

The Sikkim State Legal Services Authority organized a Training Programme on the proper and effective implementation of “***Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012 read with Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Rules, 2012 and Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015***” for all Stakeholders on 26th November, 2022 at Sikkim Judicial Academy, Sokeythang, East Sikkim. The programme commenced with the reading of the Preamble to the Constitution.

Hon’ble Mrs. Justice Meenakshi Madan Rai, Judge, High Court of Sikkim and Executive Chairperson, Sikkim SLA during her inaugural address highlighted the important provisions of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act 2015 and the POCSO Act, 2012 and various issues relating to child-in-conflict-with-law, child-in-need of care and protection, the role and responsibility of Members of District Child Protection Units, Special Juvenile Police Units, Counselors, Outreach Workers and the Courts. The importance of the 1st responder to the incident was explained at length. The purpose of ‘Mission Vatsalya’ of Ministry of Women and Child Development was also adverted to. A suggestion was put forth for the constitution of “Crisis Intervention Team” for child victims. The media were sounded on the provisions of Section 23 of the POCSO Act while reporting such offences and the bar on disclosing the identity of the victim.

Resource Person, Hon’ble Mr. Justice S.P. Wangdi, former Judge, High Court of Sikkim and the Chairperson, Police Accountability Commission of Sikkim apprised the participants on “Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015” with a detailed historical background of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015, the present position of the law with emphasis on the landmark judgments passed by the Hon’ble Supreme Court which had paved the way for enactment of this beneficial legislation. He also stressed on the rehabilitative approach towards children.

Resource Person, Mrs. K.C. Barphungpa, Ld. Judge, Special Court (POCSO Act), Gangtok District & Chairperson, District Legal Services Authority, East dwelt at length on the provisions of Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012 and the POCSO, Rules, 2012. The various provisions under the POCSO Act and its penal repercussions were explained. The stakeholders were sensitized on the manner of recording statements of the POCSO survivors.

Resource Person, Dr. Shaibya Saldanha, Obstetrician and Gynaecologist and Founder of Enfold, India spoke on Medical examination of POCSO survivors and on approach to Trauma Informed Care and Medical Examination and Collection of Forensic Evidence, Documentation and Writing a Medical Report. She elaborated on the method of medical examination that is to be adopted in cases of POCSO survivors and how doctors had to consider the matter with confidentiality and urgency.

Resource Person, Dr. Sonam O. Lassopa, Senior Clinical Psychologist, New STNM Multispecialty Hospital, Gangtok spoke on the topic “Dealing with trauma faced by POCSO survivors and their family members and an overview of their mental health”. She discussed the trauma faced by POCSO survivors, coping mechanisms and ways in which the first responders can help the children cope with several aspects of mental health were explained at length.

The sessions were followed by vibrant interactive discussion on queries raised by the participants addressed by the Chief Guest and the Resource Persons.

The welcome address was delivered by Ms. Subarna Rai, Member Secretary, Sikkim SLISA and the vote of thanks was proposed by Mr. Praveen Pradhan, Deputy Secretary, Sikkim SLISA.

The programme had the participation of Judges of the Special Courts of the POCSO Act, 2012, Director, Sikkim Judicial Academy, Registrar, High Court of Sikkim, Mrs. Matilda Isaacs, Consultant, Sikkim SLA, Designated Senior Advocate, High Court of Sikkim, Officers from Police Department, Women & Child Development Department, Medical Officers, Psychiatrists and Psychologists from the Health & Family Welfare Department, Public Prosecutors, Additional Public Prosecutors, Members of the Juvenile Justice Boards and Child Welfare Committees, Retainer Lawyers and Panel Advocates of Sikkim SLA, Officers and staff of Sikkim SLA and Press and Media.