

Press Release from Social Welfare Department,
Government of Sikkim

**REPORT ON THE CELEBRATION OF THE 6TH ANNIVERSARY OF NASHA
MUKT BHARAT ABHIYAAN (NMBA) AND SPECIAL ORIENTATION
PROGRAMME FOR ANGANWADI WORKERS**

On the occasion of the 6th Anniversary of the Nasha Mukh Bharat Abhiyaan (NMBA), a Special Orientation Programme for Anganwadi Workers was organised on 12th October 2026 at the Conference Hall of the Social Welfare Department. The programme aimed to sensitise Anganwadi Workers on substance abuse, its adverse effects on individuals, families and society, early identification, awareness generation, counselling and referral mechanisms.

The programme was attended by the Principal Director, Women, Child, Senior Citizens and Divyangjan Welfare Department; the Additional Director, Social Welfare Department; the Joint Director, Social Welfare Department; the Nurse from CAM Chuwatar; members of the PMU team, Social Welfare Department; and 58 Anganwadi Workers.

Smt. Urvashi Poudyal, Women and Child Welfare Department, acknowledged the significant role played by Anganwadi Workers in community development and appreciated their active involvement in social welfare initiatives at the grassroots level. She highlighted that Anganwadi Workers had been identified as Nasha Mukh Mitras and emphasised their responsibility in creating awareness about substance abuse and identifying individuals who may require assistance.

Referring to the increasing impact of substance abuse on society and the State, she acknowledged that early identification could be challenging but encouraged the participants to take up this responsibility through community awareness and sensitive engagement. She stressed the importance of empathy, tactful communication and a supportive approach while interacting with individuals in need of assistance. She assured the participants of the Department's continued support and urged them to work collectively towards the goal of achieving a Nasha Mukh Sikkim.

Shri Mahesh Sharma, Additional Director, Social Welfare Department, conducted an interactive session with the participants, during which Anganwadi Workers shared their experiences and observations regarding substance abuse in their respective communities. He highlighted that substance abuse not only affects individuals but also gradually disrupts family life and the wider social fabric. He encouraged Anganwadi Workers to initiate conversations within their communities and undertake awareness activities in and around their areas of work. He identified denial and reluctance to acknowledge the problem as major challenges in addressing substance abuse.

He also provided an overview of the Sahayogi Programme, highlighting its objectives and the benefits received by individuals through its various initiatives. He emphasised that assistance and treatment are available for persons affected by substance use; however, timely intervention is crucial. He expressed concern over the increasing prevalence of cannabis use and explained that recovery from substance dependence may require prolonged treatment and sustained support.

The Additional Director further highlighted the financial difficulties faced by many families in accessing rehabilitation services. He informed the participants about the availability of rehabilitation facilities, including Sanjeevi Rehabilitation Centre, Namchi, with 15 beds, and Jagriti Rehabilitation Centre, Sichey, with 50 beds, subject to availability and applicable admission conditions. He clarified that rehabilitation alone does not guarantee complete recovery and underscored the importance of prevention, early intervention, counselling and continued family support.

He observed that peer pressure, family-related stress and other social circumstances could contribute to substance use. He stressed that awareness efforts should extend beyond affected individuals to include their families and friends, thereby promoting a supportive environment for recovery. He further emphasised that substance abuse affects people across different age groups and has increasingly penetrated rural communities in Sikkim. He urged Anganwadi Workers, as frontline functionaries, to extend their support to the Department in strengthening community-level interventions. He reiterated that counselling is an important initial step towards seeking appropriate treatment and highlighted the need to address the broader social and developmental consequences of substance abuse.

Shri Ram Kumar Tamang, Joint Director, Social Welfare Department, subsequently addressed the gathering and highlighted the adverse impact of substance abuse on individuals, families and society. He emphasised the importance of collective responsibility and community participation in addressing the growing challenge of substance abuse. He urged the participants to contribute actively towards awareness generation and prevention efforts at the grassroots level. He also served as the Master of Ceremonies

(MC) for the programme and administered the pledge under the Nasha Mukta Bharat Abhiyaan (NMBA), encouraging all participants to reaffirm their commitment towards building a substance-free society.

Smt. Santoshi Khanal, Nurse, CAM Chuwatar, delivered an overview of the Centre for Addiction Medicine (CAM) and highlighted the growing concern of substance abuse in rural areas. She described Anganwadi Workers as important links between the community and the health sector, with the ability to facilitate awareness, early identification and access to appropriate support services.

During her session, she explained the meaning of addiction, its common signs and symptoms, and the role of Anganwadi Workers in identifying and supporting individuals experiencing substance-related problems. She also sensitised the participants on appropriate measures to be taken when encountering a person struggling with addiction, emphasising the importance of understanding, empathy, timely referral and coordination with the relevant health services.

The programme served as an important platform for interaction, experience-sharing and capacity-building among Anganwadi Workers on the issue of substance abuse. The sessions reinforced the importance of grassroots-level awareness, early identification, counselling, family participation and coordination between the Social Welfare Department and the health sector.

The programme concluded with a renewed commitment by the participants to support the objectives of the Nasha Mukta Bharat Abhiyaan and contribute towards building a healthier, safer and substance-free society in Sikkim.