

'Period Proud' - Sri Lanka's first event on menstrual health and hygiene

FPA Sri Lanka, in collaboration with the French Embassy in Sri Lanka and the Maldives, hosted a successful public event titled 'Period Proud' on November 11th, from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. at the Independence Arcade. The event aimed to raise awareness about period poverty, a multifaceted problem that affects millions of menstruators worldwide.

A large crowd of people of all ages attended the event to learn more about period poverty and how to help address it. There were stalls from organizations that work on menstruation and period poverty, as well as creative performances such as a puppet show, Bharatanatyam, drama, and playback theatre. The performances were all well-received and helped to convey the importance of the issue in a creative and engaging way.

The event featured 18 stalls, 13 from FPA's partner organizations for the CAAPP project, vendors who promote sustainable period products, and organizations that work around menstrual health and related topics. These included The Arka Initiative & Tea Leaf Trust, Humanitarian Development Organisation, Foundation for Innovative Social Development, Nature Foundation, Sarvodaya Women's Movement, Save a Life, Human Development Organization, Abhimana Community Development Association, Rural Economic Community Development Organisation, Jaffna Social Action Centre, Deva Sarana Development Centre and The Grassrooted Trust, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), Youth Advocacy Network Sri Lanka & Hashtag Generation, Selyn, Momiji Natural, Happy Bleeding & Endometriosis Support and Awareness Foundation, Chrysalis and The Family Planning Association of Sri Lanka.



Panel discussion titled 'Navigating Menstrual Health in Sri Lanka' with Dr. Asanthi Fernando Balapitiya - Consultant Community Physician and Head of Health Communication and Life Skills Unit at the Health Promotion Bureau, Ministry of Health Sri Lanka, Sarah Soysa - National Programme Analyst at the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), Yolani Fernando - Executive Director/ Co-founder of Arutha, a policy think tank focusing on economic research and communication, and Manisha Dissanayake - Attorney-at-Law and Founder of Arka Initiative. Some of the key points discussed included the importance of including sanitary pads under essential services and the need for more political involvement than civil society organizations.





The event showcased a lineup of artistic presentations, which included a puppet show, “නොච්චා - වෙලා” by Power of Play, focusing on cultural practices related to menarche in Sri Lanka, an interpretative Bharatanatyam dance called ‘From Stigma to Strength: The Journey of Menstrual Empowerment’ by Abhirami Patikunam, a drama called ‘This Vicious Cycle’ by the Stages Theatre Group focusing on challenges of menstrual health and period poverty, an interactive improvisation by the Basement Playback Theatre Company and concluded with an entertaining session by The Singing Potatoes music group.

Following the successful completion of the event, FPA is committed to continuing to raise awareness about period poverty and working to ensure that everyone has access to the menstrual hygiene products and education they need.

The 13 NGOs selected to work on this project met in December to present their 1st quarter activities, achievements, challenges and how they were addressed and plans for the upcoming months.



The incredible Power of Play was in action at the FPA Head Office on the 15th of December with their enlightening puppet show “නොච්චා - වෙලා” During the Q&A time at the end of the show, members of the audience took turns sharing their menstruation-related experiences and opinions on the performance. The first step toward eliminating stigma and discrimination is to start the conversation.





The CAAPP Project proudly completed quarter one in December, achieving key milestones in capacity development for more than 50 NGOs on Period Poverty. The mass event "Period Proud" confronted stigma and discrimination head-on. Thirteen partner NGOs successfully completed their first quarter activities, demonstrating their commitment to our mission. Highlights include highly effective Awareness and TOT trainings on menstrual hygiene, stigma, and school infrastructure development. Our media publications, as well as our ongoing work on sustainable menstrual products and disposal techniques, amplify our commitment to ending period poverty.

Jeyanthi Nadaraja
Project Coordinator.

TOP 10 CHAMPIONS OF DIVERSITY - PALANIYANDY SIVAKUMAR, WINS!

Palaniyandy Sivakumar, aka Siva, Head of the Service Delivery Point in Nuwara Eliya, was named one of the Top 10 Champions of Diversity (Women in Management Awards) at the ceremony held at Taj Samudra Hotel. It's no surprise to us; Siva has been dedicated to promoting equality, diversity, and inclusion for years, and his work in the field of Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) is particularly inspiring.

Siva is a strong advocate of SRHR for women and LGBTQI+ communities, particularly in the underserved estate sector, working towards combatting Sexual and Gender-based Violence, menstruation-related challenges, addressing mental health concerns, mitigating early marriages, preventing unwanted pregnancies and unsafe abortions within the tea plantation sector. His strengths include collaborating with various entities, including the Regional Director of Health Services, District hospitals, Police Stations, District and Divisional Secretariats, and other government and non-governmental organizations. He has made substantial contributions to the well-being of trans and cisgender women.

Functioning as a community trainer and sensitizer proficient in all local languages, Siva has conducted impactful trainings for diverse audiences, including school and university students, government officers, and policymakers. In 2015, he was able to lead the establishment of a Committee against Gender-Based Violence (GBV) in the district secretariat office, subsequently engaging in numerous initiatives to combat violence against women and the transgender community. His pivotal role in this Committee led to the establishment of a shelter for over 200 affected trans and cisgender women, fulfilling a longstanding community need, with support from the District Secretary. Under his leadership, FPA Sri Lanka also played a pivotal role in organizing a Gender Policy for the Nuwara Eliya District in 2022.

We are proud of Siva and recognize and celebrate his achievements and contributions, which have been a strength to FPA and the communities that he serves. He was also felicitated at FPA's 70th Anniversary Celebrations held on the 9th of December; see page 23.



Welcome to the Team



R. Jeyakumaran
Senior Manager
Kilinochchi SDP



W. A. S. Bhashini
Secretary



R. A. U. Kumara
Senior Manager
Wathupitiwala SDP



Social Media Campaigns



16 Days of Activism against Gender Based Violence

November 25th - December 10th

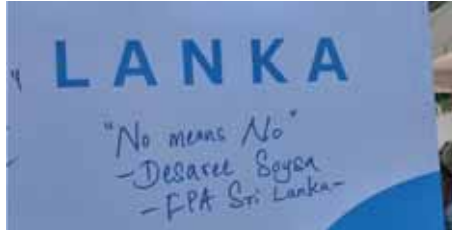


PLEDGE

to never commit, condone, or remain silent about gender-based violence.



On the 25th of November, the 'I Pledge' campaign was launched, calling on citizens to show how much they care about ending violence against women and girls. 16 pledges, one per day, were shared until the 10th of December, Human Rights Day. Violence can happen anywhere, anytime, to anyone. Don't be a bystander, be a change-maker. Together, we can make a difference.



Over 300 people, including representatives from the Government, and civil society partners, joined UN Sri Lanka to walk in solidarity to take a stand against gender-based violence. FPA was also in attendance supporting this event and cause.

Essential items for women in need!



As economic challenges continue to impact communities, as a response activity for #16daysofActivism, the Wathupitala Service Delivery Point distributed Maternity and Dignity Kits to staff in 15 factories in the EPZ.

The maternity kits contain essential hygiene and sanitary items for pregnant mothers. Dignity kits contain items explicitly tailored towards the local needs of women and girls of reproductive age. Both Kits included a leaflet that provided contact information for individuals to access sexual and reproductive healthcare, as well as support for gender-based violence situations through FPA Service Delivery Points.

This activity is supported by the People of Japan, and FPA, together with UNFPA Sri Lanka, are the implementing partners of this initiative.

Breast Cancer Awareness Month - October

Q&A session for FPA staff

Breast cancer is the most common cancer among women globally, and early detection is critical for successful outcomes. Shockingly, it's the fifth leading cause of cancer deaths worldwide, and women are 100 times more likely than men to develop it. In 2020 alone, breast cancer accounted for one in every eight cancers diagnosed, with an estimated 2.3 million new cases.

At FPA, we strongly advocate for regular screenings for breast cancer.

An awareness session was organized for female staff at the Head Office with Dr. Yasantha Ariyaratne, a Consultant

Oncologist. Staff were encouraged to share knowledge and understanding gained from the session, as spreading awareness is the only way to encourage women to get regular screenings for early detection.



AIDS Day 2023 - Let Communities Lead!

World AIDS Day, commemorated on December 1st, was a call to action to enable and support communities in their leadership roles.

FPA Sri Lanka strongly believes that the engagement of communities to carry out HIV prevention activities and advocate for treatment and support services has made a tremendous contribution to the success of the national programme that we are a part of with the National STD/AIDS Control Programme.



FPA's Executive Director, Dr. Ruchitha Perera, shared a message on the day.

"World AIDS Day serves as a poignant reminder of our collective commitment to ending HIV/AIDS and promoting comprehensive Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) for all. As the Executive Director of The Family Planning Association Sri Lanka, I urge us to unite in solidarity, fostering awareness, empathy, and access to essential services. Let us champion education, eliminate stigma, and prioritize inclusivity in our communities. SRHR lies at the core of our endeavors, advocating for comprehensive healthcare, empowerment, and dignity for every individual. Together, let us reinforce our efforts in providing equitable access to information, HIV prevention, testing, treatment and support services.

By fostering a culture of understanding and acceptance, we pave the way for a world where everyone can access their rights, make informed choices, and live healthier lives, free from discrimination and the burden of HIV/AIDS. Join us as we stand together, advocating for a future where SRHR is a reality for all."

The AIDS Day walk was organized by the National STD/AIDS Control Programme (NSACP) under the Ministry of Health, together with FPA Sri Lanka. This event was a great success and was supported by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) with the active participation of partner organizations, NGOs, CBOs, PLHIV organizations and communities.



The Batticaloa Service Delivery Point carried out a World AIDS day programme and mobile clinic in Kaluwanchikudy this morning. 150 adolescents were in attendance, some of whom tested for HIV.

Testing clinic at the Kiribathgoda Public Fair. Testing clinics organized by FPA and Community Organizations took place in the Districts of Colombo and Gampaha.

Koggala SDP conducted a Mobile Clinic in commemoration of World AIDS Day. STI/HIV testing services are done through all FPA SDPs throughout the year as well.



Premiere of 'Swara' (Seven Notes) - Produced by internationally acclaimed Nita Fernando and Manohan Nanayakkara at One Galle Face!

While times have changed since the movie was first launched 12 years ago, the fight to inform the public about HIV prevention, treatment and support options to help end the spread and create a caring and enabling environment for people living with HIV goes on.

'Swara' was produced in collaboration with the National STD/AIDS Control Programme, FPA Sri Lanka, the Embassy of Netherlands, Sri Lanka Telecom, Standard Chartered Bank and many other partner organisations.

By following the stories of individuals who have faced prejudice, ostracization, violence and harm due to their HIV status or 'exposure,' the narrative reveals the heartbreaking reality of the discrimination faced by these brave individuals.

Recent years have seen many technological advances in the battle to end the spread of HIV, such as Antiretroviral therapy (ART) - a combination of medicines, that, over time and with effective adherence, suppresses HIV replication in the body to undetectable levels; thereby stopping the negative impact on the immune system and supporting the health of persons living with HIV. With proper adherence, ART also stops the transmission of HIV to others by lowering the number of HIV copies to undetectable levels.

This has offered a new frontier in HIV prevention or 'Treatment as prevention'. Pre - exposure prophylaxis (or PrEP) is another advancement that protects against HIV when taken as prescribed before exposure to HIV.



November 27th - Swara (Seven Notes) - Media Consultation and movie screening by the National STD/AIDS Control Programme, FPA Sri Lanka and the Living with Hope Foundation.

The event was supported by the Sustainability of HIV Services for Key Population in South Asia Programme (SKPA-2), implemented by FPA Sri Lanka and managed by Health Equity Matters.



FPA at the 7th Asian and Pacific Population Conference in Bangkok

The Seventh Asian and Pacific Population Conference was organized by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UN ESCAP) in collaboration with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in Asia and the Pacific.

The conference provided an opportunity to review the 30 years' progress of the implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development in the region. It focused on intersecting population and development considerations as they relate to sustainable development, both now and in the future.

FPA Executive Director Dr. Ruchitha Perera delivered a statement on behalf of CSOs on Ageing Population at the event.

A snippet of his statement:

'We call for policies and strategies to take a rights-based, intersectional and whole-of-life cycle approach to reduce disadvantages for all people living in ageing or aged societies. Older women and LGBTQI+ persons face structural disadvantages in society, and we call upon the governments and state parties to comprehensively address issues that surround ageing through policy and programmes.'



Civil Society Organization (CSO) delegates with the Sri Lanka delegation headed by Dr. Asela Gunawardena, Director General of Health Services.



Executive Director Dr. Ruchitha Perera delivered and Desaree Soysa - Project Consultant - RFSU, represented FPA Sri Lanka at the event.



Dr. Ruchitha Perera with UNFPA representative for Sri Lanka and the Country Director for the Maldives, Kunle Adeniyi.

Regional Meeting on Sexual Gender Diversity (SGD) - 13th-15th December 2023



IPPF and their Member Associations (MAs) envision a world in which all people are free to make their own decisions about their sexuality and well-being, and where there is no discrimination. To ensure that all people with diverse sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and sex characteristics (SOGIESC) can realize their sexual and reproductive health (SRH) and live a fulfilling life, programming that takes their needs and realities into account is required.

The first pillar of IPPF's new Strategic Framework commits to increasing access to SRH for diverse SOGIESC people by involving and caring for the LGBTQI+ community.

This meeting of MAs and community representatives from the East and South East Asia and Oceania Region and the South Asian regional office intends to follow that commitment through shared experiences and MA-to-MA learning in working and engaging with the diverse SOGIESC communities.

The meeting provided opportunities for networking, knowledge exchange, showcasing accomplishments and identified collaborative initiatives to empower

both MAs and community representatives in order to ensure a unified approach to advancing and mainstreaming health initiatives in the Global South for diverse SOGIESC inclusion.



From left to right:

Dr. Ruchitha Perera, FPA Executive Director, Sonal Mehta - Regional Director, South Asia Region and Ranaka Siriwardana - SKPA-2 Project Officer

**Northern Province
Gets a New Clinic**



The goal of the Association in establishing Service Delivery Points in strategic locations throughout the island is to increase access to quality Sexual and Reproductive Health services. In addition to the static clinic, these Centres organize mobile clinics to bring services closer to the target clientele, which is the underserved and hard-to-reach communities. The People of Japan funded our newest service centre in **Kilinochchi**, and FPA and UNFPA Sri Lanka are the initiative's implementing partners.



The Minimum Initial Service Package (MISP) is a set of priority lifesaving interventions required to respond to reproductive health needs at the onset of every humanitarian crisis. A MISP training programme was held for stakeholders and FPA staff working in the districts of Batticaloa and Ampara.



Over a hundred maternity kits were delivered to the Puttalam RDHS office. Maternity kits include hygiene and sanitary items, as well as other items tailored to the needs of pregnant women. This initiative aimed to provide essential items that can have a significant impact on a woman's comfort as well as her physical and psychological health. This activity is funded by UNFPA Sri Lanka and the People of Japan, and carried via all Service Delivery Points.

Empowering the Next Generation



Great things are happening as we join forces with UNFPA Sri Lanka and DFAT (Australia) to organize youth camps across Sri Lanka! Our aim is to equip young minds with essential knowledge and skills that will shape their future.

The camps have been designed to engage young people in skills training on Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH), bodily autonomy, gender-based violence and related information and services while dispelling SRH myths and misconceptions.

Ensuring young people have access to age-appropriate comprehensive sexuality education through dialogue and interactions while facilitating their leadership skills to ensure that every young person's potential is fulfilled is a key priority of FPA Sri Lanka.

DFAT representatives visit the Batticaloa SDP



The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) Australia is working with UNFPA in Sri Lanka to provide services through FPA Service Delivery Points all over the country.

DFAT officials, Sophie Wilkinson (1st Secretary of the Australian High Commission) and Sivasuthan Ramanathan (Senior Programme Officer), visited the Batticaloa SDP for a firsthand experience of how their assistance is benefitting the people.

They interacted with healthcare workers, distributed maternity kits to pregnant women, and also spoke to participants of SRH-based youth camps. These discussions helped them gain valuable insights into the experiences and perceptions of the service recipients and identify areas for further improvement.

This strong partnership with DFAT and UNFPA enables us to provide essential services and make a real difference in people's lives. The power of collaboration is changing lives.



Improving healthcare for factory employees!



Accessing sexual and reproductive health services via mobile clinics at their workplace premises is a huge advantage.

Such clinics are addressing the limited access to quality healthcare services, including HIV and STI prevention measures. Women can access services such as family planning/contraceptive services, STI screening, cancer screening, ante and post-natal check-ups, and general health check-ups at these clinics.

A mobile clinic was carried out at Star Garments located in the Koggala EPZ by FPA's Koggala Service Delivery Point.



Enhancing healthcare workers' competencies

Improving the skills of Public Health Midwives (PHMs) and Public Health Nursing Sisters (PHNS) is a requirement for improving maternal and newborn health outcomes.

These vital community workers were trained at the FPA's Ampara, Seethawaka, and Kilinochchi Service Delivery Points.

Prevention of Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment (PSEAH) and Humanitarian Principals Training Programme and Surge Workshop



The need for preparedness for much harsher disasters and weather conditions has become critical as the impacts and threats of climate change continue to rise.

Sexual and reproductive health needs are likely to increase in such situations, particularly in humanitarian situations. As the implementing partner of the IPPF's SPRINT Project, FPA's comprehensive readiness for such events is required.

While an Emergency Preparedness Plan (EPP) has been developed and recently reviewed, a SURGE system has not yet been introduced or incorporated into the EPP. (The Surge is a group of experienced, skilled, and highly trained professionals who are ready to deploy to any humanitarian crisis anywhere in the world on short notice.)

While the staff has recently received training on the organization's safeguarding policy, those newly recruited and engaged in outreach and ground-level work have not yet received PSEAH training, which is a requirement for service providers. As a result, the two-day programme accomplished the following:

1. Creation of a Surge system and integration of Surge operations into existing organizational policies and FPA's EPP.
2. Sensitization of newly recruited staff and refreshing previously trained staff on FPA's code of conduct and IPPF safeguarding policies.
3. Creating safe reporting mechanisms and community-based complaint mechanisms, and educating FPA staff on how to use them.
4. Sensitization and refreshment of existing knowledge of humanitarian principles among staff in preparation for possible humanitarian responses.

The Alokaya Counselling Centre organized an awareness programme on Breast and Cervical Cancer for over 950 employees of MAS-Active, Biyagama.

Awareness surrounding breast and cervical cancer is incredibly important as early detection, often through screening, can catch the disease when it is most treatable. It is encouraging to see organizations such as MAS prioritizing the well-being and health of their employees!



Health and Wellbeing Programme at Avinya Academy

120 bright minds from Avinya successfully completed a dynamic workshop on Sexual Reproductive Health led by FPA's SRH Institute.

This energizing session covered a wide range of topics, arming participants with critical information and strategies for a better future.

Here's to a generation that takes bold steps toward a healthier world!



“ The diverse topics covered; Reproductive Health, Learning Soft Skills for Success, and How to Manage Stress, were not only essential but also presented with a vibrant and interactive approach.

Our students were not just attentive but genuinely energized by the wealth of knowledge and insights they shared.

Their expertise and passion for their respective fields shone through, making the session not only educational but also enjoyable.

Their commitment to fostering a holistic approach to well-being left a lasting impact on our students at Avinya, equipping them with valuable life skills. We are truly grateful for their contribution to our educational community.

ILMA RIYAZ
Educator Avinya Academy
Bandaragama ”

The SRH Institute successfully completed three courses with 50 participants: Counseling Certificate, Counseling Skills Development, and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy.



The Youth Services Committee of FPA Sri Lanka is leading the charge for reproductive health rights.

The Youth Services Committee hosted a unique 3 day residential, interactive programme for 30 passionate social workers and advocates for sexual and reproductive health and rights from across the country.

The curriculum was meticulously curated and covered topics such as reproductive anatomy, endometriosis, menstruation, LGBTIQ+ rights, contraception, abortion, and social media advocacy. Dr. Rashmira Balasooriya, Shelani Palihawadana, Harini Fernando (Senior Manager - Advocacy at FPA), Henry Mitchell (YANSL), and Thushara Manoj from Équité Sri Lanka facilitated this educational journey.

The event was a huge success, and we're grateful for the chance to make a difference.

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බිනුර් දිලේකා ”





New Committee Appointed

Employee welfare goes beyond just providing wages. It encompasses everything from benefits to support and improving the lives of employees. The ultimate goal of any welfare society is to provide services that boost morale and create a united, efficient, and loyal workforce. When employees feel valued, they take pride in their work, and this is reflected in their interactions with clients. This, in turn, enhances the company's reputation and strengthens client and stakeholder relationships.

Staff were given an opportunity to share their ideas and expectations at the meeting, and the new Committee is looking forward to putting them into action.

Regular staff meetings are essential for fostering a positive work environment. Dr. Ruchitha Perera, Executive Director of FPA, has started monthly meetings at the Head Office, which are now carried out on Microsoft Teams, allowing outstation staff to participate as well. Such gatherings encourage open communication, honest feedback, and teamwork. Regular team meetings also ensure team alignment by keeping everyone on the same page with their shared mission and individual roles.



Introducing the Committee for 2023 - 2024

Honorary President
Dr. Ruchitha Perera (Ex Officio)

Honorary Treasurer
Sureka Perera (Ex Officio)

Secretary
Nadika Fernandupulle

Vice President
Amila Gunasekara

Vice Secretary
Rohan Chandana Kumara

Executive Committee

Ranaka Siriwardana
Advocacy Unit

Bhashini Wijesinghe
ED's Office

Venura Givantha
Outreach Unit

Kokila Ramakrishnan
Maintenance Unit

Medical Committee

Dr. Nuzrath Nasoordeen

Ravindu Sandaruwan Senarathna

Death Donation Committee

Ravindra Peiris

Suresh Ajantha

Loan Committee

Jayamini Priyangika Kumarasinghe

Thivanka De Silva





The Board of Directors and the Executive Director visited the Wathupitiwala and Seethawaka Service Delivery Points, which provided them with firsthand knowledge of a clinic in operation, the opportunity to interact with clients, and the opportunity to discuss operational challenges, if any, and future plans with SDP staff.

Aruni Marcelline, President, Kusum De Silva, Vice President, Amali David, Chairperson Treasury Management Committee, Shehara De Silva, Chairperson MarCom Committee, Nilanthi Jayathilake, Assistant Secretary, Dr. Pramilla Senanayake, Past President, Melanie Kanaka, Chair Audit Committee, and Dr. Ruchitha Perera, Executive Director were in attendance.



Lakshan Seneviratne, Treasurer of FPA's Board of Directors had the opportunity to co-chair IPPF's Finance, Audit and Risk Committee (C-FAR) meeting that took place in London.



Reporting to the Board of Trustees, the expert committee monitors IPPF's financial performance ensuring the financial integrity of the organization, oversees risk management ensuring effective internal control systems are in place and recommends the appointment of the external and internal auditors, reviewing their work and ensuring timely and appropriate responses to audit findings and recommendations.



Nepal Health Officials Visit FPA Sri Lanka on a Learning Visit

During a South-to-South Learning Exchange (SSLE) supported by WHO, a group of five officials visited FPA to learn more about the family planning programme with the objective of strengthening family planning service delivery in Nepal.

The delegation met with FPA's Executive Director, Senior Management team and Unit representatives, who provided an overview of FPA's scope of work, including their advocacy efforts with the government and other stakeholders, in addition to family planning and reproductive health-related Outreach work.

The FPA team also discussed their robust monitoring and evaluation system, which ensures transparency and accountability, and briefed the delegation on the process.

Dealer Meeting in Kuliyaipitiya

FPA's - Social Marketing Programme (SMP) has developed a wide network of dealers in pharmacies, medical clinics, hospitals, groceries, and more to distribute contraceptives and lubricants throughout the country. This ensures that access to these products is not restricted by location or availability.

By sourcing products from accredited suppliers and offering them at an affordable price, the programme enables choice and access for everyone.

To ensure that dealers are well-informed and equipped to serve the community, regular meetings are held to reinforce their

knowledge of products, effects, and benefits.



COMMUNITIES CALL FOR EQUALITY: NATIONAL DIALOGUE ON THE 'PENAL CODE (AMENDMENT) BILL', CONVENED IN KANDY



The Sustainability of HIV Services for Key Populations in Asia Programme SKPA-2 implemented by The Family Planning Association of Sri Lanka (FPA) convened a 2-day National Dialogue on the 'Penal Code (Amendment) Bill', that brought together fifty LGBTIQ+ activists, representatives of organisations, networks and allies from across the country, to collectively (re) strategise and build on existing strategies and action plans, to support the passage of the Bill into law.

The National Dialogue was proposed by SKPA2 in the context of a Private Members Bill, which was presented to Parliament in August 2022 by SLPP Parliamentarian and Attorney-at-Law Premanath C. Dolawatte. The Bill, referred to as the 'Penal Code (Amendment) Bill' was subsequently published in the Gazette in March 2023 and placed on the Order Papers of Parliament in April 2023. This Bill seeks to reform Sections 365 and 365A of the Penal Code to protect the fundamental rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex communities in Sri Lanka.

This law has been arbitrarily used to criminalise same-sex relationships between consenting adults. The fear of being discriminated against or even prosecuted because of the existing law prevents LGBTIQ+ people from accessing a range of fundamental human rights, including access to legal redress in situations of forced marriage, rape and other pervasive forms of sexual and gender-based violence.

The FPA has been working in the area of Sexual, Reproductive Health and Rights, which includes working with people living with HIV in multiple districts of Sri Lanka. As a service delivery organization, FPA with its mandate to remove socio-cultural and legal barriers that prevent key populations (including Gay, Bisexual and other Men-having-Sex-with-Men and Trans people) from accessing HIV services has for many years engaging with the LGBTIQ+ community to address barriers to access services and realize rights. Due to its arbitrary and discriminatory nature, Section 365A of the Penal Code has been identified as one of the many significant legal barriers that prevent key populations from accessing safe and confidential health services. FPA acknowledges and recognises its role as an ally in this process convened the National Dialogue that was led by the LGBTIQ+ community working nationally and regionally and was inclusive of other key allies from broader social justice movements.

This National Dialogue recognizes that a multi-pronged strategy is required by a wide network of LGBTIQ+ activists and allies working in ways that are complementary and building on respective strengths if this is to become a reality.

It must be noted, however, that this current draft law did not develop in a vacuum. LGBTIQ+ activists in Sri Lanka have been demanding equal rights for almost three decades, since 1995, when the first LGBT organisation - Companions on a Journey - was set up. Over the years, activists have invoked international treaty bodies and mechanisms, such as the CEDAW Committee, the Office of the High Commission for Human Rights, and the Universal Periodic Review, to highlight the injustice and violence faced by LGBTIQ+ people living in Sri Lanka. While multiple demands for the right to equality, dignity and respect have been made over the years, the most consistent demand has been for the repeal and reform of Sections 365 and 365A of the Penal Code.

Sri Lanka is now at a decisive moment in this journey to decriminalise adult, consensual same-sex relationships. This is the first time that a draft amendment has been presented in Parliament to amend Section 365 (to only criminalise bestiality) and repeal Section 365A in its entirety. This too, in the context of a progressive Supreme Court determination which stated that “the Bill as a whole, or any provision thereof, is not inconsistent with the constitution” of Sri Lanka. In April 2023, three petitioners invoked the Supreme Court, declaring that the Bill was unconstitutional and against religious beliefs. In response to this, a total of 14 intervening petitions were submitted to the Supreme Court, including one from FPA Sri Lanka, with Sonali Gunasekara-Director Advocacy and Jake Oorloff- Programme Officer SKPA-2, being named as intervening petitioners. The Intervening Petitioners recognized that the criminalization of sexual relations between consenting adults is an archaic colonial value with no resonance with human rights standards. In a landmark decision, the Supreme Court of Sri Lanka ruled that “all persons shall be equal before the law and be entitled to equal protection of the law, irrespective of their sexual orientation and that the [Penal Code Amendment] Bill would in fact, enhance their fundamental rights guaranteed to them under the Constitution and enable them to live in a society with dignity.”

Given this unique window of opportunity in Sri Lanka’s journey towards decriminalization, what happens next is especially crucial so that the momentum of this struggle is not lost. It is crucial, therefore, for LGBTIQ+ activists and allies to re-strategize and work together to leverage the gains made so far to ensure this draft legislation is passed in parliament. The meeting held over two days included the following sessions:

- * Status of the current draft amendment and associated legal and parliamentary process, as well as the legal timeline for the same.
- * Lessons from ‘Voices Against 377’ and the Indian experience of decriminalisation: understanding legal and other strategies to achieve this, including strategies to mobilise local communities.
- * Session 3: Mapping the multiple gaps and needs in Sri Lanka to move forward on the local decriminalisation process.
- * Session 4: Developing a clear action plan with commitments from multiple stakeholders on key steps to be taken over the next 12 months. (Proposed Facilitator: Ambika Satkunanathan, Former Human Rights Commissioner)
- * Session 5: Identifying potential threats that could arise as a backlash to the LGBTIQ+ community and develop strategies to mitigate the same.

The two-day meeting was facilitated by a human rights lawyer, human rights activist and former Commissioner of the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka, Ambika Satkunanathan and was supported by community members who drew on their own lived experience and engagement in activism. The National Dialogue ensured representation from the regions as well as the inclusion of women and women-led groups who are often under-represented in such spaces.



In conversation with
Neranjana Keerthirathna
 Assistant Director - HR

Tell us about your career journey, interests and passions.

I began working as an accounts assistant in 2004 and became an HR assistant in 2010. I worked in various capacities for a long time before joining FPA Sri Lanka in 2018 as an Assistant Director of HR. I worked in human resources for a few private businesses, including service providers, multinational companies, and businesses focused on exports. Getting work experience in the manufacturing and service sectors was a great opportunity.

I've been interested in human interaction since I was a young child. I am aware that individuals differ from one another, and interacting with them was fascinating. I'm very passionate about learning about human behaviour patterns, listening to others and decision making.

Gen X and millennials are much less interested in lifelong careers, resulting in high staff turnover. What can organizations and HR do to better engage these generations and hold on to that talent?

While Gen Xers are more concerned with growth and recognition, millennials are only concerned with money. Therefore, companies should consider creating a comprehensive employment path, promoting cross-training in many business areas, and aggressively providing learning opportunities and seminars to keep millennial employees interested and to ensure their retainment.

What kind of skillsets and profiles are in demand now to allow the Association to deliver upon the goals of the new Strategy in place?

There are many different skill categories, and the field of skills is broad. From an HR perspective, we can divide skills into two groups, namely technical and soft skills. Certain employees require both technical and soft abilities to carry out their duties. For instance, "An accountant cannot perform a job without both skills."

In my opinion, employees should possess the following abilities to carry out the organizational strategy: critical thinking, adaptability, outstanding communication skills, awareness of different cultures, initiative and drive, etc.

Many NGOs experience funding cuts, and there are a lot of other organizations out there worried about the same. What role does HR play in helping organizations navigate during these times of uncertainty and change?

On one hand, this question is about crisis management. Indeed, without a doubt, HR may play a significant role in helping the company get out of a situation like this. The HR department's role in crisis management has developed to the point where they collaborate with the leadership to decide how best to inform employees about the situation and respond to any queries they may have. Since they are disseminating team feedback, they serve as a conduit between the management and staff.

HR often gets a bad rap. What advice do you have to HR professionals in dealing with this and breaking this stereotype?

It's critical to start things off well to dispel negative notions. HR divisions must make it clear that they are available to assist employees. It is easier to demonstrate that HR is about more than just playing defense when all HR-related tasks are communicated and there are open communication channels. These tasks include recruiting, compliance, and benefits.

HR, on the other hand, makes sure that every impacted employee is handled properly and with respect. HR must establish connections with workers across all levels, especially with the influential members of the workforce, in order to do this mission. The influencers will be aware of and able to inform HR of any actions or specific behaviours that are at odds with the management-established employee relations objectives (either directly or through their supervisors).

How do you keep HR “current” and encourage innovative and new ways of doing things and keep up staff morale when there may already be processes or systems in place?

Maintaining staff morale and innovation can be difficult for a variety of reasons. HR has implemented a few strategies to help with this, including promoting employee feedback by placing a suggestion box in the workplace and creating an open line of communication from the top down.

Also, establishing a culture of optimism by holding staff meetings, planning team-building exercises, implementing a programme for recognizing employees, and providing rewards based on

achievement. Aside from everything else, putting employee mental health first, implementing a health and wellness programme, and offering opportunities for ongoing education like internal and external training would boost staff morale and productivity.

What HR innovations or programmes do you feel particularly proud of or feel have been particularly successful?

Implementing a human resource information system (HRIS) at FPA is a superior investment as it allows employees to monitor and easily retrieve their attendance records.

It eliminates pointless paperwork and saves time.

What advice do you have for professionals starting out in HR. What do you wish you had known?

If you're considering a career in human resources, work on your social skills and pay attention to communication, ethics, handling conflict, and keeping things organized.

I wish I had known the importance of soft skills when I first started working in HR. These abilities, which include empathy, communication, and leadership, can be challenging to describe and evaluate during an interview. Nonetheless, they frequently make a difference in a person's ability to succeed and their impact on the organization and the clients it serves.

Results-Based Management (RBM) Workshop



Results-based management and planning (RBP) are crucial for any organization as they ensure clarity of objectives, enhance accountability, foster a culture of learning and adaptation, engage stakeholders, promote transparency, measure success with indicators, align activities with strategic goals, facilitate evidence-based decision-making, and promote sustainability.

Under the SPRINT IV project, FPA Sri Lanka's Monitoring and Evaluation Unit hosted a two-day residential workshop at FPA's Chinthana Training Centre for select programmatic staff representing all Units.

70 years of progress, growth, and empowerment

Anniversary celebrations and staff fellowship day



It was a momentous day, on the 9th of December, when Board Members, Past Presidents, the Executive Director, Senior Management team and staff gathered at Citrus Waskaduwa. "United to Serve" was the day's theme, and it symbolizes our dedication to giving back to the communities we serve. The pictures depict how the day unfolded.



A traditional welcome to commence proceedings



Cutting the anniversary cake



Executive Director Dr. Ruchitha Perera and the President of the Board of Directors, Aruni Marcelline, shared some words for the occasion



Launch of FPA's anniversary video: Reflecting on our journey and charting a path forward towards an even brighter future.

Executive Director, Dr. Ruchitha Perera handed over tokens of appreciation to the Past Presidents and the Board of Directors - We are grateful to our volunteers for their unwavering service and dedication to our cause. Their leadership, commitment and guidance have been instrumental to our success.



From Left to Right: Sanath Wijesinghe - Asst. Treasurer, Saymini Perera - Chairperson Youth Services Committee, Ramanaish Katheravel - Chairperson Policy & Strategy Committee, Nilanthi Jayathilake - Assistant Secretary, Melanie Kanaka - Chairperson Audit Committee, Aruni Marcelline - President, and Past Presidents Major Shirley Silva, Dr. Pramilla Senanayake, Padma Cumarathunga, Shirathini De Silva, Shehara De Silva - Chairperson MarCom Committee, and Past President Chandima Gunawardena.

Absentees: Kusum De Silva - Vice President, Lakshan Seneviratne - Treasurer, Anuki Premachandra - General Secretary, Prof. Sanath Lanerolle - Chairperson Medical Committee, Amali David - Chairperson Treasury Management Committee



Felicitation of Long - serving Staff Members



Sanjeewa Chandrasekara



Amal Bandara



Jayalath Premasiri



Nihal Nanayakkara



Deshani Perera



Anura Saman



Jayasiri Kularathna



Palitha Jayalath



Manori Perera



Kogila Ramakrishnan



Malinda Jayawardana



S. E. M. Subhasinghe



Lahiru Pathirana



Harsha Pathirana



Award ceremony for the Social Marketing Programme's (SMP) top sales personnel for 2022.

The SMP has been instrumental in reducing barriers to contraceptive access across the country. Through its dynamic sales team, products are distributed through its island-wide dealer network, which comprises pharmacies, medical clinics, hospitals, groceries, etc.



Sadeep Samarasekara
Winner



Lahiru Kulasinghe
1st runner - up



Suranga Vithanage
2nd runner - up



Palaniyandy Sivakumar's hard work and dedication led to him being named one of the Top 10 Champions of Diversity at a recent award ceremony. Being with his coworkers at the 70th anniversary celebrations and being able to honour and celebrate Siva was wonderful.



We want to hear your views and suggestions! Please write to: FPA Sri Lanka, 37/27, Bullers Lane, Colombo - 07, Sri Lanka.

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