

11. Sri Lanka's Report

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The Asian Young Dietitians Network (AYDN) convened its inaugural meeting from 28th November to 1st December 2023 in Japan, featuring representatives from Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, Thailand, Japan, and Vietnam. Hosted by the Asian Nutrition and Food Culture Research Center at Jumonji University and Ajinomoto Co., Inc. Global Communication, Japan, the event provided dietitians with insights into Japan's dietetic management system in hospitals and school meal programs. Participants engaged in a fruitful exchange of ideas, focusing on the unique aspects of each country's food culture, nutrition practices, and health management strategies at the kick-off meeting. The discussions also delved into the future activities and collaborative initiatives envisioned by AYDN.

Visit to Japanese Hospital (Nerima Hikarigaoka Hospital) on 29th of November 2023

Nerima Hikarigaoka (NH) Hospital, a 400-bed facility in Japan, is committed to delivering comprehensive, multidisciplinary care. NH Hospital's Dietetic Department stands out as an excellent example of nutrition management by using advanced technology, standardized protocols, and a commitment to collaborative care. The Dietetic Department manages the nutritional needs of both inpatients and outpatients, providing personalized and evidence-based nutritional support. Dietitians collaborate closely with the food and beverage department to create well-balanced menus adhering to ensure standard therapeutic diets, adhering to HACCP protocols in food and nutrition services reflects NH Hospital's commitment to patient safety. Dietitians at NH Hospital work as integral members of a multidisciplinary team. Inspired by the advanced healthcare practices at NH Hospital. My vision is to implement an electronic patient medical record system, integrating it seamlessly with the existing meal ordering system. By modernizing the documentation process, we aim to elevate the standard of nutrition care in Sri Lanka without compromising on efficiency and accuracy.

Visit to elementary school for school lunch (Funabori Elementary School) on 1st of December 2023

A visit to Funabori Primary School (FPS) revealed

a well-structured lunch program with a diverse menu, offering 25 dishes monthly from South Asian, European, and North American cuisines. This diversity enriches students' culinary experiences and promotes cultural understanding. A dedicated professional dietitian oversees the program, carefully planning nutritionally balanced meals and providing the nutrition education program for children, contributing to overall health and academic excellence. FPS prioritizes organic farming & food safety, implementing stringent measures to ensure safe and healthy meals. The school accommodates students with food sensitivities and allergies. Government support enables the school to provide meals for free. The school minimizes edible food waste through careful planning, setting an example for sustainable living. Learning from successful models in Japan, implementing a sustainable school meal program in Sri Lanka addresses immediate and long-term nutritional needs, with a key focus on reducing food waste. Also, it guarantees the nutritional adequacy of the school meals, and a team of professional dietitians should be engaged.



Fig 1. AYDN joined the school lunch

Kick-off Meeting on 2nd of December 2023

Ms.F.A, Z.Firouse, a Dietitian represented Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka's food culture, shaped by its Silk Route location and colonial history, reflects a diverse tapestry, the cuisine centers around the classic rice and curry dish. Rice, a staple, is paired with various curries, emphasizing protein sources of fish, chicken, and eggs, with vegetables creatively integrated into dishes.

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Coconut milk or oil is a key cooking component, providing significant fat. With around 20 spices and herbs like turmeric, pepper, chili, cumin, cinnamon, etc. In Sri Lanka, the field of dietetic and nutrition care in the healthcare system established over the past 25 years. The regulatory body of dietitians is the Sri Lanka Medical Council, while the Dietitians' Association of Sri Lanka serves as the professional

body. To qualify as a registered dietitian in Sri Lanka, individuals must attain a minimum education level of a four-year degree in Food Science and Nutrition. Alternatively, an MSc or PhD in Dietetics, and Human Nutrition is also accepted. A crucial component is a mandatory one-year internship under the guidance of a registered dietitian.



Fig 2. Sri Lanka presentation at the AYDN Kick-off meeting

Sri Lanka faces a mounting health challenge with the increasing prevalence of non-communicable diseases. However, the nation's major nutritional issue lies in the triple burden of malnutrition, particularly affecting children under the age of 5. A national program called "Thripasha" plays a pivotal role in addressing this issue. Additionally, Sri Lanka has undertaken significant efforts in the revision of its national nutrition policy and the development of updated food-based dietary guidelines.

The participant Asian dietitians remain resilient, collectively contributing to the upliftment of nutrition standards and the advancement of their profession in their respective nations. Despite facing challenges such as low wages and unethical nutrition practices, intrusions into the dietetic field. To build relationships, exchange information, and work together to address common challenges in the field, the AYDN need aims to provide a collaborative platform for young dietitians

throughout Asia. As involved members of AYDN, dietitians from Sri Lanka are keen to take a role in advancing the dietetic field in the region. To ensure the interchange of knowledge and the growth of nutrition practices throughout the continent

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