



Foundation for Innovative Social Development (FISD)
QUARTERLY Newsletter (JAN - MARCH 2026)



FISD IS A NATIONAL NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATION IN SRI LANKA, COMMITTED TO SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT THROUGH THE PREVENTION OF DRUGS AND ALCOHOL, THE PROTECTION AND PROMOTION OF CHILD RIGHTS, AND WOMEN AND DEVELOPMENT (WITH PARTICULAR FOCUS ON THE PREVENTION OF GENDER BASED VIOLENCE).

VISION

EMPOWER COMMUNITIES TO ENJOY RIGHTS, JUSTICE AND EQUITY IN A DYNAMIC SRI LANKA


MISSION


TO EMPOWER STAKEHOLDERS BY PROVIDING INNOVATION SOLUTIONS AND UTILIZING EFFECTIVE METHODOLOGIES TO ACHIEVE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT WITH JUSTICE AND EQUITY.


Editor:
TMF. Wazeema
Documentation & Knowledge
Management Specialist

Guidance:
Samitha Sugathimala
Programme Director

Technical Support:
Dilupa Hansani
Media & Communication Officer

 www.fisd.lk

 +94 (0) 11 2779665
+94 (0) 11 2779172

 95/10, Bodhiya Road,
Mirihana, Nugegoda

CYCLONE DITWA EMERGENCY RESPONSE: DISTRIBUTION OF RELIEF SUPPLIES ACROSS SEVEN DISTRICTS

In the wake of the devastating Cyclone Ditwa, which struck Sri Lanka in late November and December 2025, FISD has successfully completed a large-scale emergency relief operation across seven of the island's most affected districts. The cyclone triggered catastrophic rainfall, floods, and landslides, displacing thousands of families and crippling access to essential services. In response, FISD, with financial backing from FORUT, Family for Every Child, the Lak Saviya Foundation, and individual donors, launched a humanitarian initiative to restore safety, dignity, and normalcy for the most vulnerable.



PRIORITIZING WOMEN, CHILDREN, AND VULNERABLE HOUSEHOLDS



Targeting the districts of Badulla, Kandy, Anuradhapura, Nuwara Eliya, Monaragala, Hambantota, and Colombo, the intervention focused on families with children, women-headed households, and those with acute social and economic vulnerabilities. Working through government coordination mechanisms, FISD conducted rapid needs assessments to ensure equitable and transparent distribution of aid.

COMPREHENSIVE RELIEF CONTENTS

Relief items were tailored to urgent field-level needs. Dignity Packs included sanitary pads, toiletries, underwear, Dettol, and laundry soap. Emergency Relief Packs contained bedsheets, sarongs, bras, under-skirts, and towels. School Packs provided bags, exercise books, geometry tools, lunch boxes, and water bottles. Dry ration kits supplied rice, dhal, coconut oil, tinned fish, spices, sugar, and milk powder. Kitchenware included saucepans, coconut scrapers, buckets, and cutlery, while hygiene and bedding items such as mosquito nets and mattresses were also distributed.

RESTORING STABILITY

"The timely support has not only met basic survival needs but has also helped restore a sense of safety and stability during a critical early recovery phase," - General Secretary, FISD

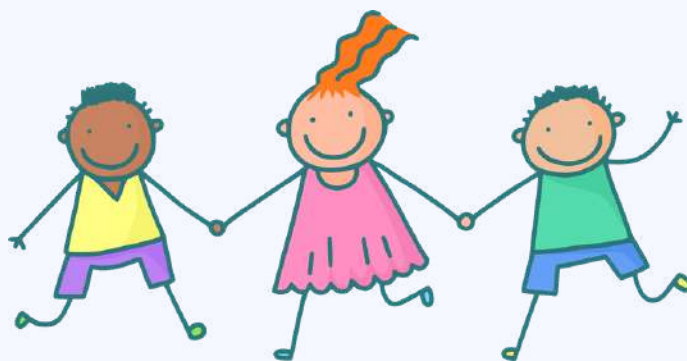
FISD extended its sincere gratitude to FORUT, Family for Every Child, the Lak Saviya Foundation, and all individual donors for their generous contributions and continued trust. Their support played a crucial role in enabling a swift and effective response to Sri Lanka's worst cyclone disaster in recent years.



CHILD CLUBS: EMPOWERING CHILDREN THROUGH PARTICIPATION



Child Clubs continued to make a meaningful impact across Anuradhapura, Monaragala, and Hambantota districts, reinforcing their role as a cornerstone of child participation and empowerment. A total of 12 sessions were held during the quarter, bringing together 265 children in a range of interactive and creative activities. Among the highlights were vision board workshops, where children had the opportunity to express their aspirations and map out their future goals, a powerful exercise in self-reflection and forward thinking. Cultural activities tied to New Year celebrations further enriched the experience, fostering a sense of joy, identity, and community belonging. Beyond the activities themselves, the sessions served as a safe and supportive space where children felt heard, built confidence, and honed their leadership skills. Over time, Child Clubs have grown into an important platform through which children can actively engage in community processes and develop a deeper sense of responsibility, not just for themselves, but for those around them.



CHILD COUNCILS: STRENGTHENING CHILDREN'S VOICES



Child participation at decision-making levels was strengthened through Child Council programmes across Monaragala and Hambantota districts. A total of 117 Child Council members received targeted training to build their leadership skills and deepen their understanding of child rights and protection mechanisms, creating structured opportunities for children to engage in discussions on issues that directly affect their lives. In Monaragala District, the programme focused on raising awareness around child trafficking, equipping members with knowledge on risks, prevention strategies, and safe decision-making, enabling them to recognise protection concerns and respond responsibly within their communities. In Hambantota District, the emphasis was on collective action and advocacy.



A District Child Council Programme provided children with a platform to voice their concerns, engage in community dialogue, and participate in grassroots advocacy campaigns. Through these initiatives, Child Council members across both districts have grown into confident advocates for child rights and protection, amplifying children's voices where it matters most.

FROM AWARENESS TO ACTION: BUILDING CHILD-SAFE COMMUNITIES



Addressing child trafficking remained a key priority, with targeted interventions implemented across Anuradhapura, Monaragala, and Hambantota districts. Awareness programmes reached 216 children through child clubs, 57 through child councils, and 51 through youth platforms, creating safe spaces to understand trafficking risks and make informed decisions. Sessions covered identifying forms of trafficking, safe migration practices, and available reporting mechanisms. Special attention was given to the Hambantota District, where additional programmes expanded outreach through child-focused awareness sessions, youth engagement initiatives, and training for community leaders. The youth component engaged 51 participants in programmes combining trafficking awareness with practical life skills, including CV writing, interview preparation, and mock interviews, helping youth pursue safer livelihood opportunities and reduce vulnerability to exploitation.



Training of Trainers (ToT) programmes were conducted for Community Facilitators in Anuradhapura and Hambantota, equipping grassroots leaders to identify early warning signs, raise awareness, and strengthen referral pathways for protection concerns. Through this integrated approach, a well-informed and responsive community network has been built, better equipped to prevent child trafficking and ensure timely protective action.

STRENGTHENING CHILD-FRIENDLY COMMITTEES: MOVING FROM BYSTANDERS TO PROTECTORS

Child-Friendly Committees (CFCs) were strengthened as part of ongoing efforts to improve community-based child protection systems, with 91 CFC members trained across programme locations in Monaragala and Anuradhapura. The training focused on safeguarding children's rights, promoting collective action, and enhancing community engagement in child protection. Members were encouraged to take an active role in identifying and addressing child protection concerns within their communities. These strengthened committees play a key role in ensuring coordinated and sustainable efforts to protect children at the community level.



STRONG MINDS, STRONGER SUPPORT: PROMOTING MENTAL HEALTH AMONG CHILD CLUB LEADERS



A dedicated programme was conducted for child club leaders, with 57 participants engaging in sessions focused on mental health awareness and emotional well-being in the Anuradhapura district. The programme introduced practical coping mechanisms, stress management techniques, and peer support approaches, enabling children to better understand and manage their emotions while fostering openness and mutual support among peers. By equipping child leaders with these skills, the initiative contributes to building a supportive environment where children can actively promote well-being among themselves and others.

LOCAL LEADERS ADVANCING COMMUNITY MENTAL WELLBEING



Building on efforts to strengthen mental health support, 29 community leaders participated in training programmes focused on psychosocial well-being in the Monaragala district. Sessions enhanced their understanding of mental health issues, equipped them to identify early signs of distress, and provided tools to offer basic support within their communities. Leaders were also encouraged to promote awareness and reduce mental health stigma. This initiative strengthened community-level support systems, ensuring children and families have better access to care and understanding.

ENGAGING COMMUNITIES IN DIALOGUE AND COLLECTIVE PROBLEM-SOLVING TO BUILD RESILIENCE

Community consultation programmes engaged 173 community members across Anuradhapura, Monaragala, and Hambantota districts, focusing on strengthening resilience and collective action. Participants identified community strengths and challenges through SWOT analysis, discussed disaster preparedness for risks such as floods and cyclones, and explored mental well-being and coping mechanisms. These consultations encouraged communities to work together in addressing local challenges and building safer, more resilient environments for children.



STRENGTHEN COMMUNITY ACTION: A DISASTER MANAGEMENT APPROACH



Disaster management programmes were implemented targeting community action committees across Anuradhapura, Hambantota, and Monaragala districts, with a total of 221 participants, 71 from Anuradhapura, 70 from Hambantota, and 80 from Monaragala. The programmes focused on identifying community strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats in preparing for future disasters, understanding the relationship between stress and coping mechanisms, and promoting healthy mental well-being strategies. Activities included SWOT analysis and the “stress bucket” exercise, enabling participants to identify their vulnerabilities and transform them into strengths. Discussions also addressed managing fear and distress, as well as the negative impact of alcohol and drug use on stress levels. Through these programmes, community action committees are better equipped to anticipate risks, build resilience, and support one another in times of crisis.



YOUTH AT THE FRONTLINE OF PREVENTION: STRENGTHENING YOUTH CAPACITY TO ADDRESS ALCOHOL AND DRUG HARMS



A two-day youth training programme on alcohol and drug prevention was conducted in Hambantota District, in collaboration with the District Secretariat and the Medical Officer of Health office. The programme aimed to shift positive expectations associated with alcohol and drugs, raise awareness of the root causes of substance use, educate participants on industry tactics, and improve understanding of Sri Lanka's legal frameworks. A total of 22 young participants attended. By the end of the programme, notable changes were observed in participants' attitudes and social norms, alongside increased awareness of industry influences and relevant laws. This group is expected to be further developed as a long-term youth network for prevention efforts, with additional programmes planned.



ADVOCACY TRAINING: EMPOWERING YOUTH FOR CHANGE



An advocacy training programme was conducted for the youth group in Monaragala district, providing participants with a foundational understanding of advocacy principles and practices. By the end of the session, participants developed an advocacy plan centred on the theme of changing positive attitudes towards alcohol and drug use among Dhamma school children in the Monaragala district. Preparations are currently underway to implement this initiative. These programmes collectively demonstrate meaningful progress in advancing community resilience, prevention efforts, and mental well-being.



UNWRITTEN RULES, UNREALIZED POTENTIAL: CHALLENGING WHAT HOLDS WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS BACK



In celebration of International Women's Day 2026 under the theme "Give to Gain", 45 women from the Nachchaduwa Women Federation in Anuradhapura participated in an awareness programme focused on the socio-cultural norms shaping women's entrepreneurship. The session created a reflective space to examine invisible barriers limiting economic potential, moving beyond the traditional focus on skills and finance. Discussions highlighted how entrepreneurial journeys are often constrained not by lack of ability, but by deeply rooted "unwritten rules" restricting mobility, decision-making, and risk-taking, including unpaid care responsibilities and societal pressure to "stay small."



The programme introduced the concept of the "family as a space for change," encouraging women to renegotiate traditional roles through practical adjustments that redistribute responsibilities and strengthen family resilience. Participants expressed increased awareness of their rights, greater confidence to question limiting norms, and a growing interest in initiating change within their families and communities, positioning entrepreneurship as a pathway for broader social transformation.

WHAT OUR BODIES CARRY: BODY MAPPING FOR WOMEN'S RESILIENCE



In recognition of Women's Rights Month, transformative workshops were facilitated for women collectives across Anuradhapura, Monaragala, and Hambantota districts, exploring the intersection of societal expectations, physical well-being, and personal agency. The session opened with a screening of the film "Saand Ki Aankh", inspired by the real-life journey of Chandro and Prakash Tomar, two elderly women who defied deep-rooted gender norms to become champion sharpshooters serving, as a powerful entry point to reflect on hidden potential and societal limitations.



A Body Mapping exercise then enabled 85 women to visually explore how their bodies carry both the burdens of daily labour and sources of inner strength, identifying areas of stress linked to unpaid care work while recognising spaces of resilience and capability within themselves. The session concluded with a strong emphasis on self-care and collective support as essential pathways to empowerment and broader social change.

STRESS POTS AND SOLIDARITY: BUILDING COMMUNITY RESILIENCE AFTER CYCLONE DITWAH



In response to the DITWAH cyclone, community resource mapping and resilience-building sessions were conducted across vulnerable communities in Anuradhapura and Monaragala districts through Community-Based Organizations (CBOs). Sessions created safe spaces for communities to reflect on past experiences, identify local risks, and map available resources, fostering collective learning over blame-based discussions. Using the “stress pot” concept, participants explored how emotional pressure builds during crises and the value of healthy coping strategies, including peer support and open communication.



SWOT-style reflections enabled communities to identify strengths and gaps, transforming vulnerabilities into practical action points such as forming support groups and strengthening stakeholder coordination. The initiative contributed to enhanced awareness, improved preparedness, and stronger social cohesion, positioning communities to respond more effectively to future disasters.

DISTRICT ORIENTATIONS SET THE STAGE FOR THRIVE: TOGETHER FOR HER: RESILIENCE-BUILDING, INCLUSIVITY, AND VOICES FOR EQUALITY IN SRI LANKA

FISD has launched THRIVE - Together for Her: Resilience-building, Inclusivity, and Voices for Equality, a transformative new initiative developed jointly by UN Women and Chrysalis, with funding from the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). The project aims to economically and socially empower marginalised women and strengthen their resilience in the face of crises, insecurity, and climate-related challenges.



Under FISD's leadership, Outcome 2 of the project focuses on shifting harmful social norms and fostering behavioural change to advance gender equality and prevent violence. As an initial step, FISD successfully conducted district-level orientations across all six target districts: Badulla, Colombo, Kilinochchi, Mannar, Monaragala, and Nuwara Eliya. The sessions brought together key stakeholders, including district officials, service providers, community leaders, and implementing partners, to introduce project objectives, clarify roles and responsibilities, and establish safeguarding protocols and coordination mechanisms, laying a strong foundation for district-level effective implementation.



PRE-PERCEPTION SURVEY TOOLS: SUCCESSFULLY PILOTED



As part of the THRIVE project's groundwork, pre-perception survey tools were successfully piloted across Badulla, Colombo, and Monaragala districts using three key methodologies: Key Informant Interviews (KIIs), Community Norms Mapping, and Life History Interviews. KIIs engaged a diverse range of stakeholders, including women leaders, police officers, religious leaders, and community officials. Community Norms Mapping facilitated participatory discussions that surfaced insights into community dynamics and the expectations shaping women's roles and opportunities. Life History Interviews enabled participants to reflect on personal journeys, revealing how social norms are negotiated and transformed in everyday life. The pilot demonstrated the effectiveness of these tools in generating meaningful community insights, laying a strong foundation for the full-scale perception survey under the THRIVE project.

ENGAGING MEN AND BOYS AS ACCOUNTABLE ALLIES TO PREVENT GBV

A series of one-day training programmes was conducted under the project titled "Engaging Men and Boys as Accountable Allies in the Prevention of Gender-Based Violence (GBV)," funded by UNFPA through JSAC. The trainings targeted four key groups across multiple districts and national level: Muslim faith-based leaders in Nuwara Eliya, Buddhist faith-based leaders in Matara, media professionals, and local government leaders at the national level.



Using participatory and reflective methodologies grounded in the Transforming Masculinities approach, the sessions aimed to increase awareness of how faith, media, and governance structures shape harmful gender norms; shift perspectives toward gender-just interpretations of scripture, ethical reporting, and accountable leadership; and strengthen participants' agency to act as change agents in their communities.



Outcomes of these training programmes included measurable reductions in victim-blaming attitudes among journalists, commitments from faith leaders to integrate GBV prevention into sermons and counselling, and pledges from local government officials to embed gender-transformative practices into governance plans.



CONNECT WITH US



OUR SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

Facebook: Foundation for Innovative Social Development

Twitter: @FISD_Sri_Lanka

Instagram: fisd.lk

ADDRESS

NO. 95/10,
BODHIYA ROAD,
MIRIHANA,
NUGEGODA,
SRI LANKA

TELEPHONE:

+94 (011) 2779665/

+94 (011) 2779172

E-mail: info@fisd.lk

Website:
<http://www.fisd.lk/>

