

ADB invests \$40.5 M in early childhood development & maternal mental health in Meghalaya

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To strengthen home-based childcare (children 0–1.5 years) and centre-based childcare



The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has approved a \$40.5 million loan for integrated early childhood development (ECD) and maternal mental health in Meghalaya. The state government is contributing \$15.27 million to the project.

The project will strengthen home-based childcare (children 0–1.5 years) and centre-based childcare (1.5–6 years) through daycare (Anganwadi) centres in Meghalaya. The project aims to improve access to nurturing care, including a component of maternal mental healthcare and group-based parenting programmes to enable the inclusion of fathers in caregiving.

ADB's assistance will also improve nutrient adequacy by adding eggs to the diet of pregnant and lactating women and children 0.5–6 years of age. As one of several climate-resilient features, the project will also help establish nutrition gardens at Anganwadi centers (AWC) for improved diet diversity and nutrition security.

The ADB-supported project will upgrade 1,800 AWCs and construct around 600 new AWCs in hard-to-reach areas with climate-resilient design. These AWCs will serve as daycare centers, and staff will be augmented with a new ECD educator who will help extend center-based childcare services to children 1.5–3 years old, in addition to children 3–6 years of age.

A \$2 million technical assistance grant from the Japan Fund for Prosperous and Resilient Asia and the Pacific will help develop guidelines and training curricula for AWC staff and ECD educators. A new state resource centre for the developing child will be also established to serve as a centre of excellence for ECD services. ADB will carry out a first-of-its-kind large scale evaluation to assess the effectiveness of integrated ECD interventions in a lower middle-income country to inform national and global childcare policies.