

# Early Intervention in Inclusive Education in Mumbai

*The 'Why' and the 'How'*

Manual 3

## How to open an Inclusive Nursery or Anganwadi



Mithu Alur and Jennifer Evans



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## Foreword

The '*How to Series of Inclusive Education*' is a set of manuals that have emerged from a study undertaken by The Spastics Society Of India, Mumbai in collaboration with UNICEF and supported by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA).

The title of the project is *Inclusive Education Practice in Early Childhood*. It is an action research project involving both intervention and research on a large scale covering 6000 families based in the impoverished areas of the Mumbai slums. Six hundred children, both disabled and non disabled, were placed in Demonstration Learning Centres within the community where an enrichment programme and a need based intervention was given over a two year period. The intervention strategies were carefully documented and the progress of the children tracked by external researchers not connected with the intervention team. The aim was to study the mechanism or *intervention* strategies needed to put *children with disabilities* into existing programmes being run by Government and non-Governmental agencies and the barriers that came in the way to accessibility and participation.

From this evidence based research emerged a series of instructional resource material: the '*How to Series of Inclusive Education*.' These manuals are relevant for any organisation, or agency, working to address the crucial need of bringing *children with any disability* into inclusive settings. They recommend a *whole community approach to inclusive education*, and although the research was carried out in India it can be used anywhere in the world.

## What is an inclusive anganwadi ?

When we think of an inclusive anganwadi, we picture all children including children with disabilities learning together, playing together and interacting with each other in the familiar environment of their own community.



Including children in all activities is

- An attitude of letting children be children together
- A willingness on our part to find alternatives within the existing situation.
- A belief that
  - ✓ Our class is the best place for providing educational opportunities for all children, including children with disabilities.
  - ✓ We are the best teachers for the child and have the confidence and the enthusiasm to find solutions to problems.

To achieve this the teaching and learning process has to be well -planned and structured.

The underlying themes for learning in an inclusive anganwadi are:

- ✓ Hands- on learning
- ✓ All children learning together
- ✓ Learning of concepts through experience
- ✓ Interactive and cooperative learning
- ✓ Maintaining the natural and traditional environment in the class

## Where should the anganwadi be located ?

- ✓ Situated within the community for easy accessibility
- ✓ It could be a small physical space/room in the community
- ✓ A shared room with other organization

When looking for a room for educational purpose, remember

- ✓ The room should be able to accommodate the number of children who are admitted to your anganwadi as well as leave some space for you and the children to move around for classroom activities.
- ✓ It should be preferably on the ground floor with easy access for the children with disabilities to come in and out of the class. If it is on the first floor then the stairs should not be steep, but easy to climb and with railings.
- ✓ The room should be well ventilated and lighted. This ensures that the children feel physically comfortable. You must have experienced that the children get irritated if they sit in a hot or an ill-lighted room for a long time.

The preschool site at Mahim was initially located on a first floor with a steep iron ladder and a suspended rope to hold on. It was difficult for normal children to climb and even more difficult for someone carrying a young child with disability. To avoid any unforeseen accident, the site was shifted to another room (as shown below), which is a community hall. It is used in the morning for the preschool, and in the evening, it is used for community meetings and functions.



Mahim site



Mukund Nagar site

Once the location of the anganwadi is decided, we should try to make the teaching and learning experience as organized and attractive as possible. The following section provides information on materials required and suggestions on how to arrange these to maintain order and organization in the anganwadi.

## What are the materials required in an anganwadi ?

- A **blackboard** kept at the lighted area of the class at the eye level, or a slightly higher level.
- **Sitting mats**, preferably of washable material like plastic, to seat children on the ground alongside the teacher.
- A **rack or tin box with lock** to keep the toys and other resources. This rack can be of wood or cane (not expensive) and kept in a corner or near the teacher.
- A **plastic tub** to be used for water and sand play and kept on a rack.



- Teaching Material in the classroom should be
  - ✓ Culturally appropriate books,
  - ✓ Ecologically relevant toys,
  - ✓ Picture charts,
  - ✓ Ecologically relevant teaching aids.

The storybooks should have **simple and culture specific stories**. They should have more **pictures**, which are big, colourful and attractive. The sequence of the story should be well depicted in the picture. Storybooks should be in **Hindi and English** and should always be at reachable distance from the children.

**Materials regularly used in anganwadi are:**

- Chalks (white and coloured)
- Duster
- Broom
- Napkins
- Water jug
- Dustbin
- Different types of papers  
(Marble, kite, crepe, gelatine)
- Chart papers
- Slate
- Slate chalks
- Gum bottle
- Stapler
- Cellotape
- Colours
  - ✓ Water Colours
  - ✓ Poster Colours
  - ✓ Markers
  - ✓ Crayon- jumbo and regular
  - ✓ Sketch pens
  - ✓ Colour Pencils
  - ✓ Wet Chalk



Teaching aids



Teaching aids



Teaching aids

**Some of the toys, which are needed in the anganwadi, are:**

- Big & small balls
- Creative blocks
- 1 or 2 piece puzzles
- Alphabet & number blocks



- Dolls
- Musical instruments (drum, tambourine)
- Doctor set
- Various charts (animals, birds, good habits, alphabet, vegetable)

**How do you arrange the space in the anganwadi?**

The study area should be in front of the blackboard.



Teaching with 3D objects



Action!

Seating arrangements are flexible to the need of the classroom. When the seating mats were placed on the floor, it was observed that the children removed the mat placed in the center as they felt that then the teacher would not scold them if they spilled any eatables or water on the floor. The teacher also found it convenient, as she could also do activities in the center and the children too would not sit in the middle during academic sessions.



Group seating arrangement

Place the charts, toys and display boards at eye level all round the class so as to display the children's work, but at the same time keep them out of reach so that they cannot be torn or dirtied.

- The chart of the current topic being taught is always displayed in front of the children, and next to the teacher.
- When the room is shared, the activities of children should be stuck on newspapers or plastic sheets such that they can be taken down collectively and easily at the end of the day when the room is used for other purposes.
- String tied across the room and display of children's activities by using clothes clips to stick the worksheets and charts make the class look attractive.
- Place the materials needed for classroom activities and management away from the children's reach either in a box or a rack at a higher level.
- Place the personal belongings of the children neatly together in one corner. There should be a fixed place for keeping the bag/ tiffin box, water bottles and shoes. They should be placed on the ground in a corner.

In Jawahar Nagar anganwadi, the bags and the water bottles were kept on the floor, in a corner. However, the children used to keep on touching or taking out things from it. So, it was decided that the bags and bottles would be kept on a rack, a little out of reach of the children.

- Cleanliness of the classroom should be maintained. A dustbin should be placed at a corner in full view of the children.



- **Water** is always available in jugs/ bottles in the classroom for the purpose of drinking and washing hands.

### How should you seat children in the anganwadi ?

When we have all children including the children with disabilities together in the class, we should ensure that:

- ✓ Each child gets equal attention
- ✓ Every child can take part in the activity
- ✓ All children can reach out to the toys or other material used in the activity.

This serves two purposes:

- It makes all children feel equally important
- It helps in maintaining class discipline when all children are meaningfully involved.

Sometimes we are at a loss about how to place children with disabilities such that they get slightly more attention, as well as get included equally in all activities. Here are some suggestions, which you can adapt to your situation:



Class room arrangements

All children should be seated on the ground facing the teacher.

Different seating arrangements of children in the class for better class management could be:

- Several lines of children,
- One big circle,
- Semicircle, and
- Two equal groups of children.

In the Colaba anganwadi, there were discipline problems among children initially. To solve it, the teachers seated the children in separate lines facing the blackboard. This seems to work for that class.

In the Mukund Nagar anganwadi, the children are seated in a big circle, as there is a lot of space to be comfortably seated for academic sessions.



Learning about sizes



Group learning

The teachers should sit in the following places for better management and control of the class:

- In front of the children (academic sessions)
- Center of the circle (in activities)
- As part of the circle (academic and activities)

Children with disabilities should be placed near the teacher but within the group of children, keeping following in mind

- ✓ Children with difficulty in walking are placed nearer to the door so that it is easy to take him/ her for any out door activity.

- ✓ Children with **difficulties in hearing and sight** are seated in front of the teacher

While engaged in activities, the children should be placed in small groups of 6-8 children. **The disabled child should be placed within one of these groups.** A child who is helpful and complements the abilities of the child with disability should be placed next to him.

You should place **2-3 children with disabilities in the small groups** for more output and efficient management.

A child who has **difficulty in sitting** should use various seating aids such as a corner chair.



Corner seat



Bucket seat

The child can also be **seated on the lap of the teacher** for some time.

If no aids are present, then he/she should be **placed in the center of the circle** so that there is enough space for rolling movement.

A child, who needs help to stand or sit, should be **placed near the wall** so that he/she can take its support to sit or stand.

**Remember, when in doubt about seating a child with disability, always ask the therapist/ professional on the correct posture and aid.** Through correct seating and arrangement in the class, you can maximize the involvement of all children and make them as independent as possible.