GOVERNMENT OF MEGHALAYA

PRESS RELEASE

District-Level Coordination Workshop on HPV Vaccination

Held in North Garo Hills

Resubelpara, November 24, 2026: A district-level coordination workshop on Human Papillomavirus (HPV) vaccination was held today at the Conference Hall of the Deputy Commissioner, North Garo Hills, with the objective of strengthening vaccination coverage and addressing challenges contributing to the low uptake of the HPV vaccine in the district.

The workshop, convened by the Office of the District Medical and Health Officer (DM&HO), North Garo Hills, in collaboration with the State-level officials of the Directorate of Health Services (DHS), brought together representatives from the departments of Medical, Education, Social Welfare, Meghalaya State Rural Livelihoods Society (MSRLS), Block Administration, faith-based organisations, community representatives and other stakeholders for an in-depth discussion on strategies to improve vaccination coverage through coordinated efforts and greater community participation.



Delivering the opening remarks, Deputy Commissioner, North Garo Hills, Smti. M.S.N.Marak, IAS, expressed concern over the district's low HPV Vaccination coverage which currently stands at just 3%. She emphasised the need to urgently scale up vaccination efforts through active involvement of all stakeholders. The Deputy Commissioner also assured that a follow-up meeting involving all stakeholders and grassroots level implementation groups would be convened to review progress.

Speaking on the objectives of the workshop, Dr. B.R. Marak, Joint Director of Health Services (MCH&FW) and State Immunisation Officer (SIO), emphasised the need to strengthen outreach and expand the coverage of HPV vaccination across the State, including North Garo Hills. She underscored the importance of addressing implementation challenges and collectively working towards improving the district's vaccination status.

Dr. Marak also highlighted the importance of HPV vaccination in preventing cervical cancer, a major public health concern affecting women. She explained that HPV is a common viral infection associated with cervical cancer and that vaccination at the recommended age offers effective protection against HPV-related diseases. She further stressed that cervical cancer is among the few cancers that can be significantly prevented through timely vaccination.

The workshop highlighted that the HPV vaccine is being provided free of cost to eligible adolescent girls aged 14 to 15 years. Emphasis was also laid on the importance of parental consent and support in ensuring vaccination, as informed parents and guardians play a vital role in building confidence, addressing concerns and encouraging eligible girls to avail themselves of the preventive healthcare service.

Deliberations also focused on dispelling myths and misconceptions surrounding the HPV vaccine, addressing vaccine hesitancy and strengthening public awareness about its safety, efficacy and long-term benefits. Stakeholders, particularly community leaders, faith-based organisations and Village Health Committees, were urged to actively participate in awareness initiatives and encourage greater acceptance of the vaccination programme at the grassroots level.

The status of HPV vaccination in North Garo Hills, including progress made, prevailing challenges and opportunities for improvement, was presented by Dr. Rezia Sangma, District Immunisation Officer (DIO), North Garo Hills. The roles and responsibilities of various stakeholders, communication resources and key messages for effective community engagement were also highlighted by the communication partners.



The workshop concluded with an open discussion, during which participants deliberated on strengthening interdepartmental coordination, community mobilisation and collective responsibility to ensure wider acceptance and successful implementation of the HPV vaccination programme, thereby safeguarding the health and future of adolescent girls.