



## A historic moment

Community Development Services (CDS) turns 40 years this year. We take this opportunity to remember with gratitude the founder - Brig. Dennis Hapugalle and other founding directors. We also thank the staff that served the organisation over the years in different capacities. We thank the many donors who believed in our vision and supported our project financially and technically. We thank successive governments and their ministries for having invited us to shape many policies in the health and labour migration sectors of the country. We thank the regional networks and associations that we have been part of in our contribution towards regional advocacy in health and labour migration. We are also truly blessed that we continued this journey for 40 years without a break. There are many other stakeholders, too numerous to mention by name. We thank them all for their support and solidarity. Lastly, we would not have come this far in this journey if not for the lives we were able to touch - underserved families in giving them choices in birth spacing and sexual and reproductive health and mental health, underserved youth in slum and shanty communities and plantation communities in showing them that there is much more to life than living on the edge, sex workers, PLHIV's, prison inmates, free trade zone women workers, rural women and female and male migrant workers.

Our journey has taken us from family planning and birth spacing, to sexual and reproductive health and rights, HIV awareness and prevention, and labour migrant rights. We have now embarked on civil liberties and civic consciousness and reconciliation among multiple communities and cultures in our country. We invite you to come along with us on the journey and be a part of the celebration with underserved or inadequately served communities of our land.

## Onward

Twenty Seventeen (2017) has been a challenging year for world economies and NGOs and civil society movements alike. We at Community Development Services (CDS) had our work cut out with the few donors we continue to engage with and we thank them for supporting us and the work we do with marginalised and underserved communities in Sri Lanka. Our work continues to be qualitative and we are very proud of the results we get from such projects.

CDS continues to work with low skilled migrant workers including female migrant domestic worker, adolescents and youth in slum and shanty and plantation communities and people living with HIV (PLHIV) in promoting a rights framework through capacity building and advocacy.

Our donors in 2017 were the Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation (SDC), Give2Asia, and Robert Carr Civil Society Networks Fund (RCNF) through CARAM Asia.

At a technical level we continue to engage with the Ministry of Foreign Employment, the National STD and AIDS Control Program (NSACP) of the Ministry of Health, ILO, IOM, UNWomen, CARAM Asia and Migrant Forum in Asia (MFA), Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation and the Solidarity Center.



Our engagement on labour migration is based primarily on rights and rights education covering national policies international conventions and the regional consultative processes (RCP) and their commitments to the labour migration discourse. We also cover migration and labour trafficking, migration and sexual and reproductive health in HIV and AIDS, migration and mental health, migration and reintegration both in psychosocial support and economic reintegration.

Our work in migration and HIV is mostly advocacy related in that we want policymakers to recognise the vulnerabilities of migrant workers and recognise and accept them as a key affected population group. Three decades on, Sri Lanka has not fully addressed HIV in relation to SOGIE (Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, and Gender Expression) at a policy level.

Sexual and reproductive health (SRH) education among migrant workers and young people has not penetrated enough. Sexual abuse and rape, gender based violence and violence in the workplace, especially among female migrant domestic workers are important discussion points for capacity development and advocacy. They cannot be ignored or denied.

We have come to realise that these topics and concerns cannot only be discussed with only the target populations. A holistic and inclusive approach is needed if we are to affect change. It is for this reason that we continue to engage with multiple stakeholders in our capacity building and advocacy discourse.

## New Hope

Significant in the calendar year was the Global Forum for Migration and Development (GFMD) that was held in Berlin, Germany. As nations of the world committed to respecting the rights of migrants and refugees, the New York Declaration came to be in September 2016 to address the issues and concerns of large movements of migrant and refugees. The focus of the GFMD was the preparation of the Global Compact on Migration (GCM) inviting governments and civil society organisations to respond at the country level and at the regional level to send inputs in preparation of an effective and robust GCM that will support the 2030 SDG agenda.

As the years have gone by, in this three-decade period of the AIDS epidemic there have been many achievements especially in the improvement of the quality of drugs that has considerably improved the lives of those living with the disease. The new antiretroviral (ARV) drugs and with the right regimens HIV positive people continue to live longer and healthier and as normal as possible. It is also very heartening to know that countries including Sri Lanka promote ARVs on diagnosis and no longer on the CD4 count. Advanced ARV drugs are also known to suppress or eliminate the spread of the virus to partners. There are new treatments such as the adherence to a HIV prevention drug or pre exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) and the consistent use of condoms that HIV negative people can protect themselves from infection. (theconversation.com)



We are also reading about labour reforms in the Gulf States where the Kafala system is being reformed to give some autonomy and negotiating to migrant workers in these countries. These reforms are being introduced in Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Qatar. As these States are members of the Abu Dhabi Dialogue (ADD), we hope that other Gulf States will follow suit in making changes to their labour policies. Having said this, we expect that labour sending countries and civil society groups will monitor the changes and reforms to ensure that the reforms are put to practice.

*Below are highlights and touchpoints of our projects in 2017.*

### **Safe labour migration project**

The predominant focus of this on going project that is funded by the Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation (SDC) is to build the ground from many fronts in protecting and promoting safe migration for low skilled migrant workers including female domestic workers and their families. We work in the district of Kurunegala in the North Western Province with a local civil society partner, Center for Human Rights and Community Development (CHRCO). This is a district that has one of the highest labour migration population in the country and is recognised by the government as a high intensity district.

As the Sri Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employment (SLBFE) is the single authority that overlooks labour migration for the Ministry of Foreign Employment, the project has taken a bold decentralisation approach in engaging with local authorities in local government administrative structures such as the district and divisional secretariats. These include Migrant Development Officers, Women Development Officers, Child Probation Officers, Medical Officers, Enterprise Development Officers, Law Enforcement Officers, Psychosocial Officers, School Principals. On the ground we engage with grassroots organisations and community associations in discriminating the knowledge so that it is communicated to the migrants, migrant prospects and their families.

The safe labour migration project cover four important strategic areas namely

- 1) access to information,
- 2) psychosocial support,
- 3) legal support,
- 4) financial literacy and
- 5) advocacy. Below is a summary of activities carried out for each of the strategic areas. Each of these strategic areas have multiple activities making the project very comprehensive in its delivery to the migrant communities and other stakeholders.



Number of beneficiaries reached from March 2016 to November 2017

Description	Total	Kurunegala	Rideegama	Ganewatta	Mawathagama	Polpithigama
Total families	<b>11,147</b>	3595	2455	2383	1156	1558
Migrant families	<b>1277</b>	421	310	210	190	146
Families given information	<b>2818</b>	786	908	831	242	51
Legal assistance	<b>42</b>	08	16	07	07	04
Psycho social assistance	<b>66</b>	22	18	12	11	03
Referral for self-employment	<b>45</b>	13	16	16	00	00





## **“Champions by leadership building” project**

This is a project that we received financial support from Give2Asia with equipment support from Synopsys USA. It was to enhance computer laboratory facilities and life skills education to less privileged secondary school students in two lower graded schools in Colombo.

The equipment support received were 5 reconditioned laptops each, 10 computer chairs, a printer each and a router for internet connectivity.

The project CDS met with three main objectives based on the needs of the schools and the assessment made in the schools' selection process and as mentioned by the school teachers based on their experiences with their students:

1. Improving student's access to better ICT facilities to enable better computer education.
2. Increasing student's leadership and life skills through leadership training and counseling.
3. Educating students on adolescent health for healthier and responsible lifestyles.

The two schools received knowledge and participatory and interactive workshops on adolescent health over two days in duration for students in grades 9, 10 & 11. The following topics were covered in the adolescent health workshop:

Health and development, health, reproductive health and sexual health definitions, puberty and mental and physical changes, reproductive system and functions, sexually Transmitted infections education and prevention, HIV/AIDS education and prevention, dispelling SRH related myths, life skills for responsible decision making, love and relationships. Each student was presented with a guide book on adolescent health developed by CDS.

The students of the two schools were then given a one day workshop on leadership skills covering the following curriculum. This workshop too was a participatory and interactive.

Qualities of a good leader, leadership skills for decision making, developing the confidence for public speaking, leadership and team building skills, communication skills for a good leader

Both schools were also given counseling sessions by a professional counselor on life skills and opened a confidential service facility through CDS and the counsellor.

### Number of beneficiaries reached

- A total of 383 students have been educated on drug prevention from both schools through three workshops and now have the knowledge to prevent becoming addicted to drugs and alcohol.
- A total of 91 students from Anurudda Balika Vidyalaya have been educated on adolescent health and life skills through three workshops and now can make informed decisions for a healthy and responsible life.
- A total of 80 students underwent leadership training from both schools and now have the skills to take on leadership roles in school and the community.
- The two computer laboratories in the two schools are now well equipped with 5 laptops each, a router, printer and computer chairs and are benefitting the students of both schools.





## “Integrated Services of Safe Migration, HIV Prevention and Care for Migrant Workers and Families

This is part of a five country project that is funded by the Robert Carr Civil Society Networks Fund (RCNF) through CARAM Asia based on each country’s migrant worker’s needs. The five countries are Bangladesh, Cambodia, Pakistan, Philippines and Sri Lanka and the project is due to finish in 2018.

The grid below outlines the project objectives and their related activities.

Objective	Activity
Enhance HIV response implementation	Capacity building workshops to enhance CSOs knowledge on HIV/AIDS, SRH issues of migrants
	Develop data disaggregation tools for better data compilation/documentation. Establish referral and testing data pertaining to MWs by gender, age, last host country, previous migrated countries, family status, sexuality etc. (follow-up)
Support human rights advocacy	Prevention of new infections- Educating officers at the local government level on HIV to carry the message of HIV prevention to migrants and their families.
	Pre-departure orientation for potential men and women migrants for awareness and sensitization on prevention of HIV/AIDS and risk behaviors
Increase resource accountability for the HIV response	Organize consultative meetings with local government and PLHIV groups to recognize migrants as a vulnerable
	population and advocate allocating funding for CSOs for migrant’s HIV programs.

**Beneficiaries reached through the project activities**

- 216 migrant aspirants (169 Males from vocational training institutes and 47 potential migrant domestic workers) received a comprehensive education on HIV prevention.
- 133 government officers at the Divisional secretariat level received a comprehensive education on HIV prevention.
- 15 participants from 07 civil society organizations were empowered to train their communities by a ToT capacity building program on HIV/AIDS and SRH issues.
- Four STD clinic advocacy consultations have been conducted in the hospitals of Kandy, Chilaw, Matara and Kegalle to sensitize 63 STD clinic staff on migrant issues.
- Two VCCT clinics have been conducted reaching a total of 159 people out of which 74 were migrant returnees or spouses of migrants. A total of 64 Migrants volunteered to undergo the HIV rapid test. None of them were found to be positive.





## National and regional advocacy

### HIV policy

We have undertaken an HIV policy review as part of a 5 country study on the RCNF/CARAM Asia project. The desk reviews, focus group discussions and depth interview with key stakeholders is complete and this document will be out in 2018. The focus of the review was to make recommendations to state parties and policymakers and policy influencers that migrant workers are a very important key affected population considering their vulnerabilities, in service abuses and behaviours in prolonged out of home settings and that they must be considered in to national programmes with appropriate strategies and budgets given for interventions at the national level.

The complexities of migrant workers are manifold. Firstly, if awareness is not created at pre departure orientations, they are at greater risk. In doing so we must understand their behaviours and tailor make programmes to address such behaviours. Migrant workers are not given any health related orientations in destination countries. Most Gulf States have very strict rules and regulations for migrant workers on sexual behaviours and sexual orientations. Condoms are not freely available to migrant workers. Female domestic workers and other low skilled female workers face sexual abuse and sexual rape. Immediate deportation is practiced by these destination countries if a migrant worker is found to be pregnant, or found to be carrying an STI's including HIV. Migrants who are MSMs are not recognised and if found to indulge in sexual behaviour are punished, imprisoned and deported never to re-enter the country again.

CDS made recommendations on HIV and labour migration to the NSACP five-year strategic planning process. A press statement was also released on World AIDS Day on migration and HIV.

### Global Compact on Migration (GCM)

The immediate post GFMD period was a busy time for civil society as we had the opportunity to submit our input document at the country level. We held a series of consultations with national civil society representatives and the IOM was held in obtaining information to address the six thematic areas and two additional crosscutting subthemes relevant to the Sri Lanka labour migration discourse. A comprehensive input document was developed by CDS based on ground realities and evidence and submitted to government and IOM.

CDS also developed papers on migration and climate change, drivers of migration and the role and responsibility of the regional consultative processes (RCPs) as part of the regional civil society consultation process on the GCM. CDS was invited to a regional journalist's sub-regional workshop organized by Panos in Kathmandu, Nepal on a recommendation made by the SDC regional office. CDS shared the relevance of the GCM and the role that the media can play in addressing migration at the regional level.



## Migration advocacy

### Standardised contract for domestic workers

As part of the safe labour migration project CDS and CARITAS undertook to study the available labour contracts for domestic workers in destination countries and what is offered for signature in Sri Lanka. It was evident that there are multiple contracts with multiple content that do not necessarily have worker safeguards and protection incorporated in them. This leaves them in very dangerous and vulnerable situations at the hands of their employers. With support from UNWomen we will soon develop a standard model contract and present it to key stakeholders and the Ministry of Foreign Employment and the Sri Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employment (SLBFE) for adoption.

### International Migrants Day (IMD)

A 5 point signature statement was developed for international migrant's day that was also released to the national press and to selected social media sites. Over 3000 signatures were obtained by returnee migrants and migrant families. The statement addressed to the government and the ministry of foreign employment covered the need for a pension scheme for migrant workers, the importance of having a tripartite signature in migrant worker contracts, the need for a standard contract for domestic workers with necessary protection clauses included, addressing the needs and concerns of undocumented migrants and irregular migration and the health rights of migrant workers.

### Interest Group on Labour Migration

An eight member interest group on labour migration was formed to advocate with policymakers and policy influencers on relevant issues. This group will address concerns relating the family background report required of domestic workers as a prerequisite to seek overseas employment. It will address concerns on the amendments to the SLBFE Act. It will address and feed in to the national framework of the GCM. It will address migration and trafficking and contributing to the amendments to the national labour migration policy to name a few.

### New Interventions

- In 2016, CDS ventured out to engage with youth in advocating for cultural diversity in a multiethnic country such as Sri Lanka. Reconciliation, cultural diversity, civic liberties and civic consciousness in a post war climate to bring about sustainable peace are tools we are developing with young adults to engage in this multidimensional response to challenge and lead at the community, district and national level.
- We have begun approaching the private sector companies who are showing a willingness to participate beyond the corporate social responsibility framework within their grounds and territories to consider engaging in national health, social and socioeconomic issues. We were successful in getting the leading life insurance company in Sri Lanka, Ceylinco Life Limited to support a non-communicable diseases initiative among 10 selected schools in the Western Province.
- We are looking to the possibilities of doing a series of training sessions for journalists who are interested in development journalism along with likeminded civil society organisations as part of our media advocacy efforts. We hope to get this initiative rolled out this year.

Peace and solidarity

**Andrew Samuel**  
Executive Director