

## Anganwadis in Odisha set to transform into vibrant learning centres

BHUBANESWAR: Anganwadi Centres across Odisha will no more be dull and dingy 'feeding centres' rather are going to be transformed into vibrant centres of joyful learning. With a focus on holistic development of children apart from taking care of their nutrition quotient, the state government in association with UNICEF has decided to bring major changes in the anganwadi centres across the state.

"The main aim is to make children between 0-6 years of age healthy, both physically and mentally. With equal emphasis on care, nutrition, play and early learning with a protective and enabling environment, these Anganwadi centres would be transformed into learning centres. The anganwadi workers will also be trained to ensure that children are not neglected in the first five years of their life," said women and child development secretary, Anu Garg.

On Monday an exhibition of low-cost toys and teaching learning materials for early childhood education inaugurated here where anganwadi workers were exposed to an array of innovative and easy methods to make children school ready.

"Separate modules for parents and teachers, flip books for brain development, puzzles, blocks, posters, pictorial books for kids and handbooks for trainers are released. Most importantly books in mother tongues of tribal children have been published, which will help them in improving their language skills. These will be provided to all anganwadi centres across the state to make them more vibrant and child friendly," said WCD minister Tukuni Sahu.

These toys and teaching-learning aids have been developed keeping in mind the important aspects of preschool education of children like physical development, language skills, numeracy and socio-environmental awareness, said experts.

"Presently in most Anganwadi centres children are coming to the centre, sitting for sometimes, having their food and play among themselves. If any child cries then we drop them home," said an anganwadi worker. Most of the anganwadi centres are running in dilapidated houses and a large numbers do not have their own building.

As per the plans now there will be a curriculum and timetable for keeping the children engaged with prayers, recitation, play time, storytelling, drawing and other activities, said a senior officer of the department.

There are also plans to engage parents, members of family in the initiatives. There are around 72,500 anganwadi centres across Odisha.