Press Release from Women, Child, Senior Citizen and Divyangjan Welfare Department

Training Programme for Caregivers of Special Schools Held at Syari

Syari, November 4: A one-day hands-on training programme for caregivers of special schools was organised on Wednesday at the Asha Kiran Special School for Speech and Hearing Impaired, Syari, by the State Child Protection Society under the Mission Vatsalya Scheme, Women, Child, Senior Citizen and Divyangjan Welfare Department, Government of Sikkim.

The programme aimed at strengthening the knowledge and practical skills of caregivers working with children with special needs in special schools.

The programme commenced with registration of participants, followed by a welcome address by Ms. Chumsang Palden, District Child Protection Officer, Gangtok. The inaugural address was delivered by Ms. Norbu Doma Bhutia, Headmistress, Asha Kiran Special School for Speech and Hearing Impaired, Syari.

The technical sessions formed the key part of the training programme. During the first technical session, Ms. Laxmi Pradhan, Special Educator at the Cradle-Child Development Centre, Gangtok, emphasised that caregiving and special education should not be about striving for perfection, but about helping every child become as independent as possible. She spoke extensively about the 21 recognised disabilities, explaining their individual characteristics and the importance of understanding the specific needs of each child. Highlighting the significance of Activities of Daily Living (ADLs), she stressed that children should be encouraged to learn everyday tasks through simple, practical and activity-based methods. She advocated a gradual, one-step-at-a-time approach, allowing children to develop essential life skills at their own pace. The focus, she emphasised, should be on equipping children with the confidence and abilities to perform daily activities independently rather than measuring their progress against conventional standards.

The second technical session, conducted by Ms. Neha Rai, an Advanced Diploma holder in Child Guidance and Counselling from the Savitribai Phule National Institute of Women and Child Development, Guwahati, focused on child psychology and understanding children's behaviour. She highlighted the importance of the trial-and-error method in understanding a child's responses and learning patterns. She pointed out that the same child may exhibit different behaviours in different settings, underlining the influence of the surrounding environment and circumstances on a child's behaviour. She further emphasised that a child should never be defined or confined by a medical diagnosis, as every child is much more than a label. Instead, caregivers and parents must recognise the child's individual strengths, potential, personality and abilities. Stressing the importance of acceptance and encouragement, she noted that courage and confidence develop within an individual when they are supported and accepted. She also underscored that parents must first embrace and accept their child's uniqueness, as such acceptance forms the foundation for the child's confidence, growth and independence

Further, Joint Secretary cum Scheme In-charge Ms. Manisha Cintury, addressed the gathering and highlighted that every child is unique, with individual needs, abilities and ways of responding to different environments and situations. She emphasised that a child's behaviour may vary depending on the setting and the circumstances, making it important for caregivers to understand each child with patience, sensitivity and empathy. She encouraged all caregivers and stakeholders to work collectively, maintain coordination and adopt a child-centric approach to ensure the overall welfare, development and well-being of every child.

An open house discussion was also organised, providing an opportunity for caregivers and resource persons to exchange views, discuss relevant issues and share their perspectives on caregiving and the support required by children with special needs.

The programme concluded with a vote of thanks proposed by Ms. Tshering Yangchen Bhutia, Programme Officer, Mission Vatsalya Scheme, followed by lunch.

The training programme highlighted the importance of capacity building among caregivers and strengthening the support system for children with special needs through improved knowledge, practical skills and effective caregiving practices.