

Women's Network Newsletter



CCP Highlights: International Women's Day 2023

In the wake of the United Nations' observance of International Women's Day, the March edition of the CCP Women's Network Newsletter will shine a light on the work of members of our network. While the stories of excellence highlighted here are by no means exhaustive or an exception, they should be treated as a snippet of a more significant segment of work done by many women in law enforcement and customs across our global network - work we hope to celebrate in the many months and years ahead.

Razeena Abdulla: The Queen of Seizures

Nearing 30 years of service with one of the highest numbers of seizures at the Maldives customs service (air cargo operations), Razeena, affectionately known to her colleagues as "The Queen of Seizures," joined Customs right out of higher secondary studies. A firm believer in women's superior intuition and hunches, she is not afraid to use her '6th sense' at work. Crediting her success to reading the environment and body language, among other non-verbal behavioral detection methods, Razeena said, "I believe it is important for women in law enforcement to be courageous and trust in their unique capabilities." She adds that women should use their intuition, compassion, and empathy in tandem with other operational skills, emphasizing that these skills are no less important if not vital in law enforcement work.



Sirima Panyarpisit: The Woman behind the Largest Waste Seizure at Laem Chabang Port

A national contact point for the CCP waste project, Sirima Panyarpisit is a Customs technical officer at the Investigation and Suppression Unit within the Customs Control Section of the Laem Chabang Port Customs Office in Thailand. Among many other significant seizures, Sirima was instrumental in a 130-tonnes waste seizure at Laem Chabang in 2022. Sirima takes great pride in her work and believes in equally serving her country and society. She conveyed a message of equality in her own words "While men still outnumber women in our field, we have seen an increase in the participation of women in customs not just in numbers, but in bringing different sets of qualities to work. In my unit, the unique qualities women bring to the workplace are gradually acknowledged and appreciated. Women are good with language, communication, and cooperation/collaboration, all essential qualities in customs."



Meet the women of CCP: Hansani Saubhagya

Madare Kankanamalage Hansani Saubhagya Karunarathne
(Hansani Saubhagya)



Assistant
Superintendent of
Customs - Passenger
Services Directorate of
Sri Lankan Customs

Q: Tell us about your career – how did you get started and what do you enjoy most about it?

Hansani: While I did not have a detailed understanding of what customs work entailed before joining Sri Lankan customs in 2016, I knew my educational background in the environmental field and my interest in legitimate trade facilitation and investigation would fit best in this field. Customs work also seemed like a never-ending, challenging, and exciting adventure.

After joining customs and during the orientation period, we were introduced to officers in each directorate. I hardly remember seeing women except for two officers who were a little senior to me. The two women explained how they conducted investigations and took great pride in their achievements, which I found quite inspiring. After that encounter, I met many other inspiring women figures at work that have assisted me in my journey.

I believe that joining the PCU was a major turning point in my career; I really enjoy the law enforcement work we do here! While I enjoy my work, navigating the socio-cultural aspect, such as personal-professional balance and having a strong support system among family members, was a bit tricky. For example, my mother was not keen on the shift schedule, and it took some time to get her fully on board. Every journey is different but undoubtedly worth it.

Q: How has your experience in CCP been thus far? How did you benefit, among other initiatives, from the work of the Women's Network?

Hansani: Thanks to CCP and our cooperation, I had the opportunity to interact and connect with officers from other agencies, both local and international. The Women's Network, in particular, has allowed me to learn from the experience and expertise of women in my team and other agencies and countries. While our department has just 10% of women officers, we could not connect or take the initiative to get together in the past. Thanks to the network, all that has changed. We now interact better within and outside of work.

Q: What inspired you to take a specific interest in gender equality and gender issues within the fisheries sector?

Hansani: I was privileged by a conventional standard as both the men and women in my life have always granted me equal access to opportunities, and gender inequality was not a concern in my immediate world. But, as I got exposed to the world, I discovered that women face various challenges. I knew these challenges emanated from patriarchal culture, but I did not yet have the vocabulary to articulate the inequality I witnessed. (cont.)

(cont.) Later, engagements such as the two-gender training conducted by CCP gave me the tools for analysis and helped me name and understand the problem better. Following the training, I even had the opportunity to deliver a gender and fisheries presentation and share my interest in detail after.

Q: Given that the meaningful inclusion of women remains a challenge in fisheries and law enforcement, what are the most concrete actions your fellow officers, both women and men, can take to support gender equality initiatives?

Hansani: Both the fisheries and law enforcement fields are male-dominated; hence, our presence in this space as women officers should ideally include taking the initiative in bringing the gender equality agenda and our lived experience to the fore. Women in law enforcement, I feel, must be active advocates of gender equality, both in our professional and personal life, in fighting sexist stereotypes and myths. Our enthusiasm for gender equality should also involve senior managers, male colleagues, and young women in Sri Lanka who want to work in law enforcement but are hesitant because of the challenges in the sector.

While the challenges and contexts vary, the fisheries community in Sri Lanka can also utilize the often-neglected traditional knowledge on conservation and sustainability practices that many women have been incubators and transmitters of. While it is common to see the men catching the fish and women selling them, I believe both traditional knowledge and modern-day gender awareness methods can be employed to demonstrate the value of women in the sector, starting from detecting fish species to financial/proceeds management.

Blue Enforcement Project Side Event in Copenhagen to Address Gender Roles in Combating Crimes in the Fisheries Sector in Sri Lanka and Maldives



The CCP and Global Maritime Crime Programme (GMCP) organized a joint side event at the Blue Justice Conference 2023 focusing on gender roles in tackling crimes in the fisheries sector (CFS) in Sri Lanka and Maldives. The event highlighted the work of CCP/GMCP's [Blue Enforcement Project](#) and the significance of women's engagement in national compliance and maritime law enforcement institutions, inter-agency coordination and international cooperation to tackle CFS. It emphasized the need for gender mainstreaming in law enforcement and the fisheries sector and brought together female representatives from law enforcement agencies to highlight the importance of women's empowerment in these fields.