

## FPA Sri Lanka Hosts Successful "PERIOD PROUD 2024" Event to Combat Period Poverty

FPA Sri Lanka in collaboration with the Embassy of France in Sri Lanka and the Maldives, hosted its second successful "Period Proud" event on September 13<sup>th</sup> at the Jaffna Cultural Centre. The event, from 9 a.m. to 6.30 p.m, aimed to raise awareness about period poverty, a pressing issue impacting millions of global menstruators.



He expressed hope that initiatives like CAAPP (Collective Action Against Period Poverty) will continue to break down barriers, raise awareness, and empower women and girls across Sri Lanka.



A key highlight of the event was the presence of the Chief Guest, Hon. Sai Murali, Consul General of India in Jaffna, who emphasized the importance of addressing menstrual hygiene and combating period poverty.



Ms. Olivia Bellemere, Cultural and Cooperation Counsellor of the Embassy of France in Sri Lanka and the Maldives, also highlighted the significance of addressing period poverty, which affects 50% of

menstruators in Sri Lanka. She noted that the "Period Proud" event aims to break taboos and build a lasting movement around period dignity across the Northern and Central Provinces.



The event featured 22 stalls, including 13 from FPASL's CAAPP partner organizations, promoting sustainable period products and menstrual health solutions. Attendees enjoyed creative performances such as Bharatanatyam dance, interactive performances, and thought-provoking dramas, all aimed at breaking taboos surrounding menstruation.

A key highlight was a panel discussion, "Ending Period Poverty: The Interplay of Health, Justice, and Equality," featuring experts who explored male engagement in menstrual

health, the medical and social impacts of gender-based violence, and the legal challenges related to period poverty. The discussion reinforced the need for collective action to ensure menstrual dignity for all.

The event concluded with an array of artistic performances and music, symbolizing unity and empowerment. FPA Sri Lanka remains dedicated to addressing period poverty, ensuring access to menstrual hygiene products, and advocating for lasting change.





## Experts Convene to Address Gender Based Violence and Health Sector Challenges

Gender-based violence (GBV) remains a pressing concern both globally and in Sri Lanka, posing serious challenges to the health sector. A meeting brought together leading experts to evaluate the costs and strategies for delivering essential services through "Mithuru Piyasa" Centres and the 24/7 Mithuru Piyasa field services operated by Public Health Midwives attached to MOH offices.

Mr. M. Suchira Suranga, Director of Organizational Learning & Evaluation at FPA Sri Lanka,

opened the session, setting the stage for in-depth presentations and discussions. Keynotes were delivered by Ms. Verena Phipps from the World Bank Group and Dr. Chithramalee De Silva, Director of Maternal and Child Health, offering both global and local insights into the issue.

Dr. Manoj Fernando outlined the meeting's objectives, followed by detailed proposals on the qualitative and quantitative components from Dr. Lakshman Senanayake and Prof. Dileep De Silva. Prof. Anuji Gamage concluded the session by outlining the fieldwork plan, which led to a productive discussion on improving support systems for survivors of GBV.

This collaborative effort, funded by the World Bank Group, aims to enhance the response to gender-based violence in Sri Lanka. Provincial Directors of Health Services (PDHS), Regional Directors of Health Services (RDHS), and directors from selected hospitals participated in this crucial meeting, underscoring the importance of multi-level collaboration.



## Regional Recognition for FPA Sri Lanka's D2D App



FPA Sri Lanka's D2D Care mobile app was recognized at the RESPOND Project's Closeout Meeting in Bali, Indonesia, for its outstanding contribution to Digital Health Intervention across 11 countries. Developed by FPA's Monitoring and Evaluation Unit, the app enhances community-based healthcare by supporting Volunteer Health Assistants (VHAs) in conducting home visits, identifying SRH needs, and providing essential services like family planning, pregnancy tests, STI counselling, and distributing health commodities directly to clients' homes.

The D2D app also helps VHAs document service statistics, manage stock, and refer clients to

Suwa Sewa Centres or MOH clinics. Available in Sinhala, Tamil, and English, and with offline functionality, it ensures efficient data recording.

Supported by the Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), the RESPOND Project was launched during the COVID-19 pandemic to provide essential SRH services to women, girls, and marginalized communities. The closeout meeting in Bali fostered collaboration between 11 Member Associations from the IPPF South Asia Region (SARO) and East and South East Asia and Oceania Region (ESEARO). Dr. Nuzrath Nasoordeen (Director Medical) and Mr. Duminda Rajakaruna (Assistant Director - M&E), representing FPA Sri Lanka, were recognized for their contributions, receiving a token of appreciation for the app's role in advancing digital health interventions.





## 2<sup>nd</sup> Technical Committee Meeting

ReproSex 2024 promises to be a groundbreaking event where crucial topics are explored, innovative ideas are debated, and future health and social trends are identified and will be held on the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> of November at the BMICH.

The dedicated team of experts met to review abstract submission progress, identify potential

reviewers, and finalize themes for plenary and parallel sessions, as well as for the mini-symposia.

Chaired by Emeritus Professor of Demography, W. Indralal de Silva, the committee includes experts from the National STD/AIDS Control Programme, Family Health Bureau, Health Promotion Bureau, Menopause Society, Sri Lanka College of Obstetricians Gynaecologists, Centre for Evaluation and Centre for Cancer Research (University of Sri Jayawardhanapura), Population Association of Sri Lanka, Sri Lanka Medical Association, and more.

### Strengthening Supplier Ties: FPA's Visit to Dongkuk Vietnam



The visit to Dongkuk Vietnam marked a significant step in strengthening collaboration and exploring new product opportunities. The delegation, including Ms. Shehara De Silva (Chairperson, Marcom Committee), Mr. Omal Sumanasiri (Chairperson, Treasury Management Committee), Dr. Ruchitha Perera (Executive Director), and Mr. Suhail Junaid (Director of

Marketing), engaged with Dongkuk's leadership, including President Mr. Lee Su Wang, Overseas Marketing Director Mr. Kang Il Cheon, and Sales Manager Ms. Cao Thanh Le.

This visit focused on solidifying our partnership and expanding FPA Sri Lanka's portfolio with high - quality, affordable products. A highlight was the inspection of the manufacturing plant where our popular Preethi and Preethi Super condoms are produced. We look forward to the exciting possibilities ahead and remain committed to enhancing our product offerings to provide better service to our communities.

Proud moment for FPA Sri Lanka as Ms. Desaree Soysa, lead for the RFSU-IPPF Sweden project and SRHR advocate, presented the National Youth Statement to Honourable Minister of Foreign Affairs Mr. Ali Sabry on the 19<sup>th</sup> of September.

Drafted by 72 young leaders across 9 provinces at the National Youth Consultation, the statement reflects their vision for a just, sustainable, and equitable future. This Consultation was organized by the UN in Sri Lanka, in collaboration with the Ministry of Youth and Sports, and presented to the Government ahead of the "Summit of the Future" on 21 - 22 September.

## FPA Sri Lanka Engages in Key Discussions at SLCOG Annual Congress

The 57<sup>th</sup> Annual Academic Congress of the Sri Lanka College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists took place from the 30<sup>th</sup> of August to the 1<sup>st</sup> of September 2024, focusing on "Quality Health Care through Standards in Training and Service Delivery – A Right of All Women." This important event aimed to share the latest advancements in women's health care and featured a variety of workshops, plenary sessions, and symposia.

Dr. Ruchitha Perera, Executive Director, played a key role by moderating a symposium on "Innovation and Digitalization to Advance Sexual & Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) for Women and Girls," organized in collaboration with UNFPA Sri Lanka.

Additionally, FPA Sri Lanka's Social Marketing Programme (SMP) hosted a stall at the congress, providing valuable information and resources to attendees. This participation underscores FPA Sri Lanka's commitment to enhancing women's health care and promoting SRHR in the country.



## Swedish Association for Sexuality Education (RFSU) Internal Partner Meeting

The RFSU Internal Partner Meeting highlighted the importance of collaboration in advancing Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) initiatives.

"Collaboration is key. This meeting allowed us to identify our expertise and understand the needs in each province. Together, we can leverage our contacts and evidence to make a significant impact," stated Irene Sobrivella, International Controller at RFSU.

Hosted by RFSU with support from FPA Sri Lanka, the meeting brought together five organizations: FPA Sri Lanka, the Muslim Women's Research and Action Forum (MWRAF), the Provincial Youth Empowerment



Network (PYEN), the Jaffna Social Action Center (JSAC), and the Federation of Social Development Organizations (FOSDOO).

Participants shared insights, celebrated achievements, and discussed challenges in raising

awareness and empowering communities. The strategies and partnerships forged will guide future SRHR initiatives.

## Empowering Youth Through CSE



FPA Sri Lanka has been actively engaging youth through impactful Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) initiatives.

On August 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>, the Youth Services Committee, in collaboration with the Peradeniya Robarosan Society, hosted a two-day session led by Shelani Palihawadana. Day 1 focused on anatomy, contraception, pregnancy, menstruation, virginity, and sexual pleasure, while Day 2 addressed power, patriarchy, gender, and online gender-based violence. Supported by Ms. Desaree Soysa, Ms. Kritanjali Ratnasabapathy, Ms. Saymini Perera, and Mr. Malith Madurandika, the session empowered youth to drive positive change.



Additionally, FPA extended its outreach through a CSE session at Royal Institute Colombo, engaging students and members of the Rotaract Clubs. Led by Dr. Nuzrath Nasoordeen and Ms. Geilee Skandakumar, topics included patriarchy, media influence, contraceptives, and broader SRHR discussions.

These efforts reflect FPA's commitment to equipping youth with essential knowledge on sexual and reproductive health, fostering informed and responsible communities.



FPA took part in the 5-day 'Sexual Reproductive Health & Rights' (SRHR) Master Trainers Programme, organized by UNFPA Sri Lanka and ADT Sri Lanka. Thirty participants gained valuable knowledge and skills to advocate for SRHR in their communities.

The sessions covered important topics like understanding consent, addressing stigma around contraceptives, promoting comprehensive sexuality education, and supporting the rights of all, especially marginalized groups. The training was interactive, allowing for active participation and discussion.

From FPA Sri Lanka, Ms. Saymini Perera (Past Youth Services Committee Chairperson), Ms. Geilee Skandakumar (Hon. Assistant Treasurer), Mr. Theekshana Ruchiran (Youth Member), and Dr. Rashmira Balasuriya, a consultant for FPA's CAAPP Project, attended the training.

## Enhancing SRHR Education in Deaf Schools

The Sri Lanka Central Federation of the Deaf (SLCFD), supported by the RFSU project, is taking significant steps to improve Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) education in deaf schools by developing a supplementary book for teachers.

This initiative aims to enhance the SRHR knowledge and

awareness of educators. Recently, SLCFD and FPA Sri Lanka visited the Senkadagala Special School in Kandy, where they conducted key informant interviews with teachers and students.

The objective was to assess current SRHR topics being taught and to identify the challenges educators face in delivering this vital



information. We look forward to sharing more about this crucial initiative and its impact on the education of deaf students!

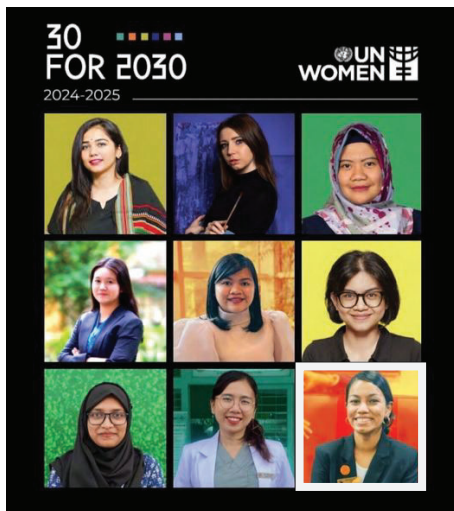
## FPA Unveils New Youth Centre: A Hub for Empowerment and Innovation!



We are excited to announce the official opening of our Youth Centre at the FPA Head Office! This milestone was made possible through the unwavering support of Board President, Mrs. Aruni Marcelline, and Executive Director, Dr. Ruchitha Perera. Driven by the enthusiasm of the Youth Services Committee, this centre marks a transformative step in our commitment to youth engagement.

Ms. Kritanjali Ratnasabapathy, Chairperson of the Youth Committee, shared her vision for the centre: "Our main aim is to create a space where young people feel connected to something greater than themselves. We are fostering a community where their ideas and contributions truly matter. This Centre empowers us to innovate, collaborate, and lead, ensuring that our voices shape a future where sexual and reproductive health and rights are accessible to all."

*We look forward to this new chapter of inspiration, collaboration, and impactful change!*



### Yes YOUth can!!

We congratulate Ms. Geilee Skandakumar, dedicated Assistant Treasurer on FPA Sri Lanka's Board of Directors and passionate youth member, for being named one of UN Women's "30 for 2030" Youth Leaders for Gender Equality!

*'I am beyond thrilled and honoured to share that I have been selected as one of UN Women's "30 for 2030" Youth Leaders for Gender Equality! Being recognized among 30 exceptional young leaders from across Asia-Pacific is an incredible honor and a childhood dream come true. This milestone resonates deeply with my lifelong passion for gender equality, Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR), and human rights.'*

### Neon and Echelon Unveil Shine 50: Sri Lanka's Young Game-Changing Women



We extend our heartfelt congratulations to Ms. Rehana Thowfeek, a valued member of our Marcom Technical Advisory Committee, who was named as one of Echelon and Neon's Shine 50. Her dedication, expertise, and insightful contributions have been instrumental in driving our initiatives forward.



## Strengthening Leadership: Conclusion of the 'Strategic Thinking for Strategic Leadership' Training Programme



The 'Strategic Thinking for Strategic Leadership' training sessions have successfully concluded, with staff from all operational units of FPA Sri Lanka completing this comprehensive 10-session programme.

Led by Dr. Lasantha Wickremesooriya, participants engaged in strategic group activities, reflective exercises, and in-depth analysis of global trends impacting the Sexual and Reproductive Health sector. They worked collaboratively to develop strategies and provide actionable recommendations for FPA Sri Lanka to effectively adapt and inform its activities in an evolving landscape.

This programme has equipped our team with the critical and creative thinking skills necessary to navigate contemporary challenges and drive future success.

## FPA joins National Steering Committee on Menstrual Health



*'I am honoured to be appointed for two years as a member of the National Steering Committee. The Ministry of Health, Additional Secretary Public Health Services, Dr. Lakshmi Somatunga chaired the meeting and the Health Promotion Bureau was the focal point of the meeting. The appointment letters were given by Dr. P.G. Mahipala, Secretary Ministry of Health'. - Ms. Sonali Gunasekera, Director of Advocacy.*

FPA is actively contributing to this effort through the Collective Action Against Period Poverty The CAAPP Project, a collaboration with the French Embassy and 13 dedicated NGOs.

We're thrilled to share that FPA participated in a pivotal consultative meeting with the National Working Committee, in partnership with the Ministry of Health and nine other stakeholder ministries in August.

This project aims to improve menstrual health, combat period poverty, and eliminate the stigma and discrimination associated with menstruation.

The focus? Advancing menstrual health and hygiene under the theme: 'Working Together to Improve Menstrual Health and Environmental Impact in Sri Lanka.'



The **OUTREACH UNIT** at FPA Sri Lanka is committed to improving community health through mobile clinics and well-woman clinics, offering essential sexual and reproductive health services. They also conduct comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) workshops for students, nursing institutes, and vocational centers, empowering youth and future healthcare professionals with vital knowledge. Here are some picture highlights of recent activities, demonstrating our dedication to building informed, healthier communities across Sri Lanka.



Our mobile clinic bus has been on a mission to reach the women of the Pallama MOH areas in Puttalam, especially those in the 35 - 45 age group who haven't been able to access well-woman clinics. The **Puttalam SDP** has been actively reaching out to remote villages, such as Wanathawilluwa, located near the Wilpattu National Park.



*Mobile Clinic at East Lanka Polysack (PVT) LTD in Nasuvantheevu by the **Batticaloa SDP***



*CSE programme at the SMI School of Nursing by the **Seethawaka SDP***



The Suwa Sewa Centre in **Kilinochchi** marked International Youth Day with an inspiring Drawing Competition that highlighted critical issues such as sexual and reproductive health (SRH), relationships, and gender - based violence.



As part of our International Youth Day campaign, FPA Sri Lanka's youth, who play key roles in governance, leadership, and advocacy while championing education and service delivery, shared their messages. [Click to view.](#)

In celebration of International Youth Day, several SDPs hosted debate competitions on the topics: 'The absence of comprehensive sexuality education can lead to contemporary social issues' and 'Do young people need reproductive health education?'



*The debate competition held at the Galle Dikkumbura Sri Siddhartha School was organized by the **Koggala SDP***

The debates not only showcased the eloquence and insight of the participants but also underscored the critical role that comprehensive sexuality education plays in tackling today's challenges. The event sparked meaningful discussions, promoting a deeper understanding of the social issues that can emerge when this essential education is lacking.

## Community Engagement in Preventing SGBV in Emergencies An Initiative by the *sprint* Project



Session at Vidyathilaka Piriwena, organized by the **Wathupitiwala SDP**

We are excited to announce that community awareness programmes have been launched in frequently disaster-affected areas of Gampaha, Nuwara Eliya, Galle, and Batticaloa districts, focusing on the prevention of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) in emergency settings. This initiative is supported by the Disaster Management Centre.

These events bring together a diverse group of participants, including community leaders, religious figures, youth, grassroots women's organizations, and local government representatives. Together, they engage in important discussions to address SGBV issues faced during emergencies.

The programmes feature brief awareness sessions and open discussions aimed at:

- Identifying the prevalence of SGBV in disaster-prone rural communities
- Collecting evidence and case stories
- Exploring community engagement strategies for prevention and mitigation

We believe that by fostering collaboration and awareness, we can significantly contribute to the safety and well-being of our communities during emergencies.

## Empowering Young Girls with Adolescent Hygiene Kits



Distribution by the **Nuwara Eliya SDP**

Supported by UNFPA Sri Lanka and the People of Japan, FPA Sri Lanka has successfully launched the distribution of Adolescent Hygiene Kits via all SDPs, following engaging menstrual hygiene awareness sessions.

Each kit is thoughtfully packed with essential hygiene items, empowering young girls with the tools they need for better health and well-being. This initiative not only addresses the practical needs of adolescent girls but also fosters a supportive environment where they can learn about menstrual hygiene management.

Together, we are helping to break the stigma surrounding menstruation and ensure that every girl has the opportunity to thrive. We are grateful for the support of our partners and look forward to continuing this important work!



A menstrual hygiene awareness session was conducted by the Koggala SDP for 150 selected girl students from four schools in Galle city, focusing on those from low-income families.

## Empowering Deaf Youth: Sensitization Programme on Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) in Emergencies



FPA Sri Lanka held a two-day sensitization programme on "SRH in Emergencies" at the Chinthana Training Centre. Youth participants from the Sri Lanka Central Federation for Deaf and Deaf Youth Federation gathered from various regions to gain essential SRH knowledge for navigating challenging circumstances.

Facilitated by experts from the Resilience Foundation, the programme aimed to build resilience, ensure access to vital health information, and promote inclusive, informed communities. This initiative highlights a commitment to empowering individuals with the tools and knowledge they need to thrive in any situation. Together, we are working toward a healthier and more informed society.



Dr. Raj, Senior M&E Advisor at IPPF Humanitarian, met with FPA's Nuwara Eliya SDP team, staff from the Nuwara Eliya Disaster Management Center, MOH staff, and the Colombo outreach SPRINT Project team.

## Strengthening Crisis Preparedness: Puttalam District MISP Training at FPA's Chinthana Training Centre in Nainamadama



The SPRINT Project team organized a two-day training on the Minimum Initial Service Package (MISP), a critical set of life-saving actions to be implemented during humanitarian crises.

Led by Dr. Harischandra Yakandawala, the training saw active participation from key stakeholders, including the Additional District Secretary, the Assistant Director of the District Disaster Management Coordinating Unit, the Officer in Charge of Halawatha, and officials from the Children and Women Bureau, Village Officers, and various Disaster Management Units.

The event underscored the importance of collaboration and preparedness in times of crisis. The full-day attendance of the District Secretary highlighted the dedication to enhancing disaster response capabilities in our communities.



# Enhancing Humanitarian Efforts: Highlights from the SPRINT IV Data Management Workshop



The SPRINT IV Project's Humanitarian Data Management Consultative Workshop, led by Dr. Raj – Senior M&E Advisor at IPPF Humanitarian, Mr. Suchira Suranga – Director of OLE at FPA Sri Lanka, and Mr. Janaranga Dewasurendra – Assistant Director of M&E at FPA Sri Lanka, provided valuable insights into the critical role of Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) in humanitarian efforts. The workshop brought together representatives from key organizations, including the Disaster Management Center, The Tri-Forces and Police, Women In Need, The National STD/AIDS Control Programme (NSACP) UNFPA, The International Organization for Migration (IOM) and World Food Programme (WFP).

It delved into the fundamentals of M&E, highlighting its importance in shaping effective humanitarian responses. Participants engaged in a dynamic group activity to assess the current state of data management within a humanitarian context, gaining hands-on experience in identifying challenges and opportunities. The session also focused on "Informed decision-making through Data Management", offering strategies to enhance the data management process and develop actionable plans.

The workshop aimed to empower stakeholders with the knowledge and tools needed to improve data practices and drive impactful humanitarian initiatives.



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In conversation with  
**Anuradha Silva**  
Assistant Director - IT



**Can you share a brief overview of your role as the Assistant Director IT at our Association?**

My primary responsibility as the Assistant Director of IT is to manage the IT systems that support our mission of providing access to sexual and reproductive health services. This includes maintaining the technology infrastructure, ensuring data security, and overseeing digital platforms that facilitate communication, service delivery, and training. My role directly contributes to enhancing operational efficiencies and expanding the reach of our services, aligning with FPA Sri Lanka's focus on promoting reproductive health rights and disseminating vital information.

**What are the most significant IT challenges you've faced in the non-profit sector, and how did you overcome them?**

In this regard, some of the IT challenges faced by non-profits include limited budgets, outdated technologies, and data security concerns. Modern digital systems often need to be integrated with older legacy infrastructures, which hampers service efficiency. To address these issues, I have focused on prioritizing essential upgrades, transitioning systems to cloud-based solutions for cost-effectiveness, and training my staff in cybersecurity best practices to protect sensitive information. Additionally, forming partnerships with technology companies to access reduced-cost services has been crucial in closing resource gaps while keeping our systems updated and secure.

**How do you stay updated with the latest trends and technologies in the IT industry, and how do you apply them to our organization's unique needs?**

I regularly follow recent trends and technologies in the IT industry through industry news, conferences, and online courses. I also participate in professional IT communities to discuss the latest tools. For non-profits, my priority is to identify cost-effective technologies such as cloud computing, virtualization, and system management tools. This involves carefully evaluating how these innovations can enhance operational efficiency while ensuring data security, streamlining service delivery, and staying aligned with our mission and resource constraints.

**With cybersecurity being a major concern today, what measures have you implemented to ensure the safety and security of our organization's data and the privacy of our beneficiaries?**

Some of the major cybersecurity measures we are implementing include encryption protocols to secure sensitive information, multi-factor authentication for controlling access to O365, and regular security assessments to identify vulnerabilities. Additionally, we advise our staff on cybersecurity best practices, including recognizing phishing attempts and proper data handling.

**How does your team approach innovation in technology to enhance our organization's effectiveness? Can you share any upcoming projects or technologies we should be excited about?**

This is an exciting and challenging step for our IT team as we plan to enhance efficiency at FPA. We are looking to introduce a fleet management system, among other improvements.

**What advice would you give to aspiring IT professionals looking to work in the non-profit sector, and how can they make a positive impact?**

The key trait for any ambitious IT professional in the non-profit sector is adaptability. Resources can often be limited, so achieving effective solutions requires innovation. It's essential to understand your organization's mission and remember that IT solutions play a vital role in creating

social impact. Familiarize yourself with cost-effective technologies and tools, such as cloud services and open-source solutions, that can maximize efficiency.

**How do you see the future of IT evolving in the non-profit sector, and what impact do you think it will have on our organization's ability to achieve its mission?**

The future of IT in the nonprofit sector is poised for transformative changes that will enhance how organizations achieve their missions. Advances in technology, such as AI and machine learning, are becoming increasingly accessible and offer powerful tools for nonprofits. As these technologies continue to evolve, they will enable organizations to operate more effectively, reach a broader audience, and deliver more targeted services. For instance, FPA could leverage these innovations in outreach strategies, resource distribution, and overall program effectiveness. This will enhance our agility in addressing the dynamic challenges inherent in our mission and further amplify our impact.

## FPA Sri Lanka Completes IPPF VCAT Training in Nepal

A team from FPA Sri Lanka has successfully completed the International Planned Parenthood Federation's (IPPF) 'Values Clarification for Action and Transformation' (VCAT) Training of Trainers (TOT) programme in Nepal. The team included Mr. Rajapakse Vithanage (Head of Outreach), Ms. Achini Pahalawatte (Project Coordinator – Humanitarian), and Ms. Desaree Soysa (RFSU Project Lead – Advocacy Unit), who participated in the five-day workshop.



The VCAT training focused on enhancing participants' understanding of values clarification, exploring effective implementation methods, and creating actionable plans. Through interactive discussions and micro-teaching sessions, our team gained practical tools and skills essential for leading impactful VCAT initiatives in their respective roles.

With this training, our team is now well-prepared to foster values clarification and action transformation, ensuring a meaningful impact in their outreach and advocacy efforts.

In light of the legally restrictive abortion policies in Sri Lanka, FPA Sri Lanka has been selected to implement the '8-Steps for Providing Comprehensive Abortion Care' under the SPRINT Project. While FPA has committed to three of the eight steps within the fullest extent of the law, one of these steps involves conducting VCAT training for FPA staff and partner organizations.

Following this training, the team will host two additional VCAT sessions; one for voluntary health workers and another for the Youth Services Committee. Moreover, a VCAT programme will be developed, specifically tailored to the Sri Lankan context by contextualizing the training materials for our country context.

This initiative marks a significant step forward in enhancing our advocacy efforts and ensuring comprehensive care for those in need. We look forward to the positive changes this training will bring to our programmes and the communities we serve!

## SKPA-2 Workshop Highlights Capacity Assessment and Next Steps



On July 18, 2024, an important meeting took place at the Sri Lanka Medical Association (SLMA) headquarters. The discussion centered on a partnership with SLMA to provide technical support and guidance for the development and maintenance of the Virtual Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) digital platform.

Initiated by FPA Sri Lanka and UNFPA Sri Lanka, the platform aims to deliver essential, age-appropriate information on reproductive health, healthy relationships, and lifestyles in an interactive and engaging manner to youth aged 11 to 24, as well as teachers and parents, utilizing the latest in digital learning. This CSE platform is a joint initiative with UNFPA Sri Lanka and is scheduled to be launched later in the year. During the meeting, SLMA expressed their commitment to offering both technical support and strategic guidance for the platform's development and ongoing maintenance.

## ALOKAYA Counselling Centre Partners with Castle Hospital's Fertility Clinic



On 12<sup>th</sup> June, the ALOKAYA Counselling Centre commenced a partnership with the Castle Hospital Fertility Clinic to provide essential support services to couples facing challenges related to intimacy, sexual health, and marital harmony, which can affect both fertility treatments and their relationships.

Through this collaboration, counselling sessions are now available, offering a confidential and supportive environment where couples can discuss their concerns, express their emotions, and receive professional guidance. This initiative aims to ensure that individuals and couples in the community have access to the necessary resources to foster healthy relationships while navigating fertility treatment.



The SKPA-2 project recently hosted a one-day workshop to review the findings of the capacity assessment conducted by the Diversity and Solidarity Trust (DAST) among Key Population (KP) organizations. Roshan De Silva, Chairperson of DAST, and Sathya Bhashi, Programme Manager, presented the results, while Dr. Kumari Navarathne, Lead Consultant, shared insights on future capacity-building plans. Mr. Sanjeewa Wimalagunaratne, Director General of the NGO Secretariat, led an engaging Q&A session on NGO registration.

The workshop brought together around 50 participants from Key Populations (KP), organizations nationwide, along with key government stakeholders from the Country Coordinating Mechanism (CCM), the National STD/AIDS Control Programme (NSACP), the Ministry of Labour, and the NGO Secretariat.

The SKPA-2 project successfully identified capacity gaps within organizations working with KPs, paving the way for targeted support and development.

## Strengthening the Legal Framework for HIV/AIDS Prevention



Focusing on Human Rights and Gender, external consultant Dr. Kaushalya Ariyaratne led a session on the legal framework for HIV/AIDS prevention during the Review of the National STD and AIDS Control Programme (NSACP) in Sri Lanka. The event brought together officials from the Ministry of Health, NSACP, STD clinics across the island, and key population organizations.

The session offered valuable insights into strengthening the legal framework for HIV/AIDS prevention, fostering collaboration among stakeholders to enhance Sri Lanka's national HIV response.

## Assessing the Impact of Chemsex Training at the MSM Community Clinic



The Project Manager and Project Officer of the SKPA-2 programme, Nimal Dassanayake and Ranaka Siriwardana, visited the Heart to Heart Lanka premises to observe the MSM Community

Clinic. During the visit, they discussed the team's experiences with clients engaging in chemsex and reflected on insights from the Chemsex workshop held in February. The discussion aimed to assess whether the training has been beneficial, evaluate its effectiveness, how it has been applied in daily work, and whether the knowledge is actively shared with clients engaging in chemsex activities, ensuring improved support and understanding.

## Strengthening Advocacy for Key Populations: A Series of Legal Literacy and Capacity Building Workshops

The SKPA-2 programme recently organized two separate two-day residential Legal Literacy and Advocacy Capacity-Building Workshops, both facilitated by external consultant Dr. Kaushalya Ariyaratne.

The first workshop focused on enhancing participants' understanding of practical legal issues impacting Key Populations (KP) in Sri Lanka. Its primary objectives were to identify areas requiring advocacy interventions and equip participants with the skills to plan, implement, and evaluate community-based advocacy campaigns. Day 1 of this workshop empowered activists from KP-led organizations with knowledge of laws affecting their communities, laying the groundwork for identifying barriers and advocacy needs to design effective campaigns. The second workshop similarly

## Follow-Up FGD on Harm Reduction for ATS Users



After the capacity-building workshop, "Harm Reduction for ATS Users," organized by SKPA-2, Mainline Foundation Netherlands, and NSACP in January in Colombo, the SKPA-2 programme team invited all participants to a follow-up Focus Group Discussion (FGD) recently.

The FGD aimed to assess the effectiveness of the Harm Reduction/Chemsex workshop, understand how participants have applied the knowledge gained, and explore the ways they have shared this information with the communities they serve.



aimed to address legal and social challenges related to KPs, with a strong emphasis on promoting stigma-free HIV/STD health services. Day 2 of this event developed participants' technical understanding of advocacy, enabling them to create comprehensive advocacy plans to tackle the issues faced by KPs in Sri Lanka. Together, these workshops provided essential training to support ongoing efforts in advocating for KP rights and improving access to health services.