

PRESS RELEASE



MSLSA, Government Launch Initiative to Strengthen Child Safety

Shillong, October 14: The Meghalaya State Legal Services Authority (MSLSA) and the District Legal Services Authority (DLSA), East Khasi Hills, in collaboration with the Government of Meghalaya, today launched Project 'Ka Jingkyrmen (Hope)', an initiative aimed at preventing offences against children, promoting legal awareness and strengthening child protection mechanisms under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012.



The project seeks to sensitise children, parents, educators and local communities on child safety, legal rights and preventive measures, with particular emphasis on vulnerable children and areas requiring greater intervention. It aims to foster a safe and supportive environment for children through community participation, legal awareness and coordinated action among government departments and other stakeholders.

Addressing the gathering, Hon'ble Mrs Justice Revati Mohite Dere, Chief Justice of the High Court of Meghalaya and Patron-in-Chief of MSLSA, emphasised the importance of creating



awareness about the provisions of the POCSO Act, particularly among adolescents and young people.

She observed that many young people remain unaware of the legal consequences of engaging in sexual activity with persons below 18 years of age. She highlighted that under the POCSO Act, a minor's consent is not a valid legal

defence and that offences under the Act attract stringent punishment.

Hon'ble Mrs Justice Revati Mohite Dere, explained that the project was conceived in response to cases encountered during judicial proceedings, particularly those involving adolescents in romantic relationships. Such situations, she noted, can have serious consequences, including school dropouts, pregnancy, arrest and prosecution, potentially affecting the future prospects of both boys and girls.

Emphasising the importance of education, she described it as a means of empowerment that opens doors to opportunities, enables young people to pursue their chosen careers and helps them build a secure future. She encouraged children to remain focused on their education, complete their studies and continue pursuing their aspirations.

Speaking on the occasion, Shri Pravin Bakshi, IAS, Commissioner and Secretary, Social Welfare Department, Government of Meghalaya, welcomed the initiative and described it as an important step towards strengthening child protection and community awareness.

He highlighted the project's focus on legal awareness, community sensitisation and coordinated institutional responses, assuring that the Social Welfare Department, along with other government departments and stakeholders, would extend its support for the effective implementation of the initiative.

Referring to the prevalence of POCSO cases, Bakshi cited 29 cases in Mawlai Block and 26 cases in Mawryngkneng Block, underscoring the need for sustained awareness and preventive interventions.

He also highlighted various child protection initiatives implemented by the Social Welfare Department, including Mission Vatsalya, which provides care, protection and support to children in difficult circumstances and promotes their holistic development. The scheme covers children in need of care and protection, including those who are abused, abandoned, orphaned, missing or trafficked, as well as children affected by conflict, disasters and substance abuse.

He further outlined the role of Child Care Institutions, including children's homes, observation homes, special homes, open shelters and places of safety, in providing care, protection and rehabilitation to children requiring assistance.

Bakshi also highlighted the Child Helpline, which has been integrated with the Emergency Response Support System (112) and the Women Helpline (181) to facilitate access to emergency assistance and support.

Hon'ble Mr Justice H. S. Thangkhiew, Judge of the High Court of Meghalaya and Executive



Chairman of MSLSA, stated that the project had been formulated under the directions of the Chief Justice to strengthen awareness and disseminate information, particularly among vulnerable children and those most affected by offences.

He emphasised the importance of communicating legal information in languages that children and local communities can understand, ensuring

that awareness initiatives are accessible, inclusive and effective.

The key areas of intervention under Project Ka Jingkyrmen include educating children about their rights and legal protections under the POCSO Act, creating awareness about good touch and bad touch, promoting an understanding of consent and child safety, and strengthening digital awareness to protect children from online risks and cyber-related offences.



The project will also disseminate information on essential helpline services, including the Legal Services Helpline (15100), Cyber Crime Helpline (1930) and Police Emergency Helpline (112), to ensure that children and community members are aware of the channels available for seeking assistance.

The initiative will involve coordinated efforts by the Social Welfare, Health and Education Departments, the Police, district administration, students, teachers, Anganwadi workers, Para-Legal Volunteers (PLVs) and traditional village institutions to ensure effective outreach and community participation.



It also seeks to encourage children to continue their education and prevent school dropouts by promoting awareness, guidance and access to appropriate support services.



Through Project Ka Jingkyrmen (Hope), MSLSA, DLSA East Khasi Hills and the Government of Meghalaya reaffirm their commitment to strengthening collaboration among legal institutions, government departments and local communities to protect children from abuse, promote their rights and ensure that every child can grow up with dignity, security and opportunities for a better future.