

Press Release From Women, Child , Senior Citizen and Divyangjan Welfare Department, Namchi
8th Poshan Pakhwada Programme Held in Namchi District

Namchi, 22nd April: The 8th Poshan Pakhwada programme was organised by Namchi Zone-1 under the Women, Child, Senior Citizen & Divyangjan Welfare Department at Gangjung ICDS Centre.

The event was graced by the Honorable Panchayat of Tadong-Boomtar Ward Mr. D.B Tamang, along with Landowner of ICDS Center Mr. Dawa Norbu Tamang, AD Nutrition Ms. Sophia Lepcha, Dr. Monishka Pradhan from the Health and Wellness Centre (HWC) Boomtar, and her team Nurse Ms. Krishna Maya Gurung and Office Staff Anjana Limboo, District Coordinator Mr. Pranay Sharma, NITI Aayog Block Fellow Ms. Mithila Rai, representative from Boomtar- Thangsang Primary school Ms. Sancha Maya Tamang, Supervisor Mr. Bidhan Rai, ASHA workers Ms. Man Maya Rai, and Welfare Inspector Ms. Rashmi Rai.

The Honorable Panchayat Mr. D.B. Tamang expressed gratitude for the invitation and appreciated the initiative. He highlighted that such awareness programs are highly beneficial for the community and should be conducted more frequently. He was particularly impressed by the display of millet-based foods, recalling how millets were a staple diet in earlier times but is now rarely seen in households.

He commended the ICDS Centre for reintroducing millets into children's diets and emphasized the need to include them in modern nutrition practices. He also expressed his willingness to organize similar programs on a larger scale in the future.

District Coordinator Mr. Pranay Sharma elaborated on the significance of Poshan Pakhwada, which was launched in 2018 as a long-term initiative to improve nutritional outcomes. Celebrated annually from 9th to 23rd April, the program focuses on evolving themes based on current needs.

This year's themes include Mother and Child Nutrition Early Stimulation for Brain Development Play-Based Education in Early Years Role of Parents and Community in Minimising Screen Time Garnering Community Support for Stronger Anganwadis.

Focusing on the theme of minimizing screen time, Mr. Sharma emphasized the growing dependence on mobile phones in daily life and its negative impact on both adults and children. He pointed out that excessive screen usage is a form of addiction often overlooked by society. He stressed that reducing screen time must begin within the household, especially with parents setting the right example, and warned that if not addressed, it could lead to the need for rehabilitation services in the future.

Ms. Mithila Rai, NITI Aayog Block Fellow, spoke about the Aspirational Block, noting that Namchi Block was selected due to its performance being below expected standards. She highlighted key indicators such as:

Health & Nutrition Education Agriculture Services Basic Infrastructure Social Development

Addressing the gathering she spoke about Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM) and Moderate Acute Malnutrition (MAM) and how the right data can be inserted at POSHAN App. She also mentioned the other services that NITI Aayog can help with such as improving internet connectivity in Gram Panchayats, strengthening Self-Help Groups through revolving funds, and ensuring regular data entry in the Poshan App by Anganwadi workers.

Dr. Monishka Pradhan delivered an informative session on anaemia, explaining that it occurs due to a deficiency of haemoglobin in red blood cells. She outlined various types of anaemia, including iron deficiency, Vitamin B12 deficiency, and folic acid deficiency. Common symptoms such as fatigue, dizziness, rapid heartbeat, and low immunity were discussed. She emphasized the importance of early diagnosis through health check-ups and explained contributing factors such as poor nutrition, heavy menstruation, and worm infestations due to inadequate hygiene.

She added that preventive measures include consuming Vitamin C-rich foods, meat, pulses, eggs, and rajma, along with regular deworming twice a year. She advised pregnant women to take iron supplements after the first trimester and encouraged everyone to seek timely medical attention when symptoms arise.

AD Nutrition Ms. Sophia Lepcha focused on the critical importance of the first 1,000 days of a child's life, from conception to two years of age, for optimal brain development. She stressed that colostrum, the first milk after birth, should never be discarded as it is rich in antibodies and essential nutrients. Exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months, without even water, was strongly recommended. She also addressed common myths such as feeding honey or ghee to infants, which can be harmful.

She explained the importance of timely introduction of complementary feeding after six months, recommending nutritious options like khichdi in appropriate consistency. She raised concern about the increasing use of mobile phones to feed children, noting that it negatively affects their eating habits and nutritional intake. She emphasized the inclusion of protein-rich foods in children's diets and suggested affordable alternatives for essential nutrients, such as walnuts and avocado locally available foods for Omega-3 fatty acids.

Highlighting micronutrients, she discussed the importance of iodine, zinc, and other essential elements in early childhood development. She also addressed broader social concerns such as rising mental health issues and the

increasing gap between parents and children. She emphasized that regular communication and emotional bonding are crucial for a child's overall well-being.

Concluding her session, she advised practical strategies to reduce junk food consumption among children, such as ensuring they are first given a balanced, nutritious meal before offering occasional treats.

Supervisor Mr. Bidhan Rai highlighted the importance of Poshan Pakhwada and the first 1000 days of life for a child's growth and development. He appreciated the efforts of ICDS Anganwadi Workers at the grassroots level for spreading awareness among parents. He urged beneficiaries, including pregnant women, lactating mothers, and adolescents, to utilise the benefits of such programmes and emphasised the importance of proper nutrition, especially for children aged 0–6 years. He also encouraged the inclusion of green vegetables in daily diets for better health.

The program concluded with a strong message on the collective responsibility of parents, caregivers, and the community in ensuring the healthy growth and development of children. It reinforced the importance of awareness, behavioral change, and sustained efforts in building a healthier society.

The program was organized in collaboration with 11 centers of Namchi Zone I that was:- Gangjung, Bhutia Busty, Boomatr, Singithang, Gangyap, Namuna Busty, Lower Mikchola, Sangbong, Purano Namchi, Lower Gom and Assangthang. Anganwadi Worker, Anganwadi Helper and MTOS from each center actively participated in the program. Their collective efforts, strong coordination and teamwork played vital role in making the programme successful and in achieving its intended objectives.