

Voices of Life Lecture Series

Lecture #2

&

Observation of World Population Day

“Empower Youth to Build the Families they Want”

Date: July 11, 2025

Time: 5:30 PM – 6:30 PM

Platform: Zoom

Organised by: Indian Association of Life Skills Education (IALSE)

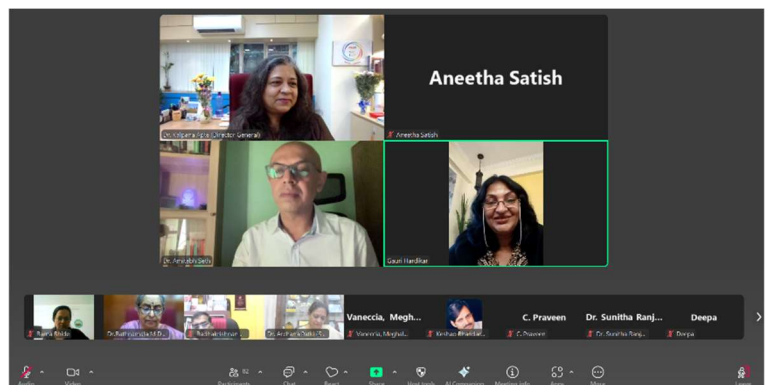
In Collaboration with: Family Planning Association of India, Smt. M.M.P. Shah Women's College of Arts & Commerce (Autonomous), Mumbai, and Shri. M.D. Shah Mahila College of Arts and Commerce (Autonomous), Mumbai

EVENT REPORT

The **Voices of Life Lecture Series** is an initiative by the Indian Association of Life Skills Education (IALSE), focusing on equipping individuals with essential life skills and promoting holistic wellbeing. The term ‘Voice of Life’ embodies a beacon of hope, education and empowerment, aiming to amplify voices of resilience, purpose, and positive change. By undertaking this initiative, IALSE seeks to empower individuals to resist harmful temptations, make positive choices and create a culture of positivity and resilience.

On the occasion of **World Population Day**, IALSE, in collaboration with Family Planning Association of India, Smt. M.M.P. Shah Women's College of Arts & Commerce (Autonomous), Mumbai, and Shri. M.D. Shah Mahila College of Arts and Commerce (Autonomous), Mumbai organised the second lecture of the Voices of Life Lecture Series, on the theme, **“Empower Youth to Build the Families they Want”**.

Dr. Amitabh Seth anchored the program and welcomed all dignitaries and participants. In his opening remarks, he underlined the value of investing in awareness and education to empower the youth with the awareness of World Population Day. The day emphasizes the need for access to comprehensive reproductive health services, women's empowerment, and health equity. By promoting action on population issues, World Population Day strives to create a more equitable and sustainable future for all with the objective



“Empower Youth to Build the Families they Want”. He noted that the lecture series is designed not only to address population issues faced worldwide but also to serve as a platform for addressing the broader challenges faced by young people, including emotional exploitation, peer pressure, and mental health issues.

Dr. Deepa Sharma, Principal of Shri M.D. Shah Mahila College of Arts & Commerce (Autonomous), delivered the welcome address and emphasized the transformative role of education in shaping responsible, self-aware individuals. She described life skills such as empathy, decision-making, and critical thinking as the “first line of defence” against addiction and social manipulation. Dr. Sharma focused her address on Reproductive Health and Family Planning. She emphasized the importance of providing access to quality reproductive healthcare services, including family planning options. Dr. Sharma also said that Gender Equality is very important part of society. She said that gender inequality can affect population dynamics, the day promotes equal opportunities and rights for women and girls.



In his Presidential Address, Dr. Radhakrishnan Nair, President of IALSE, emphasized the importance of sustainable practices to manage resources and mitigate the impact of population growth on the environment. Speaking on this year's theme, *“Empowering young people to create the families they want in a fair and hopeful world,”* he highlighted youth empowerment as central to sustainable development. Dr. Nair stressed that education and opportunities are key to enabling young people to make

informed choices about their futures and family well-being. Reflecting on changing societal priorities, he noted that earlier generations viewed overpopulation as a challenge, while today, India's 1.4 billion people represent valuable human capital. However, he cautioned that without adequate investment in education, training, and support, this asset could turn into a burden.

Dr. Nair underlined the critical role of life skills education in preparing youth for a complex and evolving world. He identified two essential life skill areas for young people: self-management skills - such as self-awareness, emotional regulation, and stress management, which are vital for personal and family stability, and emotional intelligence, beginning with self-awareness and extending to empathy and social skills. He concluded that equipping children with these skills empowers them to live effective, meaningful lives.

He highlighted the strong ongoing collaboration between the Indian Association of Life Skills Education and the Family Planning Association of India (FPAI) over the past two years. He emphasized the need to expand this collaboration beyond annual conferences, suggesting that the combined expertise of both organizations - one in life skills, the other in family planning and reproductive health - could result in a powerful nationwide network. This alliance, he suggested,

would be mutually beneficial and enable both organizations to reach and positively impact their shared target groups across the country.



health issues like anemia.

She shared that to improve maternal and child health, consider these three recommendations - women should delay their first pregnancy until at least age 18; after a live birth, wait at least 24 months before trying for the next pregnancy; & after a miscarriage or induced abortion, wait at least 6 months before attempting to conceive again.

The Inaugural lecture “Healthy Timing and Spacing between Pregnancies for Planned Parenthood” was delivered by Dr. Rathnamala Desai, President, Family Planning Association of India. Dr. Desai shared with the audience that the time between a woman's birth and her next pregnancy affects the risk of infant, child, and maternal mortality. She said that shorter intervals increase these risks, especially in adolescents under 18. Closely spaced pregnancies can lead to preterm births, low birth weights, and maternal

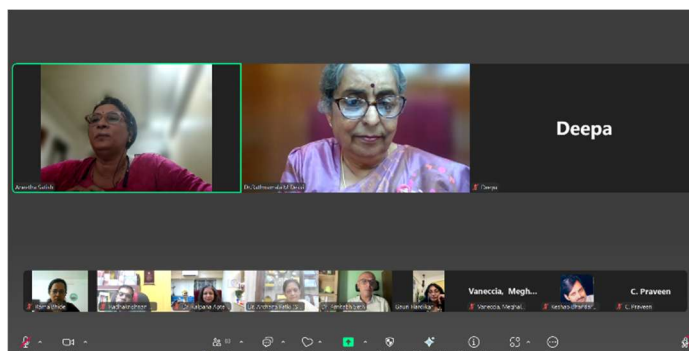


the tools and resources necessary for informed decision-making about their lives and families. She highlighted how young people, typically aged 10 to 24, make up around 2 billion individuals, or nearly a quarter of the global population, predominantly from low- and middle-income countries. As they transition to adulthood amid significant changes, their potential to drive development and progress - known as the "demographic dividend" - depends on strategic investments in health, education, employment, and gender equality.

Dr Kalpana Apte, Director General, Family Planning Association of India, delivered the lecture on “Life Skills for Empowering the Youth for Nurturing a Family as they Wish.” Dr. Apte emphasized the vital role of youth in shaping future demographics and in asserting their right to reproductive autonomy. In her talk, she urged governments and institutions to provide

Q&A Session

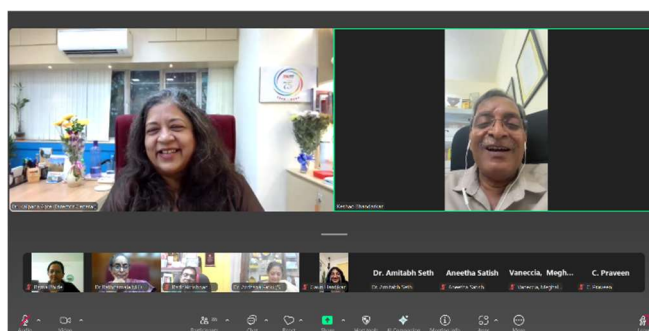
Dr. Deepa raised a query to Dr. Rathnamala M. Desai, President of the Family Planning Association of India (FPAI), regarding progress in male contraception beyond existing methods. Dr. Desai acknowledged that research remains limited but noted some advancements. FPAI is actively promoting non-scalpel vasectomy across several branches, and a contraceptive gel to reduce spermatogenesis is now in Phase 3 trials. She also highlighted societal barriers, particularly patriarchy, which discourages men from sharing responsibility, and added that reproductive research is often slow, with hormonal methods posing risks to male potency.



Ms. Aneetha Satish sought guidance from Dr. Kalpana Apte on the appropriate age groups for conducting awareness sessions through Inner Wheel and Rotary. Dr. Apte recommended three categories: 10–14 years, 15–19 years, and 20–24 years. While themes may overlap, content and delivery must be age-appropriate. She noted that FPAI provides ready-to-use modules and trainer orientations, stressing the need for facilitators to handle out-of-syllabus questions sensitively. Sessions, she added, can begin as early as age 10.

Dr. Gauri Hardikar raised a pertinent question on anonymous platforms for young people. Dr. Apte explained that while FPAI does not run a dedicated helpline, some counselling lines exist, though effectiveness varies. FPAI prefers online or face-to-face sessions in local languages and is exploring options like anonymous email queries or weekly web series for interactive Q&A. She highlighted that such initiatives can be designed and implemented based on the needs of the community.

Dr. Keshao Bhandarkar inquired about the exclusion of adolescent education from the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. In response, Dr. Desai attributed this omission to state-level resistance to sexuality education. Adding context, Dr. Radhakrishnan Nair recalled that adolescent education began in the late 1990s but faced opposition over sexual content. While NEP 2020 highlights school health programs covering reproductive health, lifestyle diseases, and life skills, he noted weak implementation. He also pointed out that school counselors are now prioritized under the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) and stressed the need for public advocacy to ensure adolescent education is formally integrated into curricula.



Dr. Archana Patki, Principal, Smt. M.M.P. Shah Women's College of Arts & Commerce (Autonomous) presented the vote of thanks and expressed heartfelt gratitude to Dr. Deepa Sharma, Principal, Shri M.D. Shah Mahila College of Arts & Commerce (Collaborating College) for



highlighting Gender Equality and how gender inequality can affect population dynamics, as well as to Dr. Radhakrishnan Nair for his vision and leadership in life skills education. She also thanked Dr. Rathnamala Desai, President, Family Planning Association of India, & Dr Kalpana Apte, Director General, Family Planning Association of India. She expressed her gratitude towards Shri M.D. Shah Mahila

College of Arts and Commerce (Autonomous) for their collaboration. She also extended appreciation to the participants, students, colleagues, office bearers, and IALSE members for their support.

The launch of the *Voice of Life* Lecture Series marked a significant step in celebrating World Population Day to create a more equitable and sustainable future for all with the objective “Empower Youth to Build the Families they Want”. The initiative calls for sustained collaboration among educators, policymakers, and communities to build a



protective ecosystem around youth. The event concluded with a strong call to action to integrate life skills education at all levels of the educational framework to empower students and combat the rising challenges posed by addiction and related social risks.

Report prepared by:

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