

Centre for Inclusive
Development
Charitable Trust



CHILD-FRIENDLY STATUS OF ANGANWADIS IN WEST BENGAL

- A SNAPSHOT



Child-Friendly Status of Anganawadis In West Bengal – A Snapshot

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Data collection from the field was carried out by a team of five dedicated undergraduate students: **Mr. Diptajyoti Haldar**, **Ms. Nilufa Parvin**, **Ms. Rosanara Khatun**, **Sk. Sohel**, and **Ms. Tiyasha Saha**. All of them rendered voluntary contributions towards the successful conduct of the pilot study, by working under the guidance of lead researchers for about one month. During the period, they have visited number of Anganawadi Centres spread into three selected districts of West Bengal - **Kolkata, North Parganas and South Parganas**. The field researchers have shown commitment, dynamism, hard work, sincerity and voluntary spirits during the study.

On behalf of the CIDCT, I wish to express sincere appreciation and gratitude to the Anganawadi Workers/ Helpers from the study area who provided valuable inputs to the research team. Without their willingness and support, this study would not have been possible.

I wish the pioneering research by the CIDCT in the domain of development of women and children will be a good beginning of a long journey in enhancing its efforts towards human development, social responsibility and nation-building.

Place: **Nadia**

Date: **31 March 2025**

Biswajit Mukherjee

President

Centre for Inclusive Development Trust

A Snapshot of the Research Study

This research study was carried out **'to analyse the child-friendly status'** in the existing infrastructure and services by the Anganawadi Centres (AWC) in the study area. The study is a modest attempt made towards assessing the **'child-friendly infrastructure and child-centric services'** in the state of West Bengal by examining the outputs and outcomes of ICDS project. As part of the study, the field research was done on a pilot basis, through Anganawadi Centres (AWC) in selected Districts of West Bengal. The field research was carried out in three Districts - **Kolkata, North 24 Parganas, and, South 24 Parganas** - that provides the cross-sectional sample of the whole state.

As part of the pilot study, the research team adopted a cross-sectional and representative sample of 70 AWCs across the rural, semi-urban, and urban settings in the sample districts of West Bengal. The study tried to assess existing infrastructure, services and community support in delivery of services by the Anganawadis; to identify the challenges faced by the Anganawadi staff; to evaluate the gaps in infrastructure and resources; and to put forward actionable, doable, practical, relevant and suitable suggestions. The study is expected to make suggestions to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of ICDS services, to propose child-friendly infrastructure and child-centric services, as well as to build the capacity of the staff engaged in the service delivery at the grassroots.

The major findings of the study were classified into seven sections such as operational aspects, staffing and infrastructure, play and learning areas, Hygiene and cleanliness, health and nutrition, child-friendly amenities, and general infrastructure concerns. In addition, the study brings up number of general observations and reflections by providing a **'worm's eye view'** about the functioning of the AWCs and effectiveness and efficiency in delivery of services.

The research study puts forward number of doable and practical suggestions as well as recommendations to augment the infrastructure facilities that include better hygiene facilities, enhanced play and learning spaces, improved ventilation, value addition to child-friendly amenities. It also puts forward suggestions to enhance the role and ownership of Community Based Organisations in the process.

Rather than merely pointing out gaps, this study takes a positive approach by offering practical, context-specific and doable suggestions to upgrade the AWCs into '**active, dynamic and vibrant child-centric hubs of learning**'. Strengthening the infrastructure of AWCs and enhancing their services are essential towards realising the **Sustainable Development Goals**, with thrust on **SDG-4**. It is significant to mention that the **National Education Policy, 2020** gave lot of thrust on **Early Childhood Care and Education** which will be delivered through the Anganawadis and pre-primary schools.

As a follow-up of the pilot study on the AWCs, the team proposes to submit a proposal to take up a study of all districts of West Bengal. It is expected to formulate the '**model framework for AWCs with more child-friendly infrastructure and child-centric services**' that will enable the Government of West Bengal to become the '**first complete child-friendly state**' in the country.

It is expected that the pilot study on AWCs is a modest effort to support the State Government of West Bengal to see that the services of ICSD project delivered through the AWCs in the State will result in formulation of a more child-friendly and child-centric institutions, approaches, practices and services which will benefit the present and future generation at one hand but also boost the image of West Bengal as '**the best social welfare state**' in the country.

Background

The ICDS (Integrated Child Development Services) project was launched in West Bengal in 1975. The project was launched in a phased manner across the country, and West Bengal was one of the states to implement it soon after its inception.

The primary objective of the ICDS project was to improve the health, nutrition, and development of children under the age of six, as well as pregnant and lactating women. The scheme aims to:

- Provide supplementary nutrition to combat malnutrition.
- Promote early childhood education through Anganwadi centres.
- Offer basic healthcare services, including immunization and health check-ups.
- Educate mothers on childcare, nutrition, and health practices.

The ICDS project is significant as it improves child nutrition, provides early childhood education, and ensures maternal health. It helps to reduce mal-nutrition and infant mortality, while empowering women through employment as Anganwadi workers (AWW) and Anganawadi Helpers (AWH). The project benefits vulnerable communities, increases awareness of health and hygiene, and contributes towards reducing poverty by providing essential services like immunization, nutrition, and education, especially in rural and tribal areas.

Rationale

It is noted that the ICDS is a project that aims to provide a psychological and physical well-being of children below 6 years of age. The pilot study enabled the research team to understand the role of civil society in making one of the flagship schemes by the Government for children to enable better integration of resources by the Union Government and State Government. AWCs function by bridging the gap between the different

Governments in the running of the institutions for child development. One can find that these children are the building blocks, contributing to the stability and strength of the country in future. Therefore, by analysing the operationalization of Government policies, programmes/ projects in the field, it is expected that a proper assessment of the '**expectations Vs reality**' can be made with a positive intention to propose contextually relevant, feasible, and suitable modifications/ revisions/ changes in the specific area/ sector to the Government. Keeping this view, the pilot study of AWCs in the selected districts of West Bengal was taken up. It is known that as on 25 February 2025, there are about 84,348 Anganwadi Centres (AWCs) operating in the State of West Bengal.

As a follow-up of the pilot study on the AWCs, the team proposes to submit a proposal to take up a study of all districts of West Bengal with the support of the State Government of West Bengal and to submit the framework for model AWCs with 'more child-friendly infrastructure and services'. It is expected that the pilot study on AWCs is a modest effort to support the State Government of West Bengal in its efforts towards the formulation of **more child-friendly and child-centric institutions, approaches, practices and services**.

Objectives

The broad objective of the study is **to analyse the child-friendly status of Anganwadis** in the State of West Bengal. During the process, the study makes an attempt to assess the **child-friendly infrastructure and child-centric services** available in the state by examining the outputs and outcomes of ICDS project. Towards realising the objective of the study, the field research was conducted through the AWCs in selected Districts of West Bengal.

The study aims to:

- **Assess the current scenario:** Observe the infrastructure, services and community support in delivery of services by Anganwadis thereby enhancing the outcomes of the ICDS project and its services to the target group of beneficiaries.
- **Evaluate gaps in infrastructure and resources:** Assess the adequacy of physical infrastructure, resources, and staff training at the AWCs.
- **Identify challenges:** Highlight the issues faced by Anganwadi staff consisting of AWWs and AWHs, in providing and enhancing their services in the fields of nutrition, education, and healthcare.
- **Recommend improvements:** Provide actionable, feasible, practical, relevant and suitable suggestions to enhance the effectiveness, efficiency of ICDS services, to enhance child-friendly infrastructure and child-centric services, as well as to build the capacity of the staff engaged in the service delivery at the grassroots.

Methodology

The study to analyse the child-friendly status of Anganwadis in West Bengal was carried out by taking up the field survey in selected Districts of the State. The sample Districts were chosen by ensuring that a cross-section of developed as well as developing regions of the state shall be included in the study. Number of AWCs in the three districts like Kolkata, North 24 Parganas and South 24 Parganas were randomly selected for the pilot study. During the process of identification of sample AWCs in different Districts, it was ensured that the Anganwadis from rural, semi-urban and urban areas should be included in order to ensure that the sample becomes genuinely cross-sectional and representative.

As part of the study, Gram Panchayats (GP) of North 24 Parganas and South 24 Parganas Districts as well as semi-urban and urban areas of Kamarhati, Madhyamgram, Panihati, North Dumdum municipalities and the Kolkata Municipal Corporation were studied. A total of five GPs representing rural and four Municipalities including one Corporation representing urban were included in the pilot study. A perfect blend of rural, semi-urban and urban regions were consciously incorporated in the pilot study in order to ensure that the cross-section of the sample will be contacted within a reasonable time and limited resources, as the study was met by the research team from the own funds of the organization and meeting of travel expenses from own funds by the researchers on a voluntary basis.

A structured observation schedule /checklist for the AWCs (Annexure 'A') and an interview schedule for the Anganawadi Staff (AWW/AWH) (Annexure 'B') were used to gather data from the field. The schedules, previously used to study the functioning of AWCs in Jammu and Kashmir, Kerala, Maharashtra, Sikkim, and Tamil Nadu by the mentor of this team were used by making relevant contextual changes, suitable to the eco system and cultural patterns of West Bengal.

Major Findings

The survey of 70 AWCs running ICDS project spread through five GPs and four Municipal areas in the selected districts of West Bengal was carried out. The study was carried out to assess the present child-friendly status of AWCs in the field, identify the challenges, evaluate the gaps in infrastructure and resources, as well as to make recommendations and suggestions to improve their functioning.

In this report, the major findings are classified into different sub sections for improving the focus of the points cited, enhancing the readability of the contents and practical application during the follow-up.

(a) Operational Aspects:

- * On an average, the AWCs in the study area operate for 3 to 5 hours in a day.
- * About nine AWCs out of 70 centres did not keep the data on the number of students.
- * Gender distribution of the children accessing and utilizing the services of AWCs in study area turned to be Girls (53 %) followed by boys (47%).
- * Genuine attendance of children at the Anganawadis during the time of survey through the field was less than one third (32%).
- * No migrant student was found in the rolls of the AWCs in the study area.

(b) Staffing and Infrastructure:

- * More than one-third (36 %) of the AWCs in the study area did not have any name board/ display board.
- * Wherever the board was found, about less than half of them (46%) were found short of displaying the important details (Number of the AWC, Date of establishment, Name of the Local Government, Name and contact details of the AWW/ AWH and ICDS Supervisor)
- * Most of the AWCS (93%) were functioning in 'pucca' building with concrete roofing, with 3 % of the AWCs operating in tiled roofs and 4% were still functioning in 'katcha and Semi-katcha' buildings.
- * More than four-fifth of the AWCs (83%) of centres were functioning in rented premises with only 17 % delivering the services through their own buildings.
- * The size of each AWC in the study area vary significantly, ranging from 100 - 120 sq. ft to 240 ft. as the functional area.
- * Just more than one-fourth of the AWCs in the study area (27 %) did not have the electric connection.
- * More than half of the AWCs in the study area (54 %) had poor or no ventilation in learning-playing area.

* A significant segment of AWCs in the study area (29 %) did not have ceiling fans.

* Just more than half of the AWCs in the study area (51 %) did not have the adequate and relevant furniture (like small chair-cum-table) for children and the Anganawadi staff. It is also noted that wherever it is available, the quality of the furniture needs improvement.

(c) Play and Learning Areas:

* Just less than three-fourth of the AWCs in the study area (73 %) did not have adequate space for learning and playing area with respect to the number of children in the rolls.

* Just less than two-third of the AWCs in the study area (63 %) did not have adequate outdoor play area.

* More than half of the AWCs (56 %) in the study area have separate kitchen for cooking food to the children,

* Just less than four-fifth of the AWCs in the study area (78 %) used to keep essential records with majority of them (70%) maintaining the Visitor's Diary.

(d) Hygiene and Cleanliness:

* It is noted that the cleanliness of the AWCs (Inside the building) was 'below average' in more than four-fifths of the AWCs (85 %) in the study area.

* Only a very small segment (4 %) could be assessed to have 'Good' standards of hygiene and cleanliness.

* Most the AWCs in the study area (98 %) did not have any exhaust fan in the kitchen.

* Just less than half of the AWCs (49 %) in the study area did not have 'functional toilets' with running water facility, soap, hand washing facility, etc.

- * Just less than three-fourth of the AWCs (73 %) in the study area did not have the basic things like bucket and mug in the toilets.
- * Most of the AWCs in the study area (90 %) did not keep any dustbins.

(e) Health and Nutrition:

- * Almost all the AWCs in the study area do not follow the menu specified in the Food Chart as they offer only 'Khichadi' to the children.
- * In many centres, no trace of vegetable was found in the food being served to the children.
- * However, more than two-third of the AWCs (68 %) in the study area display the weekly food chart.
- * It is noted that eggs were occasionally included as part of the menu in limited number of AWCs in the study area. It is seen that the availability and quantity of egg for the children was found to be insufficient, considering the number of children enrolled in the AWC.
- * Nearly half of the AWCs (49 %) in the study area did not have weighing machines.
- * Three-fifths of the AWCs (60 %) in the study area did not maintain the records of underweight children.

(f) Child-Friendly Amenities:

- * Most of the AWCs in the study area (95 %) did not have any child-friendly furniture like chairs and tables.
- * Just more than four-fifth of the AWCs in the study area (81 %) did not have 'child-friendly toilets'
- * More than four-fifth of the AWCs in the study area (85 %) did not keep toys for playing. Wherever the toys were found, the quality of the toys was very low as most of them were made out of 'low quality' plastic products.
- * Just less than half of the AWCS (48 %) in the study area did not have child-friendly paintings or pictures displayed in the walls.

* No AWC in the study area have the facilities like music system, radio, Television or Computer for recreation to the children.

(g) General Infrastructure Concerns:

* Just less than half of the AWCs (49 %) in the study area were not located in safe and secure location, in view of their spatial features.

* A significant segment of AWCs in the study area (12 %) did not have proper flooring inside the physical infrastructure. The kind of flooring found in those centres seems to be very difficult to maintain considering its long life and the quality of flooring materials being used.

* Just less than half of the AWCs (46 %) in the study area did not have any facility for potable drinking water. This forces the children to bring their own water bottles from home or rely on the public tap water, which does not appear, taste or smell to be 'good' at several places as reported during the field visits.

General Observations & Reflections

(a) Infrastructure Facilities:

Many of the AWCs visited by the team in the study area were ill-equipped to provide a safe and conducive environment for early childhood care and education (ECCE), as envisaged in the National Education Policy, 2020. Lack of proper furniture, play areas, and sanitation facilities compromise both the learning experience and the physical well-being of children.

(b) Hygienic Standards:

Hygiene was a major concern, with cleanliness being rated as 'below standard' in majority of the AWCs as observed by the field researchers during the study. Use of unsafe cooking fuels, lack of proper sanitation, and inadequate cleanliness in kitchens and toilets posed significant health risks.

(c) Nutrition Standards:

Absence of adequate nutrition, as seen in the provision of 'khichadi only' without vegetables, reflected poorly on the ICDS centres' ability to meet the developmental needs of children.

(d) Child-Friendly Infrastructure:

Inadequacy of child-friendly infrastructure, such as appropriate furniture, toilets, 'safe' toys, etc. hindered the AWC's ability to create a nurturing and engaging environment for young learners.

(e) Community Engagement:

There was a lack of compilation of data about the efforts made Anganawadi staff to organize awareness camps for adolescent girls, establish mother's committees, educate the young parents about vaccination, etc. These initiatives are crucial for ushering community engagement as well as fostering community involvement in health and nutrition programs.

(f) General Safety Concerns:

The spatial features of the AWCs in the study area highlighted lot of scope for risk to the healthy, happy and safe living of the children. Improper or unhygienic flooring also compromises the safety of the children coming to the AWC. In addition, lack of proper drinking water facilities and child-friendly infrastructure also point towards the urgent need for health, safety and security of the children.

Suggestions

Based on the field research that resulted in highlighting the major findings, general observations, etc. the following suggestions are put forward.

- (a) With the help of Community Based Organisations (NGO, SHGs, Youth Clubs, Mahila Mandals, etc.), a fresh list of enrolment of the

children into the AWCs shall be made. This data will enable to rationalize the provision of resources and augmentation of resources and materials, wherever necessary.

(b) Efforts shall be made on priority to improve the hygienic standards of kitchen, toilet, etc. in the AWCs.

(c) Provision of electrification in all the AWCs as well as efforts for ensuring ceiling fans, electronic gadgets for recreation, etc. shall be made on priority.

(d) Efforts shall be made to provide the adequate materials to prepare the nutritious food as per the approved food chart.

(e) Random monitoring by the ICDS supervisors, members of the Mother's Committee and functionaries of the Local Government Institutions shall be made to ensure that the preparation and serving of food as per the menu has been followed properly.

(f) Inputs from the CBOs working with children and for development of children shall be taken to revisit the curriculum used by the AWCs.

(g) Urgent need to reassess the budgetary allocations to each AWC, considering the number of children enrolled, availability of infrastructure facilities, etc.

(h) Honorarium to the Anganawadi Staff shall be paid on time and the same shall be remitted to their accounts in Post Office/ Bank only.

(i) No cash transaction for purchase of any materials or payment of honorarium shall be made.

(j) Periodical reports shall be sent by the AWW to the ICDS Supervisor in the organization hierarchy along with seeking the support and suggestions from others at regular intervals.

(k) Specific and focused efforts shall be made to ensure active community participation and support in the operationalisation of the AWCs.

Conclusion

The research study in the selected Districts of West Bengal highlighted the gaps, shortcomings and areas that needed to be taken up for early interventions in order to enhance child-friendly infrastructure and child-friendly services provide by the AWCs. The findings emphasised the urgent need for substantial improvements in the AWCs to ensure that they meet the basic requirements of safety, hygiene, and child development.

Addressing these concerns shall be crucial in optimizing the potential of the AWCs to foster a nurturing and healthy environment for children and other members of the target group. The study advocates the need to ensure community vigilance along with enhancing community support, community participation and community ownership.

It is expected that the findings and suggestions of the study will provide number of inputs to the Government of West Bengal to accelerate its efforts to become the **'first complete child-friendly state'** in the country. It is submitted that the pilot study on AWCs is a modest effort to support the State Government of West Bengal to see that the services of ICSD project delivered through the AWCs in the State will result in formulation of a more child-friendly and child-centric institutions, approaches, practices and services which will benefit the present and future generation at one hand but also boost the image of West Bengal as **'the best social welfare state'** in the country.

Schedule for Observation of Anganawadi

Name of the Gram Panchayat :

Ward Number of the Anganwadi :

Anganwadi Number :

Place/Address of Anganawadi :

Date of visit: Timings: From to

Sl. No.	Description	Comment	Remarks
1	Details of children/staffs		
1.1	Total number of students as per the Register in the Anganawadi (AW)	Boys: Girls:	
1.2	No. of students present in the AW at the time of visit	Boys: Girls:	
1.3	Total number of migrant children	Boys: Girls:	
1.4	Number of staffs in Anganwadi		
2.	Basic Infrastructure		
2.1	Name board – Anganawadi	Available / Not Available	
2.2	Display of details like working hours, contact number, etc. in the name board	Available / Not Available	
2.3	Type of building	Concrete/Tile/Kutcha	
2.4	Status of building	Own building / Rented	
2.5	Total Area (in cents) Cents	
2.6	Boundary Wall	Available / Not Available	
2.7	Playing Area for Children - inside	Available / Not Available	Sufficient/ Not Sufficient
2.8	Playing Area for Children - Outside	Available / Not Available	Sufficient/ Not Sufficient
2.9	Separate Kitchen Room	Available / Not Available	
2.10	Provision of Toilet	Available / Not Available	
2.11	Records/ Registers for storage of items, medical records, etc.	Available / Not Available	
2.12	Visitor's diary	Available / Not Available	

3.	Other Facilities		
3.1	Electrification to the Building	Available / Not Available	Sufficient/ Not Sufficient
3.2	Lighting	Available / Not Available	Sufficient/ Not Sufficient
3.3	Ventilation in the workroom	Available / Not Available	Sufficient/ Not Sufficient
3.4	Ceiling Fans	Available / Not Available	Sufficient/ Not Sufficient
3.5	Table(s)	Available / Not Available	Sufficient/ Not Sufficient
3.6	Chair(s)/ Floor Mat	Available / Not Available	Sufficient/ Not Sufficient
3.7	Drinking Water	Available / Not Available	
3.8	Source of Drinking Water	Open Well/ Bore well/ Public Tap / Water Can Any Other	
3.9	Type of flooring in the AW	Tile/ Mosaic / Red Oxide / Any other	
3.10	General cleanliness: Flooring (Assess in a scale from 1 - Very Poor to 5 - Very Good)	1 / 2 / 3 / 4/ 5	
3.11	Type of Fuel used for cooking	Gas/ Kerosene/ Fire wood/ Any other	
3.12	Exhaust fan in Kitchen	Available / Not Available	
3.13	General Cleanliness - Kitchen (Assess in a scale from 1 - Very Poor to 5 - Very Good)	1 / 2 / 3 / 4/ 5	
3.14	Toilet facility	Available / Not Available	
3.15	Running water	Available / Not Available	
3.16	Soap/ hand wash in Toilet	Available / Not available	
3.17	Bucket and Mug in Toilet	Available / Not available	
3.18	Exhaust fan in Toilet	Available / Not Available	
3.19	General cleanliness – Toilet (Assess in a scale from 1 - Very Poor to 5 - Very Good)	1 / 2 / 3 / 4/ 5	
3.20	Dustbin	Available / Not available	

4.	Child Friendly Approach		
4.1	Daily Food Chart	Available / Not Available	
4.2	Weighing Machine	Available / Not Available	
4.3	Record of underweight children and/ or Special children	Available / Not Available	
4.4	Child-friendly Furniture (Bench, Chair, etc.)	Available / Not Available	
4.5	Child-friendly toilet	Available / Not Available	
4.6	Painting / Pictures (Fruits, Flowers, Animals, Alphabets, etc.)	Available / Not available	
4.7	Toys for playing (Indoor)	Available / Not available	Sufficient/ Not Sufficient
4.8	Safe toys	Available / Not available	
4.9	Items for playing (Outdoor)	Available / Not Available	Sufficient/ Not Sufficient
4.10	Radio	Available / Not Available	
4.11	Music System	Available / Not Available	
4.12	Television	Available / Not Available	
4.13	Computer	Available / Not Available	
4.14	Projection System	Available / Not Available	

Remarks on spatial location of the Anganawadi (Like presence of drainage, open well, proximity to the road, etc.):

Any other remarks:

Date of field visit:

Name and Sign. of the field researcher

Interview Schedule for Anganwadi Worker/Helper

Place of the Anganwadi :
Ward Number of the Anganwadi :
Name :
Age (Appx.) :
Designation : Anganawadi Worker/ Helper

1. For how many years you are working in Anganawadi?
2. Details of the training you have attended during the last three years.
3. Details of working of Mothers' committee (Frequency of meeting, agenda, quorum, discussions, etc.)
4. Relationship between other institutions and Anganwadi.
5. Relationship between Youth and Anganwadi.
6. Whether Anganwadi was used for other purposes (such as Coaching/Training for women/Conducting Gram sabha/ any other meeting)?
7. Details of medical check-up received by Children during the last one year.
8. What are the records maintained in your Anganwadi?
9. Details of officials visited your Anganawadi during the last one year.
10. Details of welfare meeting conducted by Anganwadi during the last one year.
11. Any suggestion for the improvement of Anganwadi?

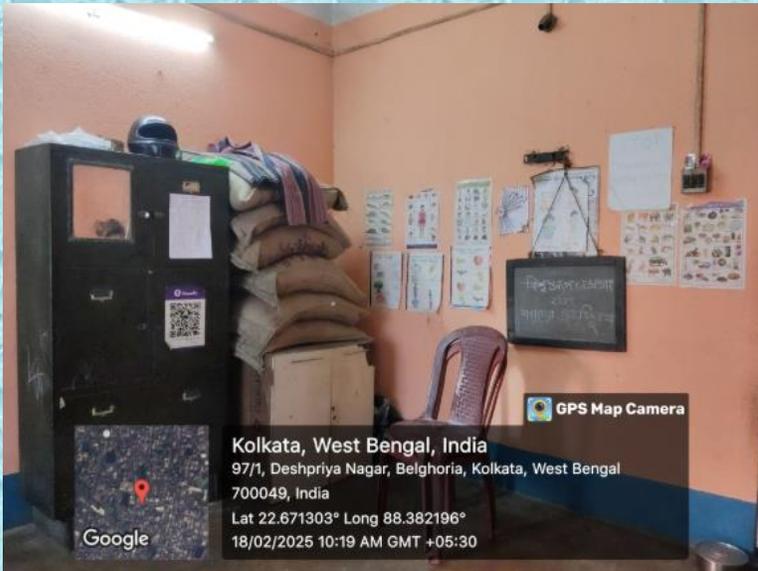
Photo gallery



An outdoor Anganawadi kitchen in Dhamua, S. 24 Parganas



An Anganawadi classroom in Kolkata



An Anganawadi classroom in Kolkata

An Anganawadi classroom in Dhamua



Photo gallery



An Anganawadi kitchen in Sewli, N. 24 Parganas



An Anganawadi kitchen in Dhamua, S. 24 Parganas



An Anganawadi classroom in Dhamua, S. 24 Parganas



An Anganawadi classroom in Nilganj, N. 24 Parganas