



Bangladesh ECD Network (BEN)



ECD NEWSLETTER

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PROYASH'S EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME (ECDP) MODEL TRANSFORMING EARLY INTERVENTION FOR SPECIAL NEEDS IN BANGLADESH

Proyash's Early Childhood Development Programme (ECDP) is a pioneering early intervention model for children aged 2 to 5 years with diverse special needs, including autism, cerebral palsy, Down syndrome, intellectual disability, hearing/visual impairment, multiple disabilities, and developmental delays. Since its launch in 2010 under the patronage of the Bangladesh Army, the programme has combined education, therapy, and active parent involvement to prepare children for inclusive schooling and community life. Admission is open to children from all walks of life. Today, ECDP operates in 13 branches across Bangladesh,

transforming lives and setting a national benchmark for inclusive early childhood education.

The ECDP implements a one-stop service approach—offering baseline assessment, individualized education plans (IEPs), targeted therapies, and hands-on parent training. Children learn through structured activity areas, sensory gardens, daily living skill model rooms, and real-life simulation spaces. Parents and caregivers are involved in every stage, ensuring skills are reinforced at home.



A key feature is its structured transition plan to mainstream schools. Children begin with short visits to inclusive classrooms, gradually increasing participation. A peer buddy system, combined with ongoing support from special educators, ensures smooth integration and reduces social barriers.



Therapies such as speech and language, occupational, physiotherapy, hydrotherapy, and creative arts support each child's holistic development. Progress is tracked term-wise using teacher observations, therapy reports and parent feedback.



By March 2025, the ECD programme had served 1,175 children, with 563 successfully mainstreamed into regular schools. Looking ahead, Proyash is launching an Infant Early Intervention Programme for children aged 6 months to 2 years, focusing on early stimulation, parent hands on training, home support and medical collaboration for early detection.

By starting early, empowering families, and breaking barriers to inclusion, Proyash's ECDP is transforming lives and setting a national benchmark for inclusive early childhood education.

PLAY TO LEARN: TRANSFORMATIVE INTERVENTIONS IN EMERGENCIES THROUGH PLAY

Learning and Sharing Event – Insights and Impacts from the Play to Learn Partnership



For six years, the Play to Learn consortium comprising Sesame Workshop, BRAC, BRAC IED, the International Rescue Committee (IRC), and New York University (NYU), with support from the LEGO Foundation has been working to ensure displaced Rohingya children in Cox's Bazar grow, heal, and thrive.

Designed for children aged 0–5, the model reflects Rohingya culture, language, and traditions, creating safe spaces for learning and healing. Through play-based approaches, nearly 800,000 children, parents, and caregivers have directly benefited. Research shows that 70% of children

reached developmental milestones, 91% achieved mental development, and 96% of parents became more caring and attentive.

On 16 January, the consortium hosted a learning and sharing event, “Play with a Purpose: Insights and Impacts from the Play to Learn Partnership,” at BRAC Centre, Dhaka. A Resource Hub and Marketplace displayed innovative Early Childhood Development (ECD) tools and approaches. The event aimed to share six years of learning with policymakers, implementers, and humanitarian actors while demonstrating thought leadership in ECD evidence generation, programming, and advocacy.



Md. Kamrul Hasan, ndc, Secretary of the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief, joined as Chief Guest, highlighting the risks of cultural erosion and praising the programme’s integration of Rohingya heritage into play labs. Md. Anowar Hossain, Acting Director General of the NGO Affairs Bureau, mentioned the global relevance of the findings for humanitarian settings.

Speakers from consortium partners underlined play’s transformative role in resilience and healing. They shared how

children co-designed activities, fathers engaged more meaningfully, and small but strategic investments delivered powerful shifts in behavior. The session reaffirmed Play to Learn as a movement where play becomes a tool for learning, healing and growth in crisis settings. By blending research, local culture, and strong partnerships, the initiative continues to shape global understanding of how play fosters resilience, learning, and hope for children in crisis.

EMPOWERING WORKING MOTHERS AND NURTURING YOUNG LIVES: CARITAS BANGLADESH’S ECD JOURNEY IN URBAN SLUMS “LEARNING WITH FUN, BEYOND MEMORIZATION”

Early Childhood Development (ECD) programs in urban slums are more than childcare—they are **lifelines** that protect children, empower working mothers, and help break the cycle of poverty.

Recognizing this, Caritas Bangladesh launched the **Momota Project** in 2013 with support from Caritas Luxembourg to support children of low-paid working mothers in garment factories and other industries. The project, which was run until December 2020, operated **11 daycare centers (DCCs)** in Ashulia, Savar, and Chattogram City Corporation.

Since January 2021, ECD activities have continued through the **Ankur Project**, also funded by Caritas Luxembourg. Currently, **15 DCCs** operate under Ankur, while two kindergartens, Joyful and Grasshopper—

provide additional services.

Why Daycare Matters

Before these interventions, working parents in slum areas left children with relatives, neighbors, or even locked them at home. Many mothers quit jobs due to lack of safe childcare. Surveys confirmed that most families were garment workers or small traders living with financial insecurity, unable to afford private care. The absence of reliable childcare created risks for children and economic stress for families.



What the Daycares Provide

Each center employs a **day mother and caregiver**, supported by educators, field officers, and animators. Children receive **safe care, daily meals, structured play, and early learning**. Hygiene and child protection awareness—such as handwashing and safe toilet use—are also emphasized. For mothers, daycare provides **peace of mind, food security,**

and continued employment, increasing productivity and empowerment.



Impact and Achievements

- **299 children** currently receive daycare services.
- **185 children graduated** into formal schools between 2021–2025.
- **60 school-going children** benefit from day care and homework support and care before and after school.
- Children show stronger academics, social skills, and health outcomes compared to peers.



Beyond direct beneficiaries, the project has influenced communities with **nutrition education, hygiene promotion, and behavioral change**, proving to be a sustainable and high-value model for urban slums in Bangladesh.

SHARED RESPONSIBILITY: PROMOTING FATHERS' ROLE IN CHILD CAREGIVING

Fathers' engagement with children just for 15 minutes daily boost brain by 20 percent, reducing behavioral problems in child. In Bangladesh the common phenomena that there is a disparity in paternal involvement especially fathers are less involved in child caregiving practices. Only 11% of children benefit from early stimulation and responsive care by fathers (thrive 2021).



A father is playing with child
Photo: Ripan Kumar Das, Rayer Bazar, Dhaka, 2021

In Rayerbazar slum, Dhaka migration of many families has brought new challenges. With both parents working to make ends meet, children are often left without the crucial care and stimulation they need during their most formative

years. In slum context fathers are often left out of the conversation on early childhood development. This is where the Father Focused Initiative (FFI) steps in by Manabik Shahajya Sangstha, supported by-Save the Children.

The FFI is dedicated to raising awareness among fathers about the importance of Early Childhood Care and Stimulation Parenting for children aged 0-5. Through interactive, pictorial sessions, the initiative empowers men to become more actively involved in their children's lives and the impact is profound. To address this, the Father Focused Initiative holds periodic meetings for fathers to teach them about early childhood development and care.

Take Mr. Sohag Mia, for example. After participating in the 2024 program, he began applying what he learned at home. He started spending more time with his daughter, Lamia—playing, feeding, and even dressing her. This increased engagement not only strengthened their bond but also led to positive changes in Lamia's behavior. Mr. Sohag's story is a testament to the ripple effect of the FFI; he now inspires other fathers in his community to take a more active role, creating a positive shift for the next generation. We are proud to see these fathers become true partners in their children's growth and well-being.

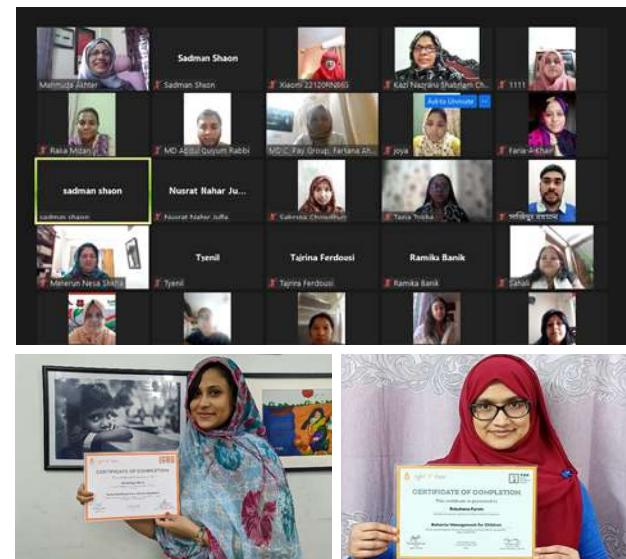
INSTITUTE OF CHILD AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT (ICHD): BUILDING CAPACITY OF THOUSANDS OF PROFESSIONALS AND PARENTS ON EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT IN BANGLADESH

Institute of Child and Human Development (ICHD) considers that Early Childhood Development (ECD) is one of the most critical investments for Bangladesh's future and it lays the foundation for lifelong learning, health, and productivity. Being a key actor in the field of ECD has been creating opportunities for professionals and parents to gain specialized knowledge on ECD and drive positive changes in the lives of young children.

ICHD, in collaboration with Light of Hope, is completing Batch 51 of the Certificate Course on Early Childhood Development. Renowned ECD expert Ms. Mahmuda Akhter, Executive Director of ICHD, designed and developed this course with support from international ECD Experts. She has been leading the course from the front. This course, offered online, is distinguished by its modern learning approach. Participants benefit from live Zoom sessions, direct access to expert discussions, and lifetime access to course materials, ensuring that knowledge remains available for

continuous professional growth.

The course has transformed about 1500 plus participants how they understand child development, from uncovering hidden potential in children to supporting brain development and identifying developmental delays at an early stage. Many participants share testimonials of how these insights have enriched their teaching, caregiving, and community work, strengthening the ECD ecosystem in Bangladesh.



Bangladesh requires greater professional development opportunities, wider access to early intervention resources, and increased public awareness of the importance of ECD. ICHD is committed to addressing these needs by expanding its capacity building programs, fostering international collaborations, and equipping professionals with practical tools to shape a more inclusive and nurturing environment for children.

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PLAY

BRAC IED organized Play Material Development Workshops with Community across the Country



BRAC and BRAC IED marked International Day of Play (IDOP) 2025 by organizing play material development workshops with parents, caregivers, and community members across Bangladesh. The sessions explored creative, low-cost ways to design play resources while emphasizing play's vital role in children's physical, cognitive, language, and socio-emotional development.

The Material Development Workshop took place in 15 different locations across Bangladesh with around 440 participants. It focused on equipping participants to design engaging learning materials from every day and recycled items such as cardboard, fabric scraps, bottle caps, and paper rolls. Using these materials, the participants made dolls, puzzles, counting games, and other play material. These handmade play materials foster children's curiosity and

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Through these workshops, BRAC and BRAC IED continue to advocate for play as an essential part of children's holistic development.

BEN INITIATED TO ESTABLISH TWO MODEL REGIONAL (SUB-NATIONAL) HUBS IN KHULNA AND CHATTOGRAM REGIONS

Bangladesh ECD Network (BEN) has taken initiatives to work on enhancing advocacy and strengthening networking at regional (sub-national) level to promote Early Childhood Development (ECD) in the regions. Initially BEN planned to establish two model regional hubs which will be gradually replicated in other regions in future.

On 1st September 2025, BEN, signed Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Jagorani Chakra Foundation (JCF) and Community Development Centre (CODEC) to establish and operate Model Regional Hubs of BEN in Khulna and Chattogram regions respectively.

The regional hubs will focus on enhancing advocacy and awareness on ECD among local stakeholders including BEN member organizations in the region, local communities, local level government agencies, and parents; strengthening the capacity of BEN member organizations and those directly working with children and families on the ground; and mobilizing local resources to support regional ECD initiatives. They will also facilitate coordination among regional stakeholders, including government

agencies, private sector entities, and community-based organizations, while documenting and sharing knowledge, best practices, and research to inform national ECD efforts.

As immediate actions, JCF and CODEC with support from BEN Central Secretariat will work to establish the hubs in Khulna and Chattogram regions, form regional committees, form and capacitate regional ECD resource pools, organize regional meetings, issue-based webinars, workshops, in-country exchange visits, and document hub operations, lessons learned, and success stories from the region.

CRP'S EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATION (ECDE) AT INCLUSIVE SCHOOL

William & Marie Taylor School (WMTS) is an inclusive school operated by Centre for the Rehabilitation of the Paralysed (CRP), fostering a nurturing environment that values each child. It promotes positive attitudes and lifelong learning, aiming to develop independent, respectful, and creative individuals with unique gifts and talents. WMTS operates with two educational units: the Inclusive Education Unit (IEU) and the Special Education Needs Unit (SENU). The school caters to students from pre-primary to class five, with a particular emphasis on children with Neurodevelopmental

Disorders (NDD). As of 2025, WMTS has 20 teachers, 3 therapists, and 362 students. Of these students, 117 have NDD, including Cerebral Palsy, Down syndrome, and Autism, representing 32.32% of the total student population. Among the NDD students, 60 are enrolled in the IEU and 57 in the SENU, with Cerebral Palsy being the most common diagnosis. The school provides 55 residential facilities for children with disabilities (CWDs) who cannot travel daily to the school.



WMTS provides vocational classes for students aged 15 and over with special needs, focusing on life skills training to foster independence. Activities include sports, cultural classes, handicrafts, paper technology, art, cooking, computer skills, money management, animal husbandry, horticulture, and shop-keeping. Students also receive daily therapeutic services such as physiotherapy, occupational therapy, and speech and language therapy. A multidisciplinary team at CRP assesses disabilities. After completion of education from WMTS, CRP supports students in

reintegrating into mainstream schools or vocational job areas within their communities.



WMTS actively enhances its capabilities through a range of activities designed for special children. These include morning assemblies, special coaching, co-curricular events, cub scouting, class parties, birthday and important day celebrations, inclusive sports, and various therapies such as individual therapy, group therapy, hydrotherapy, horse-riding therapy, music therapy, and social skill development. WMTS aims to create positive and memorable educational experiences that will last for the rest of their lives.

JOYFUL LEARNING SPACES: SUPPORTING ECD IN TEA GARDENS

ASED HABIGONJ is implementing the Wellbeing & Education for the Children through Integrated and Viable Efforts in the Tea Garden of Moulvibazar (WAVE) Project, targeting children aged 3–5 years in Sreemangal Upazila of Moulovibazar district. The project operates 10 ECD centers across 2 tea gardens, serving 203 children (103 boys and 100 girls) in Rajghat Union. The initiative provides a joyful and child-friendly learning environment, promoting children's physical, cognitive, and socio-emotional development. By focusing on marginalized tea garden communities, the program addresses critical gaps in early education, nutrition, and parental awareness, laying a strong foundation for lifelong learning and holistic growth.



The program integrates diverse activities for children, parents, and caregivers. These include nutritional awareness sessions, parenting meetings, quarterly CMC gatherings, material development workshops, routine health checkups, and distribution of learning and play materials. Teachers receive training on motor skills, mental health, brain development, and other child-centered topics, while parents engage in homestead gardening and nutritional food demonstrations. This holistic approach ensures that children benefit from both educational stimulation and life skills development, while parents gain knowledge and tools to support their children's well-being at home.



The WAVE project has achieved significant outcomes, including the enrollment of 203 children, successful nutritional demonstrations, and distribution of educational materials across all centers. Many parents have adopted healthier cooking practices and actively participate in their children's learning. Challenges remain, including irregular attendance due to parents' workload and lack of birth certificates for school enrollment.

These experiences highlight the need for community engagement, advocacy for civil documentation, and ongoing support. Overall, the project illustrates that well-structured ECD interventions in tea garden communities can empower families, strengthen community structures, and contribute to Bangladesh's national ECD goals and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).