



# Early childhood care and development in Hazrat Nizamuddin Basti

*A partnership project  
between*

*Department of Women and  
Child Development*

and

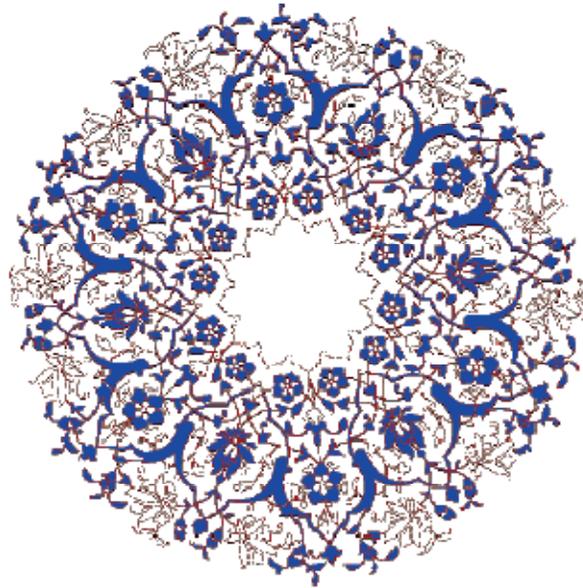
*Aga Khan Foundation*

**A Report**

July 2012 - December 2014

HUMAYUN'S TOMB : urban renewal initiative  
SUNDER NURSERY :  
NIZAMUDDIN BASTI :

A PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP INITIATIVE OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF INDIA  
MUNICIPAL CORPORATION OF DELHI – CENTRAL PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT  
AGA KHAN FOUNDATION-AGA KHAN TRUST FOR CULTURE



“The Urban Renewal Initiative is based on the philosophy of the Aga Khan Historic Cities Programme to ensure that conservation work benefit local communities. Working in close collaboration with partner agencies, AKDN connects conservation with socio-economic development in a synergetic and enabling manner to create and ensure a self sustaining and improved quality of life for the indigenous community. This landmark non-profit initiative establishes both an innovative practical paradigm and benchmark for similar projects worldwide.

AKDN’s socio-economic initiatives aim to improve the quality of life of the residing population by strengthening urban basic services through interventions in areas of health, education and environmental sanitation and interventions to promote livelihoods and economic empowerment opportunities.”

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## BACKGROUND TO THE PROJECT

The Humayun's Tomb-Hazrat Nizamuddin Basti-Sunder Nursery Urban Renewal Initiative is being implemented under a not-for-profit public-private partnership (PPP) programme. The partners in the initiative are the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), Central Public Works Department (CPWD) and Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) as the public partners and the Aga Khan Foundation (AKF) and Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC) as private partners. The partnership was formed following the signature of a Memorandum of Understanding in July 2007. The Nizamuddin Urban Renewal Initiative is a unique project that aims to combine conservation with socio economic development. It aims to revitalize and unify three historical sites – Humayun's Tomb, Nizamuddin Basti and Sunder Nursery into a unique heritage zone. This is a rare occasion when multiple agencies have come together in a not-for-profit public-private partnership.

The Nizamuddin Basti development intervention combines conservation, urban improvements and socio-economic development through a community centred, collaborative approach to improve the quality of life of the resident population. The socio-economic initiatives comprise strengthening basic services through interventions in areas of health, education and environmental sanitation and interventions to promote livelihood and economic empowerment opportunities, especially for youth and women. These initiatives have been conceptualized and designed in consultation with the residents, specific target groups and key opinion makers. A detailed socio economic survey and sector specific assessments inform all programme interventions. Interpreting data from these surveys, coupled with consultations with residents is an ongoing process to design strategies and activities aimed at improved quality of life of a heterogeneous population residing in this small area.

For the early childhood care and development component, there is an exclusive memorandum of understanding between the Department of Women and Child Development, Delhi and the Aga Khan Foundation. This MoU commenced in January 2010 and was renewed in July 2012. The focus of this engagement is to strengthen the existing aanganwadi centres. For details of the MoU, please refer to Annex 1

### Humayun's Tomb

- Reveal, Conserve and Restore the aesthetic and historical value of the monuments
- Revive and Preserve traditional building craft traditions through training opportunities

### Sunder Nursery

- Create a significant public space with vibrant ecological-heritage zones and cultural assets for future generations
- Establish Delhi's first arboretum and develop Nature trails to promote environmental education

### Nizamuddin Basti

- Improve the quality of life for local communities through improved urban environment and access to education, health, and economic opportunities
- Cultural revival through documentation and dissemination of local music, heritage and craft traditions

## BASELINE SURVEY ON EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND DEVELOPMENT

One of the initial activities as per the MoU was to conduct a baseline survey. Accordingly, it was conducted at the beginning of project period in the year 2010. This study was conducted by Ambedkar University with the support of Aga Khan Foundation. A comprehensive baseline of early childhood services in the basti was established through the study. The aim of the study was to look at key early childhood related issues. Services for children, pregnant and lactating women, and adolescent girls within the basti were looked at and their quality was assessed. Perceptions of parents as well as other key stakeholders such as Aanganwadi workers, school teachers etc were gathered regarding early childhood. The issues addressed were malnutrition, preschool education, immunization, early stimulation as well as health of mother and child.

The baseline survey informed the development of our engagement in the basti. The programmes that emerged were:

- Improving school readiness
- Addressing malnutrition
- Early stimulation

These issues from the baseline were crucial to determine AKF's strategy for ECCD interventions. Early childhood care and development is a complex issue requiring intervention at various levels. Equally important is to work with stakeholders such as Aanganwadi workers and parents to bring about a shift in understanding about care during early childhood. The ECCD programme has been designed to follow a multipronged approach to work on the issue of early childhood. The interventions are as follows:

Improving  
School  
Readiness

School

Direct Interventions with  
children and the  
community

Creating Awareness



## INTERVENTIONS

### 1. IMPROVING SCHOOL READINESS

- CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT AND FIELD TESTING

Working towards improving the school readiness programme entailed developing a curriculum keeping in mind the urban context and the skills that need to be developed in children in order for them to be ready for school.

The process we followed included working towards the development and testing of the curriculum in the aanganwadi centres. The process was supported by an advisor at the Centre for Early Childhood Care and Research.

This was a long process as it involved developing a framework, developing activities, building capacities of the teachers to conduct those activities and field testing them.

The focus areas were :

- **School readiness:** Since preschool age forms a basis of school learning, the curriculum included various activities which help children prepare for school especially focusing on the pre numeracy and pre literacy skills. The curriculum primarily achieves this through activities focusing on cognitive development: For instance, to understand numbers, children are given concrete objects to count. Once they are able to count upto 3, they are given a matching worksheet where they are introduced to the numerals to form the visual association with the number. Once children are able to count and identify numerals upto 3, they count objects till 5 with the support of teacher and so on.



- **Curiosity:** This is an inherent quality of children which supports their understanding and learning of the environment. The aim of this curriculum is to expand this quality further so that children make sense of the world around them. For instance, children are taken to

the neighbourhood park to explore various textures, colours and sounds. Once they are back, the teacher talks to them about their experiences and asks them to draw what they saw in the park.

- **Language development:** Preschool is an important period for language development as this is the first set up outside the child's environment where the child learns to express herself. Most children are proficient in their mother tongue by the time they enter into a preschool setup. The aim of preschool education thus becomes to build on this language and help child prepare for skills she would require later. For instance, to teach the written language, the children are first asked to identify their names to establish sight reading. They then move towards sight reading of other simple words of things in their environment.

- **Socio Interaction Skills:** The child forms relationships outside the family for the first time in the preschool set up. Research has indicated that positive relationships with adults other than family in this age are crucial for resilience later in life. Also, this is the time where children learn various social skills and practice them such as greeting, sharing and understanding needs of other individuals amongst others. This is achieved through the facilitation done by teacher and integrating these practices into everyday classroom rituals.

The curriculum is now being implemented in all the aanganwadis by the AKF community teachers with the support of the aanganwadi workers and helpers.

- **SUPPORT TO AWCs IN PRE SCHOOL EDUCATION**

Ever since the MOU was signed in 2010, the preschool component at almost all seven Aanganwadi centres in Nizamuddin ward, has been strengthened with the support of the AKF appointed community teachers. During the baseline survey conducted in the same year it was understood that Preschool component and early stimulation are the two crucial components requiring support and intervention.

In this reporting period, seven community teachers, selected from Nizamuddin basti, were trained alongwith aanganwadi workers, to conduct preschool education with the help of aanganwadi workers and helpers, following developmentally appropriate 'theme based curriculum'. Currently, the community workers with support of aanganwadi workers develop daily lesson plans according to the curriculum. However, in the coming time, it is hoped that there will be greater support from AWWs and that they will be able to plan and conduct pre-school activities independently, following the curriculum.

The aanganwadi helpers, being from the locality are at a greater advantage as rapport building and regular interaction with parents has been made easily possible. They communicate with the parents on the need of sending children to aanganwadi centre and

preschool education. The AWHs play a crucial role in this as they are well versed with the community.

The anganwadi centres lack the appropriate space for preschool activities which is a concern across urban centres. The community teachers are specifically oriented towards modifying the activities to be conducted in the given space till the time proper space is made available through increased rents for the anganwadi centres.

- CAPACITY BUILDING OF TEACHERS

The capacity building of the community teachers has been at two levels.

The first level comprises the general principles of education that include the philosophy of education, the aims of education, classroom management and curriculum transaction. Also an essential aspect of these training sessions is to create linkages between learning at pre school and primary level. The focus of these sessions has also been teaching language and maths specifically. The teachers understand how there is a progression of learning of mathematical and language concepts from age 2 to about 8 years which is universally classified as early years. Over past 2 years, a total of 120 days of training has been conducted.

The second level has focussed more on learning at the pre primary level and field testing



and teaching using the curriculum developed as part of the project. This training also focused on using the curriculum, developing relevant teaching learning material. These training sessions were designed on basis of the need emerging from the field level activities. The teachers were given weekly plans systematically. After the implementation plan was given to the teachers, discussion was held on their experiences. This process

was carried out for about 3 months. The issues related to classroom management and children's learning were taken up in separate workshop sessions. In past 2 years, over 25 to 30 days have been spent on these training sessions.

In addition, there has been hand holding support to the community teachers through a process of classroom observation and as a result a checklist was developed to aid the observer as well as providing help in the self evaluation.

- PLAY GROUP

According to a study by NUEPA (2003-04), the rate of drop outs is consistently higher in grades 1 and 2, which reflects the transition from home/ preschool to grades 1 and 2 to be the most vulnerable. As most children in Nizammudin basti are first generation learners, AKF very recently initiated a *Play Group Programme* to support children (5-8 years) for a smoother transition to grades 1 and 2. Under the Play Group Programme, play-way methodology is being used by AKF teachers, to fill the gaps in early learning. The activities conducted with children are continuation of activities used in the preschool program at the aanganwadi centers which are the building blocks of learning. It has been identified that the social and emotional aspects of development are given attention at the preschool levels but as soon as the child moves to formal school these aspects get neglected due to large numbers of children in each class. Combined with other factors this impacts child's learning. The play group aims to keep some of these principles of child development to aid the learning of vulnerable children. Being at a nascent stage, the group is small but it is planned to reach out to 70-80 children by next year, i.e. 2015.

## 2. DIRECT INTERVENTION WITH CHILDREN AND COMMUNITY

- SUMMER CAMP



The summer camp has become an annual feature in the basti. For the past 3 years, we have been holding a summer camp for the pre primary school children. This 15 day camp is held at the MCD school and parents look forward to sending their children.

For the pre primary children, it sometimes forms a first introduction to the classroom, for others it is a reinforcement of learning in a different environment. Almost 50-60 children enroll for it. Most of these children, then enrol into the

Department of Women and Child Development run aanganwadis.

The summer camp focuses on developing language, curiosity, social interaction and school readiness interspersed with a lot of art and craft activities. Special story telling sessions are also organized for children who are not enrolled in the summer camp but study at aanganwadi centres. At the



end of the summer camp, there is a closing ceremony where the children's work is displayed to the community and the children perform at the cultural event.

- **BAL MELAS**

AKF has been organising Bal Melas in collaboration with the Department. In the past two and a half years, we have organized 3 bal melas. These melas are an important forum for the community to understand the role of aanganwadis in early childhood care and development and the importance of sending their children regularly to the aanganwadis. They also help to build a better relationship with the community and raise awareness about ECCD issues.

- **ART INTERVENTION**

AKF has used art to engage with the mothers and children. Apart from the regular art and craft classes during the pre school programme, we have organised special events to encourage the mothers have a deeper relationship with the community. 2 Toy making workshops were held with the mothers to develop toys out of materials found at home. In one of aanganwadis, the mothers through a series of art workshops converted a drab aanganwadi wall into a colourful and inviting space.



Music classes are held with preschool children at regular basis.

A special theatre performance called 'Bends and Flows' – a play only for toddlers was performed especially for children studying in the aanganwadi centres.

- **INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENT AND RESOURCE SUPPORT**

In 2011, AKF had created a maternal and child health centre (MCH centre) in the polyclinic premises. The MCH centre was attractive and spacious inside but the floor outside needed a lot of improvement. This was important as there was another aanganwadi on the same premises.

AKF decided to use the floor space creatively so that the floor itself became a teaching learning space. The floor is colourfully designed and embellished with mosaic figures that

encourages language development, story telling, seriation, numbers, imagination to name some. In addition, instead of being an unsafe and unattractive space, it has become a point of attraction.



**Floor as a medium for Play**

- **ZAIKA-E-NIZAMMUDIN**

In the baseline study conducted in 2010, malnutrition amongst young children was found to be very high and thus emerged as a major issue of concern. During a consequent study done on the eating habits of young children it was found that many children were consuming 'cheez' or junk food items which often have very little nutritive value which is one of the reasons for poor nutritional level.



During community meetings this was highlighted and the need to develop low cost healthy options for young children was realized. A group was formed, comprising of 11 mothers from basti who were interested in taking cooking of food items forward. The group called itself 'Zaika-e- Nizamuddin'.

After the food was pilot tested among children, the bulk food items were sold first at the annual mela held from 30<sup>th</sup> November to 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2012. It was observed that there was high acceptance of *til ladoo*, *chirwa namkeen* and *Chana chaat* by the people. The group then met on periodic basis to cook these food items and sell it through local vendors within the basti. The group again put up their food stall in the 'Apni Basti' mela from 14<sup>th</sup> to

16<sup>th</sup> November'14. Women were involved in cooking and selling of food items during the *mela*.

In the next year it is planned by the group, to adopt different strategies for regular distribution of these healthy snacks items in the basti. The focus will also be on making these food items available in aanganwadis, private pre-schools and primary schools. Since malnutrition is still a major issue being faced, the group will also be used as a forum to spread awareness about poor nutrition among the community so that this can be dealt at the household level as well.

- **COMMUNITY CRECHE**

With more women stepping out for work to supplement family incomes, there was a greater need for a crèche within the basti, for the care and protection of their younger ones. There are few creches available around the basti, however there is always an increasing need of these services, especially a neighborhood centre. Thus a crèche was opened by a woman residing in the Kot Mohalla area of the basti. She has also worked as a part time worker with the community health based initiatives of the project and has an understanding of health and care needs of young children.

The crèche being in the neighbourhood, is very convenient and is a flexible model as the timings are based on work timings of parents. The crèche runs from 9:00 am to 2:00 pm and there are currently 12 children coming to the crèche between the ages of 1 to 6 years old. The families contribute some amount as fees and AKF is subsidizing some of the costs till it becomes a profitable venture and it also generates income for the woman running creche. This is a pilot project which will be expanded next year. The aim is also to link these neighbourhood creches with the aanganwadi centres for the nutrition and/or preschool education so that young children of working parents can get complete care.

- **GROWTH MONITORING**

Growth monitoring is a crucial step in dealing with malnutrition that pervades our country. Not only is accurately weighing the children a major concern but interpreting of the growth chart to counsel the mothers on appropriate feeding practices is another problem. It is often found that problem in this emerges from the level of community as well as at the AWC level. The AWWs are often not trained on weighing process, and even if they are trained, the counselling aspect is completely neglected. The lack of space for the weighing also poses an issue. On the other hand, strong bias against weighing in the community also hampers the process. Through the interventions we have aimed at both, training of AWWs in weighing and counselling; and raising awareness in the community to get the children weighed. However the weighing is at present being done by the community health workers. In the next phase we aim to conduct the weighing at the centre level and CHWs play a supporting role.

### 3. RAISING COMMUNITY AWARENESS

- **BALWADI KAWAD AND KHILTA BACHPAN**

Folk media and then follow up meetings with the community members is an effective medium for creating awareness on a specific issue. To bring about mass awareness on the significance of early childhood care and development (ECCD) amongst the families in the basti, the basti theatre group and Community ECCD workers were trained to perform two folk media, titled as 'Balwadi Kawad' and 'Khilta Bachpan'. During the training that continued over a period of six months, five performances of Khilta Bachpan and four performances of Balwadi Kawad were facilitated and about 15 performances were held after the training, reaching out to a huge proportion of basti population. These performances also emphasized on the need for early stimulation and the importance of sending children to aanganwadi centres before they are enrolled in school. The advantage of these performances is that it gives a space to have dialogue within the community through engaging them in a folk art form. Many performances were held outside the aanganwadi centres so that people are able to relate to the information to the aanganawadi centres.



- **PARENTING PROGRAMME**

The Parenting Programme emerged from the observation that young mothers particularly first time mothers living in nuclear families, need help to understand issues related to maternal and child health as well as development of children. The sessions focus on understanding menstruation, pregnancy, pre natal and postnatal care, breastfeeding and nutrition of children, immunization and developmental milestones of children. Most of these topics are in congruence with the information to be imparted through Mahila Mandal meetings. The sessions are structured and activity based so that field workers can conduct them with some supervision and hand holding, engaging women to transmit information in an interesting manner.

This has taken the form of an 11 module parenting programme for women who have children in the age group of 0-6. 150 women have participated in the programme so far in 3 different batches. We are in the process of finalizing the module for wider circulation.

- HOME VISITS

The AKF community teachers maintain regular contact with the parents of children studying in the aanganwadi centers. Some of the issues which are taken up during home visits are related to regularizing attendance of children to anganwadis and motivating parents to send children to the centres on time. Teachers also visit parents to give them information about how their child is progressing in the class. The visits also helps teachers understand the home context of the child better which influences the learning process as well. The home visits are an important aspect of the work as it links parents to the AWCs on a regular basis which eventually aims at improving ownership of the community in functioning of the AWCs.

- APNI BASTI MELA

The apni basti mela is another annual feature of the project and is held every year. This annual event showcases the project activities to the community at large to disseminate our objective and approach. This mela is visited by many residents of the basti and aims to celebrate the unique identity of Nizamuddin.

The ECCD team has been using this opportunity to showcase a model aanganwadi and the importance of play and nutrition in child development. The teachers present different play materials and activities which are used in the classroom so that parents get a flavor of the way an aanganwadi centre functions. Workshops are held for mothers and children which generates great deal of excitement. Various games and quiz are organized to disseminate messages related to child care. Art work created by children through out the year is also showcased for the members of the community.

These large scale events help in creating a positive atmosphere related to various interventions in the basti. This has been received very well by the community and the ECCD stall has always been full of children. These events then acts as springboard for further contact with the community.

- JAMIA ECCD COURSE

This is one more strategy to raise awareness about ECCD issues as well as provide an employment option. We have been enrolling 10-15 girls every year for this one year diploma programme.

So far, 35 young women have benefitted from the programme.

## CHALLENGES

**Fabric of the urban areas** (migration, lack of feeling of community): This is a crucial challenge working in a slum settlement area. High transition rate in the population creates hindrances in process of sustained interventions. However this is the population which needs most support.

**Overload on Aanganwadi workers** often leads to a compromise in quality of preschool education. They are often given responsibilities such as census, polio campaign, pension scheme enrolment among others, so the focus on children is completely taken away. The maintenance of records also takes up considerable amount of time.

**Lack of consistency** in the presence of Aanganwadi workers at the centre is often noticed. Since the Aanganwadi workers are not from the basti they take up considerable time to travel and the centre almost never opens on time. And since the workers are not from the basti, there is **little accountability to the community**.

With the given rent, the **space is a major constraint**. Of the 7 aanganwadi centres, five centres are operating within household spaces which are not conducive to preschool situation. The members of household are often carrying out domestic activities. Given the space, most aanganwadi centres are unable to house more than 10 children at a time.

**Low motivation to conduct preschool education** is often seen. It does not feature as high priority task in the scheme of things at the Aanganwadi centre. This hampers the pace of the programme.

## WAY FORWARD

**Motivation to the Aanganwadi workers** by improving their status is the first step that needs to be taken up if we want the status of Aanganwadi centres and subsequently status of children to improve. An Aanganwadi worker is at the lowest rung and is thrust upon so many responsibilities apart from care of children that there is no possibility of care being taken. A higher status to the Aanganwadi workers needs to be accorded so as to keep the motivation levels high.

An **increase in rent** will be favourable for the Aanganwadis to function in a better way. The current space and rent are in no way adequate for running an Aanganwadi centre.

**Collaboration with other government agencies** such as DDA, MCD to establish spaces for running Aanganwadi centres is very crucial. Also collaboration with health department is crucial to fulfilling aims of ICDS.

Further **handholding to Aanganwadi workers for the preschool component** by the supervisor is very essential in helping Aanganwadi workers gain confidence as well as effectively conduct preschool education.

Adoption of the **preschool curriculum focusing on urban areas** developed as the part of the project. This can be disseminated for further use.

A **structured programme for mothers meetings** at the aanganwadi centres could go a long way in engaging with mothers.

**Availability of low cost snacks through SHG members** wherever possible at the aanganwadi can be a useful strategy to address the issue of junkfood consumption.

**Better linkage with the public health** professionals will enable better growth monitoring.

**Building capacities of Aanganwadi helpers** has been recognized as an important step as they are very close to the community by virtue of living there. They can be trained to take up some part of preschool component. This will not only improve the overall quality of Aanganwadi centres but also provide work satisfaction to helpers as for few hours in a day they will be pulled away from the job of maintaining the centre.

**Aanganwadi workers from the community** are a must. This will play a major part in efficient functioning of the centre as she will be accountable to the members of community she lives and works in.

**Creating mothers' groups and self help groups** is going to be a major part of next phase of the programme. Though work with community has happened in some way or the other, much more intense effort to work with community based groups is needed.

**Strengthening of the MCH centre** is also required in the next phase of intervention. It is a good opportunity to establish a model early childhood centre in an urban settlement area.