

# A Study on the Infrastructural Facilities Available in the Anganwadi Centers of Lakhimpur District, Assam

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## Abstract

Nonformal pre-school education is considered a crucial service under the ICDS scheme. It is a very crucial component of the package of services envisaged under the ICDS scheme as it seeks to lay the foundation for proper physical, psychological, cognitive and social development of the child. The purpose of the study was to find out the availability of infrastructural facilities in the Anganwadi centers of Lakhimpur district. *Methodology:* A self-structured questionnaire was used to collect data from the Anganwadi workers of the selected centers and an interview schedule was prepared to collect data from the guardian. Three ICDS services were selected for the study and 120 Anganwadi centers were selected by multi-stage sampling method from three ICDS services. One hundred and twenty Anganwadi workers from 120 centers were selected as samples and from each center two guardians were selected randomly as samples. *Result:* Results shows that 48 percent of Anganwadi centers were running in state owned building, 45 percent centers were attached to primary school and 31 percent centers were running in the house of Anganwadi workers and helpers. The study revealed that only 28 percent Anganwadi centers had safe surroundings 66 percent had enough outdoors space and 52 percent had enough indoor space. Only 8 percent Anganwadi centers had two rooms which were separated by a partition, 30 percent of the centers had separate cooking place and only 22 percent had storage space, 64 percent of the Anganwadi centers had toilet facilities, but most of it was not child friendly. The study showed that 18 percent of the Anganwadi centers use tap water, 63 percent use water from well and 5 percent use water from pond. Sixty percent centers were airy and well ventilated. Less than 50 percent of the guardians responded that there is enough outdoor and indoor space. *Conclusion:* Adequate physical facilities and environment is necessary for proper functioning of the Anganwadi centers. There is a great need to fulfill the need of the centers so that the Anganwadi centers may achieve its targeted goal.

*Key words:* Anganwadi centers, ICDS, Infrastructural facilities, Pre-school.

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## **1.0 Introduction**

In 1974, the National Policy for Child was adopted by the Government of India. The policy recognized the children to be "Supremely important assets" of the nation and hence, the nation should have to look to their nurture and solicitude. This policy provides that the State Governments have to provide adequate services for children both at the pre-natal and postnatal stage to ensure full development in all aspects. To ensure this purpose, Integrated Child Development Scheme was launched in 2nd October, 1975. ICDS includes six components as supplementary nutrition, immunisation, Health checkup, Referral services, pre-school education and Nutrition and Health Education. The target group covered under this service are children of 0-6 years, pregnant and lactating women and adolescent girl. Non-formal pre-school education is considered a crucial service under the ICDS scheme. It is a very crucial component of the package of services envisaged under the ICDS scheme as it seeks to lay the foundation for proper physical, psychological, cognitive and social development of the child (Mohanty, 2014).

An Anganwadi center is the focal point from where all the services are delivered. It is run by an Anganwadi worker and she is supported by a helper in service delivery. Pre-school Education is imparted to children of 3-6 years at the Anganwadi centers through playway method. Health and nutritional aspects of the pre-school children are also taken care of in the Anganwadi. Location of an Anganwadi is important for proper the utilisation of ICDS services. An AWC should be located at a place which is easily accessible, away from congested or traffic areas, does not have ponds or rivers or other dangerous places nearby, and is near the locality of weaker sections of the society. Despite significant expansion of the ICDS programme from the eight plan onwards, the recent NFHS-3 data shows that the status of the children in the country is still far from satisfactory. Though the Anganwadi centers are increasing and the scheme is running from almost 43 years, but the expansion of the numbers did not commensurate with the resource both human and financial, as a result of which a number of gaps crept which were essential to be rectified.

A report published by NITI AYOJ (Govt. of India) in the year 2015 revealed that 41 percent AWC's have either shortage of space or unsuitable accommodation and only 48.2 percent of Anganwadi centers are maintaining a good hygienic condition. Therefore, the aim of the study was to find out the

availability of infrastructural facilities in the Anganwadi centers of Lakhimpur district, Assam.

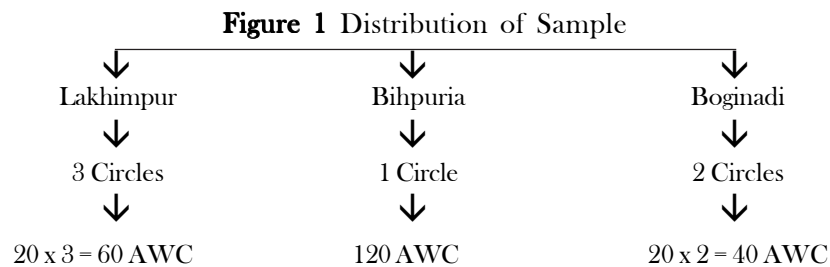
## 2.0 Review of Literature

An Anganwadi center is the focal point of delivery of services to the community. For the proper service delivery, the basic facilities of an Anganwadi center are important. The center should be well equipped with proper space to accommodate the enrolled children in the Anganwadi center with separate cooking area, storage space, sanitation facilities, safe drinking water etc. Thakare and Kuril (2006) reported 50 percent of the Anganwadi workers were not satisfied with the infrastructural facilities of the centers and the study also revealed that most of the Anganwadi centers are running in rented house.

Malik, et al. (2015) assessed the facilities and services being provided at the Anganwadi Centre's by the Anganwadi Worker in North East Delhi with regard to the norms laid down by ICDS scheme with special emphasis on the children of 0-6 years of age. The assessment revealed that the Anganwadi centers lacked the facilities. Seventy percent of the center's had growth weighing machines but most of them were of non-working condition. Drug kits were present only in 34 percent centers. Haque and Wan analysed the availability of infrastructure related to various services of ICDS in the Anganwadi Centres of Kashmir. The study revealed that 46 percent Anganwadi centers were in pucca house, 39 percent in semi pucca house, 15 percent in Anganwadi Worker's house and 16 percent in government constructed house.

## 3.0 Methodology

The present study was carried out at Lakhimpur district of Assam. For the study, the researcher has taken 3 ICDS projects of Lakhimpur district as the area



of investigation. Hence 717 Anganwadi Workers of all these centers are the population of the study. For the study, 120 Anganwadi centers were selected by multistage sampling method from three ICDS projects in Lakhimpur, Boginadi and Bihpuria of Lakhimpur district. 25 percent circle of each ICDS project were selected and from each circle 20 percent Anganwadi centers were selected randomly. Therefore, 120 Anganwadi centers were selected for the study. There are 120 Anganwadi Workers in 120 centers. The Anganwadi Workers from each center were taken as sample and from each center two guardians were selected randomly.

A self-structured questionnaire was used to collect data from the Anganwadi workers and an observation checklist was also prepared to be used during personal visit to the Anganwadi centers. An interview schedule was made to collect the data from 240 guardians. The constructed tools for data collection were circulated among three experts for elimination of ambiguous questions and for reliability and validity. Besides this, other secondary sources of information success articles, reviews, journal websites and reports were also consulted to collect factual data concerning the study. The data collected was analysed manually and tabulated.

#### **4.0 Results and Discussion**

The results of the data collected from the sample are presented in tabular form. From Table-1 it is observed that 39 percent of the Anganwadi workers were from the age group of 31-40 years. The table also reveals that 27 percent respondents were both from the age group of 20-30 years and 31-40 years and 16 percent respondents were more than 51 years. Most of the respondents i.e. 77 percent Anganwadi workers were Higher Secondary pass, 14 percent HSLC and only 9 percent were graduate. The table also indicates that 45 percent of Anganwadi worker are in service for 26-35 years, 32 percent are in service for 36-45 years. 26 percent for 16-25 years and only 6 percent are in service for 5-15 years.

**Table 1** Profile of Anganwadi Workers

Catagories	N=120	Percent
a) Age of AWWs		
20-30 years	32	27
31-40 years	47	39
41-50	32	27
More than 51	19	16
b) Educational qualification		
HSLC passed	17	14
HS passed	92	77
Graduate	11	09
c) Year of service		
05-15 years	07	06
16-25 years	31	26
26-35 years	54	45
36-45 years	38	32

**Table 2** Profile of Parents/Guardians

CATAGORIES	N=240	Percent
Educational qualification		
Below HSLC	45	19
HSLC	61	25
HS	87	36
Graduate	43	17
Post graduate	04	02
Number of Children		
1 Child	12	05
2 Children	39	16
3 Children	65	27
More than 3	17	07

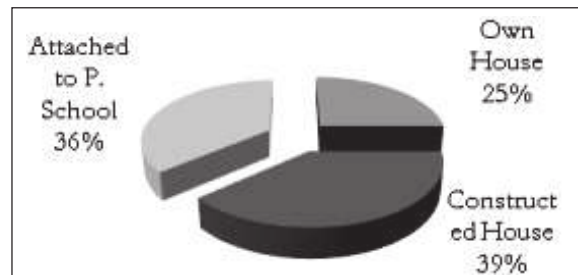
Occupation		
Government Job	04	02
Shopkeeper	23	10
Salesman	14	06
Cultivator	59	25
Wage earner	121	50
Business	07	03
Teacher	12	05

Table 2 shows that 36 percent guardians are H.S. passed, 25 percent HSLC, 17 percent are graduate, 19 percent are below HSLC level and only 2 percent are post graduate. From the table, it is also observed that 27 percent family have 3 children, 16 percent have 2 children, 7 percent have more than 3 children and only 5 percent have 1 child. The table also indicates that 50 percent of the guardians are wage-earner, 25 percent are cultivator, 10 percent are shopkeeper, 6 percent are salesman, 5 percent are teacher, 3 percent are businessman and 2 percent are engaged in Government jobs.

#### 4.1 Locations of Anganwadi Center

Locations of Anganwadi Center are shown in Figure 1. The figure indicates that 48 percent Anganwadi centers were running in the state owned building, 45 percent were attached to primary schools where they provide a room to run the center and 31 percent AWC's were running either in the house of Anganwadi worker or in the house of the helper.

**Figure 1** Locations of Anganwadi Centres



4.2 *Infrastructural facilities in Anganwadi Center*

Infrastructural facilities in Anganwadi Centers are summarised in Table 3A.

**Table 3(A)** Percentage Distribution of the Responses of Anganwadi Worker regarding Infrastructure in Anganwadi Center.

Sl. No	Items	(60) Lakhimpur		(20) BiHPuria		(40) Boginadi		(N=120) Total	
		N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
		1	Safe Surrounding	14	24	10	50	10	25
2	Sign. Board of AWC displayed	27	45	16	80	33	82.5	76	64
3.	Enough outdoor space	26	43	13	65	40	100	79	66
4.	Enough indoor space	32	53	09	45	21	53	62	52
5.	Number of rooms								
	1 room	53	88	20	100	37	93	110	92
	2 rooms	07	12	00	00	03	08	10	08

Table 3(A) reveals that 28 percent AWC's had safe surrounding. Most of the AWC's were not free from hazard as there were ponds, ditches, drains near the center. Few AWC's were also found to be very noisy due to heavy traffic. It was observed from Table 3(A) that 64 percent of the AWC's displayed signboard but some of the displayed signboards were not in good condition. The name or number were not distinct in the signboards as the color faded away. Further, Table 3(A) also indicates that 66 percent AWC's had enough availability of outdoor space which was mostly seen in the AWC's attached to the primary schools as the centers were able to use the playground of the primary schools.

Table 3(A) also reveals that 52 percent of the AWC's had enough indoor space and only 8 percent had 2 rooms which were separated by a partition and the remaining 92 percent AWC's had only one room. The rooms were congested as the AWW had to keep all the materials in the same room and very less space were left for student's activity.

**Table 3(B)** Percentage distribution of the responses of AWW regarding infra-structure of AWC (N=120)

Sl. No	Items	(60) Lakhimpur		(20) Bihpuria		(40) Boginadi		(N=120) Total	
		N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
		1	Separate cooking space	26	43	07	35	03	08
2	Separate storage space	14	24	06	30	06	15	26	22
3.	Toilet facility	39	65	11	55	27	68	77	64
4.	Drinking water								
	Tap	08-13		03-15		11-28		22-18	
	Well	43-72		12-60		21-53		76-63	
	Pond	02-03		01-05		03-08		06-05	
5.	Water filter available	55	92	16	80	38	95	109	91
6.	Room equipped with natural light	32	53	16	80	27	68	75	62.5
7.	Airy comfortable	32	53	15	75	25	62.5	72	60

Table 3(B) reveals that 30 percent of the AWC's had separate cooking space and that was mostly in the centers attached to primary schools and the other AWC's cook in open area or in a shed prepared by the AWW. A few AWW cooked food at their home and brought the same to the center. The table also shows that 22



percent AWC's had storage space and a big trunk is given to store the play materials and equipment of the center.

It was observed from the table that 64 percent AWC's had toilet facilities, but most of the toilets were not child friendly. Proper outlet system was not seen in most of the toilets. The table shows that 18 percent AWC's use tap water, 63 percent use well and 5 percent use pond for drinking water. Water filter was available in 91 percent of the centers, but most of it were not in working condition. The table indicates that 63 percent AWC's were equipped with natural light and 60 percent of the centers were airy and comfortable, but the rest were in damp areas, covered with trees and as there was no proper sunlight so the condition was unhygienic.

**Table 4** Percentage Distribution of the Responses of Guardian regarding Infrastructural Facilities.

Sl. No	Items	(120) Lakhimpur		(40) Bihpuria		(80) Boginadi		(N=240) Total	
		N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
		1	Surrounding of AWC safe	39	33	17	43	27	34
2	Enough outdoor space	52	43	23	58	37	46	112	47
3.	Enough indoor space	47	39	19	48	39	49	105	44
4.	Satisfied by physical structure	66	55	12	30	32	40	110	45
5.	Safe drinking water	91	75	14	35	24	30	129	54
6.	Proper toilet facility	72	60	26	65	39	49	137	57

From Table 4 it can be observed that 35 percent of the AWC's had safe surrounding. But the remaining 65 percent responded that the AWC's are not

hazard free due to the pitch, pond and heavy traffic. Forty seven percent responded that there were enough out space and 44 percent responded that there are enough indoor space. The table revealed that 54 percent respondents felt that there were safe drinking water in the center and 57 percent felt that proper toilet facilities were available in the center. But though toilets were available in the center it was found that the sizes were too small and the drainage facility was not proper.

## **5.0 Conclusion**

Pre-school education has a direct impact on the all round development of the child. Pre-school age is a critical phase of human life. The experience gained and exposure received during this period shapes the cognitive growth of learners in their later life. (Sarson, 2007). It cannot be ignored because it has a widespread effect on the entire life of an individual. A person's physical, mental, intellectual, social efficiency mostly depends on the education attained during the early ages through pre-school education. The early years are very important because on them rest the entire life span from childhood to old age. This is the time when children need to get correct guidance and assistance to help their growth, good opportunities to release their energies, creativity and to express their feelings. It is the first concrete step towards making the child acquire knowledge and become a better citizen. Therefore, the main aim of pre-school is to stimulate and satisfy the curiosity of the child rather than follow any rigid learning curriculum. It does not impart formal learning but develop in the child desirable attitudes, values and behaviour patterns and aims at providing environmental stimulation. But it is quite evident by the fact that the Anganwadi's are not being able to fulfill the aim of pre-school education satisfactorily. Various factors are responsible for the malfunctioning of the centers. Hence, it becomes imperative to know at this stage to what extent Anganwadis are fulfilling the targeted objectives and what are the factors responsible for the malfunctioning of the Anganwadi centers. As the study shows gaps in infrastructure, viz., indoor and outdoor space, surrounding area, number of rooms, cooking and storage space, toilet facility etc. Hence, steps are needed to be taken to fill these gaps. Moreover, further studies are needed to be conducted in this aspect of ICDS because in the pre-school period, a child puts forward his first concrete step to acquire knowledge and to prepare itself to be a responsible citizen.

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