



## ENHANCING PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION UNDER CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY IN ANGANWADI CENTRES: A KARNATAKA PERSPECTIVE

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### Abstract

Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) is a critical determinant of lifelong learning, cognitive development, and social integration. In India, Anganwadi Centres (AWCs), functioning under the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) scheme, play a pivotal role in delivering pre-school education to children aged 3–6 years. Despite their extensive reach, many Anganwadi Centres, particularly in Karnataka, face persistent challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, limited teaching-learning materials, and insufficient pedagogical training of Anganwadi workers. In this context, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), mandated under the Companies Act, 2013, offers a significant opportunity to strengthen pre-school education through targeted interventions. This paper examines the role of CSR initiatives in enhancing the quality of pre-school education in Anganwadi Centres, with specific reference to Karnataka. Using secondary data from government reports, academic literature, and CSR case studies, the study analyses how CSR contributions improve infrastructure, teaching quality, learning environments, and community participation. The paper concludes that strategically aligned CSR interventions, integrated with government programs, can substantially enhance early learning outcomes and promote inclusive educational development.

**Keywords:** Corporate Social Responsibility, Anganwadi Centres, Pre-school Education, ECCE, ICDS, Karnataka

### 1. Introduction

Pre-school education constitutes the foundation of the formal education system and plays a crucial role in shaping children's cognitive, emotional, and social abilities. International and national studies consistently demonstrate that quality early childhood education significantly improves school readiness and long-term academic achievement. In India, the responsibility of delivering pre-school education to economically and socially disadvantaged children primarily lies with Anganwadi Centres under the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) scheme.

However, Anganwadi Centres in many states, including Karnataka, often struggle with infrastructural inadequacies, overcrowding, limited play-based learning resources, and insufficient training in early childhood pedagogy. While government initiatives such as Saksham Anganwadi and the National Education Policy 2020 emphasize strengthening ECCE, public funding alone remains insufficient to address ground-level gaps. In this scenario, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) emerges as a complementary mechanism to enhance pre-school education by mobilizing Govt and private sector resources for public welfare.

### 2. Conceptual Framework: CSR and Pre-School Education

Corporate Social Responsibility refers to the ethical obligation of businesses to contribute to sustainable economic development while improving the quality of life of employees, local communities, and society at large. In India, CSR spending became mandatory under the Companies Act, 2013, requiring eligible companies to allocate at least 2 per cent of their average net profits to socially beneficial activities, including education.

Education-focused CSR initiatives increasingly recognize early childhood education as a high-impact investment area. Research suggests that CSR interventions targeting foundational education yield long-term social returns by reducing dropout rates, improving learning outcomes, and promoting equity. When aligned with Anganwadi services, CSR can play a transformative role in upgrading infrastructure, supporting Anganwadi workers, and enriching learning environments.



### **3. Anganwadi Centres and Pre-School Education in Karnataka**

Karnataka has an extensive network of Anganwadi Centres serving rural, urban, and tribal populations. These centres provide pre-school education, supplementary nutrition, health check-ups, and immunization services. Despite policy emphasis on ECCE, field-based studies in Karnataka reveal uneven quality of pre-school education across districts, particularly in backward regions such as Raichur, Yadgir, and Kalaburagi.

Government reports highlight challenges such as inadequate classroom space, lack of child-friendly furniture, and limited teaching-learning materials. Anganwadi workers often receive minimal training in play-based and activity-oriented learning methods, which are essential for effective early childhood education. These constraints underscore the need for supplementary support through CSR initiatives.

### **4. CSR Interventions in Anganwadi Centres**

#### **4.1 Infrastructure Development**

One of the most visible contributions of CSR to Anganwadi Centres is infrastructural enhancement. CSR funds have been utilized to construct new Anganwadi buildings, renovate existing structures, provide safe drinking water, sanitation facilities, and child-friendly classrooms. Improved infrastructure creates a conducive learning environment, positively influencing attendance and participation among children.

#### **4.2 Teaching-Learning Materials and Digital Support**

CSR initiatives also support the provision of educational kits, storybooks, toys, charts, and audio-visual learning aids. In Karnataka, several CSR-supported projects have introduced smart learning tools and play-based materials to strengthen early literacy and numeracy skills. Such interventions enhance children's engagement and support experiential learning.

#### **4.3 Capacity Building of Anganwadi Workers**

Training and capacity building form a critical component of effective CSR interventions. Workshops on child psychology, activity-based learning, and classroom management enable Anganwadi workers to improve instructional quality. Studies indicate that trained Anganwadi workers demonstrate greater confidence and effectiveness in delivering pre-school education.

#### **4.4 Community and Parental Involvement**

CSR programs often emphasize community participation by involving parents, local self-governments, and NGOs. Awareness programs on early childhood development encourage parental engagement, thereby reinforcing learning at home and improving retention rates in Anganwadi Centres.

#### **4.5 CSR Interventions in Anganwadi Centre's**

Table 1: Areas of CSR Support in Anganwadi Centres

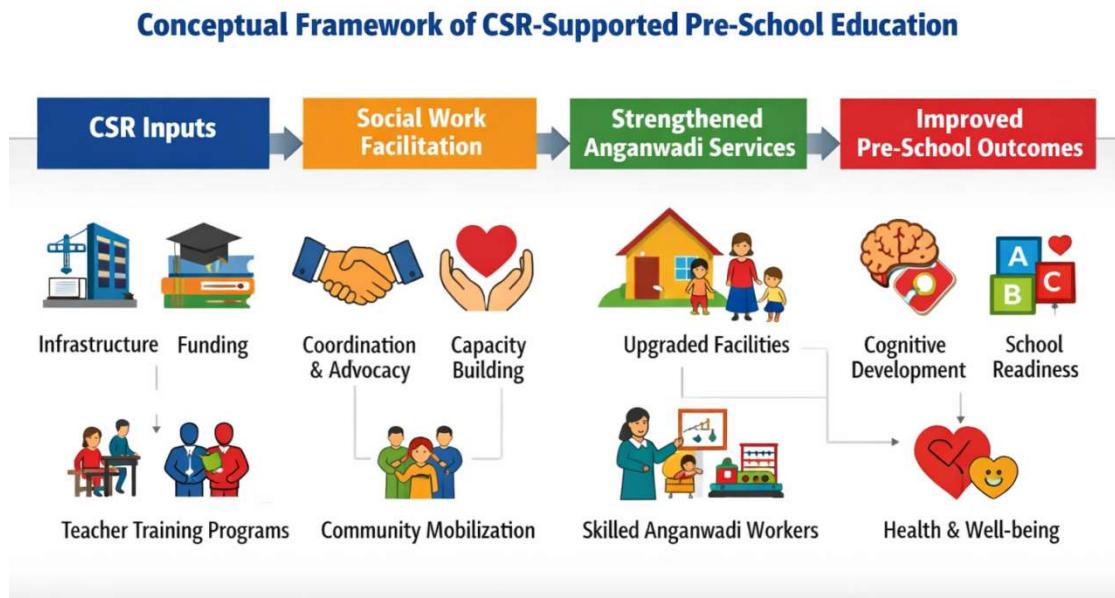
CSR Intervention Area	Description
<b>Infrastructure Development</b>	Building renovation, child-friendly classrooms, sanitation facilities, Kitchen rooms, Basic Electricity, Solar panels and Kitchen Gardens.



<b>Learning Resources</b>	Toys, charts, storybooks, Shelves & Cupboards for storage, digital learning aids
<b>Capacity Building</b>	Conducting Health checkups, Training of Anganwadi workers in ECCE pedagogy,
<b>Community Engagement</b>	Parental awareness and community participation programs, conducting Balavikas committee and VHND (Village Health Nutrition Day).

#### 4.6 Conceptual Framework

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of CSR-Supported Pre-School Education



CSR inputs in the form of financial resources, infrastructure, and expertise are facilitated by social workers through needs assessment, coordination, and community mobilization. This leads to strengthened Anganwadi services, resulting in improved learning environments, school readiness, and holistic child development.

#### 5. Research Objectives

The present study aims to:

- Examine the role of Corporate Social Responsibility in enhancing pre-school education in Anganwadi Centres.
- Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM) and Moderate Acute Malnutrition (MAM), including diagnosis, nutritional food kit, severity, risks, and treatment options.



- Analyze the major challenges faced by Anganwadi Centres in delivering quality pre-school education in Karnataka.
- Assess the contribution of CSR initiatives toward infrastructure, learning materials, and capacity building.
- Suggest policy measures for effective integration of CSR with government ECCE programs.

## 6. Research Methodology

The study adopts a descriptive and analytical research design based on secondary data. Data sources include:

- Government reports from the Department of Women and Child Development, Karnataka
- National policy documents such as the National Education Policy 2020
- UGC CARE-listed journal articles related to CSR, ECCE, and Anganwadi services
- Reports published by UNICEF, WHO and other development agencies

The collected data were systematically reviewed and analyzed to understand patterns, challenges, and outcomes of CSR interventions in pre-school education.

## 7. Challenges in CSR-Driven Interventions

Despite their potential, CSR initiatives face challenges such as lack of coordination with government departments, short-term project orientation, and uneven geographical coverage. In some cases, CSR projects focus more on visibility rather than long-term educational outcomes. Ensuring sustainability and alignment with ICDS objectives remains a critical concern.

## 8. Conclusion

Enhancing pre-school education through Corporate Social Responsibility represents a viable and impactful strategy for strengthening Anganwadi Centres in Karnataka. CSR interventions in infrastructure, learning resources, and capacity building significantly improve the quality of early childhood education when aligned with government programs. However, for sustained impact, CSR initiatives must adopt a long-term, evidence-based approach integrated with state and national ECCE policies. A collaborative framework involving government agencies, corporates, NGOs, and local communities is essential to ensure that every child receives quality pre-school education and an equitable start in life.

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