

MIGRANT ASSISTANCE UNIT – SRI LANKA

The Pioneer Sports based, Female Youth Centric
Safe and Regular Migration Campaign in Batticaloa District



Figure 1 – A national level young female football player supports the pioneer sports based IOM Sri Lanka's SMC campaign as a youth ambassador

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) Sri Lanka has been conducting special information outreach campaigns popularly known as safe migration campaigns (SMC) to curb the irregular migration attempts of Sri Lankans through irregular channels. The Global Assistance to Irregular Migrants (GAIM), which is running in its fifth phase, funds this programme. The campaign informs the benefits of safe and regular migration and the ill effects of irregular migration by targeting students, youth, government officials, community leaders, and communities prone to irregular migration.

According to the recent Central Bank report statistics (2019), Batticaloa is the highest unemployed youth populated district. Based on the IOM Sri Lanka's hotline based records (2019), it is further evident to be one of the highest irregular migration prone communities in Sri Lanka as well. Culturally, the area is also popular to have a male dominant community where females are less interactive in sports and in other social activities. Further, football is not a common sport in popularity among the Sri Lankans compared to Cricket and Netball.

By taking all these facts to due consideration, the safe and regular migration campaign team gave life to their novel ideas in disseminating SMC message to communities living in the most vulnerable irregular migration prone areas through sports by using female youth groups.

Based on such pioneer initiative, for the first time in the history of IOM Sri Lanka, the Migrants Assistance Unit (MAU) launched a female centric sports based mass information outreach campaign on 17 October 2019 at Weber Stadium in the heart of Batticaloa. This one-day female football tournament was a significant milestone in developing close ties with the District Secretariat (Government Agent & District Sports Officer in Batticaloa) while it developed direct involvement of around 80 female youth participants from four district administrative divisions including best national level players to reach different levels of the communities. Such agents of change made the event further colourful by reflecting their greater level of active participation as SMC ambassadors.

While innovative campaigning turned to be an outstanding performance reaching more than thousand (1000 Females: 400 Males) target audience beyond its expected levels of engagement, the activity further highlighted the IOM's active participation in achieving the key Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) reflected by the Migration and the 2030 Agenda (2018). In addition, it also laid foundation to deploy the Sri Lanka's mandate towards the Global Compact for Migration (GCM) through the MAU initiated District Migration Forum in the Batticaloa District.



Figure 2 - Government Officials once trained by IOM supporting response generation activities from the audience

Overall, 1282 community members from different age categories, such as school children, parents, women groups, young girls and boys, government officials, Divisional Secretaries from 14 DS divisions attended this auspicious event and submitted their responses to the safe and regular migration knowledge, attitude and behavior survey administered by using comment cards. Volunteer support was obtained from the groups who were once trained by IOM on safe and regular migration knowledge during the past project phases. They included government Foreign Employment Development Officers (FEDOs), UNV (Local UN volunteer V force members) and students from local schools. All of them supported immense to develop a larger engagement in the area together with IOM staff. It also facilitated 127 winners with mobile top-up cards as incentives iconizing their active participation in the IOM survey. Finally, the event concluded with happy faces empowered with informed decisions on safe and regular migration to a better future.

For more information on the above activities, please contact Migrant Assistant Unit (MAU) at RBALASURIYA@iom.int or visit our web platform <https://srilanka.communityresponsemap.org/dashboard/2019->

