

Cut in ICDS Budget Puts Children at Risk

The fund allocation for anganwadi centres has been slashed by more than a half to only ₹300 crore in the present Budget

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Bhubaneswar: Anganwadi centres in the State will continue to languish in dilapidated and hazardous conditions putting thousands of pre-school children at risk for years to come, thanks to the apathy of the Government.

The insensitivity of the Government towards safety of young children has been laid bare by the State Budget for 2015-16 which has effected a drastic cut in fund allotment for construction of

childcare centres under Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) scheme.

In 2014-15, the estimated budget for construction of anganwadi centres was ₹839 crore, which was subsequently reduced to ₹676.41 crore in the revised budget. The fund allocation for the purpose has been slashed by more than a half to only ₹300 crore in the present Budget.

Presently, there are 71,306 functional anganwadi centres in the State of which only 22,843 have own buildings. The others are func-

FUND DEFICIT

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The budget on repairs has also been halved from **₹60 crore** in 2014-15 to **₹30 crore** in 2015-16

There is a requirement of around **₹2665** crore for construction of anganwadi centre buildings

tioning either from schools and community halls or rented buildings.

As per the unit cost fixed by the State at ₹5.50 lakh for construction of one pucca anganwadi centre building,

there is a requirement of around ₹2665 crore. With a pittance of funds, it will take more than nine years to complete construction of all buildings, an analysis by Odisha Budget and Account-

ability Centre (OBAC) under CYSD has revealed.

Further, most of the anganwadi buildings, which were constructed more than a decade back, have undergone wear and tear and need renovation. The budget on repairs has also been halved from ₹60 crore in 2014-15

to ₹30 crore in 2015-16. The Government has also failed to converge other schemes like MNREGA, Backward Regions Grant Fund Programme (BGRF), MLA LADS for construction of the centres. Buildings,

which were sanctioned three years back, are yet to be completed.

The importance of anganwadi centres in providing quality education to pre-school children is paramount as early childhood covering 0-6 years is a crucial period of human development. The overall budget for Women and Child Development Department has been reduced from ₹4666.65 crore to ₹4162.62 crore in 2015-16. Pre-school education component is the worst hit, said Surendra Sahoo of OBAC.