

Udaan 2026: India's Largest Convening on Early Childhood Care and Education Strives to Move India's Children from 'Surviving to Thriving'

Category: Business

written by International Khabar | October 8, 2026



Rocket Learning, one of India's largest early learning non-profits, hosted Udaan 2026 in New Delhi – India's largest convening on Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE). The event brought together a diverse line-up of speakers and experts from government and policymaking, research and academia, education, civil society and technology. The theme for this edition was **'From Surviving to Thriving'**, and the event saw discussions on enhancing Anganwadis, investing in

early childhood development, the role of technology in supporting India's youngest children and the resulting impact, through speaker sessions and panel discussion.



Azeez Gupta, Rocket Learning; Dr. Shena Aggarwal, Govt. of Punjab; Radhika Jha, Govt. of India; Dr. Mrinalini Darswal, Govt. of Odisha; Rakhi, Parent from Sonipat

Amongst the esteemed speakers and guests were distinguished leaders including **Dr. M. Srinivas**, Member, NITI Aayog; **Arti Ahuja**, Former Secretary, Ministry of Labour and Employment, Government of India; **Amanda Devercelli**, Former Global Early Childhood Development Head, World Bank Group; **Dr. Soumya Swaminathan**, Chairperson, M. S. Swaminathan Research Foundation; **Radhika Jha**, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India; **Dr. Dinesh Arora**, Principal Specialist at the Asian Development Bank, and **Dr. Abhijeet Singh**, Professor at the Stockholm School of Economics and Board Member (Education), J-PAL. They were joined by **Dr.**

Shena Aggarwal, Special Secretary-cum-Director, Dept. of Social Security, Women and Child Development, Govt. of Punjab; **Dr. Mrinalini Darswal**, Commissioner-cum-Secretary, Dept. of Women and Child Development, Govt. of Odisha and senior officials of the Women and Child Development departments of Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, and Andhra Pradesh; leaders from OpenAI, TRYST at IIT Bombay, and SIRA; and Rocket Learning co-founders Azeez Gupta, Namya Mahajan, Siddhant Sachdeva, and Utsav Kheria.

Delivering the keynote discussion on reducing the administrative burden on Anganwadi workers in India, **Dr. M. Srinivas, Member, NITI Aayog**, said, *“Frontline workers like Anganwadi staff should not be burdened solely with administrative tasks and manual record-keeping. Technology and policy changes must simplify their workload so they can focus on their primary mission: directly nurturing mothers and children.”*

Speaking on targeted AI interventions for vulnerable families, **Arti Ahuja, Former Secretary, Ministry of Labour and Employment, Govt. of India**, said, *“The true power of AI lies in data-driven empathy. Down to the village and hamlet level, AI can help us identify red flags such as family migration or food scarcity, thus enabling targeted, local-level support for the most vulnerable children and families before they fall behind.”*

Speaking about the vision behind building Udaan as a cross-sector platform, **Rocket Learning’s co-founders, Azeez Gupta, Namya Mahajan, Siddhant Sachdeva, and Utsav Kheria**, in a joint statement said, *“Every child deserves more than simply surviving the early years – they deserve the opportunity to*

thrive. We have witnessed the possibilities of Anganwadi educators, pre-school teachers and parents working together as one coherent unit to change children's trajectories. Udaan 2026 was about moving from surviving to thriving, and the conversations on evidence, investment and technology reinforced that India has both – the ideas and the will – to make this possible at scale. Rocket Learning remains committed to supporting India's early learning ecosystem, with Udaan 2026 marking an important milestone in this journey."

Discussions throughout the day addressed how to best reform and enable Anganwadis, better invest in early childhood development, lessons from academia, and the role of technology in supporting the youngest children. The conference also saw the launch of results and lessons from the evaluation of a highly successful, technology-based homegrown early childhood development model, presented by Dr. Abhijeet Singh, and extended a platform to showcase stories of Anganwadi educators and parents.

Udaan 2026 reinforced that the case for ECCE is clearly established. The task now is to translate that understanding into action at scale – with rigour, compassion and a commitment to every child.

About Rocket Learning

Rocket Learning is one of India's largest early learning non-profits focused on transforming early childhood and foundational learning outcomes at scale. Eighty-five percent of brain development happens before the age of six, making early learning extremely critical. By leveraging technology, behavioral insights, and strong government partnerships,

Rocket Learning empowers parents, teachers, and frontline educators to drive measurable improvements in children's learning. Working directly with government systems across 15 states and union territories and 200+ districts, since 2020 the organization has impacted 6 million children between birth and 6 years of age, across more than 500,000 classrooms, including 400,000 Anganwadi educators. Through responsible use of AI and digital innovation, Rocket Learning is striving to make quality early education accessible, inclusive, and effective for every child, with the aim to positively impact 50 million underserved children by 2030.

For more information, visit rocketlearning.org.

