

# Engaging Urban Health Champions for Preventing COVID-19 and Promoting Healthy Lifestyles among Urban Under-Settlement Communities in Colombo District : an initiative by Estate & Urban Health Unit of Ministry of Health, Sri Lanka

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## Introduction

Nearly 4-7 million (18%-30%) Sri Lankans reside in urban sector. Most urban people are clustered in under-settlements with high population density, low living conditions & poor health indicators. Urban under-settlements faced highest COVID impact. Focused interventions are needed to improve their health and promote healthy lifestyles. Sri Lanka aims to relocate these communities in settlement flats by 2030. Currently 13,000 families are relocated in 21 flat complexes in Colombo district. Estate & Urban Health unit together with Colombo Municipal Council and UDA initiated the Urban Health Champion model project in these flats. Project aimed to mobilize settlement flat champion groups to promote healthy lifestyles and prevent spread of COVID-19 in their communities.

## Methods

**1<sup>st</sup> stage:** Training of coordinators on community mobilization, engagement and health promotion concepts.

**2<sup>nd</sup> stage:** formation of urban champion groups in each flat. Identifying and prioritizing health needs of each setting by coordinators and champion groups.

**3<sup>rd</sup> stage :** Conducting community based activities with engagement of urban champions to promote healthy lifestyles & prevent COVID spread in each flat complex.

## Methods cont.

### Prioritized health needs:

- Improving knowledge and skills on preventing Non Communicable Diseases (NCD)
- Promoting healthy lifestyles (eg: exercise)
- Prevention of public spitting & COVID spread
- Community based screening for NCD risk factors

### Activities conduct by the project:

- Regular risk communication
- Display of Banners & Posters on COVID and NCD prevention
- Installation of wash stations
- Regular awareness sessions on COVID prevention and healthy lifestyles
- Regular exercise sessions
- Establishment of Wellness Centers



## Conclusion

Urban health champion project showed positive results in promoting health and healthy lifestyles among urban under-settled communities



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URBAN HEALTH CHAMPIONING PROGRAM