



By Women - for Women

Building the childcare ecosystem
in India

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INTRODUCTION

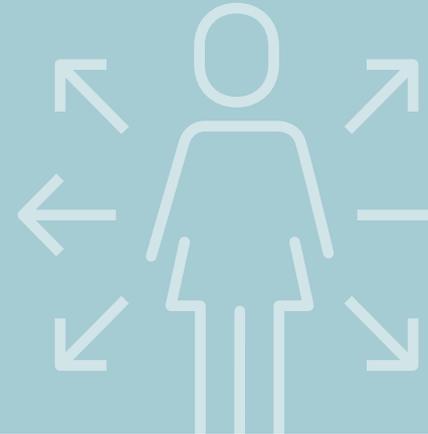
This report is based on the core hypothesis that heightened workforce participation by women can usher in the dual benefits of spurring India's economic growth and strengthening socioeconomic empowerment of women. With this backdrop, the report contrasts the low and declining levels of women workforce participation in the country and highlights the complex interplay of socioeconomic barriers and challenges that contribute to this phenomenon. The report thereafter, deep dives into the specific challenges associated with lack of access to quality childcare and examines how convenient and affordable access to childcare can help women transition from unpaid labor to paid employment and in turn, socioeconomic empowerment. The report takes stock of the current state of the childcare ecosystem in India and attempts to leverage the latent market opportunity. The report concludes by articulating recommendations for implementing an integrated three-pronged approach that combines building the required policy, skilling and entrepreneurship ecosystems for childcare.

This report will be a valuable resource for a range of ecosystem stakeholders including regulatory agencies and government policymakers, development agencies, foundations, private sector companies in the capacity of employers, incubators and accelerators. It is expected to inform policy formulation and intervention design targeted at strengthening the childcare ecosystem in India.

We are grateful to GIZ for supporting this endeavour and enabling us to conduct this study.

Chapter 1

WOMEN WORKFORCE PARTICIPATION IN INDIA



Increased women workforce participation can unlock significant economic growth for India and enhance socioeconomic empowerment of women. The inherent benefits of gender equality are universally accepted. There is growing acknowledgement of the fact that a gender equal society can have a significant impact on the economic growth of a country as well. Unlocking the potential of women to acquire greater personal agency, improved social status, and active participation in the labour force can

lead to significant gains in economic growth. In January 2017, the IMF Chairwoman, Christian Lagarde, quoted IMF research stating that women's participation in the workforce to the level of that of men can boost the Indian economy by 27%.¹ Similarly, according to a report by McKinsey Global Institute (MGI), increase in women's participation by even 10% can add US\$ 770 billion to India's GDP in 2025.² Further, paid employment on the other hand can also significantly enhance women empowerment, both from economic and

Figure 1: Few Statistics on Women in Workforce in India



24%
Female
workforce
participation
in India



34%
Women
graduates
taking up
work outside
home



16%
CXO positions
held by
women in
India

Source: Economic Survey India, 2017; India Development Update, World Bank Report; Credit Suisse, The CS Gender 3000: The Reward for Change (September 2016)

- 1 Economic Survey of India: 2017, January 2018 http://mofapp.nic.in:8080/economicsurvey/pdf/102-118_Chapter_07_ENGLISH_Vol_01_2017-18.pdf
- 2 Gender parity to boost India GDP by 18% in '25, The Times of India, June 2018 http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/64655536.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst

social standpoints. The ability to earn income provides women with a sense of self-reliance and empowerment within their marriage and their households, greater mobility and great roles in household decision-making. Evidence also suggests that it can also have positive impact on their health and nutrition as well as the health and education outcomes of their children.³

Participation of women in the Indian workforce is however, suboptimal and has been declining. Women today comprise 27% of the labour force in India, and account for 18% of the country's GDP. Of this, almost 97% of the total female workers are engaged in the informal sector. Furthermore, female

workforce participation rates declined from 37% in 2004-05 to 27% in 2011-12.³ This figure is much lower compared to other countries in the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) region. For instance, 58% women in Bangladesh participate in the economic activities while the percentage is almost 80% in Nepal.⁴

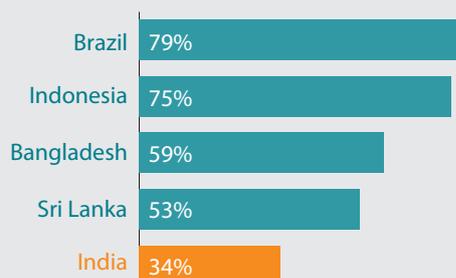
India has also been witnessing a steady increase in the number of women completing graduation, but the increase in access to education and economic growth has not translated into increase in women participation in the labour market. Between 2001-2011, the number of women passing out as graduates rose by 116%.⁵ However, amongst those who complete their education till graduation in India, only 34% women take up formal jobs. This percentage is 75%, 59%, and 53% for other emerging countries such as Indonesia, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka respectively.³

Figure 2: Regional Comparison for Female Labour Force Participation



Source: India Development Update, World Bank Report

Figure 3: Labour Force Participation (Female Graduates)



Source: India Development Update, World Bank Report

3 India Development Update: Unlocking Women's Potential, May 2017 <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/107761495798437741/pdf/115297-WP-P146674-PUBLIC.pdf>

4 Travel safety and childcare can encourage women to go to work, says World Bank's Annette Dixon, The Economic Times, March 2018 http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/articleshow/63260545.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst

5 Rise in women graduates almost double that of men in a decade, The Times of India, August 2015 http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/48313138.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst

Low workforce participation among women in India is an outcome of a complex interplay of diverse socioeconomic challenges including lack of access to adequate and affordable childcare. According to an International Labour Organization (ILO) article titled "Women's labour force participation in India: Why is it so low?"⁶, while better education attainment, declining fertility rates, more urbanization and higher growth are enabling factors, several challenges continue to pose barriers to women participation in the workforce. Workplace specific challenges include limited access to employment and choice of work, poor working conditions and employment security, lack of wage parity and workplace discrimination. In addition, structural changes in families due to heightened migration resulting in nuclear families coupled with deep-rooted social norms forcing women to shoulder much of

the household responsibilities, implies that they have limited time for engaging in paid employment. Furthermore, women also face specific constraints such as inadequate access to relevant training, proper skill development, and access to child care, maternity protection and provision of safe and accessible transport which limit their ability to join the workforce. Interplay of all of these factors contributes to the decline in participation in the workforce.

Among the numerous issues contributing to the low participation of women in the Indian workforce, this report dives into the challenges associated with lack of access to quality childcare and recommends solutions to address this issue.

Figure 4: Challenges to women workforce participation



6 According to an International Labour Organization (ILO) article titled "Women's labour force participation in India: Why is it so low?", https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/---sro-new_delhi/documents/genericdocument/wcms_342357.pdf

Chapter 2

CHILDCARE SERVICES AND ITS POTENTIAL ROLE IN FOSTERING WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN INDIA



*Almost 48% of Indian women drop out of the workforce within four months of their return from maternity leave.*⁷ In India, the difference between workforce participation rates of men and women is around 52% - a major cause of this difference is child-bearing and child-rearing.⁸

According to a study, India is poorly ranked with respect to men's contribution towards household work. In India 29% of women with young children joined the workforce versus 81% of men in 2016.⁸ This is because women spend over twice as much time than men in unpaid work such as household work and childcare – these are the responsibilities that women are traditionally expected to fulfil. Formal childcare services are an upcoming sector in India given that limited quality services are available in a few leading cities in the country.

The onset of maternity also triggers a certain degree of discrimination at the workplace in terms of types of tasks allocated to women employees. According to a qualitative study conducted by Genpact Centre for Women Leadership⁷, a general perception that pregnant women and new mothers have low productivity often prompts employers to allocate low pressure and less demanding assignments to them, often impacting their career progression. The new Maternity Benefit Act, 2017 which increases the duration of maternity leaves, further disincentivizes employers in India to hire women.⁹ Such traditional gender roles, inadequate childcare infrastructure and deep-rooted social biases limit the entry points available to women for joining paid employment. Currently, India lacks demand and supply side studies

7 Predicament of Returning Mothers, Genpact Centre for Women Leadership, Ashoka University, April 2018 <http://gcwl-ashoka.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Final-Report-PREDICAMENT-OF-RETURNING-MOTHERs.pdf>

8 Despite Growing Gender Equality, More Women Stay at Home Than Men, Yale Global, January 2018 <https://yaleglobal.yale.edu/content/despite-growing-gender-equality-more-women-stay-home-men>

9 Women, Business, and the Law 2018, World Bank, April 2018 <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/926401524803880673/Women-Business-and-the-Law-2018>

resulting in dearth of data on childcare sector and its potential.

Convenient and affordable access to childcare can help women transition from unpaid labour to paid employment and thereby become socio-economically empowered. In India, the disparity between male and female work force participation rates varies across regions and all ages. A common observation across the country is that the disparity in the gender participation rates is the widest at the onset of childcare responsibilities. According to a World Bank report¹⁰, a sharp widening of this disparity is noticeable between the 15-24 and 25-34 age groups, the latter being the general child

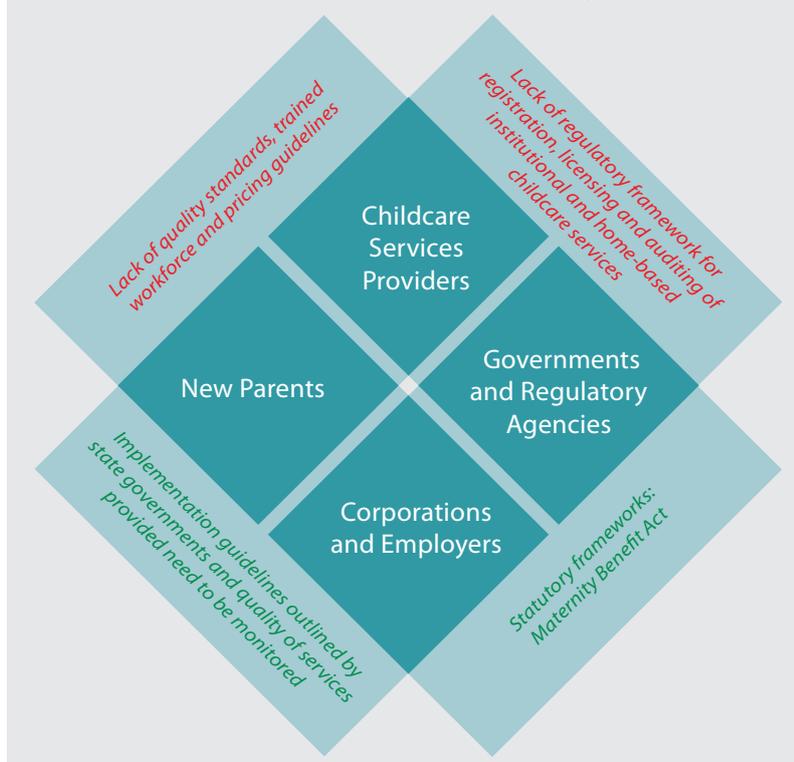
bearing age group. The report revealed a difference of approximately 50% between male and female participation rates in India.

Sustainable Development Goal 5 (Target 5.4) pushes for recognizing the value of unpaid care and domestic work for achieving gender equality. This aspect is however, seldom factored in during formulation of policies on women empowerment. According to a recent Asian Development Bank report¹¹ titled "Emerging Lessons on Women's Entrepreneurship in Asia and the Pacific", while care work is inherently linked to paid work, little effort has been made to develop a policy framework that connects the two as they apply to entrepreneurial activities.

The report highlights that unpaid care responsibilities have been a key barrier to women's entrepreneurship and a major cause for underrepresentation of women in the paid workforce.

Responsibilities related to taking care of their families, which includes elderly care and child care, significantly influence choices made by women in terms of decision to take up part-time work or even rely upon domestic workers to manage their caring responsibilities. A 2012 World Bank study¹² found that women in Asia and the Pacific spend between 60% to 84% of their

Figure 5: Childcare Ecosystem India and its gaps



10 Gender at Work: A companion to World Development Report on Jobs, World Bank, February 2014 http://www.worldbank.org/content/dam/Worldbank/document/Gender/GenderAtWork_web.pdf

11 Emerging Lessons on Women's Entrepreneurship in Asia and the Pacific, Asia Foundation and Asian Development Bank, October 2018 <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/459551/women-entrepreneurship-lessons-asia-pacific.pdf>

12 The World Bank. 2015. World Development Report 2015: Mind, Society, and Behavior. Washington, DC. <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/645741468339541646/pdf/928630WDR0978100Box385358B00PUBLIC0.pdf>

time doing unpaid work, including caring for their families. Further, focus group discussions in 18 developing countries found that women on average spend about 3 hours more per day on housework and childcare and about 2.5 hours less per day on market activities compared to men.¹² In India, women spend approximately 11 weeks per year on unpaid care.¹²

Evidence therefore suggests that strengthening childcare support is one of the key factors that results in increase of workforce participation and productivity at workplace. It can therefore act as a catalyst for transitioning women from unpaid labour to paid employment. Indirectly, it also generates employment for other women who can offer childcare services to women joining the workforce.

India has recently adopted progressive maternal leave and childcare provisions in its labour laws that would require substantial growth of childcare service providers in the country. Provisions related to maternity benefits are not new to Indian laws.¹³ However, the recent amendment of the Maternity Benefit Act in 2017 signals the Indian government's emphasis on adopting progressive policies to protect the interests of women working in the organized sector. Through the Act, the government increased the period of maternity leave available to women from 12 weeks to 26 weeks. The Minister while introducing the Bill in Parliament stated that through such enhanced benefits, the amendment

"aims to have a positive impact on women participation in the labour force."¹⁴

Additionally, with regard to childcare, the amendment now requires every establishment, public and private sector, with 50 or more employees to provide crèche facilities at its premises or within a prescribed distance. Recently, the National Minimum Guidelines for setting up and running crèches under the Maternity Benefit Act were issued by the Ministry of Women and Child Development.¹⁵ Through this policy directive, the government has placed priority in the well-being of new parents, promoted sharing of childcare work and created provision for quality care for the children during their most formative period. This policy initiative has catalyzed the demand for the corporate day care market across the country, but given that the model requires the child to commute to workplace, its impact and adoption in the Indian context with inadequate public transportation system is yet to be established.

Childcare (and preschool) market in India is expected to grow at a compounded annual growth rate (CAGR) of over 23%¹⁶ during 2017 - 2022, but is unorganized in nature and characterized by poor affordability and variable service quality. Despite underlying business potential, childcare services in India are largely unorganised. While there is a range of options available, the type and quality of services offered vary across these models. Affordability of these services also limits parents below a certain socioeconomic level from availing some of these services. The four major types of childcare alternatives in India

13 Legislative Brief: Maternity Benefits (Amendment) Bill, 2016, PRS Legislative Research, October 2016, <http://www.prsindia.org/uploads/media/Maternity%20Benefit/LB%20Maternity%20Benefit%20Bill%202016.pdf>

14 Parliamentary Debate, Lok Sabha, 9 March 2017, <http://164.100.47.193/debatetext/16/XI/09.03.2017.pdf>

15 National Minimum Guidelines for setting up and running creches under Maternity Benefit Act, 2017, Ministry of Women and Child Development, November 2018 <http://wcd.nic.in/sites/default/files/National%20Minimum%20Guidelines.pdf>

16 India Preschool and Daycare Services Market Outlook to 2022, Business wire, <https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20181008005413/en/India-Preschool-Daycare-Services-Market-Outlook-2022>

include private crèche, corporate daycare (crèche provided by employers), home-based childcare and maid on request/nanny services.

The following exhibit maps these existing childcare models against parameters such as quality and safety, cost effectiveness, required commute and policy frameworks.

1. Home-based childcare centres are initiatives by women providing childcare services at their own homes. These would typically involve a caregiver providing childcare services to 3 to 6 children of the local community. With marginal infrastructural costs, these are affordable for parents and need minimal commute for the child. Quality of care and safety standards however, is circumspect at such centres and varies on the basis of the economic class of the community. These childcare services are available for as low as INR 2000 per month targeting low income segment to INR 8000 per month for the middle class segment.

- Maid on request** portals are platforms for matching demand and providing domestic helpers who can help in childcare. Typically, helpers are registered on to these portals and verified for their background by the service provider. Upon a request, the helper is sent to the home of the child. Despite cost and travel efficiency, the level of skilling and training of such helpers and their ability to provide professional childcare support are aspects that require improvement in India. Due to lack of skill development courses for childcare in India, only few agencies provide trained nanny services. Some of the major providers of maid-on-request include Bookmybai, MyChores, Didi and MaidinMumbai.
- Another alternative for childcare include **private crèche or daycare**, sometimes available with integrated preschools. KidZee, Theo Kids, The Yellow Duck, Tree House, Toddler’s Town, Cosmi Kids, Aptech Montana International, World of Children, are well known examples. These

Figure 6: Existing alternatives to private childcare services

Prevalent childcare options				
	Private Crèche Services (including pre-schools like Kidzee, Treehouse)	Corporate Daycare (E.g. ProEves)	Home based child care centers	Maid on Request (E.g.: Bookmybai)
 Quality & Safety	Quality and safety varies on the basis of service providers		Quality and safety issues in case of lack of supervision and training	
 Cost Effectiveness	Cost varies based on quality of care	Cost effective as subsidized by employer		Cost-efficient
 Commute Required	Can be optimized	Commute challenges	Effective option with limited to no commute	
 Policy Framework	Limited policy framework available	Policy in progress, limited implementation		Lack of policies and guidelines

private childcare centres not only provide the opportunity for parents (mothers in most cases) to go back to work but also support the child's social, emotional and physical development. The daily activities being conducted there can help inculcate good habits (for instance, toilet training), and also help learn arts and crafts, and hence prepare the child for eventually a more structured environment at school. Some of the factors that are of prime importance for assessing such facilities include reputation of the childcare centre, its registration and licensing status, protocols and standards followed with respect to physical safety, cleanliness, and staff qualification, timing, location, and cost. Most of such childcare centres charge an average fee between INR 10,000 to INR 20,000 per month making it an expensive proposition for parents and households below a certain level of economic earnings. Also, due to lack of childcare provision laws in India, the quality of care and safety standards in these private crèche services vary among the service providers.

4. **Corporate daycare** services are provided by the employers at workplaces and now comes under "The Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act 2017" that directs establishments that employ 50 or more employees to provide for crèche facility, either at office or at any place within a radius which is short enough for employees to avail the services. While some of the states in India have developed the detailed implementation framework for the act, the others are yet to develop the guidelines and audit

infrastructure. While these services are partially or completely subsidized by employers and hence highly affordable, long commute for child and other logistic issues for the school going children make these services attractive only at early years of the child (0 to 3 years). Some of the organizations that already provide crèche facility include Accenture, HCL Technologies, General Electric Co., Pepsico India Holdings, Airtel, Flipkart, Godrej Industries, L'Oreal India, Johnson and Johnson, Genpact, and Hindustan Unilever.

There is an unprecedented demand for childcare services in India that requires structured interventions from the government and private sector.

The demand for childcare services in India is driven by career aspirations of women, integration of childcare in early education and enabling policy directives such as the recently passed Maternity Benefit Act. In addition to corporate daycare and professional daycare services that target the formal workforce, there is an opportunity to formalize and improve the quality of home-based childcare services that provide affordable services to the millions of working women in India. This points towards significant latent demand for childcare and a strong case for building an effective childcare ecosystem in India that will promote women entrepreneurship as childcare providers and drive women workforce participation as target customers.

Chapter 3

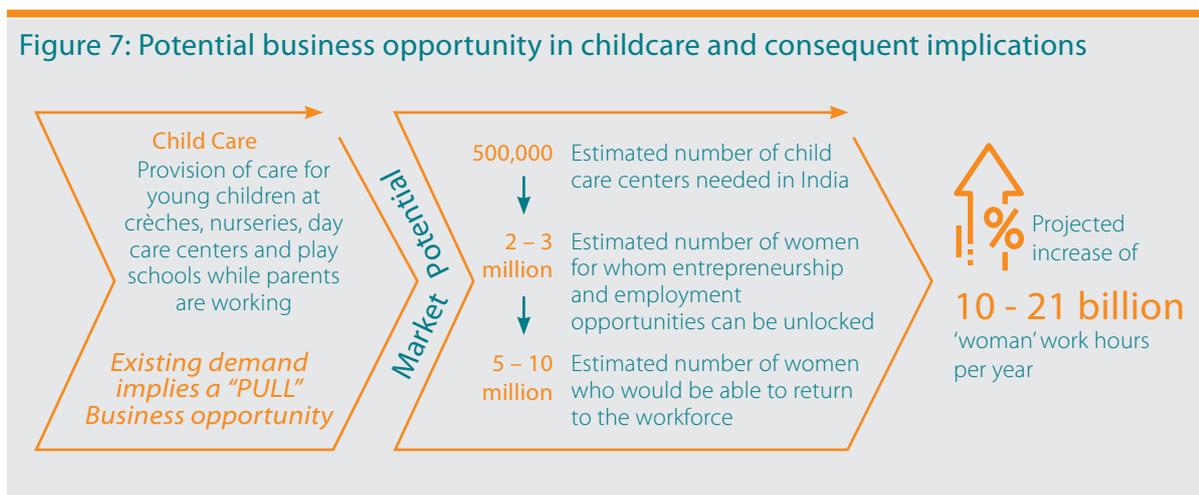
CATALYZING CHILDCARE ECOSYSTEM IN INDIA



Catalyzing childcare ecosystem in India can create a three-pronged impact on women – economic empowerment of women as childcare (and pre-school) entrepreneurs, increase in job opportunities for women as childcare providers and improved workforce participation of women with access to quality childcare. An enabling childcare ecosystem benefits individuals, families, communities, and eventually the entire economy. According to the Census 2011, India is home to about 160 million children below 6

years of age. Assuming that a childcare facility can cater to about 30 children, India would require over 5 million childcare facilities. Given accelerated urbanization and shift towards nuclear families, capturing 10% of this broader potential market focusing on Indian metros and tier two cities alone points towards the need for 500,000 childcare facilities, even by conservative estimates. In addition to increased numbers of women entrepreneurs, enhancing the access to affordable childcare facilities is expected to enable a large number

Figure 7: Potential business opportunity in childcare and consequent implications

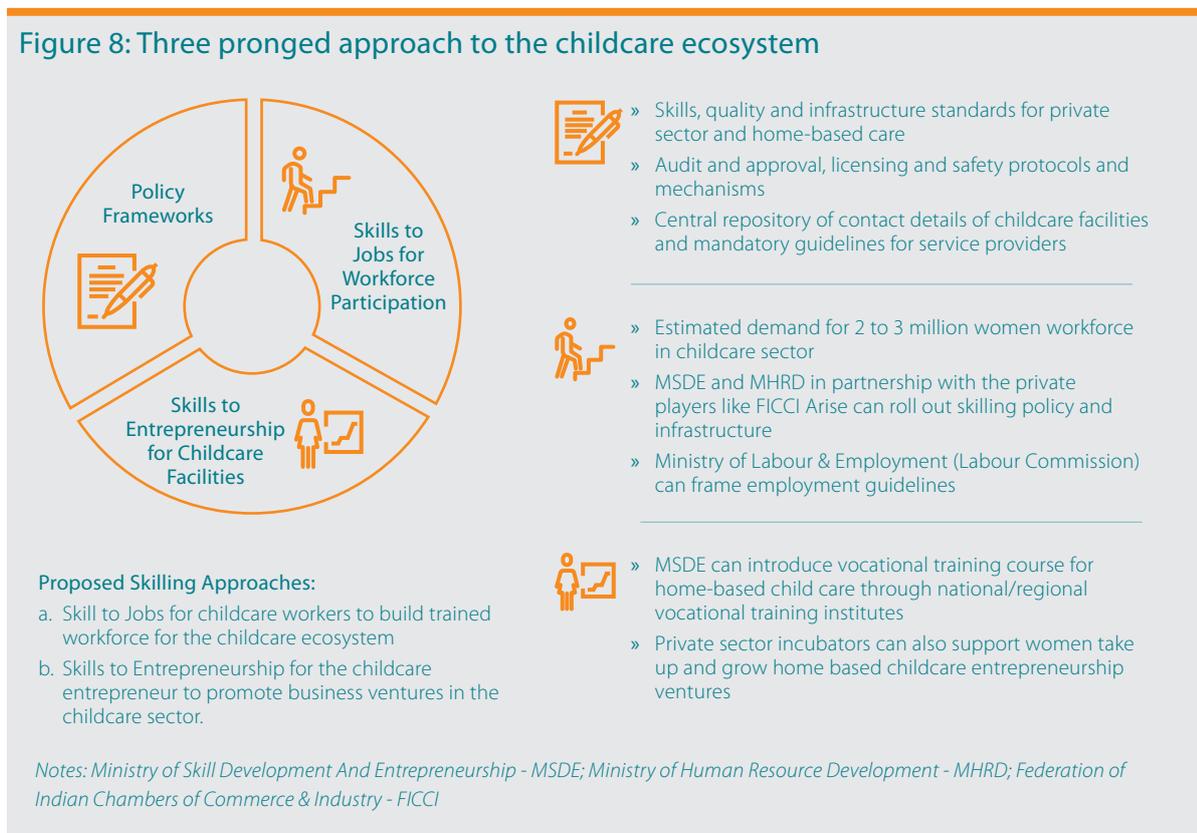


of women to join the workforce or return to work as well as provide gainful employment opportunities to women to deliver childcare services at these centres. The estimated half a million childcare centres would give a direct opportunity for almost an equivalent number of women to become entrepreneurs, as they would either own or manage the facilities. It would also provide employment to at least 3 to 5 women per centre since the nature of the services requires women staff to deliver the childcare services. This translates to a total of 2 to 3 million women either becoming an entrepreneur, or getting employed in the childcare centres. This growth in childcare infrastructure in the country can potentially enable 5 to 10 million women to return to the workforce.¹⁷

The key stakeholders of an effective childcare ecosystem include childcare services providers, employers and government regulatory agencies, with parents of young children at the core of the ecosystem.

Although all of these stakeholders exist in India, there is a need for an integrated approach that can bring them together and create an enabling environment for parents to affordably access quality childcare infrastructure and services. For leveraging the latent market opportunity, an integrated approach needs to aim at building the required policy, skilling and entrepreneurship ecosystem for childcare.

Figure 8: Three pronged approach to the childcare ecosystem



17 Intellectap estimate based on a conservative assumption of each childcare facility having a capacity of 10 to 20 children.

A. Building the policy ecosystem for childcare

Create policy frameworks to regulate the quality of childcare services across corporate daycare, centre-based daycare and home-based childcare services. Recognising the urgent need for improved quality and reach of childcare services for working women among all socio-economic groups, there have been some efforts in recent times to strengthen policies and guidelines for regulating childcare service delivery. The Rajiv Gandhi National Crèche Scheme (RGNCS), for example, was revised in 2016. The scheme sets out certain guidelines for private childcare providers regarding infrastructural standards, integrated services to be made available in day care centres, monitoring mechanisms, salaries for crèche workers, among others. Similarly, guidelines for regulating private play schools for the children of the age of three to six year have also been provided by the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights.¹⁸ The Ministry of Women and Child Development is also working towards a national programme for crèche and daycare facilities in India.

Despite these initial attempts at providing guidelines, currently there is no comprehensive regulatory framework for centre-based and home-based childcare. Even for private sector employers, while the Maternity Benefit Act mandates crèches at establishments employing more than 50 people, many state governments are yet to notify rules detailing specifications for its effective implementation.¹⁹ Standards with respect to childcare skills, quality of services

and infrastructure for private sector and home-based childcare facilities need to be established, implemented and monitored. There is a need to establish protocols and standards to conduct safety audits and licensing. Safety audits would help in several ways such as improving the health environment in the centre, preventing or minimising child injuries and illnesses, and increasing health and environmental safety awareness amongst staff and workers.

To build the policy guidelines for *centre-based childcare providers*, the regulators can adapt best practices from various private sector daycare chains that have formed rules and regulations for their franchisees and also contextualize the best practices from other developed countries such as Norway, Finland and Australia that have extensive frameworks in place.



TheoKids - Sample rules and regulations for running a crèche

- » Space specified per child is 6-8 square feet with ventilation and bright rooms
- » Clean, hygienic and well maintained sanitation
- » Play area should be outside of the centre with more than adequate space
- » Kitchen/cooking area for food preparation has to be away from kids to prevent any accidents
- » Individual based sleeping facilities; bed linen to be clean and washed regularly
- » Educational as well as play material have to be made available as per the needs of the children
- » First aid with medicines for common ailments; stocked bandages, disinfectants and ointments
- » Caretaker of the children should have completed the crèche training program from a recognized institution
- » Manned at all times by a watchman
- » Medical examination of the children has to be conducted every 3 months and relevant records have to be maintained for scrutiny at any time

¹⁸ Rajiv Gandhi National Creche Scheme, Ministry of Women and Child Development, June 2016 <http://wcd.nic.in/sites/default/files/RajivGandhiCrecheScheme.pdf>

¹⁹ Comply with rules on crèche facility, Deccan Herald, July 2018 <https://www.deccanherald.com/national/comply-rules-creche-facility-681358.html>

Similarly, to establish quality standards, approval procedures and auditing models for *home-based daycare services*, regulators can adopt models from developed countries such as Australia that have well established home-based daycare option (family daycare, in home care and nanny services).

Make childcare entrepreneurship attractive and investment friendly for women through single window registration and accreditation. For entrepreneurs, mostly women, delivering or aspiring to deliver childcare services, it should be made compulsory for them to secure license by registering under the required rules and regulations (that need to be framed) instead of delivering their services informally. While formalised establishments like private crèches, both self-owned and franchise, or enterprise portals (for example, providers of maid on request), and domestic worker societies are likely to be registered entities, the unorganised home-based childcare centres mostly do not have any registration. As a lucrative option for home-based income generation, these centres can be popular entrepreneurship avenues for women.

Regulatory mandates can ensure them to become accountable for their services and meet standards of quality and safety.

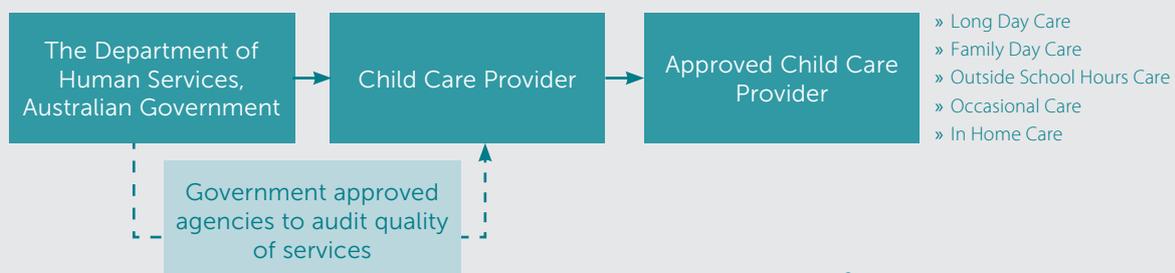
Further, in order to make childcare centres investment friendly, a specific registration and authentication process is imperative. Framing regulatory guidelines for home-base childcare and maid on request portals will ease licensing protocols. A single window clearance for licensing and related paperwork will augment the business potential for private childcare service delivery.

Create central repository of accredited childcare services. While there is data around the total number of crèches and beneficiaries under RGNCS, a comprehensive centralised data bank of all the approved private childcare providers (both centre and home-based) will support both parents and service providers. Such system will facilitate parents to conduct cross-verification of approved childcare providers and corporate players to engage only with approved service providers.

Several interventions can be undertaken by development agencies to improve the policy ecosystem in India. Development

Figure 9: Case Study from Australia

Direct payment of the subsidy to the service provider based on number of hours of paid or volunteering work done by both the parents and total family income



- *Meet set standards and requirements of Government of Australia*
- *The first three types must also meet the new quality standards set out under the National Quality Framework including parameters such as:*
 - » *educator to child ratio*
 - » *skills and qualifications of staff*
 - » *approved learning frameworks for development of children*
 - » *consistent & transparent information about the services in the national registers*

Source:

- » [Australian Government, Child Care Subsidy Link](#)
- » [Approved Child Care, Australia Link](#)
- » [Registered Child Care, Australia Link](#)

agencies can facilitate knowledge sharing between countries to exchange best practices and policy frameworks that have been implemented successfully in the domain of childcare. They can also support governments to create a central repository and data bank of childcare facilities. Further, there is a need to commission data-driven demand-supply studies to assess the market gaps. Such research can subsequently help build evidence to support advocacy efforts aimed at framing and revising policies.

B. Building the skilling ecosystem for childcare

Launch targeted skilling program in collaboration with the National Skill Development Council and other industry associations to train women workforce across childcare delivery models. There is a significant potential demand for childcare workers in India. Based on the estimated need for half a million childcare facilities, this latent demand for women workforce at these facilities is projected at 2 to 3 million childcare providers. The sector provides diverse opportunities for care workers to be gainfully employed depending upon the type of childcare they choose to be involved in. It ranges from formalised establishments like private crèches and pre-schools to home-based childcare centres.

The National Skill Development Council (NSDC) acts as a catalyst in skill development by providing funding to enterprises, companies and organizations that provide skill training. It currently has more than 413 training partners, 6000+ training centres, 38 Sector Councils, across 567 districts in India. NSDC can create a new sector council or integrate childcare training under one of the existing skilling section council to launch the

childcare program. It can leverage its wide outreach and can play a pivotal role spurring the labour market for childcare providers, training them and advocating for greater industry participation.



TiLi – Early Childhood Care and Education

TiLi is a Mumbai based enterprise that operates in the field of training and curriculum development in early childhood care and education (ECCE). It provides high quality accredited curriculum for the government ECCE programs and private sector, and has worked with over 2500 women since inception. It provides low cost part time six months training program to women in ECCE and places them with leading childcare providers in India with job assurance of up to 5 years. Its advance courses supports experience childcare providers to set up their own childcare centres and pre-schools.

The government, multilaterals and foundations can also engage with industry bodies like Centre for Civil Society (CCS), World Skills Competition, Federation of Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industries (FICCI) to design and roll out greater awareness and advocacy campaigns to promote the childcare sector. Consultations for framing and implementing a targeted and specialised skill policy for the sector should be organised through these bodies. Enterprises, private childcare service providers, organizations like SEWA can convene to create appropriate models to enhance and support private sector initiatives that are profitable and scalable.

Different ministries (the Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Women and Child Development and Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship) can work together to frame guidelines for developing occupational standards and curriculum for childcare training, and certifying training institutions. Through inter-ministerial coordination, a robust and holistic approach can be adopted towards skill development for imparting childcare services.

Development agencies have an opportunity to support the government through technical and funding support to establish Childcare Skilling Council under the NSDC. Further, they can convene industry associations and civil society organizations to create models of skilling childcare workers at scale. Such convenings can also serve as a forum to bring together stakeholders and build an advocacy program targeted at creating a skilling policy for childcare workers.

C. Building the entrepreneurship ecosystem for childcare

As highlighted earlier, the childcare sector can offer significant opportunities for women entrepreneurship. While traditional and formal childcare set ups continue to grow, entrepreneurial potential of smaller home-based ventures needs to be promoted.

Help aspiring entrepreneurs choose the type of childcare service ventures to launch. With some planning and modest start-up cash a childcare business can easily be started at home. A commercially located centre on the other hand requires greater investment of time, energy and money. Depending upon the start-up resources and future goals, the size and type of business is chosen. Many child-care providers are satisfied with a one-person operation in their home that generates a comfortable income. Others may start at home and eventually move to a commercial site as the business grows.

Impart entrepreneurship training through online courses and structured curriculum. With the right training and certification, entrepreneurs in the childcare sector can scale their businesses. In India, Directorate

General of -Employment & Training (DGE&T) and NSDC can introduce vocational training courses for home-based childcare through national/regional vocational training institutes. Currently there are a few MOOC (Massive Open Online Courses) trainings that are available. For instance, the Indian Agricultural Statistics Research Institute runs a ten week online program on "Entrepreneurship for Childcare Services".²⁰

Illustrative childcare entrepreneurship course curriculum

- » Childcare Opportunities in India
- » How to select between childcare centre or home-based model
- » Inputs required to establish childcare as enterprise
- » Ensuring quality and safety with respect to service delivery
- » Developing of proposals to secure funds for establishment of childcare facility
- » Budgeting and financial management
- » Licensing requirements needed for establishment of childcare center
- » Key websites and contacts

Efforts need to be made to generate awareness about and popularize such programs. Some such training programs can also be integrated in centres of innovation or in entrepreneurship cells within formal educational institutions or management schools.

Launch of special loan product for childcare entrepreneurs under Mudra Scheme. In 2015, the Government of India launched the MUDRA (Micro Units Development and Refinance Agency) Loan scheme i.e. Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana. Under the scheme, MUDRA provides loans to micro entrepreneurs and individuals through branch offices of banks, MFIs, NBFCs etc. With a credit limit up to INR 1 million, entrepreneurs can

20 Entrepreneurship in Childcare services, Online Course, Indian Agricultural Statistics Research Institute, <http://ecoursesonline.iasri.res.in/course/view.php?id=619>

avail such loans to start small enterprises and businesses like beauty parlours, tailoring units, tuition centres, etc. To further boost entrepreneurship in the childcare sector, a special loan product aimed at encouraging women to start childcare centres can be designed and launched under the MUDRA Scheme.

Provide incubation and acceleration support to childcare entrepreneurship. In addition to supporting entrepreneurs, specifically designed incubators and accelerators can also support women take up and grow home-based childcare entrepreneurship ventures. These incubators and accelerators can provide mentorship, facilitate capital and offer business services to aspiring entrepreneurs in the childcare sector.

The Wonderschool model

In May 2016, a group of educators and technologists in California founded Wonderschool which is a network of boutique-style early childhood schools. Each school meets the quality standards of top childcare facilities along with a personal touch of an in-home program. Wonderschool supports children, parents and provides entrepreneurial opportunities for educators.

Google-sponsored 'Campus for Moms' for instance is a startup program that helps address the challenge of childcare costs that can be prohibitive to many start-up founders whose businesses are yet unfunded. Campus for Moms allows women during maternity to make the most out of this time by providing physical space and enriching content for learning and networking. Through a multi-week program, the initiative helps parents benefit from accessing courses, mentoring and community events. There are toys, play rooms, and feeding rooms so new parents can bring their kids with them.²¹

Development agencies can play important roles in strengthening women entrepreneurship in the Indian childcare sector. The agencies can facilitate collaboration between the Ministry of Skill Development and the private sector and support the development and implementation of tailored "Skill to Entrepreneurship" program for promoting women entrepreneurship in childcare market. They can also provide technical and funding support to the Government of India for launching a specific loan product under the existing Mudra Scheme for enabling women entrepreneurs open childcare facilities.

21 Campus for Moms, Google for Startups: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O8MKgi2eArA>

CONCLUSION



In recent years there has been increased recognition of the challenges women face at workplaces after returning from child birth. While governments and the private sector in India have been trying to address the need for maternity protection and support childcare services, these efforts are nascent and need to be stepped up. However, there is a need for an integrated approach that brings together the different stakeholders and creates an enabling environment for women to affordably access childcare infrastructure and services. Such an approach needs to aim at creating effective policy framework, encouraging entrepreneurship led by women and skilling women to be gainfully employed in childcare facilities.

Further, women primarily engage with employers and private childcare services for accessing childcare in India. In developed countries however, governments play a much

more proactive role in engaging with young parents through mechanisms like direct cash transfers, subsidies and benefits. Efforts can be made to adopt and replicate some of these aspects in the Indian context. At a societal level, behavioural change towards equal and shared parenting, redefining gender norms, increased support from family in childcare can substantially increase the participation of women in the workforce.

Overall, by supporting childcare ecosystem in the country, India has the potential to create 2 million new entrepreneurship and employment opportunities for women as childcare providers, and also impact lives of around 5 million women – an estimated number of women who can go back to workplace by accessing childcare services.

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