

PRESS RELEASE



CDC-Meghalaya Convenes National Experts for Inaugural Early Childhood Development (ECD) Workshop

Aims at bridging research, practice & technology for transformative ECD outcomes

Shillong | July 24, 2025

In a significant move to advance Early Childhood Development (ECD) outcomes in Meghalaya, the Centre for Developing Child- Meghalaya (CDC-M), under the Meghalaya ECD Mission Society, convened a high-level workshop today (July 24, 2025) in Shillong. Designed as an intensive problem-solving platform, the workshop brought together a diverse mix of policymakers, developmental paediatricians, researchers, frontline practitioners, educators, and institutional partners to jointly diagnose challenges and co-develop scalable, context-sensitive solutions across the ECD spectrum. Representatives from the partner states of Maharashtra, Odisha, and Karnataka joined the deliberations, underscoring the national momentum around early child development and care systems.



The workshop was organised by the **Centre for Developing Child (CDC), Meghalaya**, in partnership with **Krea University**. Centered on the theme “**Bridging Research, Practice & Technology for Transformative Early Childhood Outcomes,**” the convening sought to align scientific research and policy frameworks into a unified convergence strategy for Meghalaya. The CDC-M is envisioned as a platform that bridges governance and research, enabling states and countries to formulate policies and guidelines grounded in robust data and globally proven best practices.

Speaking at the inaugural, Development Commissioner & Principal Secretary, Dr. Sampath Kumar, IAS emphasized that ECD is not a single-ministry or department mandate, but a multi-sectoral mission requiring convergence across departments/stakeholders, communities, and frontline systems. Echoing this vision, Mr. Ronald Kynta, Chief Operating Officer of MECDM, announced that project partner ADB has also allocated financial support for the establishment and operationalisation of the CDC-M over the next two years.

Dr. Roopa Srinivasan, Senior Developmental Paediatrician at Ummeed Child Development Centre, presented Ummeed's work in building inclusive, family-centred interventions for children with disabilities. She shared a powerful case of a 13-year-old non-verbal child with autism who found his voice through augmentative and alternative communication (AAC), highlighting the transformative role of empowered caregivers. Dr. Srinivasan also discussed Ummeed's upcoming trainer certification phase and shared that over 460 Guide for Monitoring Child Development (GMCD) assessments have been conducted across Meghalaya, covering children aged 0–42 months.



A key highlight of the workshop was insights gathered across two panel sessions. The 1st session was themed- *From Awareness to Action: Building inclusive foundations for young children with disabilities and delays*. This was moderated by Dr. Roopa Srinivasan. The panel members were Dr. Sampath Kumar IAS, Development Commissioner & Principal Secretary, Health & Family Welfare and Social Welfare Department, Government of Meghalaya; Dr. Subodh S Gupta, Professor and Head at Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Medical Sciences, Sewagram; Dr. Sunanda Reddy, Developmental Paediatrician, CareNidhi; Dr. Simin F Irani, Neonatologist and ECD Specialist, UNICEF Maharashtra; Dr. Sandra Albert, Director, IIPH-Shillong.



Dr. Sampath Kumar, IAS emphasized convergence across departments and the state's efforts to institutionalize ECD through multi-sectoral platforms like the Human Development Council and ECD Society. He shared Meghalaya's innovative community-led models, including parenting interventions, VEC-led child-friendly spaces, and the ECD Graduate Fellowship. Experts including Dr. Subodh Gupta, Dr. Sunanda Reddy, Dr. Simin Irani, and Dr. Sandra Albert underscored the importance of home visits, positive parenting, neonatal care (like KMC), grassroots capacity building, and culturally rooted practices, backed by evidence.



The second session was themed- *Reimagining ECD & ECCE through Innovation and Evidence*. Moderated by Ms. Madhavilata Maganti, Associate Professor, Psychology, Krea University, the panel members were Dr. Sampath Kumar IAS, Mr. Reddy Subrahmaniam, Founding Member, CRISP; Dr. Venita Kaul, Professor Emerita (Education), Ambedkar University, Delhi & Founding Director of Center for Early Childhood Education and Development (CECED); Dr. Abhishek Raut, Professor, Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Medical Sciences (MGIMS); Mr. D. Shivkumar, Kalike- Tata Trusts; Mr. Prakash Paul, Country Head, Van Leer Foundation;



This session tackled core challenges in early childhood care-anemia, micronutrient deficiencies, and school readiness gaps. Dr. R. Subrahmaniam outlined five key reforms: co-locating AWCs with primary schools, relieving AWWs of non-core tasks, supporting curriculum translation, peer-assisted training, and continuous mentoring to empower AWWs as early educators. Dr. Venita Kaul introduced the “4Cs” framework-Continuum, Cumulative, Comprehensive, Contextual-for evaluating programmes and stressed the need for decentralization. Practitioners like Dr. Abhishek Raut and Mr. Shivkumar emphasized unburdening AWWs, home-based learning, and spiral learning models for supervisors. Mr. Prakash Paul advocated for an ecosystem approach-nurturing environments, behavioural design (Urban95), and active father involvement in positive parenting.



As part of Meghalaya’s larger goal as part of its state capability building initiative to convert dialogue into action, participants engaged in focused group discussions to co-create practical strategies for accelerating early childhood outcomes. Divided into 4 thematic groups, participants explored key priorities such as community-led ECD through SHGs and Village Health Councils, ensuring continuity of learning from Anganwadis to primary schools, designing enabling environments for responsive caregiving and use of technology to leverage ECD interventions. Each group used a *Feasibility–Impact matrix to rank ideas* based on their transformative potential and implementability. The session culminated in shared reflections and an open dialogue on shaping a blueprint for convergence and mission delivery, with technology and community empowerment as cross-cutting enablers.



The workshop concluded with a facilitation of guests by Ms. C.D. Lyngwa, MCS, Director of Social Welfare, followed by closing reflections from the Principal Secretary Dr. Sampath Kumar, IAS. He emphasized that the workshop had been a significant learning moment for the state, reinforcing the importance of knowledge partnerships across research, development, and policy. Highlighting that the CDC Meghalaya is possibly the first of its kind in India, he clarified its unique positioning- as a research-to-practice platform embedded within the state's ECD Mission. Envisioned as a movement to unite passionate stakeholders around a shared vision, CDC aims to shape the future cognitive capital of the state and the country. Dr. Kumar appreciated the collective insights shared, urged continued collaboration, and reaffirmed that this marks the beginning of a long-term effort to achieve transformative human development outcomes