Meghalaya Takes Early Childhood Development to UK Parliament, Making the Case for a Better Future

A landmark parliamentary dialogue at Westminster brings Meghalaya legislators, UK leaders and global advocates together to champion early childhood as the foundation of healthier, more capable and compassionate societies.

LONDON, 11 November 2026: What if the future of a society depended not only on the infrastructure it builds, but on how well it nurtures its youngest citizens?

This question was at the heart of a landmark Early Childhood Development (ECD) Policy Dialogue at the UK Parliament in Westminster on 11 November 2026 — a first-of-its-kind parliamentary engagement for Meghalaya at the UK Parliament.

Organised by the Government of Meghalaya in collaboration with global education organisation Think Equal, the dialogue brought together 20 Meghalaya legislators, led by Hon'ble Speaker Thomas A. Sangma, UK parliamentary representatives, researchers and global advocates. It placed Meghalaya's ECD journey within a wider international conversation on governance, public investment and the foundations of human development.

Sharing Meghalaya's experience, ***Dr. Sampath Kumar, Additional Chief Secretary to the Government of Meghalaya,*** spoke about how evidence on childhood stunting and nutrition challenges prompted the state's leadership, including Chief Minister Conrad K. Sangma, to rethink public spending priorities and recognise the importance of investing in children's development. "Through evidence, through data, through research, if you can connect with values, then you get different results," he observed.

This vision underpins Meghalaya's Early Childhood Development Mission — a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach bringing together health, nutrition, early learning, responsive caregiving and parental wellbeing. The Mission is strengthening systems and community capacity across the state, including through the training of approximately 22,000 frontline functionaries and an ECD Fellowship engaging over 1,600 young people across all 12 districts.

Dr. Julian Huppert, former Member of Parliament for Cambridge and Founding Director of the Intellectual Forum at Jesus College, University of Cambridge, emphasised the need for governments to shift public investment towards the earliest years of life, rather than relying primarily on interventions after challenges have emerged. "Let's move money right to the start," he urged, highlighting the importance of rigorous, independent evidence to understand what works, for whom and under what conditions, and how successful interventions can be scaled.

Leslee Udwin, Founder and President of Think Equal, emphasised that early childhood development extends far beyond academic learning, with the social and emotional capacities children develop in their formative years shaping how they relate to themselves, others and the world around them. "This is not an education issue alone," she said.

Through its partnership with Think Equal, Meghalaya is bringing structured social and emotional learning to approximately 6,188 early childhood development centres, with a planned reach of around 200,000 children. The dialogue also drew on Greater Manchester's experience, highlighting how political leadership and collaboration across public institutions can create more supportive environments for children and families. It opened avenues for continued peer learning and collaboration between Meghalaya and Greater Manchester.

The discussions further explored opportunities for collaboration in research, independent evaluation, institutional learning and international policy exchange, including the possibility of a Commonwealth learning platform. Participants reflected on the importance of building enduring public systems and partnerships that place children's development at the centre of governance.

In his Vote of Thanks, ***Hon'ble Speaker Thomas A. Sangma*** reflected on the shared aspirations that unite countries despite differences in context. "While our contexts and approaches may differ, our aspirations for children are shared. I hope this exchange marks the beginning of continued learning and collaboration, and strengthens our collective resolve to make early childhood a priority across government and society."

The dialogue marks an important step in Meghalaya's efforts to place early childhood at the centre of public policy, recognising that the children we nurture today will shape the societies we become tomorrow. Building a more compassionate and capable world begins with giving every child the best possible start in life.

**** pictures attached below**




Investing in the
Early Years to nurture
compassionate societies
for a better tomorrow