



UKRI Action Against Stunting Hub

Education and Cognition Workstream

Practice Toolkit – India

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Introduction



What is the purpose of this toolkit?

The purpose of this toolkit is to share simple, effective activities that adults can do with children to develop their learning. Teachers in India are supporting children every day in Anganwadi Centres and other early childhood care and education settings. Good nutrition, healthcare, and a safe environment are important for children to thrive. This toolkit offers strategies to help children learn and develop.

Who can use this toolkit?

Every adult in a child's life can make a difference to children's development. This toolkit can be used by anyone who interacts with young children. Simply playing or talking with a child can make a difference! The section "What you can do!" provides guidance to help you be successful in supporting children's learning.

Why should I use this toolkit?

The early years in a child's life sets the foundation for their development. Using this toolkit will help you find and use activities that have been found to be most beneficial for children's development. This toolkit will provide you with examples of activities that you can do every day to positively support children's learning.

How was this toolkit developed?

This toolkit was developed from a research project that looked at what experiences were important to support children's education and cognitive development in Anganwadis, in Hyderabad, India. We used the Measuring Early Learning Environments (MELE) tool to collect information about the learning environments in Anganwadi Centres. We conducted qualitative interviews with teachers. The findings from the research in child development were also used to develop the toolkit.

The activities will support young children's learning and development – teaching children through play, talking with children, positive reinforcement, and home engagement.

UCL Institute of Education and ICMR-National Institute of Nutrition (NIN) collaborated to develop an education toolkit that is aligned with the Indian early years curriculum, working alongside the Department of Women Welfare and Child Development (DWCD), and Anganwadi teachers. More details can be found on the website [UKRI Action Against Stunting Hub: Education and Cognition workstream](https://www.ukri.org/ukri-action-against-stunting-hub-education-and-cognition-workstream).

What makes this toolkit unique?

The information and activities in this toolkit were designed based on research in Anganwadi Centres in Hyderabad, India, in collaboration with local and international early childhood experts. The activities and examples are drawn from real-life experiences that are culturally relevant, and which research evidence has shown to have a positive impact on children. It also includes resources at the end to find more information.

Are the activities aligned with the current Indian guidelines/curriculum?

The activities in the toolkit are aligned with the national early years curriculum and guidelines in India. They can easily fit within your daily programme and can be used across many different types of settings. See the India specific links in the resources for more information.



**How to support
children's learning**



*“In the first week story is narrated with role play introducing the characters, imagining the role. It is enacted as a play”
(Teacher, Anganwadi Centre 12)*

Interactive Book Reading

Why is this important?	How can you support?	What activities can we use?	What you can do!
Enhances children's <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • learning & development, • language & communication 	Encourage children to ask questions and participate in reading activities Provide opportunities for interactive book reading to support word learning and extended conversations	Introduce the book and use questions and prompts to initiate back and forth conversations with children about the story. When you read through the book, ask children questions about elements in the story and give them time to respond. Create different questions to prompt children to think and talk about the book.	Open-ended questions: <i>Use questions that begin with “who”, “what”, “when”, “where” or “why”</i> <i>‘What do you think the story is about?’</i> <i>‘What do you think is happening in this picture here?’</i> <i>‘What do you think will happen next?’</i> <i>‘Which characters do you find most interesting in the story and why?’</i> Give children time to listen, ask questions and respond Recast and reflect: Repeat and extend what children say.



“They like to come to school as they are treated with love and affection” (Teacher, Anganwadi Centre 1)

Build Positive Relationships

Why is this important?	How can you support?	What activities can we use?	What you can do!
<p>Supports children's emotional & behavioural development, trust and sense of belonging</p>	<p>Build trust and understanding</p> <p>Encourage children to care for themselves</p> <p>Encourage children to listen to each other</p> <p>Encourage children to care for others</p> <p>Understand each child's interests and concerns</p>	<p>Take time to listen and talk with children.</p> <p>Share stories where they have been kind to one another.</p> <p>Create opportunities for children to be involved in classroom tasks such as tidying up.</p> <p>Use kind and positive language to help children feel safe and respected, and to set a positive example of good behaviour for children.</p> <p>Use positive gestures such as encouraging smiles and nods to show that you are interested in what the child is saying and that you care.</p>	<p>Greet each child warmly as they enter the centre and offer a personal greeting to make children feel comfortable and valued.</p> <p>Acknowledge and praise children's efforts. Using gestures such as clapping, thumbs up, hugs, and high fives.</p> <p>Structure small group activities where children interact about a topic or activity. Start in pairs and gradually increase group size to maximum five children.</p> <p>Celebrate cultural events and traditions that help children foster a sense of belonging. Ask children to share with the class what activities they did with their family and friends to celebrate their culture and festivals.</p>



*“They like to play with friends, learn through play with freedom”
(Teacher, Anganwadi Centre 14)*

Play

Why is this important?	How can you support?	What activities can we use?	What you can do!
<p>Positive impact on children's cognitive and emotional self-regulation.</p> <p>Encourages children's language & communication, creativity and social interaction skills.</p>	<p>Encourage children to use their imagination to develop their own games.</p> <p>Create space in the morning for play.</p>	<p>Encourage children to choose what they would like to do and use materials from the 'play corner' to support their own games and activities.</p> <p>Organise games, puzzles and activities that children could play with at home with their siblings, parents and families.</p>	<p>Use simple materials e.g. containers, cups, bowls or spoons of different sizes to help children learn the concepts of size and volume (big/small; empty/full); e.g. dry rice and lentils can be used to compare volume and explore which container holds more or less amounts. Give children the freedom to choose what they want to do with the materials.</p> <p>Encourage pretend play e.g. children to imagine the room is a market, they could be sellers setting up stalls, shoppers, etc.</p>



“The children feel that the school provides the same freedom as their home, and hence they come here enthusiastically. They also feel that the teacher and the caretaker look after them as their mothers do” (Teacher, Anganwadi Centre 20)

Home Engagement

Why is this important?	How can you support?	What activities can we use?	What you can do!
<p>Involving and engaging home carers in their children’s education helps support children’s transition and adapt better to early childhood settings and school.</p> <p>Home engagement has positive impact on establishing a two-way home and school communication to help children foster a love for learning.</p>	<p>Encourage home carers to participate in activities and events.</p> <p>Create opportunities to discuss with home carers about their children’s learning and progress.</p>	<p>Encourage home carers to support children with sharing books, oral traditions, legends, and local folk stories.</p> <p>Initiate positive conversations and communications with home carers about learning.</p> <p>Organise book reading or storytelling by home carers.</p>	<p>Conduct meetings with home carers to build relationships and understand children’s home background and communities.</p> <p>Create volunteering opportunities for home carers to be involved in classroom activities and functions.</p> <p>Plan dances, recitals, shows, award ceremonies and events for home carers to attend.</p> <p>NB: Home carers can include older siblings, grandparents or other members; Activities can be applicable for all literacy levels.</p>

Suggested Citation: Fernandez Rao S., Ang L., Munoz-Chereau B., Davis D. and Dockrell J.E.(2025) *UKRI Action Against Stunting Hub. Education and Cognition Workstream: Practice Toolkit – India. England and Hyderabad:* UCL Institute of Education & ICMR-National Institute of Nutrition.

The toolkit is available online:

[UCL IOE Action Against Stunting Hub Early Childhood Education and Cognition Workstream](#)

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