

## Report

### Gender awareness workshop for the supporting staff of the Faculty of Medicine, University of Jaffna Organized by the GCFM - October 2023

Appreciating the importance of gender awareness and issues related to it, the Gender Cell of the Faculty of Medicine (GCFM), University of Jaffna organized the very first gender awareness programme for the supporting staff of the Faculty.

The workshop was held on the afternoons (1 to 5 pm) of 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> October 2023 in the Conference Hall of the Faculty of Medicine. Forty-eight supporting staff members of different responsibilities from most of the departments attended on both days.



The resource persons for the workshop were Ms Sulochana Dissanayake from Power of Play Pvt Ltd who is an artist who uses music and puppetry to convey important social messages and Mr Velusamy Weerasingam, a freelance consultant who specializes in conducting training programmes for young people, NGOs and companies on issues related to gender and masculinity.

This workshop was fully funded by the Jaffna Medical Faculty Overseas Alumni (JMFOA) Canada. The format of the workshop was probably something that many of the participants had not anticipated. Both the afternoon sessions were highly interactive and had enthusiastic participation from all present, including those who might normally have been inhibited in public, thanks to the way the resource persons conducted it. Both at the outset and during the sessions, the participants were encouraged to be open with their views while understanding that the views expressed by individuals at the workshop would remain within those confines.



On the first day, there was an ice breaking and stress relieving session by Sulochana. She then gave a small puppetry performance that very simply raised the standard perception of what a man is expected to be like. After that, Weerasingham held a thought provoking discussion on what it was to be a man or woman and our understanding of those concepts and the stereotypes related to them. Participants playing enthusiastically with balloons was used as a tool to understand the control they

had on their lives in terms of power and powerlessness. Participants were also allowed to express the way they felt about the control they had on their lives in terms of power and powerlessness. Those present eagerly participated in the discussion as well.

During the second afternoon, participants were shown how to make puppets. The artistry and ingenuity of the puppets created by many was very impressive. Participants then gave voice to their puppets to express some of their inner thoughts and feelings on gender issues without inhibition.



Three academic members of the GCFM were present during the workshop. Feedback was received from the participants anonymously (attached). Certificates were given to all the participants. It is hoped that we can make use of their skills in the future.





### Acknowledgements:

First and foremost, our thanks to Dr. Mylashan and the Jaffna Medical Faculty Overseas Alumni (JMFOA) Canada for the wholehearted support from the time of initial planning of this workshop and for fully funding this workshop.

A big thank you is due to Ms Sulochana Dissanayake (Power of Play PVT LMT) and Mr Velusamy Weerasingam who conducted this workshop in such a stimulating and thought provoking manner. Thanks are also due to our Dean who has wholeheartedly supported the establishment of the Gender Cell and its activities.

Sincere thanks to the GCFM committee members for their whole hearted support for this workshop from the beginning.

A big thanks to all the supporting staff of this faculty who worked hard in organizing this workshop and for their enthusiastic participation in the workshop.

This was the first official activity of the GCFM. It is hoped that with the support of all the staff and students of the faculty that such innovative programmes will continue in helping improve gender awareness and that the Gender Cell will provide the support needed by students and staff affected by gender related issues.

Thank you

Dr Valarmathy Ambalavanar  
Coordinator, GCFM  
Faculty of Medicine  
University of Jaffna

