



JOINT AFPPD-SLPPD PRESS RELEASE

Sri Lanka Forum for Parliamentarians on Population and Sustainable Development Launched



Members of Parliament, Ministers and Government Officials of Sri Lanka, AFPPD Executive Director, Representatives from UNFPA and Family Planning Association of Sri Lanka, at the AFPPD-SLPPD National Inception Workshop on February 16 – 17, 2017 in Negombo, Sri Lanka. (Photo: AFPPD)

Negombo, February 17, 2017 – Parliamentarians and Ministers of Sri Lanka met in Negombo on February 16-17 to convene a workshop to launch the activities of Sri Lanka Forum for Parliamentarians on Population and Sustainable Development (SLPPD). SLPPD is a member National Committee of the Asian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development (AFPPD), a regional network of national legislators aimed to address development and population issues. The “AFPPD-SLPPD National Inception Workshop” engaged SLPPD member parliamentarians and Ministers on topics related to active ageing, investing in youth, and gender equality, including sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR).

SLPPD was initiated in October 2016 under the leadership of the Minister of Social Empowerment and Welfare of Sri Lanka, Hon. S. B. Dissanayake, who delivered opening remarks at the workshop. He stressed on the country’s demographic shift and rapidly ageing population, noting that one out of four is expected to be over 60 years of age by 2040. “The policy framework must be balanced, incorporating the rights of the elderly. The right to work, the right to choose, and the right for protection and support should all be integrated into legislation and policymaking,” he added.

Professor Lakshman Dissanayake, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Colombo, urged parliamentarians to act and adopt evidence-based policymaking. "Sri Lanka is now experiencing a demographic bonus, which is projected to last until 2037. To take advantage of the demographic dividend, evidence-based policymaking and implementation are necessary now," he said.

Ms. Kristine Blokhuis, Officer-in-Charge of UNFPA, praised Sri Lanka for the country's social development progress over the last decades. "Sri Lanka ranks well in indicators on health and education for women. At the same time, however, we are aware of the gaps that still remain." Dr. Janaki Vidanapathirana, Ministry of Health, and Ms. Madu Dissanayake, Director of Family Planning Association for Sri Lanka, warned about social and economic consequences of Sri Lanka's lack of access to sexual and reproductive health services especially for vulnerable populations.

As countries continue to work towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), AFPPD National Committees such as SLPPD continue to play an increasingly crucial role for effective formulation of legislation and oversight for policy implementation. "As we talk about the SDGs, we also have to keep in mind of the five key foundations, 5Ps: people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnership," said Hon. Seyed Ali Zahir Moulana, Member of Parliament of Sri Lanka and Assistant Secretary of SLPPD.

The AFPPD-SLPPD Inception Workshop was co-organized by AFPPD and the National Secretariat for Elders of the Ministry of Social Empowerment and Welfare, under the auspices of UNFPA, the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF), and the European Commission.

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