Greetings from Asia Safe Abortion Partnership!

Across the globe we have all been struggling these past few months, some with trying to get back to our pre pandemic lives and others still trying to fight it’s subsequent waves. In some countries Governments and political leaders added to the difficulties and troubles by insensitive and unjust policy and programmatic decisions, that unfairly affected vulnerable groups such as migrants, sex workers, women seeking safe abortion services. Now, even though the vaccines are available, their distribution and accessibility is still grossly unequal, from country to country and within each country.

In the meanwhile ASAP members and partners, Youth Champions and Country Advocacy Networks continued our advocacy of safe abortion access for everyone, under all circumstances-- pandemic or no pandemic. So do join us as we take you through the journey of our past quarter along with our brilliant partners and Youth Champions

In the interest of building cross movement solidarity we are focussing on ‘Building Inclusive Movements’ as our guiding principle for 2021. The organization is working towards finding synergies and developing solidarities between various human rights, sexual and reproductive rights, and social justice movements in order to encourage to integrate safe abortion rights within their advocacy agenda and program strategies.
While we are incorporating these principles functionally, we are also focussing on raising awareness on the need for solutions, to make safe abortion services truly accessible to all.
ASAP ACTIVITIES

THE BIG PICTURE WITH ASAP

In 2020, with our ASAP Conversations During Covid, we connected with our members, partners and allies belonging to or working with communities facing specific challenges during this pandemic for safe abortion access. After these conversations which touched upon specific focused issues, whether it was lack of safe abortion access in Japan to the existence of FGM in India and marginalization of the queer community to the difficulties being faced by sex workers, we are back with our second series of more meta level conversations. With this we hoped to bring to the forefront some core themes that need deeper reflection and some people who can shed a light on these complicated issues, unpack the controversial ones and enlighten us with their unique perspectives on old problems.

In this new series we are taking a look at the Big Picture issues that affect each one of us at a personal as well as a political level in our struggle for sexual and reproductive rights. These are issues like gender, patriarchy, sexual and reproductive labour, neoliberalism, population policies, digital freedom, healthcare and medicine, sustainable development.

The Big Picture Ep 1: Politics of Sex Selection

The Big Picture Ep 2: Politics of Beauty & Desire (with Dr...

The Big Picture Ep3: Politics of Gender & Medicine
In 2019 the Mahila Sarvangeen Utkarsh Mandal (MASUM), in collaboration with India Safe Abortion Youth Advocates (ISAY) and ASAP had undertaken a rapid assessment with partners from seven states of India on ‘Mapping women’s access to safe abortion services’. Following that a national level consultation was held in New Delhi on 2nd March, 2020 with policymakers and government officials and on 3rd March, 2020 with civil society partners in order to disseminate the findings and to create a community of advocacy around the key issues.

As the Medical Termination Of Pregnancy Act in India completes 50 years in 2021, we will be talking about important issues with regards to accessing services under the law, throughout the year with a series on online events such as webinars and photo campaigns.

Click on the left image to watch the full video.
In order to make information more accessible to people looking for safe abortion services ASAP, Stories to Action (led by alumni YC Iris Pi) and Gynopedia ran an Asia wide campaign. The aim was to update the Gynopedia country pages and raise awareness about this crowdsourced platform, while also increasing the visibility of Country Advocacy Networks and other regional organizations working on SRHR and safe abortion access. As part of the campaign, we also held a Tweet-a-thon and a Gynopedia Editing training with our CAN leaders.
We are delighted to announce that our Medical Abortion Factsheet has been recently translated into Japanese, by our partner Kumi Tsukahara from Japan who is currently working with Reproductive Health and Rights Literacy Lab.

The factsheet is now available in English, Hindi and Japanese. All of which can be accessed here.

AWARD NOMINATION

ASAP along with Feminism in India was nominated for Social Media for Empowerment Award, for our campaign: #AbortionMeraHaq / #AbortionMyRight where we used social media to raise awareness regarding safe abortion rights and laws in India throughout the month of May in 2019. The Nomination was in the category Communication, Advocacy & Development Activism.
The Year of MAGA: Making Abortions Great Again. By Dr Suchitra Dalvie

Ok....... so now that we have your attention :) we wanted to take this opportunity to remind all of us working on safe abortion rights...

69 views  0 comments

Rape Culture & Glorification of the Vagina. By Manoj Kumar...

Women have always been represented as the ‘honor’ of a family in patriarchal societies. Mothers, daughters, sisters, wives and women in...

8 views  0 comments

'Her Choice' by Lirisha Tuladhar

She felt tears pour her pretty face She felt her heart calming down She could feel her nerves staying put She could feel her mind no more...

3 views  0 comments
BLOGS

'Obvious Child'
Normalises Abortion, And I'm Glad For It. Review by...

I saw Obvious Child for the first time around three years ago. But the Jenny Slate starrer wasn’t exactly a popular film when it came...

24 views 0 comments

New Pandemic, Old Issues: 'ASAP Conversation During...

Our guest today is Dr. Manisha Gupte who has been a part of the Indian feminist movement since the mid-70s. In 1987 after living in a...

4 views 0 comments

#GynopediaIt: Safe Abortion, Contraception, and your Health

We have teamed up with Asia Safe Abortion Partnership and Gynopedia, and invite anyone with internet access and a computer or mobile...

4 views 0 comments
As a result of the lockdowns there could be as many as 7 million more unintended pregnancies across the world. Hence ASAP continued raising awareness on the importance of accessible safe abortion services, especially amidst the pandemic.

REWINDING 2020

Despite the terrible year that was 2020, some incredible breakthroughs took place in our world and we wanted to start the New Year by celebrating those wins.

Thailand in November amended its abortion law, which now aims to allow women to seek and have abortions up to 12 weeks into their pregnancy.

Currently, women seeking a termination can receive a prison sentence of up to three years and a 60,000 baht ($1,980) fine.
Argentina which became the largest Latin American country to legalise abortion up to the 14th week of pregnancy after the bill was approved on 30th December 2020

The decision is ground-breaking given that the majority Roman Catholic country had some of the world’s most restrictive abortion laws.

South Korea decriminalized abortion, effective 2021, by an order of the Constitutional Court.

The government had criminalized abortion in the 1953 in all circumstances. This was amended by the Maternal and Child Health Law of 1973 to allow in case of incest, rape, hereditary/communicable disease or risk to woman’s health.

In India the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act of 1971 is being amended and a Bill was passed in one house of parliament before the country went into pandemic lockdown in March

Although the preamble of the proposed amendment includes progressive language, unfortunately the content and clauses of the new version are likely to create more barriers than make access universal and safe.

#MakeHistory because I know the world is unequal and many are left behind, but I have the willingness & knowledge to change that.

Sabina Pokhrel is a feminist activist from Nepal. A Public Health graduate she is currently working with Visible Impact and is also SheDecides 25x25 young leader - Generation of Change.
FEMINIST N CHILL

Movie recommendation - ‘Obvious Child’. Review by Youth Champion from India, Purnima Singh

Click the image to read review

MEMES

All of us waiting for Joe Biden to remove the Global Gag Rule like

How buying sanitary napkins in Sri Lanka feels like
ISAY partnered with MASUM and ASAP for a national webinar called '50 Years of MTP Act - Gaps and Gains' to discuss the nuances of the policies regarding abortions in India. Suyash Khubchandani briefly detailed the work done by ISAY and how our partnership with MASUM led to collaborations for workshops and many other activities.

Shwetangi Shinde participated in the making of a reel for promotion of Gynopaedia in association with ASAP.

Members of the ISAY team worked for the creation of a toolkit for medical students as a guide for an abortion sensitization workshop. It includes a detailed account of every session and resource material that would be required to conduct a basic SOGIESC and abortion advocacy workshop.
SAFE ABORTION RIGHTS AND LEGAL PROVISIONS IN NEPAL | YOSHAN | 20TH JANUARY

Youth Champion Nir Shrestha conducted a virtual session on the topic with Blind Youth Association Nepal.

SESSION ON SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS | PAHICHAN NEPAL & YOSHAN

The organizations collaborated to conduct an interactive session where women with disabilities from all the provinces actively showed up to share their lived experiences related to sexual and reproductive health. The session was facilitated by Durga Sapkota.
YoSHAN participated in this workshop where different seeds and plants were planted on the feminist farm provided by Yogashala Nepal. There was enormous space to learn and share with each other. YoSHAN Youth Champion Kamala Bista took part in the program representing YoSHAN.

YoSHAN as part of RHRWG along with other organizations has been engaging in creating a more inclusive law in the country, which can ensure women’s health and rights.

This session was organized on Mental health and SRHR and was facilitated by Pushpa Joshi and a psychological counselor Shraddha Pradhan. In the session, the interlinkages between SRHR and mental health were explored and they also discussed self-care practices.
On International Women’s Day, Durga Sapkota was featured in a national newspaper as one of the inspiring Nepali women.
One of the milestones of the first quarter of the year 2021 for YANSL was the Annual General Meeting for the year 2020 held on the 21st of February 2021 from 9.30 am to 1.30 pm at Enclave, Colombo. The ACM brought together members of YANSL from its inception and was followed by a fellowship session. Apart from the presentation of the Annual Report, another key event was the change of the Board of Directors.
The 2nd Phase of We Hear You (WHY) reached its culmination in the first quarter of 2021. Several video documentaries were produced capturing the SRHR needs of people living with hearing disabilities and the developing of a sign language glossary on SRHR by featuring interviews with stakeholders who were engaged in this initiative from the beginning and documentary content of conducting educational and awareness-raising sessions with the Rathmalana School for the Deaf with the support of the Sri Lanka Central Federation for the Deaf (SLCFD).

The project reached its pinnacle with the launch of a disability friendly website on SRHR named ‘We Hear You’ featuring information extracted from the SRHR Booklet of FAQs also put together by YANSL, and also videos with sign language interpretations.
Due to constraints posed by Covid 19 and limitations of physical accessibility, the 2nd phase of Amplify Change Project was re-strategized to conducting a small research targeting law students and legal practitioners named ‘Suggestions for Changes in Laws Related to SRHR’. During the first quarter of 2021, the research was conducted through online surveys and telephone calls and the research report was drafted with the assistance of Shelani Palihawadane. The research is currently under review and will be edited and put to print soon. A policy brief is also being formulated.

Desaree Soysa and Tharindi Devadurendra, the Small Grants Recipients from Asia Safe Abortion Partnership (ASAP) continued the second phase of their project, which is to collect stories of women and girls who have faced difficulties in accessing SRHR services during the Covid-19 pandemic induced lockdown and share them in the form of blog articles, animated videos and posts on social media pages of YANSL.
Having secured the grant ‘Claiming our Voices: Beijing+25 Follow Up and Review’ by Women’s Fund Asia, a project was launched as an evidence building project on access to SRHR services before and during Covid-19 focusing on women and girls in marginalized communities (ex. disability community) and the LGBTQ+ community in January 2021. In partnership with Care Consortium, a concept note for the entire project setting out its objectives was finalized during the month of February and discussions of how to create the videos including the terms of reference for videographers were finalized by the beginning of March. Focus Group discussions were held online towards the end of March with the participation of about 10 participants and their input has been taken for the conceptualization of the video scripts and finding respondents. Currently, the project team headed by Harini Fernando is finalizing the video producers for the project and identifying individuals as Respondents to be featured in the videos.

**ONLINE CAMPAIGNS**

**GYNOPEDIA IT | ASAP**

YANSL worked with Stories to Action (STA) and ASAP in updating the Sri Lanka page on ‘Gynopedia’ during the 1st quarter of 2021. As a method of collecting information to update the page and make SRHR information more accessible Members of YANSL participated in a Tweetathon through YANSL’s Twitter page.
YANSL posted several posts and stories over different Social Media Forums on the importance of Sexuality Education targeting the International Day of Education. A conversation was also held on Comprehensive Sexuality Education in Sri Lanka featuring Paba Deshapriya, Director of The Grassrooted Trust Sri Lanka and moderated by Dakshitha Wickremarathne as the 5th Episode of the Catalyst Programme (an online series of educational sessions conducted by YANSL on various topics related to Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights, and broadly on Gender and Gender Equality).

'ME' TO 'WE' | YANSL & ROTARACT CLUB OFFACULTY OF LAW

In collaboration with the Rotaract Club of the Faculty of Law, University of Colombo, an online campaign and series of webinars on raising awareness on the rights of the LGBTQ+ Community named ‘Me’ to ‘We’ was conducted by YANSL where resourced persons from within the organization like Desaree Soysa and Tharindi Devasurendra spoke of same sex relationships, contraceptives, and law reforms that are required to uphold rights of LGBTQ+ community.
Continuing the initiative conducted in partnership with the Rotaract Club of Panadura, another webinar of SexEd101 was conducted on the topic of ‘Myths surrounding Virginity’ by Nishadhi Gunathilake, yet another Youth Champion. The presentation called for good engagement and meaningful discussion among the participants.

A couple more webinars were conducted on Sexual and Reproductive Health related topics in partnership with the Leo Club of the Faculty of Arts, University of Colombo. YANSL member Sanduni Hettigoda conducted a session in Sinhala language attracting a wide group of participants on the topic of ‘Myths on Menstruation’ while another member of YANSL Nishadhi Gunathilake spoke on laws and regulations surrounding LGBTQ+ community in Sri Lanka.

YANSL became a partner organization in the South East Asia Youth Advocacy Network (SYAN), which is a network which aims to bring youth focused, adolescent focused groups together and create a network in the region and create knowledge advocacy resources based on a module already developed through an online course.
Sanjana Ravi and Harini Fernando participated in the Generation Equality Forum from 29th of March to 31st of March representing YANSL.

YOUTH CAMPS | FPA SRI LANKA

Dakshitha Wickremarathne and Priskila Arulpragasam rendered their services as resource persons by developing training modules and training manual to conduct trainings for Youth Camps organized by the Family Planning Association of Sri Lanka in the three official languages – English, Sinhala and Tamil. Dakshitha and Nishadhi conducted the pilot training in the Youth Camp held in Galle and Nishadhi again conducted a second training held in Galle.

THANK YOU!
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