

SAFE AND REGULAR MIGRATION

SHARING INFORMATION THROUGH MEANS OF ART



Forum Theatre show at a bus station in Batticaloa in March 2023, © IOM Sri Lanka 2023

Safe Migration Campaign (SMC) activities carried out within the Protection Unit strives to explore new and innovative methods to deliver safe migration messages in an interactive manner. Notable among those in the past are the weeks of activities carried out in the district of Jaffna where flash public campaigns, puppetry and sports events were conducted. These public events targeted a large number of audience in a location and disseminated specific information.

Forum theatre was one such public information campaign that was carried out in four different districts (Jaffna, Kurunegala, Trincomalee and Batticaloa) with 32 shows in February and March 2023.

For more information on the above activities please contact Migrant Assistant Division (MAD) at migrantassistancedivision@iom.int or Department of Operations and Emergencies (DOE) at DOEProtection@iom.int.

IOM has revisited its goals to achieve SDG and developed the Strategic Results Framework (SRF) with 4 pillars. Out of these pillars, pillar 3 focuses on Human Mobility.

One of the pillar's long-term outcomes is Sustainable channels for regular migration which are efficient, innovative, and responsive to current and emerging trends. To support this outcome Protection Unit implements projects under the following thematic areas:

1. Assistance for voluntary return and reintegration
2. Safe and regular migration information campaigns and campaign response mapping
3. Counter trafficking
4. Supporting migrant communities
5. Mental health and psycho-social support of migrants



The four districts were chosen based on the observations related to irregular migration attempts such as the incident of 300 odd migrants stranded at the Vietnam Sea in October. Districts such as Jaffna, Kilinochchi, Trincomalee were chosen for its high number of irregular migrants and Kurunegala for its highest number of foreign employment agencies.

The forum theatre was a novel concept that combined a drama performance where the audience could engage in a discussion through drama. This depiction through drama allows them to reflect on challenges and realize the consequences of irregular migration. The SMC team developed the script along with the team of artists, which included the topics such as regular migration, exploitation by human smugglers, encouragement towards skilled migration and the ways migrants can verify the information regarding their migration process.



The forum theatre performance starts with an opening play depicting how migrants can be deceived by human smugglers and types of human smuggling. As part of the second act of the forum theatre, the troupe took to performing a short drama that spoke of the experience of a family, who is deceived by a human smuggler disguised as a foreign employment agent. The father character gets stranded in Togo and the story expands showing the difficulties faced by stranded migrants as well as their families. The audience is then prompted to change the ending of the play to achieve a happy ending for the migrant family where the solutions are achieved via the inputs of the audience.

A scene depicting how irregular migration message is shared, March 2023, © IOM Sri Lanka 2023

The forum theatre was showcased in 4 different districts, with two drama troupes performing the play in two languages, Tamil and Sinhala. This allowed IOM to target a larger audience with over 4,500 participants viewing the shows. Responses from the audience were collected through a simple question card that captured the essence of the information the drama was based upon. SMC hotline 077 441 0086 was promoted throughout all the shows which permitted the audience to engage further with IOM to receive information on safe migration.



Forum theater shows were well-received by the audience who actively engaged with the play across all four districts. The performances were staged in public places such as markets, bus stands and government offices where the public visit. Artists received great applause from the audience and IOM was appreciated for helping to realize the consequences of selecting the irregular migration path. IOM also received a request to continue the forum theater in divisions where it was not performed for the next iteration. The forum theater activity was made possible with the generous funding from the Government of Canada.

An individual from the audience engaging in the discussion in Batticaloa in March 2023, © IOM Sri Lanka 2023

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