganwadi Centres
-  Recognition and motivation for Anganwadi Workers
-  Reinforcement of the Anganwadi centre as a community learning space

A Growing Community Around the Anganwadi

- Through storytelling, games, conversations, and recognition, these events helped transform Anganwadi Centres into spaces where learning, community support, and childhood development come together.
- Parents left with a deeper understanding of how simple everyday interactions—talking, playing, and listening to their children—can shape their future learning journeys.



Community Events



Community Events



Impact Assessment

SRI and QMT Baseline and Endline


Baseline and Endline Assessments

To understand the existing status of Early Childhood Education (ECE) in the Anganwadi Centres and measure the impact of the project interventions, baseline and endline assessments were conducted.


The baseline assessment helped establish a benchmark of children's school readiness levels and the quality of classroom practices in Anganwadi Centres. The endline assessment, conducted at the conclusion of the project, measured impact assessment through the intervention.

This approach ensured that the project outcomes could be assessed through evidence-based indicators rather than anecdotal observations.


Tools used for Assessments



School Readiness Index
(To assess readiness of children for grade 1)



Quality Monitoring Tool - Part A
(For ECE quality)



Quality Monitoring Tool - Part B
(For infrastructure)

School Readiness Index

To understand whether children are developmentally prepared to **transition from Anganwadi to formal schooling**, the project used the School Readiness Instrument (SRI) as a child-level assessment tool.

SRI is a standardized tool originally designed and standardized by the **World Bank in 2009** and later adapted by the Centre for **Early Childhood Education and Development (CECED), Ambedkar University, Delhi**. The tool has been widely used to assess children's readiness for entering primary school.

The instrument evaluates a child's readiness through interactive, activity-based tasks, allowing assessors to observe how children think, communicate, and solve simple problems rather than relying on written tests.

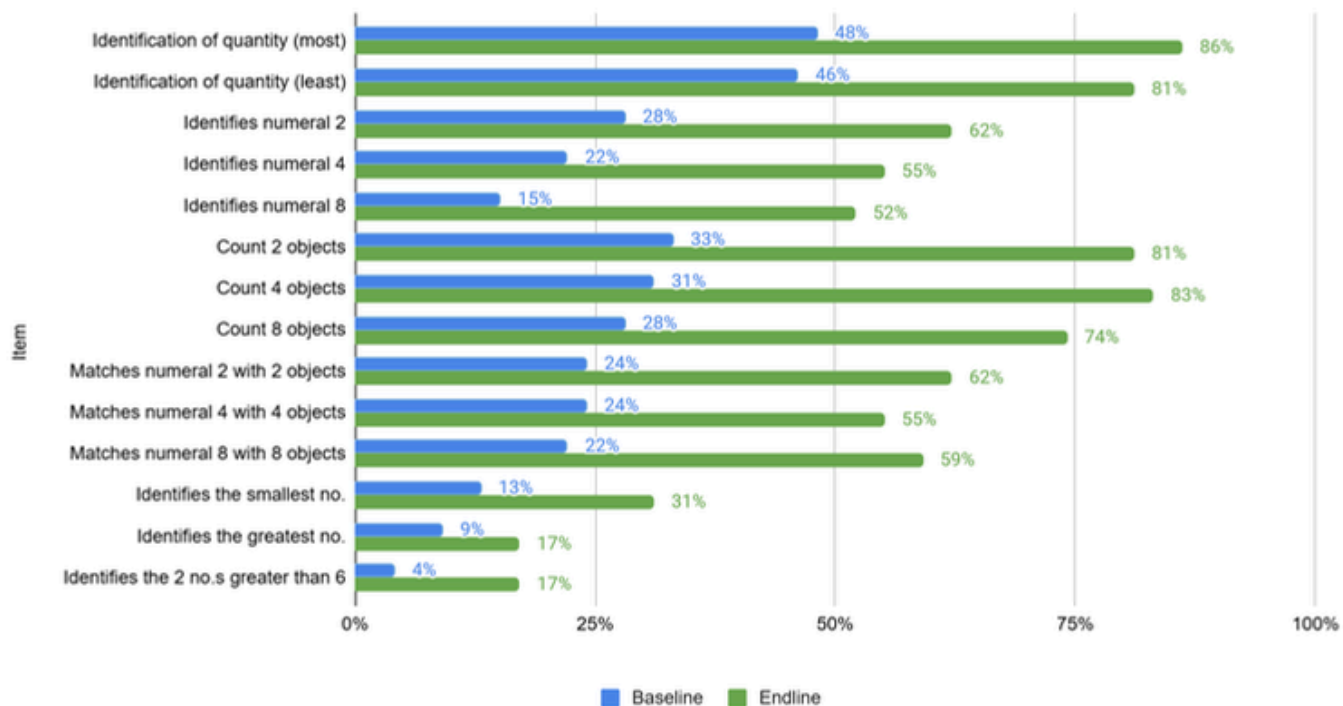
Structure of the SRI

- Total Parameters: 41
- Total Activities: 16

Domains assessed:

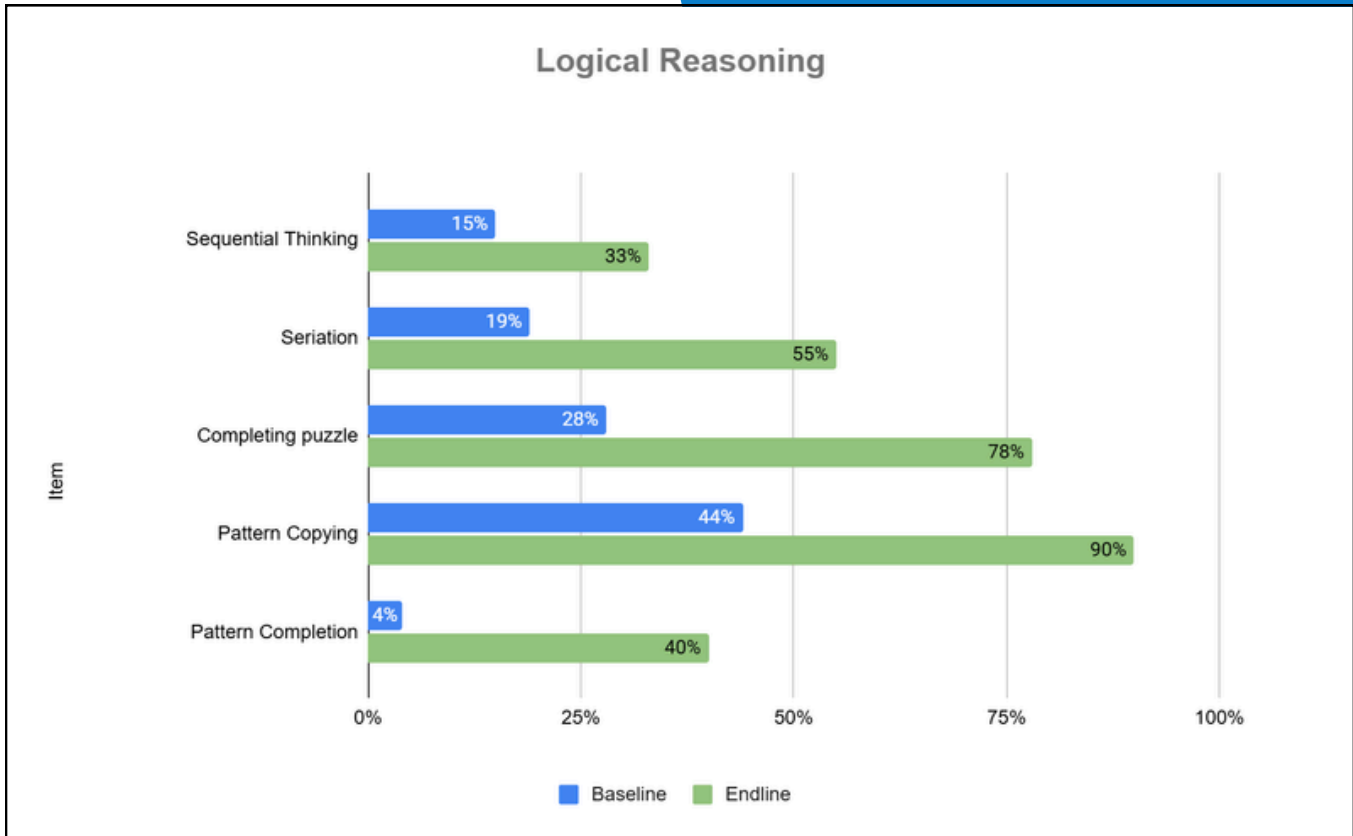


Prenumber Concepts



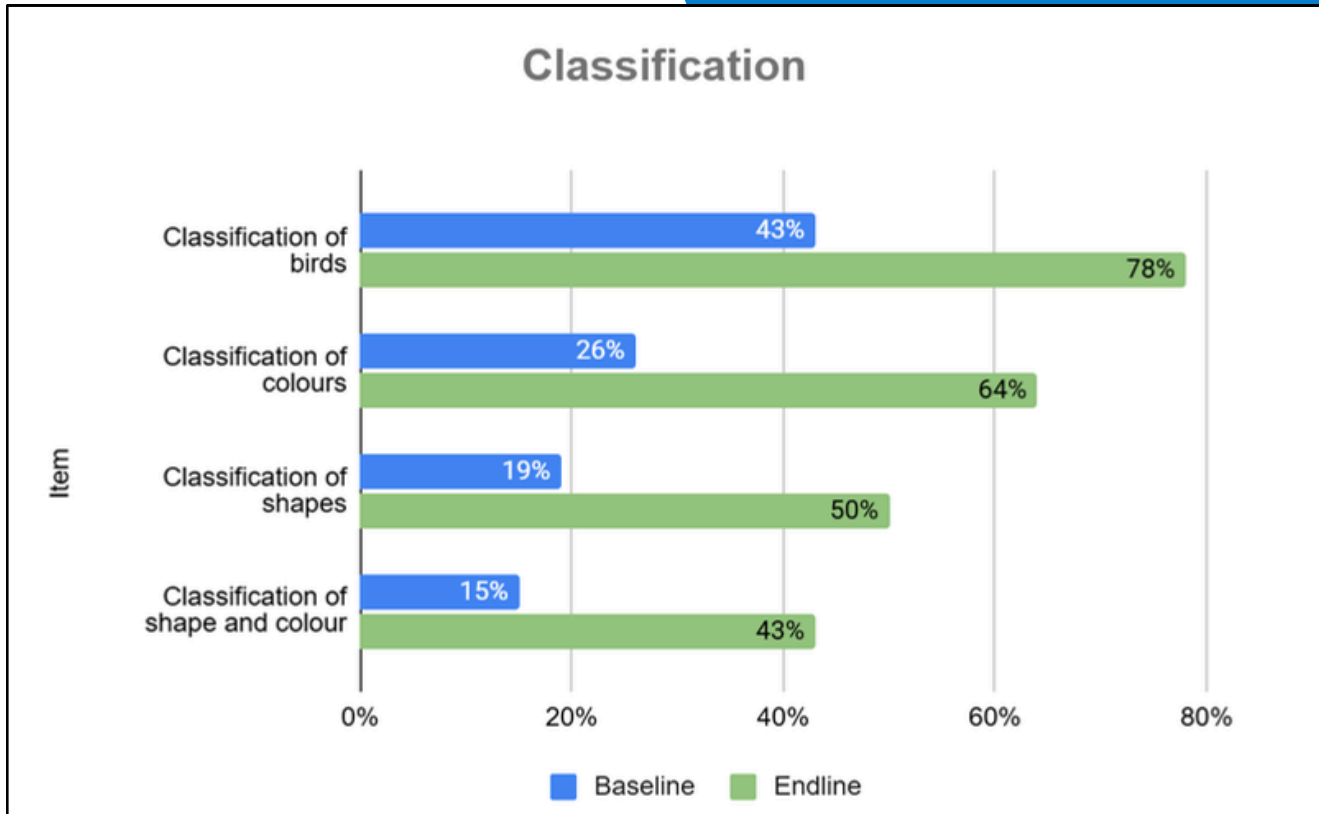
This domain shows strong and broad-based improvement. Identifying trees with most and least number of fruits and counting objects demonstrate major gains, with Majority indicators reaching above **50% at endline and few crossing 80%**.

Matching and identifying numerals also improved significantly, though relative number comparison needs more reinforcement. Overall, children showed good progress in Foundational numeracy.



Logical reasoning shows substantial progress across all indicators. Copying pattern demonstrates the strongest performance (**44% to 90%**), suggesting improved pattern recognition and sequencing ability.

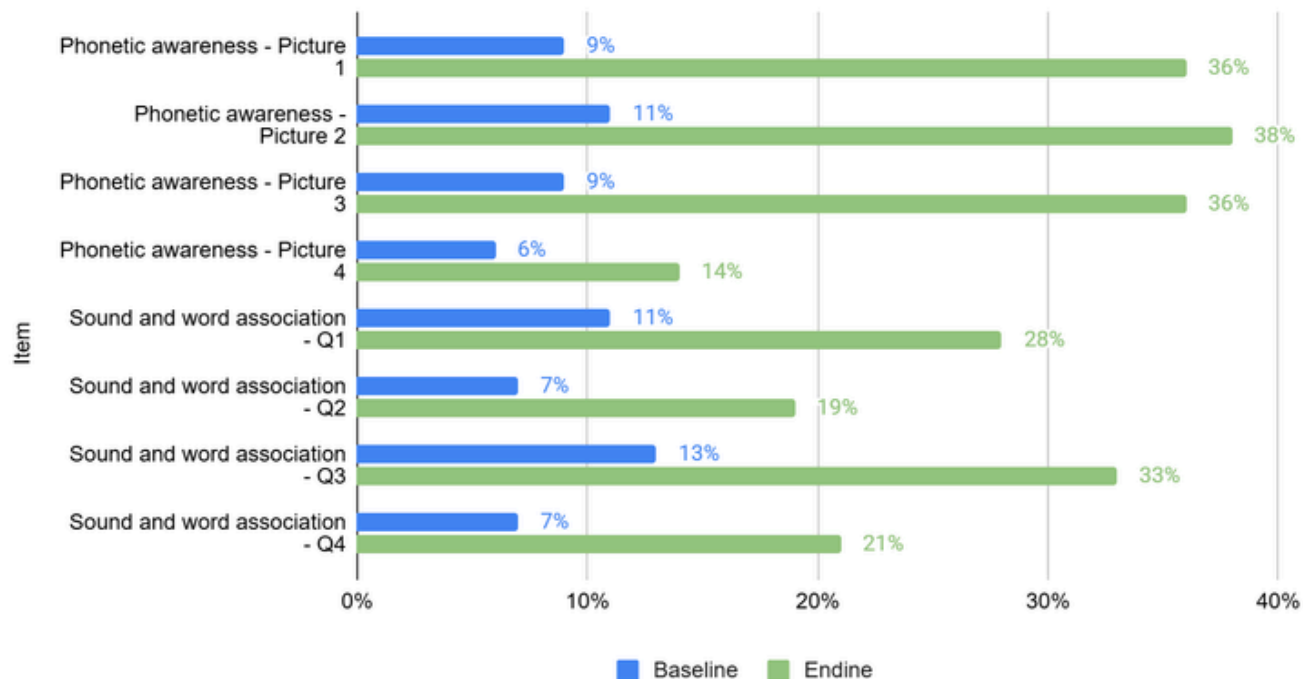
Solving the picture puzzle also shows a major improvement (**28% to 78%**). While all areas improved, sequential thinking remains relatively weaker (**15% to 33%**), indicating continued need for work on.



There is clear improvement across all classification tasks from baseline to endline. The most notable gain is in identifying picture cards of birds (**43% to 78%**), indicating stronger visual categorization skills.

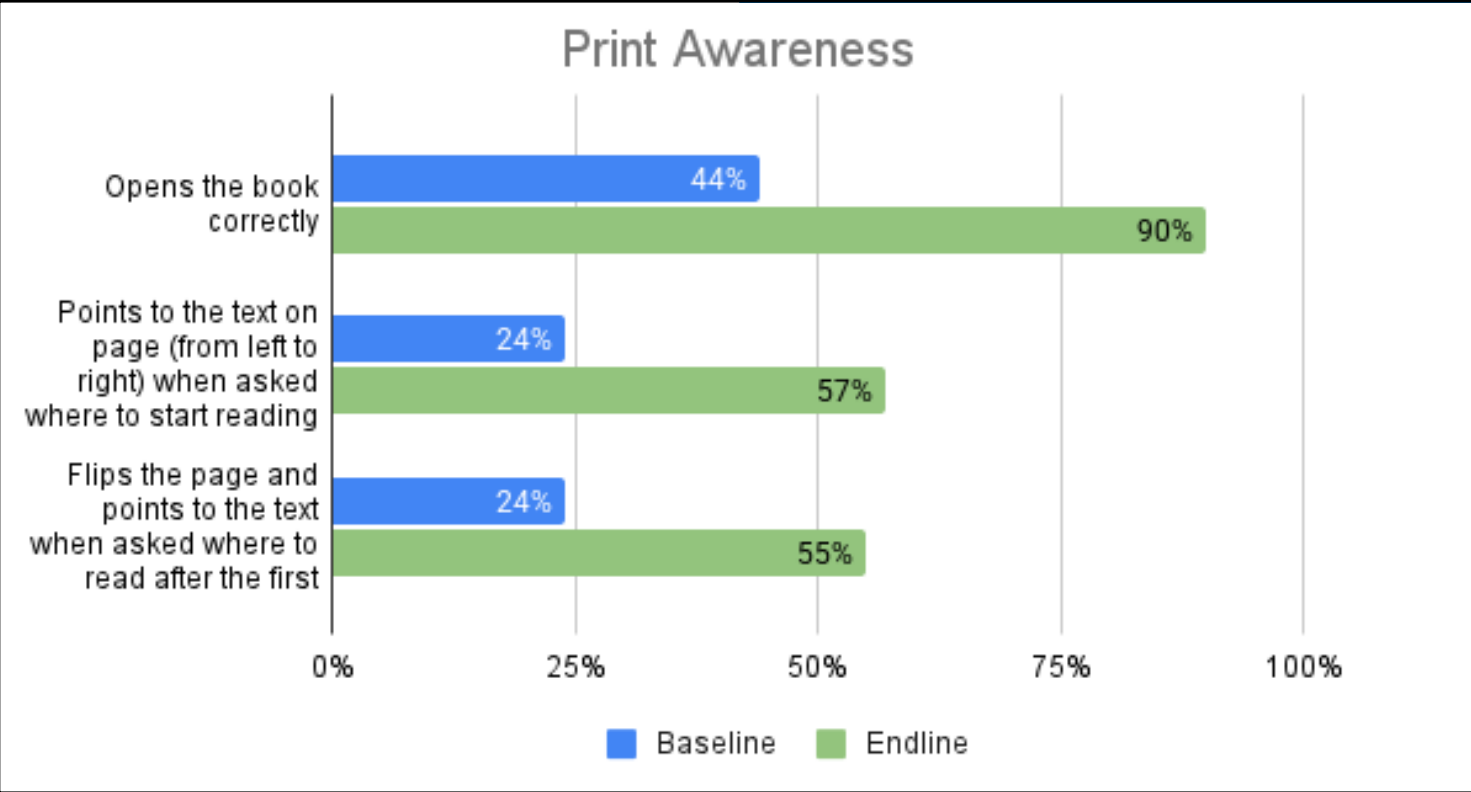
Moderate gains are seen in colour and shape sorting, though performance remains comparatively lower in identifying blue square cut-outs (**15% to 43%**). Overall, children show better ability to group objects by attributes, but some colour–shape combinations still need reinforcement.

Phonological Awareness



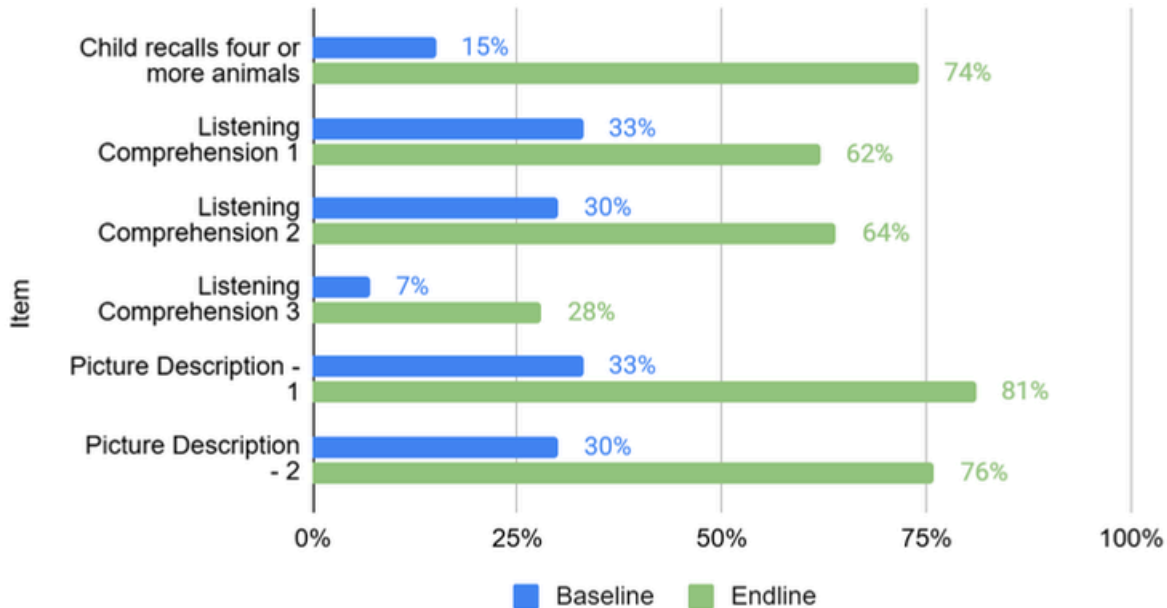
Phonological awareness has improved but remains an emerging skill area. Identification of beginning sounds increased consistently (around **9–11%** to **36–38%**), showing positive early literacy development.

The strongest gain is in identifying the first word with the P sound (**13% to 33%**). However, overall percentages are still modest, suggesting that sustained focus on sound discrimination and word awareness is required.



Print awareness shows very strong growth. Opening the book correctly improved from **44% to 90%**, indicating better understanding of book handling conventions. Directionality skills (left-to-right tracking and page turning) also more than doubled. This suggests meaningful gains in early reading readiness and exposure to print-rich practices.

Expressive and Receptive Language



Vocabulary recall increased substantially, with children able to name **four or more animals rising from 15% to 74%**, indicating a significant expansion in word use.

Listening comprehension also improved across all three questions, particularly for Questions 1 and 2, though performance on Question 3 remains comparatively lower and may require continued support for more complex understanding.

Picture description skills show notable gains, with a sharp increase both in naming objects (**33% to 81%**) and in forming meaningful complete sentences (30% to 76%). Overall, children demonstrate marked progress in verbal expression, though higher-order comprehension can be further strengthened.

School Readiness - Baseline vs Endline

Category	Sajgaon		Devnhave	
	Baseline	Endline	Baseline	Endline
Achieved school readiness	26.3%	61.9%	29.4%	52.3%
Intermediate school readiness	47.4%	38.1%	35.3%	42.8%
Beginner	26.3%	0%	35.3%	4.8%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

In **Sajgaon**, the proportion of children classified as **Ready for School** increased substantially from **26.3% at baseline to 61.9%** at endline, while the **Not Ready category reduced from 26.3% to 0%**. Similarly, **Devnhave** demonstrated positive movement, with **Ready children rising from 29.4% to 52.3%** and Not Ready declining sharply from **35.3% to 4.76%**.

In both blocks, many children shifted into higher readiness categories, though a notable proportion remains In Process (**38% in Sajgaon and 42.8% in Devnhave at endline**), indicating continued need for targeted support.

Overall, the findings suggest a **strong programme impact in improving school readiness levels across the two blocks.**

Quality Monitoring Tool

To assess the **quality of Early Childhood Education practices** in Anganwadi Centres, the project used the Early Childhood Education Quality Monitoring Tool (ECE QMT).

The ECE QMT was developed by the Centre for Early Childhood Education and Development (CECED), Ambedkar University, Delhi in collaboration with UNICEF in 2017.

The tool has been tested across several Anganwadi Centres in Maharashtra and has proven to provide reliable insights into classroom practices and learning environments when administered through structured observation.

The tool is designed to **evaluate both teaching practices and infrastructure conditions**, enabling a comprehensive understanding of the functioning of Anganwadi Centres.

The ECE QMT is organized into two parts:

Part A – Classroom Processes and Pedagogical Practices

Part B – Infrastructure and material availability

Methodology :

For the baseline assessment, **ECE QMT Part A** was conducted in 14 randomly selected Anganwadi Centres out of 56 (**25%**) to assess classroom processes and ECCE practices. **QMT Part B** was conducted across all 56 AWCs (**100%**) to review infrastructure and learning environment indicators.

Endline assessment, **all AWCs** were included for QMT A.

Score Distribution Overview

Baseline vs. Endline

Average % of classrooms per score level · 20 indicators · 4-point scale



SUMMARY TABLE – AVERAGE % PER SCORE LEVEL

SCORE	DESCRIPTION	BASELINE AVG %	ENDLINE AVG %	CHANGE	DIRECTION
Score 1	Absent – Activity not observed	77%	37%	-40pp	✓ Positive
Score 2	Low Quality – Present but low participation or poor quality	6%	21%	+15pp	⚠ Monitor
Score 3	Adequate – Regular, good participation, reasonably effective	2%	5%	+3pp	✓ Positive
Score 4	Excellent – Well-planned, high participation & engagement	16%	36%	+20pp	✓ Positive

Score 1 = Activity absent · Score 2 = Conducted with low quality/participation · Score 3 = Regular, adequate quality · Score 4 = Well-planned, high engagement

Averages calculated across all 20 classroom observation indicators.

At baseline, the vast majority of classroom indicators were scored at the lowest level (**Score 1 – activity absent**), with most sitting between **70–100%**, meaning structured learning was simply not taking place in most Anganwadi centres.

By endline, this dropped significantly, with many **indicators falling to the 15–30% range – a strong positive shift.**

The rise in **Score 2 at endline reflects a transition stage** where activities are now happening, but quality and consistency are still developing. **Score 3 (adequate quality) remains modest overall**, though Teacher-child interaction stood out, reaching 22%.

The most encouraging finding is the **substantial growth in Score 4 (excellent quality)**, particularly in relational indicators – interaction, child participation, and teacher warmth – all reaching **50–63% at endline**. Two areas that need focused attention going forward are **science and environmental activities and progress documentation**, which showed little to no improvement across the project period.

The data from QMT A Baseline and Endline tells an encouraging story.

In just one programme cycle, classrooms shifted from activities being largely absent to a majority of children experiencing structured, engaging, and nurturing learning environments. **The near-halving of Score 1 ratings – from 77% to 37% – and the doubling of Score 4 ratings – from 16% to 36% – reflect not just improved practice, but a genuine change in how teachers show up for children every day.**

This progress is a foundation, not a finish line.

QMT Part B analysis

No.	Indicators	% of AWC rated 1	% of AWC rated 2	% of AWC rated 3	% of AWC rated 4
1	Availability and use of clean drinking water	53%	34%	8%	6%
2	Availability and use of water and soap	26%	34%	4%	36%
3	Availability and use of clean toilets	34%	19%	19%	28%
4	Adequate lighting and ventilation in the center	11%	21%	13%	55%
5	Availability sufficient print material	34%	19%	4%	43%
6	Availability of space for indoor activities	2%	15%	30%	53%
7	Availability of space for outdoor activities	42%	19%	2%	38%
8	Availability of free play materials	43%	15%	26%	15%
9	Toys and materials for gross motor	77%	4%	2%	17%
10	Availability and usage of materials for arts and crafts	74%	15%	2%	9%
11	Safety of surrounding area	4%	2%	23%	72%
12	Building safety measures	0%	17%	38%	45%
13	Availability of first aid for children	32%	9%	45%	13%
14	Availability of play materials	36%	51%	13%	0%
15	Kitchen and hygiene – both space and utensils	32%	6%	6%	57%

Overall, the baseline reveals a mixed picture across the 15 infrastructure and materials indicators. Several areas show **genuine strength** – **Safety of surrounding area (72% rated 4)**, **Adequate lighting and ventilation (55% rated 4)**, **Availability of space for indoor activities (53% rated 4)**, and **Kitchen hygiene (57% rated 4)** – suggesting that the physical environment in many AWCs is reasonably well-maintained.

However, three critical learning materials indicators stood out as areas of acute need. **Toys and materials for gross motor development (77% rated 1), Availability and usage of arts and crafts materials (74% rated 1), and Availability of sufficient print material (34% rated 1)** all showed that the majority of AWCs lacked these resources entirely at baseline. Availability of play materials similarly showed concern, with **36% rated 1** and a **striking 51% rated 2** – meaning most centres either lacked materials or had them in inadequate condition.

Recognising these gaps, the project intervened directly: following the baseline, **material support for play materials, arts and crafts materials, gross motor toys, and print materials was provided to AWCs as part of the programme.**

Access to clean drinking water also remains a priority area, with 53% of AWCs rated 1 – the highest Score 1 share among infrastructure indicators – pointing to a systemic gap that goes beyond programme-level intervention and may require broader administrative attention.



Case Studies

Learning Beyond the Classroom: Reyansh's Journey of Confidence and Routine



AWC - Honad (Sajgaon block)
AWW - Archana Deshmukh

When the Anganwadi centre in Honad adopted play-based and structured pedagogy after the training on Aakar and NEP-aligned early childhood practices, learning began extending beyond the classroom.

Reyansh quickly responded to this environment. Through storytelling, songs, and activity-based learning at the centre, he became comfortable with alphabets and numbers. Parent meetings helped his family understand how everyday engagement at home could support learning.

Today, Reyansh studies regularly without being reminded and carries out daily tasks like dressing himself independently.

His father shared, *"Every evening he tells us what he learned at the Anganwadi. We sit with him and practice together."*

Reyansh enjoys dancing and travelling, and confidently says, *"I want to become a doctor when I grow up."*

His journey reflects how structured pedagogy and parental involvement together build confidence, independence, and early learning habits.



"Every evening he tells us what he learned at the Anganwadi. We sit with him and practice together."

From Disinterest to Curiosity: Advait's Change in Attitude



AWC - Thanehave 2 (Devnhave block)

AWW - Kishori Lale

A year ago, Advait rarely showed interest in the lessons conducted at the Anganwadi centre in Thanenhawe. Classroom activities felt routine and he often remained disengaged.

After the Anganwadi worker received training on play-based pedagogy, classroom management, and interactive learning, the teaching approach changed significantly. Activities such as songs, picture talk, and object-based discussions made learning more engaging.

Advait gradually began participating in class and sharing his experiences at home. His mother says, "Earlier he would not talk about school. Now he comes home and tells us everything that happened in class."

Today, Advait can write alphabets and numbers and confidently shares what he has learned. Parent meetings have also encouraged his family to support his learning at home. Advait's transformation shows how interactive teaching methods can turn disinterest into curiosity and active learning.

Changing Community Perceptions: Sangde Anganwadi



AWC - Sangde (Devnhave block)

AWW - Darshana Patil

In Sangade, many parents earlier preferred sending their children to private English-medium preschools. However, after the Anganwadi worker introduced new teaching approaches aligned with Aakar and the NEP, the centre began offering a richer and more engaging learning environment.

Through activities such as picture talk, object talk, storytelling, and hands-on learning with materials, children began understanding concepts through play and exploration.

Vedika is one of the children who benefited from these changes.

She can now recognize numbers, identify colours and shapes, and participates confidently in classroom activities.

Her mother shared, “We thought English schools were better, but here the children actually learn by doing.”

As more **parents observed the changes in children’s learning and confidence, their trust in the centre grew.** The Anganwadi worker herself noted the shift: **“Parents can see the difference now. Because of that, more children have started enrolling in our Anganwadi.”**

Vedika’s story reflects how improved teaching practices can not only strengthen children’s learning but also build community confidence in Anganwadi centres.

An Inclusive Anganwadi Centre: Sejal's Progress



AWC – Honad (Sajgaon block)

AWW – Archana Deshmukh

When six-year-old Sejal joined the Honad Anganwadi, her family was unaware that she had special developmental needs. She rarely communicated and struggled to interact with other children.

After receiving training on **CWSN Protocol and inclusive practices** under the project and support from the project team, the Anganwadi worker recognized these signs and began working closely with Sejal to support her special needs.

She patiently engaged Sejal through **simple activities and puzzles** while also guiding her family in **obtaining a UDID card** so that she could **access appropriate support and diagnosis**

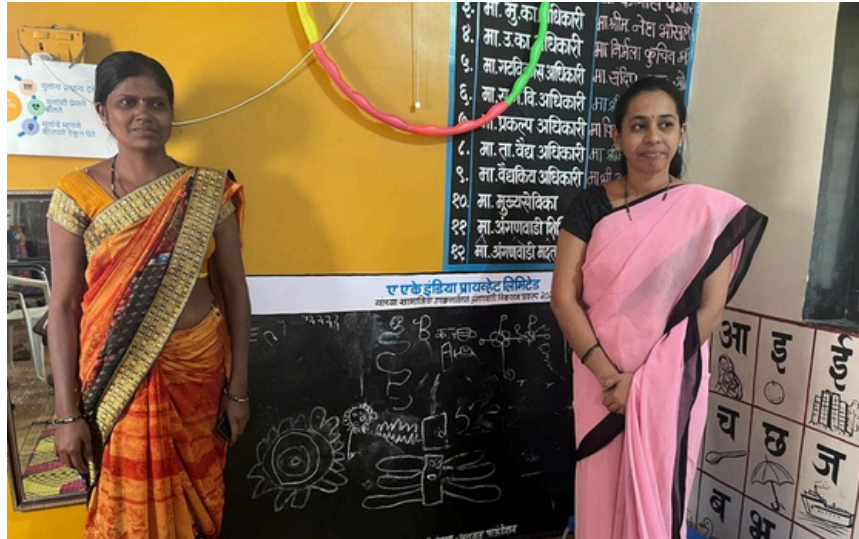
Gradually, Sejal began responding to classroom activities.

Today she can identify and differentiate fruits and participates in puzzle-solving exercises.

Her mother shared, “The tai understood my child before we did.”

Sejal's story highlights the importance of early identification, inclusive classrooms, and empathetic teaching.

Managing a Busy Anganwadi: Dheku Anganwadi's Structured Day



AWC - Dheku (Sajgaon block)

AWW - Sonali Dhamale

Every day at the Dheku Anganwadi is a busy one, **with 25–30 children** attending the centre regularly. Earlier, the Anganwadi worker found it difficult to balance classroom activities with responsibilities such as nutrition distribution and maintaining official records.

During the project training, this challenge was addressed through sessions on **classroom management and structuring the daily timetable**. The Anganwadi worker began organizing the day with **free play corners, group activities, storytelling, and songs**, ensuring children remained engaged throughout the day.

The Anganwadi helper also began playing a more active role. When the tai is occupied with nutrition distribution or documentation, the helper supports by leading songs, storytelling, or play activities, ensuring the children remain engaged and supervised. As a result, the centre now runs more smoothly and children stay actively involved in learning.



Project Summary & Conclusion

Summary

Over the course of this project, Early Childhood Education across 56 Anganwadi Centres in Khalapur has been strengthened through a combination of capacity building, improved learning environments, and community engagement.

The initiative focused on equipping Anganwadi Workers with practical knowledge of early childhood pedagogy aligned with Aakar and NEP principles, while also ensuring that centres were supported with play-based learning materials and teaching-learning resources.

Through four capacity-building trainings, regular mentoring visits, parent meetings, and community events, Anganwadi centres began adopting more structured and engaging classroom practices such as storytelling, activity corners, and play-based learning.

These efforts translated into measurable improvements in school readiness among children. The proportion of children classified as “Ready for School” increased significantly in both Sajgaon and Devnhave blocks, while the number of children categorized as “Not Ready” reduced substantially.

Beyond learning outcomes, the project also strengthened community confidence in Anganwadi centres, encouraged greater parental participation, and improved the overall quality of early learning environments.

While the project concludes, the strengthened practices and capacities developed among Anganwadi workers will continue to benefit young children and families in Khalapur.

Outcomes



Improvement in School Readiness

Ready for School rose from 26.3% to 61.9% in Sajgaon and 29.4% to 52.3% in Devnhave.



Better quality teaching in classrooms

Following capacity building trainings, AWWs adopted play-based, activity-oriented practices.



Stronger parent engagement

30 AWCs in Devnhave and 21 in Sajgaon organized parent meetings during the year, strengthening the involvement of parents in ECE.



Improved learning materials

All 56 AWCs received play equipment & TLM kits. Centres previously lacking play equipment, art materials, and print resources were fully equipped.



Greater community awareness and participation

Community events across both blocks brought together parents, and local leaders – recognizing AWCs as spaces for early childhood education and development.

Conclusion

Over the course of this project, Anganwadi centres across Khalapur have evolved into more vibrant and engaging learning spaces for young children. Through structured training on early childhood pedagogy aligned with Aakar and NEP principles, Anganwadi workers introduced practices such as play-based learning, interactive conversations, structured routines, and stronger engagement with parents.

Every morning, these centres now open their doors to classrooms filled with songs, stories, and activities where children learn through curiosity and participation. These changes have translated into visible outcomes—children engaging more actively in classroom activities, strengthening early learning skills, developing routines at home, and building confidence in expressing themselves.

The success of this initiative reflects the dedication of Anganwadi workers, the active participation of parents, and the continued support of ICDS officials and partner organizations. Their collective efforts have helped strengthen the foundations of early childhood education in the community. While this project formally concludes, the strengthened practices, skills, and community relationships developed during this journey will continue to support the learning and development of young children in Khalapur for years to come.



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