



YOULEAD

IMPACT

Together for a brighter future for the Youth of Sri Lanka

VOLUME 03. ISSUE 1

Empowering 85,000+ Youth To Make Better Career Choices



Youth attending a career fair in Jaffna, fill out a form ahead of their one-on-one career guidance session

Supporting youth, especially marginalized youth and young women from rural areas make better educational and career choices, remains one of the major pillars of USAID's youth employability and entrepreneurship project, YouLead. Career Guidance practitioners are a vital cog in this process.

As of June 2022, YouLead has trained 1,892 career guidance practitioners across public and private sector institutions, enabling them to steer the lives and aspirations of young people from some of the poorest communities across Sri Lanka.

To date, YouLead-trained career guidance practitioners have provided one-on-one career guidance to over 85,000 youth, enabling them to discover their vocational personality and make better choices for their career progression.

The majority of Sri Lankan youth have little influence over their educational and career choices due to cultural norms and

deference to elders. Unemployment among the youth entering the job market after their primary or secondary education (15 to 24 year old) is at 26 percent—five times the national average.¹

Guidance from a trained counselor could help these youth make better choices regarding their education and career by supporting them discover their vocational personality and educating them on the choices available to them for study and work.

Ensuring the sustainability of the career guidance program, YouLead has established a mechanism to ensure career guidance will be accessible to youth in Sri Lanka well into the future. This included-making the YouLead-developed career guidance curriculum part of the National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) system and setting up District Career Guidance Committees (DCC) to better plan and implement career guidance programs across the island.

YouLead is also supporting the development of an NVQ Level 5 or a supervisory level curriculum for career guidance practitioners that will enable those completing the course to organize activities, monitor the deliverables of career guidance practitioners, and to identify the knowledge gap and upskilling processes.

A formal Code of Ethics was also introduced for Career Guidance practitioners to ensure they always put the needs of youth first rather than simply promoting the courses offered by their institutions or training center.

With the economic crisis spurring hasty life and employment decisions for many people, it is more important than ever to make sure youth are linked to employment opportunities and receive professional, up-to-date guidance so they can make informed decisions regarding their future employment, education, or entrepreneurship options.

YouLead's two-pronged approach to giving youth one-on-one counseling while also training thousands of counselors and teachers helps ensure that youth with the fewest post-secondary opportunities—i.e. those who can most benefit from career guidance, receive the professional support they need.

The programs also encourage young women to continue their education and pursue a career or engage in training and development programs that will help them be economically productive and independent.

¹ www.statistics.gov.lk/LabourForce/StaticInformation/AnnualReports/2021

Six US Brands Collaborate To Support Vocational Training For Youth



The key stakeholders hold up Sri Lanka's first pizza made in the first QSR Industry focused vocational training facility launched at the Department of Technical Education and Training center in Kuliyaipitiya. From left Amar Raj Singh, Chairman & Managing Director Gamma Pizzakraft India & Gamma Pizzakraft Lanka (Pvt) Ltd, Upali Kappitipola, Chairman, Vocational Training Authority, Chris Conway, Global Chief Customer Officer, Pizza Hut International, Micah Globerson, Deputy Director Economic Growth Office of USAID, Merrill Pereyra, Managing Director, Pizza Hut Indian Sub-continent, Kaushal Mendis, Director - People & Culture, Gamma Pizzakraft Lanka Pvt Ltd, Charles Conconi, Project Director - YouLead and Jagath Saputhanthrige, Director General, Department of Technical Education & Training.

Pizza Hut and USAID's youth employment and entrepreneurship project, YouLead, launched Sri Lanka's first state-of-the-art quick service restaurant training facility at the Technical Training College in Kuliyaipitiya on October 14, 2022. **Taco Bell, Domino's, McDonald's, Burger King, and Popeyes** have also thrown their support behind the effort with pledges to provide trainers and employment opportunities.

The goal is to create new, mostly rural enterprises and help struggling families diversify their household income—an outcome made all the more important with Sri Lanka in the grip of an unprecedented economic crisis.

The program expects to train more than 2,100 youth annually and is building the institutional capacity of the Vocational Training Authority (VTA), and the Department of Technical Education and Training (DTET)—two public-sector training institutions. Students will receive a National Vocational Qualification (NVQ)

Level 3 certification after completing six-months of both classroom and on-the-job training.

"We need to create more vocational training facilities to enable our youth to find better employment in in-demand jobs," said Mr. Jagath Saputhanthrige, Director General of DTET. "I would like to acknowledge USAID's continued support to the people of Sri Lanka and Pizza Hut International for contributing to this initiative and working with the public sector vocational training institutions to empower the youth of this country."

Titled an 'Equal Slice for Everyone', the program is funded by a \$1.3 million grant from the Yum! Brands Foundation and will also include two centers dedicated to training youth with disabilities. YouLead worked closely with Pizza Hut to draft and secure the grant and is also training the vocational instructors and assessors who will deliver the course and certify the learning outcomes.

"An Equal Slice for Everyone will help create a regular inflow of work-ready youth for Sri Lanka's rapidly growing fast food industry while supporting youth aspirations for a better future," said Chairman

and CEO of Gamma Pizzakraft, Amar Raj Singh. "At Pizza Hut, we also have a strong commitment to inclusivity and have enabled many young individuals with disabilities to find gainful employment and the financial independence they dream of. We have included specialized training centers for youth with disabilities in this program and we are confident that it will encourage more youth with disabilities to seek out careers in this industry."

The goal is to create new, mostly rural, enterprises and help struggling families diversify their household income—an outcome made all the more important with Sri Lanka in the grip of an unprecedented economic crisis.

Pizza Hut's 'Equal Slice for Everyone' program will set up two more centers in January 2023 to deliver the new, industry specific curriculum. YouLead will continue to build the institutional capacity of the TVET sector by training trainers to ensure the sustainability of the initiative.

Mobilizing A National Dialogue For Better Informed Labor Migration

Coming on the heels of nearly two years of COVID 19 pandemic-related restrictions, the economic crisis of 2022 represented one too many challenges for some Sri Lankans, compelling them to seek out overseas employment. In the rush to find international work, many are unfortunately making rash migration decisions.

In September, 2022, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation's (SDC) Skilled and Resilient Migrant Worker project (SRMW), with support from USAID's YouLead project, convened a group of 32 key stakeholders to discuss how to provide prospective migrant workers with better information and skills

The lack of licenses or regulations to engage in key vocations such as plumbers and electricians were also identified as a reason why Sri Lanka is unable to supply the skilled workers demanded by countries of destination and will require Sri Lanka to regulate and license more occupations targeting foreign labor markets.



Stakeholders share their views at the first National Dialogue

Migration for work has many positive outcomes, but it also has risks. In times of crisis, a sense of urgency or desperation can lead to hasty, uniformed decisions. These risks are higher for low-skilled workers.

right now—when it is most needed. Participating organizations included government ministries and departments focused on employment and vocational training, bi-lateral donors, the ILO, the IOM, research institutes, employment agencies, and private employers.

Up to November 2022, over 300,000 Sri Lankans have migrated through the Bureau of Foreign Employment. This figure, however, does not include those who migrated on visit visas in search of employment, those with direct employment offers, or those who have migrated under country-specific migration programs.

Another key indicator is the 770,000 passports issued by the end of September, well over the 2016 record of 658,725 passports issued for the full year. A recent survey report also found that over 57 percent of all Sri Lankans and 77 percent of youth are considering migration.

Finding ways to get better information, occupational guidance, and opportunities for skills development to prospective migrant workers will help minimize the negative impacts of overseas work while maximizing the positive ones, such as ensuring that when the workers return, they do so with skills and knowledge that will contribute to Sri Lanka's continued growth.

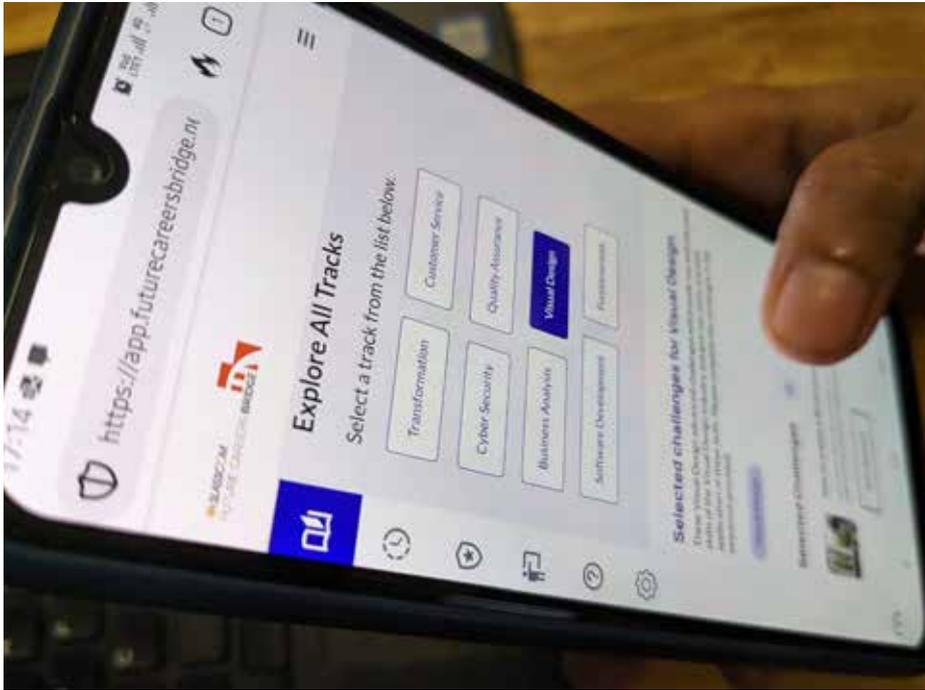
The national dialogue identified several key challenges that need to be addressed urgently, including strengthening the process for recognizing skills learned abroad and improving soft skills.

The stakeholders also highlighted the lack of data about returned migrant workers, especially male migrant workers, posing challenges to evidence-based decision making. Data gaps include information on the type of work the migrants engaged in, skill levels and qualification, remuneration levels and details about the employers.

While migration for employment plays a significant role in the country's road to recovery from the current economic crisis, emphasis needs to be made to support the skills development of migrant workers in order to reduce the multitude of risks they face when seeking employment overseas.

The SRMW project is conducting a series of follow up District level dialogues to better understand the ground realities as well as the needs of aspiring migrant workers, and to pool the resources of the stakeholders and focus on implementing quick interventions.

Upgrading Career Pathways For Youth To Join The ICT Sector



A youth accesses the new SLASSCOM Future Careers BRIDGE platform on her phone

USAID's youth employment and entrepreneurship project, YouLead, strengthened its ongoing partnership with Hatch Works, providing upskilling and mentorship services to a select group of aspiring young women entrepreneurs, through an accelerator program branded 'AccelerateHER'.

BRIDGE 2.0 adds several new learning streams in networking, visual design, cyber security and customer service for a total of nine ICT-related fields and will help enable Sri Lanka's digital transformation across all sectors.

Students can also find mentors and request assistance from industry experts. Thirty-five private employers have signed up with SLASSCOM pledging to provide

employment and internship opportunities to students who complete the online challenges.

Sri Lanka's ICT industry is set to exceed USD 5 billion in export revenue by 2025. The industry, however, is facing a skills shortage due to the limited number of ICT graduates. The sector has struggled to meet its ambitious targets due to a multitude of issues, the most significant being the growing skills shortage. The ICT Association of Sri Lanka (ICTA) estimates that there are currently more than 21,000 vacancies, and projects a need for approximately 12,000 new recruits annually. Sri Lanka's university system, however, produces fewer than 9,500 IT graduates each year.

With universities unable to produce the required number of ICT graduates the country needs, Sri Lanka is unable to maximize its economic development potential. Future Careers BRIDGE 2.0 is helping to relieve the bottleneck by identifying and training a skilled workforce

outside the university system and is providing progressive career opportunities to more than 20 percent of youth who are unemployed.

The Future Careers BRIDGE program was launched in 2019 through a collaboration between SLASSCOM and YouLead, to shatter industry norms by creating opportunities for youth without a university degree, to join the ICT sector in Sri Lanka.

Over 23,000 youth, including nearly 10,000 young women are currently enrolled in the program. More than 100 youth have received jobs from BRIDGE partners, while many others have received better job opportunities in other sectors thanks to their improved IT skills or have gone on to start up their own ICT ventures.

In 2022, the BRIDGE program was adopted by the Open University of Sri Lanka, the first national university to institutionalize BRIDGE and the second national institution overall, after the Vocational Training Authority (VTA) adopted it as a national vocational qualification (NVQ) Level 3 course, earlier in 2022.

YouLead is continuing to work with SLASSCOM to onboard more ICT sector partners to provide internships for the top performing youth and will promote the platform as a recruitment tool for employers to hire top talent from outside the university system. In the long term, the BRIDGE program will create a viable pathway for youth outside of the Western Province, to access career opportunities in Sri Lanka's fast growing ICT sector.

Who we are

YouLead is a 7-year project funded by the **United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the European Union (EU) and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)**. Its aim is to improve technical and vocational education, create a more skilled workforce and link youth to more productive careers by supporting and strengthening students, teachers and institutions. It encourages entrepreneurship by giving young people the skills needed to run their own enterprises and improve their access to mentoring and financing.

How to reach us

Together, we can do more, so we welcome mutually beneficial collaborations with private, public and development sector organizations and individuals.

For inquiries, please contact Vindya: vsilva@youlead.lk

Our Community Impact

50,334

Number of individuals with new or better (self) employment following the participation in YouLead program



Female
19,106



Male
28,385

Unspecified
2,843

54,970

Number of individuals completed project assisted workforce development program



Female
20,551



Male
32,371

Unspecified
2,048

86,929

Number of individuals received career and occupational guidance and counselling services



Female
48,949



Male
37,415

Unspecified
565

1,112

Number of new businesses start-up following the project support



Female
858



Male
213

Unspecified
41

47,178

Number of youth (age 15-29) trained in social or leadership skills through project assisted programs



Female
18,391



Male
27,982

Unspecified
805

2,038

Number of career/ occupational guidance practitioners trained to deliver better services

87
in the system

Number of technical curricula developed or improved

2,042

Number of trainers receiving training by YouLead

