

Name of the Gram Panchayat	Okosto
States/UTs	Nagaland
Theme	(Women and child development) Child Friendly

For a house to be able to withstand the storm, the foundation has to be strong. Children of today are the leaders of tomorrow but if the foundation is not laid strong, we end up raising a generation of people who are not equipped to face the challenges of the world.

Realizing the importance of grooming the children from a young age, Okotso village Council has taken extra care to ensure 100% enrolment of children in schools and efforts are made to keep the dropout rate to the absolute minimum. To make the VC more Child friendly, people from the Village believe that the mid-day meal is the best practice till date. Mid-day meals are provided every day to the children with the maximum required nutrition in their food.

Okotso village Council comes under Sanis block which is situated in Wokha District of Nagaland. The Village has 451 households and a population of 2138 as per 2011 census. The villager mainly depends on farming. The Village Council is headed by a Chairman. It has its own office and village court.

Since most of the villager depends on farming, social activities become negligible because a farmer goes to his field early in the morning and comes back late in the evening due to which they don't prosper economically. They are ignorant in politics due to this reason while Jhum cultivation by farmers leads to loss of natural forest eco-system creating a huge impact on environment resulting in flood, soil digression and loss of bio-diversity which eventually affect the economic activity and integrity of the forest dependent beings.

In order to enhance enrollment, retention and attendance, the supreme court of India in the year 2001, ordered all state Government Schools to implement mid-day meal scheme and provide cooked meals to the children. But during those earlier days, the village had a very poor road connectivity resulting in the children not getting nutritious food during monsoon season. But as more funding received from the government for road connectivity, the mid-day meal quality for the children increased.

The members of VC and women SHGs are working hard to generate awareness to the village mass through different kinds of interventions. One among these is the midday meal given to the school children.

Special gram sabhas were held with special focus on improving the quality of food being served in schools and the ways to improve shortfalls. Underlying problem was identified and the house understood that to attract more children to schools, Mid-Day Meal would play the most important role. All out efforts were made to implement the MDM Scheme as per the laid down guidelines. Also with improved road connectivity, the village school began giving more nutritious food every day. Mass awareness was created through active participation of youth and women bodies in the village. The church became an important place of education and awareness. The importance of education was understood by everyone in the village and with that target achieved, Mid-Day Meal only became an attraction for the parents to send their children to schools. The Village Council oversees all the developmental activities in the village. The quality of the meal has improved leaps and bounds in the last 5years and the results of the children have improved drastically. All the members of the village are stakeholders in making the MDM a success. The Village Council, the Village Development Board, various government departments, elected representative, women SHGs, the church and the youth and student bodies played a vital role.



As a result of the above mentioned interventions, the irregular school children started attending class regularly while most students improved on their IQs and they started to show more interest in classes as well. Enrolment started to enhance each year. These efforts have resulted in the literacy rate of the village improved. The literacy rate as per 2011 census is 92.87(Male- 95.21% and Female-90.35%).

Nagaland is a state where almost all the villages have similar geography and inhabited by similar people, therefore, the interventions that were undertaken at Okotso Village Council can be easily replicated in other villages. Before the implementation of any scheme, awareness is an absolute necessity. If any scheme fails to provide the desired result, a thorough deliberation is necessary by organizing a special gram



sabha to identify the reasons for failure. Once the problem is identified, awareness and interventions should be carried out to let the message reach the masses. Once the solution is understood by the people, implementation no longer becomes a problem. Special gram sabhas, with active participation by the members, are vital in addressing any challenge faced by the village.

The recognition of the hard work done by the village in the form of an award is a huge boost to the village. The awareness activities and other development works will continue in future by Village Council.