port of UNICEF and medical health partner Institute of Child and Mother Health (ICMH) is like a breath of fresh air for the toddlers," explains Dipika Rani Shaha, Social Services Officer.

She adds that the day care centre began in 2003 but it was in 2004 that the centre started its full-fledged function in a new building that was built adjoining the women's jail premises to accommodate the day care centre. She also mentions that Bangladesh Shishu Academy took up the education and early learning initiative for the children since 2009.

"Bangladesh Shishu Academy, with its awareness and advocacy policies, gives special importance to its Early Learning for Child Development (ELCD) projects and for which the academy works in vulnerable areas like the tea gardens and 10 central jails throughout the country," Md. Tariqul Islam Chowdhury, Programme Officer, ELCD project, Bangladesh Shishu Academy says.

"We feel it is vital to stimulate a child's brain during infancy because 80 percent of its development occurs during the first five years. At the Dhaka Central Jail we have a successful programme. However, there is an in-built hindrance because of the circumstances in which these children are bound. If the mother is released or is freed on bail, or if she is shifted to another prison then the child too needs to move with her. Thus children here are mostly passing through and cannot be given a continuous learning atmosphere," Tariqul felt.

Physical exercise, storytelling, rhymes and songs, reading and writing Bangla, pre-math, health and hygiene are all part of the curriculum and because of a dedicated teacher like Amina Khatun of Shishu Academy, every child gets special care.

"Every day I see a new face or have to say goodbye to an old one, this is how my classroom runs but in general the two – and – a – half – hour study time following the Bangladesh Shishu Academy curriculum is helping the children learn many things. They get a good environment, good food and here the kids are well taken care of. In fact every person – the matron, the police officers and even the Jail Super love the kids and are keen to give them a better chance," says Amina Khatun.

"Those children who pass the pre-school age are transferred to Rupganj or Tejgaon Shishu Palli or Shishu Poribar with their mother's consent or



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For pre - schoolers the day care centre is definitely a better choice sitting in their mother's prison cells.