ASSOCIATION OF WOMENS' WITH DISABILITIES

"A SOCIETY WITH EQUAL RIGHTS FOR ALL"

Since 1995

PAHALAGAMA ROAD,

KOONGOLLAWA,

THALAWA,

SRI LANKA.

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- REGISTERED AT:

NGO SECRATARIET - L10116

NATIONAL SECRETARIAT FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES – MSS / NSPD / R / 65

EUROPEAN UNION – PADOR- LK-2008-DOP-0611738167

HISTORY

- In 1984, Ms. N.G. Kamalawathie, a young Sri Lankan woman from a lower income, rural background, ventured out of her family home to seek a job and independence in the capital, Colombo. A childhood bout of polio had left her with permanent mobility impairment. Hence, she faced many impediments, and often needed to create her own opportunities and cope with various struggles.

- This led her to campaign for improved public access for people with disabilities, but she found it difficult to get her lone voice heard.

- Recognizing the strength in numbers, in 1989 she formed the 'Sri Lankan Federation of Women with Disability' along with five others.

- Inspired after attending the UN Beijing Conference on Women in 1995 and brimming with new ideas on organisation and mobilisation, she established AKASA on the 30th of December 1995, re-organising the erstwhile federation. At that time, it had 36 members.

OUR JOURNEY

- As our first activity AKASA started by conducting a survey on the opportunities, projects and services available for the rehabilitation of people with disabilities in Sri Lanka. The survey covered 10 Divisional Secretariats in different provinces of the country, focussing specially on areas where community-based projects had been implemented. The survey revealed that rehabilitation opportunities were very scarce. Further, community participation, especially of people with disabilities and their family members were neglected, in the implementation of the projects.

- Women with disabilities in Sri Lanka were often confined to their homes, over-protected by their families yet isolated by a society that stigmatised them. They had few opportunities for economic, social or cultural participation in society and little sense of self-worth. Change begins with self-belief. AKASA embarked on a process of mediation, aimed at a drastic change in the attitudes and behaviour of women with

- AKASA trained 371 mediators in 10 Divisional Secretariats between 1997 – 1999. Initially all the mediators were non-disabled women, but now, the mediators are a mix of women and men, with and without disabilities. The mediators identified women with disabilities or women with family members having disabilities, and talked to them and their families about possibilities open to them. Gradually this was opened up to men with disabilities and their families too.

- The survey revealed that the situation for people with disabilities was worst in the Anuradhapura District, especially in the war-torn villages. Hence AKASA decided to locate itself here, and opened the project office in Talawa on 1st June, 1998. On the same day, a vocational training centre for young women with disabilities was opened adjacent to the project office. Both premises and the buildings were donated by the Government. The buildings were bare granary storehouses and were converted to office and vocational training facilities, with minimum resources.

- From 2004 until early 2008, AKASA managed the running of a residential home, (on behalf of the Ministry of Social Services, North Central Province), for orphaned and abandoned girls and women with mental impairment in nearby Saliyapura until its turn over back to the Ministry last February.

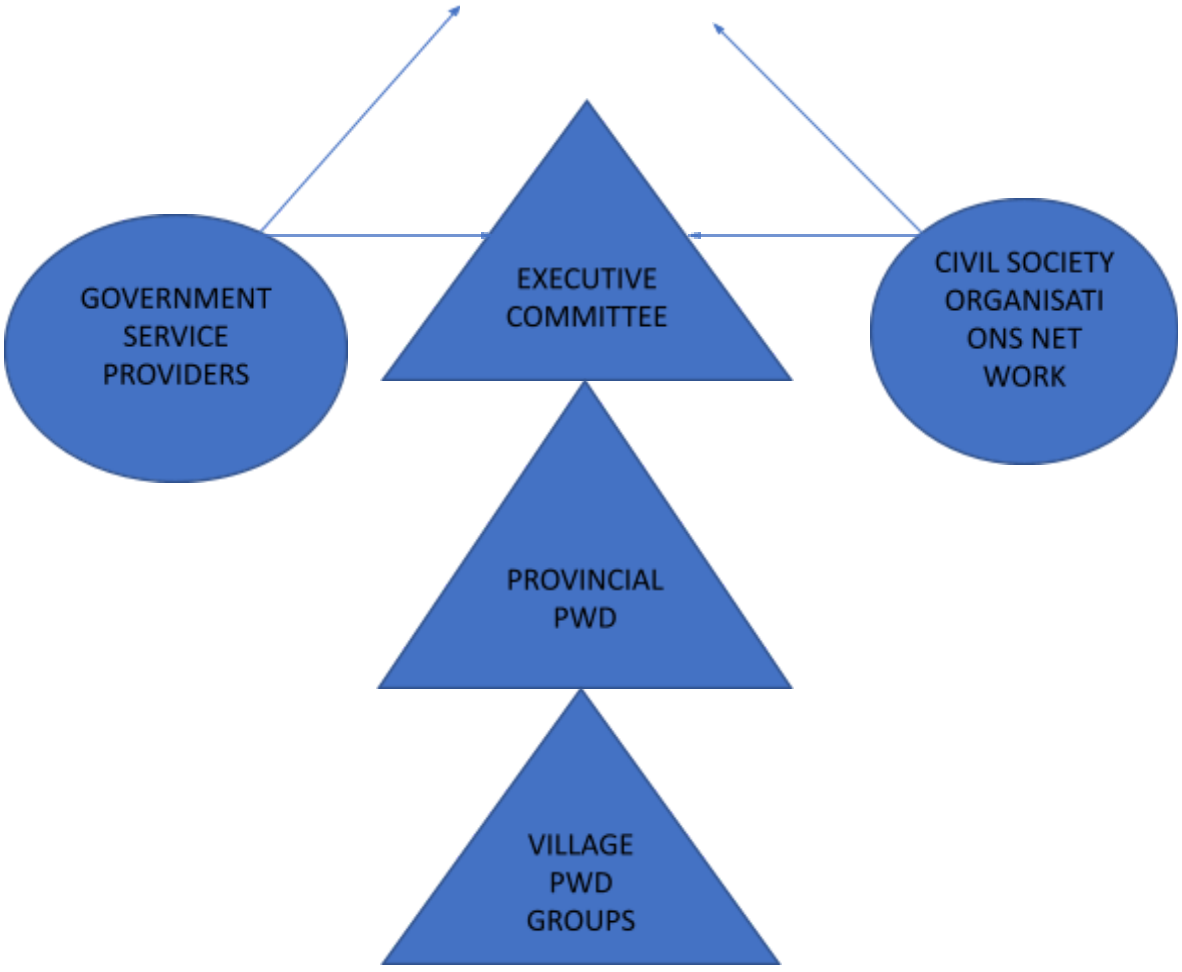
- In 2007, AKASA joined and participated in a South Asian Project (together with India & Bangladesh) to create spaces to advocate and communicate rights for women with disabilities. Also in the same year, AKASA started programmes and activities for mental health clients in Anuradhapura and Puttalam Districts.

- Today AKASA has over 3.200 members, organised in a bottom-up approach, beginning with small groups of 4-8 members within a village. Up to eight of these small groups within a village form a village group or association. Elected representatives (President, Secretary and Treasurer) from village groups within a division combine to form a Divisional group or association. AKASA has 13 full-pledge Divisional networks in the Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa Districts of the North Central Province. These groups form valuable support systems, and give its members the opportunities to discuss individual problems, help each other find solutions, organise collective actions, etc. AKASA supports the groups with skill training, a micro-credit fund endowment for self-employment development, and interventions to improve their quality of life.

OUR TARGET GROUP

- Girls with disabilities
- Young women with disabilities

AKASA AT A GLANCE



OUR VISION

A society with equal opportunities for full participation is available to all.

OUR MISSION

We support people with disabilities in Sri Lanka in order to protect them from economic, political, cultural and social discrimination. We encourage them to develop their skills, abilities and talents in order to obtain equal opportunities for full participation in society and help them to live as independent, self-reliant citizens of Sri Lanka.

OUR GOALS

- To prevent people with disabilities in Sri Lanka from being discriminated against, economically, socially, politically, educationally and culturally.
- To provide them with equal opportunities in society.
- To create awareness among the Government officials, families of persons with disabilities and the general public in Sri Lanka, about the needs of people with disabilities, so that people can begin to understand them and care for them.
- To help people with disabilities to live an independent life

CORE VALUES

- Financial Policy
- Child Insurance Policy
- Child and Student Safety Policy
- Procurement Policy
- Human Rights Policy for Women with Disabilities
- MEAL Policy
- Sexual Abuse Prevention and Reward Policy
- Anti-Violence Policy
- Code of Ethics

AKASA AS AN ORGANISATION

- Women with Disabilities can obtain direct membership of AKASA while men can obtain indirect membership. Direct members can make decisions and implement them whereas indirect members cannot do so.

- Men can become executive members of provincial and village level organisations.

ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

All members belong to the organisational structure of AKASA. It also includes the administrative structure. While Annual General Meetings are held annually the following activities should take place at each AGM:

- Progress review of the previous year
- Presentation and approval of financial report and audited accounts
- Granting permission to new projects and programs
- Presentation and approval of the budget for the next year
- Granting permission for the annual work plan
- Appointing /changing of executive committee every two years
- Revising and changing the constitution as necessary

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

While the executive committee is the controlling body the activities are implemented by the organisational structure. The executive committee meets monthly to take important decisions and review progress. The executive committee members are:

- President
- Treasurer
- Secretary
- Vice President
- Deputy Treasurer
- Deputy Secretary
- 5 Executive Committee members

AWARDS AND RECOGNITIONS

- North Central Province Women's award for the contribution made to the development of WWDs – 1999
- North Central Province award for social development – 2000 and 2003
- Dirijaya award for social development in the North Central Province – 2004
- United Nation award for contributions to protecting the rights of PWDs in IDP camps – 2003
- Navaliya award for Women of achievement given by Upali Newspapers – 2005
- Award for contributions made to the field of vocational training for PWDs given by the Vocational Training Authority of Sri Lanka – 2005
- International Service Award for the protection of the rights of the disabled given by the British parliament – 2006
- Bank of Ceylon award for Women of achievement – 2007
- Rajatha Mayura Award for Service in the of protecting Rights of women with Disabilities - Mihindu Cultural Foundation – Sri Lanka 2019

REPRESENTATION AT NATIONAL LEVEL

- Participated in the committee developing the National Policy on Disability in Sri Lanka
- Participated in the National Committee of Persons with Disabilities for 6 years
- Member of Council of Persons with Disabilities (NCPD), Sri Lanka (2004 – 2009)
- Secretary of Disability Organization Joint Front (DOJF), Sri Lanka (2008 – 2009)
- Treasurer of NGO Consortium, Anuradhapura District, Sri Lanka (2007 - 2008)
- President of NGO Consortium, Anuradhapura District, (2020 -2021)
- Committee member of Anuradhapura Civil Society Forum (2024)
- Committee member Women's Forum Against Violence (2022 - 2025)
- Core steering committee of the National Action Plan on Women Peace and Security 2023 -2027 (Ministry of Children and Women's Affairs)

REPRESENTATION AT INTERNATIONAL LEVEL

- National Women's Conference – 1995, China
- Paralympics – 1996, USA
- 6 weeks Leadership training for PWDs -1997, Japan
- 6 weeks Regional Training of Trainers on creating a conducive environment for PWDs - 2000, Thailand
- Represented Sri Lanka at the development of the UN charter on disability – 2006, New York
- Advanced International Training Program on sexual and Re proactive Health and Rights for

1. **Projects implemented (1998 -2009):**

No	Project	Activities	Results	Project area	Duration	Donors
01	Vocational training for Women with Disabilities	Providing vocational training for women with disabilities	- Provided vocational training for WWDs and ensured their access to their rights - Socialised WWDs through provision of VT - Ensured recognitions for them in the family Created opportunities for income generation	- Anuradhapura District - Island wide	1998 to date	- Dept. of Social services - Sri Lanka Canada Development Fund - North Central PC - Jayaseeli Trust Fund - Vocational Training Authority -
	Inclusion of Women with Disabilities in to Development through organizing them	Organising Women with Disabilities into: - Small groups - Village committees - Provincial organisations	Developed the confidence of WWDs to be able to obtain their rights by coming together in mutually beneficial relationships.	- Anuradhapura - Polonnaruwa - Trincomalee - Ampara - Batticaloa	1998 to date	- SHIA - Abilis Foundation (Finland) - The Global Fund for Women - Handicap International (France) - VSO UK
03	Ensuring the rights of women with Disabilities in internally Displaced Persons welfare camps.	- Counselling of conflict affected and displaced WWD's in IDP camps - Empowerment of PWDs and WWDs in IDP Camps	- Developed a positive attitude within them - Created awareness about rights of the disabled, the National Charter and the Disability act - Developed leadership and personality	- Puttalam - Kalpitiya - Rambawa - Padaviya - Welioya - Palagala	2003 – 2004	UNHCR

04	Repied II	Income generation through: - Livelihood development - Micro finance - Technical training	- Economic empowerment of PWDs - Developed financial management and savings among them	- Anuradhapura - Puttalam	2000 – 2005	- Care International - UNHCR - ABILIS - Global fund for Women
05	Inclusion of Women with Disabilities in to Development through organizing them **Repied II** Economic Development and counselling for the People with Disabilities live in internally displaced welfare camps	Counselling and awareness creation of personnel working in NGOs about the rights of the disabled	- Sensitised personnel of NGOs about the rights and needs of WWDs - Created a network of stakeholders to work together	- Anuradhapura - Polonnaruwa - Puttalam	2000 – 2009	- UNHCR - SHIA - Care International
06	Economic Development of Women with Disabilities through cultivating indigenous Herbal Plants	Protecting and growing indigenous trees through growing herbal medicinal plants	- Grew 1 acre of medicinal pants in Thalawa - Providing vocational training - Training 350 WWDs on use of medicinal plants - Created conducive environment for indigenous animals	Anuradhapura	2001 – 2002	Ministry of Environment

07	Economic Development and counselling for the people with disabilities live in internally displaced welfare camps	Provision of roofing sheets, sanitary and disability aids to WWDs and PWDs	- Created a healthy environment for WWDs - Prevention of diseases - Building of 22 toilets with special facilities - Providing crutches, wheel chairs and spectacles	Anuradhapura	2003 - 2005	- UNHCR - Rotary Club - Friend in Need - Abilis - HI
08	Contributing to the National Development process by Empowerment of Women with Disabilities	Social and economic support to PWDs affected by the tsunami	- Supported with counselling, rehabilitation services, disability aides and income generation support - Conducted a survey on PWDs affected by the tsunami in the north and east - Capacity building for young women with disabilities and created a conducive environment for them	- Northern Province - Eastern Province - Hambanthota District	2005	SHIA
	- Skill Development of girls with intellectual disabilities by rehabilitation	- Running a skill development centre for girls and young women with mental disabilities	Socialised young women and girls by developing their livelihood skills and creating a conducive environment for them	Anuradhapura District	2005 – 2007	- Dept. of Social Service North Central Province - Project Trust - Jayasri Trust Fund

2. Projects implemented (2010 - 2020):

	Activities	Results	District	Duration	Donors
11	Vocational training for Women with Disabilities	- Provided vocational training for WWDs and ensured their access to their rights - Socialised WWDs through provision of VT - Ensured recognitions for them in the family - Created opportunities for income generation	- Anuradhapura District - Island wide	1998 – 2015	- Sri Lanka Canada Development Fund - Jayaseeli Trust Fund -
12	Shelter for women with disabilities	- Providing care and protection to women with disabilities who are living alone and deprived of care, and creating an environment for them to live independently	Anuradhapura District - Island wide	2015 – to date	North Central Provincial Council - Jayaseeli Trust Fund
13	Conducting a baseline survey of the status WWDs in a post conflict environment	- Gained an insight into the pots conflict status of WWDs - Used this knowledge in developing programs for WWDs - Created awareness among civil society and government stakeholders about the current status of WWDs	- Anuradhapura Polonnaruwa - Trincomalee - Batticaloa - Ampara	2010 – 2012	European Union
14	Developed a handbook for the training of WWD leaders	Published handbook in 3 languages for the use of training WWDs in conflict affected areas	- Anuradhapura - Polonnaruwa - Trincomalee - Batticaloa - Ampara	2010 – 2012	European Union

15	Creating awareness among NGO personnel about the importance of the rights of PWDs	Networked NGOs to facilitate the provision of services to WWDs	- Anuradhapura - Polonnaruwa - Trincomalee - Batticaloa - Ampara	2010 – 2012	European Union
16	Creating awareness among the media about the rights of PWDs	- Published articles about the rights of the disabled - Airing of programs about the rights of the disabled in electronic media - Published articles about WWDs in the media	- Anuradhapura - Polonnaruwa - Trincomalee - Batticaloa - Ampara	2010 – 2012	European Union
17	Leadership training for 25 WWD leaders	- Created awareness about the rights of WWDs - Created advocacy groups to fight for their rights - Developed their leadership skills and personality	- Anuradhapura - Polonnaruwa - Trincomalee - Batticaloa - Ampara	2010 – 2012	European Union
18	Livelihood generation and skills development training for WWDs	- Empowered them economically and instilled confidence and acceptance by society - Improved financial management and savings skills - Capacitated WWDs to generate income	- Anuradhapura - Polonnaruwa - Trincomalee - Batticaloa - Ampara	2010 – 2012	European Union

19	Income generation for WWDs	- Empowered WWDs to gain economic development and increase their social status - Improved financial management and savings skills - Developed their livelihoods - Increased their acceptance within the family - Supported financial independence among WWDs	- Anuradhapura - Polonnaruwa - Trincomalee - Batticaloa - Ampara	2010 – 2012	European Union
20	Counselling for WWDs	Increase awareness among WWDs about their rights and improved access to services available to them	- Anuradhapura - Polonnaruwa - Trincomalee - Batticaloa - Ampara	2010 – 2012	European Union
21	Creating awareness among government service providers about the rights of PWDs	Improved the delivery and outreach of services available to WWDs	- Anuradhapura - Polonnaruwa - Trincomalee - Batticaloa - Ampara	2010 – 2012	European Union
22	Providing aides to WWDs	Improved accessibility and mobility of WWDs	- Anuradhapura - Polonnaruwa - Trincomalee - Batticaloa - Ampara	2010 – 2012	European Union
23	Improving sanitation facilities for war affected PWDs	Conducting training programs on sanitation for PWDs	- Anuradhapura - Polonnaruwa - Batticaloa	2011 – 2012	Australian High Commission

24	**Inclusions and exclusions in law: Experiences of women with disability in rural and war-affected areas in Sri Lanka** - Survey of women with disabilities in war affected areas	Launching a report on the experiences of women with disabilities in war-affected rural areas of Sri Lanka	- Anuradhapura - Polonnaruwa - Batticaloa - Ampara	2014	UNSW Australia
25	Implement human health development programs and Counselling programs for women with disabilities	Increase awareness among WWDs about their rights and improved access to services available to them	Anuradhapura	2014	Global Fund women
26	Provide rural areas women with disabilities vocational training	Women with disabilities should be directed towards economic development	Anuradhapura	2014	Global Fund women
27	Livelihood generation and skills development training for WWDs	- Empowered them economically and instilled confidence and acceptance by society - Improved financial management and savings skills - Capacitated WWDs to generate income	Anuradhapura	2013 – 2014 2015	Global Fund Women Dept. of Social Service Jayaseeli Trust Fund
28	Mental Health Development Programs for Women with Disabilities	Increase awareness among WWDs about their rights and improved access to services available to them	Anuradhapura	2014 – 2015	Global Fund Women Dept. of Social Service Jayaseeli Trust Fund

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- 29	- Economic Empowerment for People with Disabilities - Enhanced interaction and spaces created for disabled people and their families, at family, community and divisional levels	The environment needed for economic empowerment	Mullaitivu District	2016 - 2017	HOPE International Development Agency (HIDA)
31	Livelihood generation and skills development training for WWDs	- Empowered them economically and instilled confidence and acceptance by society - Improved financial management and savings skills - Capacitated WWDs to generate income	- Anuradhapura - Mullaitivu District	2016 - 2017	HOPE International Development Agency (HIDA
-	- Empowered WWDs to gain economic development and increase their social status - Improved financial management and savings skills - Developed their livelihoods - Increased their acceptance within the family - Supported financial independence among WWDs	- Empowered them economically and instilled confidence and acceptance by society - Improved financial management and savings skills - Capacitated WWDs to generate income	- Anuradhapura - Thambuththegama - Nochchiyagama, - Kurunegala - Galgamuwa	2016 - 2017	- JayaseeliTrast Fund - HOPE International Development Agency (HIDA)
	Women with disabilities and their guardians are aware of the sexual rights, right to family life, abuse and legal status of disabled women	Being aware of the sexual rights and legal status of women with disabilities and their guardians	- Anuradhapura - Thambuththegama - Nochchiyagama - Kurunegala - Galgamuwa	2017 - 2018	WFA

	Leadership awareness of young women with disabilities	Ensure awareness and prepare environment for disabled young leaders	- Anuradhapura - Thambuththegama - Nochchiyagama - Kurunegala - Galgamuwa	2017 - 2018	WFA
33	Awareness on economic development programs	Creating a knowledgeable environment for independent living	- Anuradhapura - Kabithigollewa - Padwiya - Mullaitivu - Welioya	2018 - 2019	WFA
-	Counselling Workshop for Changing Negative Attitudes of Women and Caregivers with Disabilities	Negative attitudes towards women with disabilities have changed	- Anuradhapura - Kabithigollewa - Padwiya - Mullaitivu - Welioya	2018 - 2019	WFA
-	Awareness on GO and NGO officials on basic rights, human rights and sexual rights of women with disabilities	Facilitating access to government and non-governmental services for women with disabilities	- Anuradhapura - Kabithigollewa - Padwiya - Mullaitivu - Welioya	2018 - 2019	WFA
-	Awareness of top government officials and WWDs on how environmental justice affects women with disabilities	Agreement of Public Officers to ensure the Rights of Women with Disabilities in a barrier Environment	- Kegalle - Kandy	2019 - 2020	WFA
	Providing self - employment assistance to women with disabilities and providing self - employment training.	Build up an environment for disabled women to have the necessary facilities to live an independent life	Anuradhapura District	2019 - 2020	CENWO

3. **Projects implemented (2020 - 2024):**

	Activities	Results	District	Duration	Donors
	Shelter Home for women with disabilities	Providing care and protection to women with disabilities who are living alone and deprived of care, and creating an environment for them to live independently	- Anuradhapura - Island wide	2015 to date	UNFPA/UNDP/UN WOMEN and the Ministry of Women's Affairs
	Ensuring the rights of women with disabilities in a barrier environment	Creating an environment to ensure the rights of women with disabilities in a barrier environment.	- Kegalle - Kandy	2021 – 2022	WFA
	Implementing programs to integrate women with disabilities into the mainstream	Build up an environment for disabled women to have the necessary facilities to live an independent life.	Anuradhapura	2021 2022	CENWO

	Access of the disability community to a society with equal rights	Create an environment that is free of barriers to access vital services provided by institutions and sites located in the selected region, enabling the disability community to integrate into the wider society and establish themselves as an independent community capable of contributing to the national economy (through empowerment).	Kurunegala	2021 - 2023	Asia Foundation (US)
	Increased Accessibility for Women with Disabilities	The overall objective is to strengthen equal rights of women with disabilities through increased knowledge, sensitivity and capacities of key government institutions and general public on improving accessibility for women with disabilities and to increase capacities of AKASA to advocate for rights of women living with disabilities.	Anuradhapura	2020 - 2023	Asia Foundation (CANADA)

4. Current Projects

	Activities	Results	District	Duration	Donors
	Shelter for women with disabilities	- Providing a safe and secure environment for women with disabilities. - Conducting vocational training programs	Anuradhapura	2015 - Present	**UNDP , Ministry of Children and Women's Affairs and**

		- Increasing self-confidence, independence, and social interaction among women with disabilities.			**Donors**
	Economic Empowerment of Women with Disabilities in Care	- Engaging in farming activities, creating opportunities for income generation for WWDs in AKASA Safe home. - Improving both mental and physical health of participants through regular involvement in farming and outdoor activities.	Anuradhapura	2024 - 2025	UNDP
	Gender-based violence and the human rights of women with disabilities	- A survey was conducted to assess issues related to gender-based violence and the protection of human rights among women with disabilities	- Anuradhapura - Kurunegala	2024 - 2026	CREA
	The human dignity of women with disabilities in gender relations	- Conducted a survey with the participation of parents and caregivers of 200 unmarried young women with disabilities to assess attitudes toward marriage and disability, and published a report based on the findings.	Kurunegala	2024 - 2025	WFA
	Ensuring the independence and right to live comfortably for women with disabilities	- Increased community awareness and acceptance of the rights and capabilities of women with disabilities.	Anuradhapura	2024 - 2025	KAAGAPAY
	AKASA Daycare Centre for Children with Disabilities	- Established a daycare center to provide safe and quality care for children with disabilities. - Reduced the daily burden on mothers engaged in unpaid care work by offering reliable daytime support. - Created opportunities for mothers to engage in income-generating activities, education, or employment.	Anuradhapura	2025 - 2028	Asia Foundation (Canada)

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