

# THE WIRE

ISSUE NO. 01 | March 2019



the youth employment and  
business startup program

Funded by



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**Cover Photograph:** Wildlife Ranger, Anjali Shithar Prabakaran, is breaking barriers at Yala National Park taking visitors on safari. Considered a non-traditional job role for women, the path to becoming a ranger was not easy but Anjali believes that women are just as capable as men and can stand on equal ground with them. See more of her story and those of other women breaking barriers on YouLead's facebook page or on YouTube.



the youth employment and business start-up program.

### Seeking solutions to the problem of youth unemployment

## Who we are

YouLead is a four-year U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)-funded project in Sri Lanka which is working to improve technical and vocational education and training, create a more skilled workforce and link youth to more productive careers by undertaking activities to support and strengthen students, teachers, institutions and entrepreneurs.

USD  
12 Mn

USD  
1.8 Mn  
from partner support

2017-2021

Funded by  
 USAID  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

Administered and implemented by  
 iesc

## What we do

A large number of young Sri Lankans are leaving school without the proper skills needed to adapt to the changing workplace.

### For youth

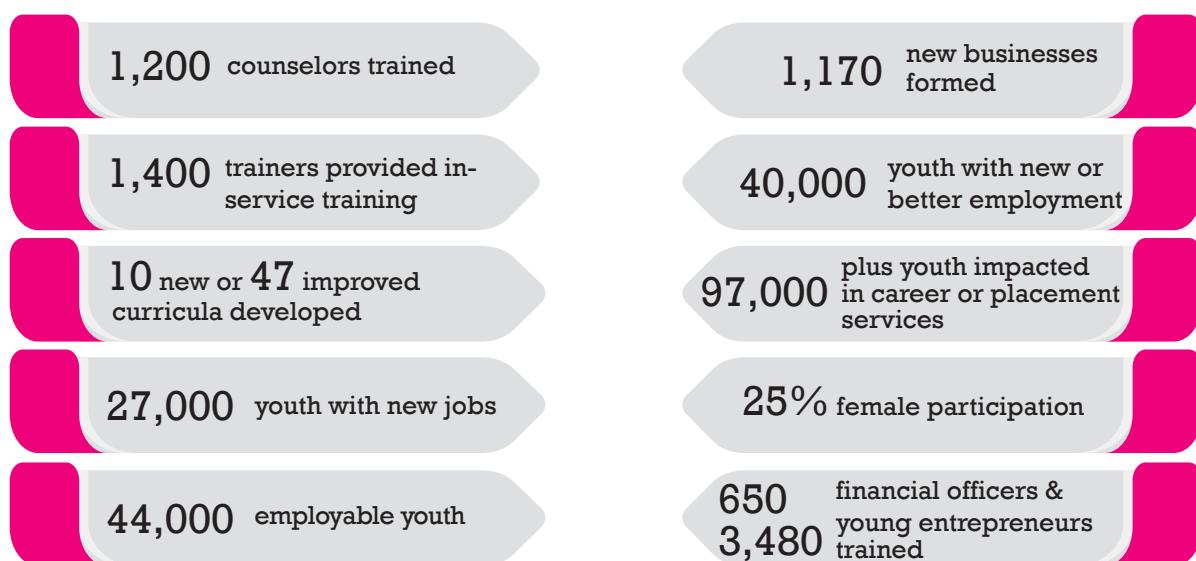


- Educating youth in the vocational skills demanded by the market
- Partnering with the private sector to take leadership on creating a world-class workforce
- Laying a foundation of skills for a lifetime of employment
- Training career counsellors and giving them the tools to help youth make better career decisions

# The challenge



## What we will achieve by 2021



### For teachers



- Developing better curricula
- Training trainers – not just in what to teach, but also HOW to teach
- Encourage more apprenticeship and on-the-job training
- Building sustainable capacity in Sri Lanka's vocational institutions and workplace training centers

### For entrepreneurs



- Giving youth the skills to run their own enterprises
- Helping would-be entrepreneurs to craft investment-ready business plans
- Developing financial products that support young entrepreneurs
- Training loan officers to extend credit to youth-led businesses

### For women



- Enable more women to enter the workforce
- Engage parents and community to change attitudes toward trade-based careers
- Focus on regions with the highest youth unemployment



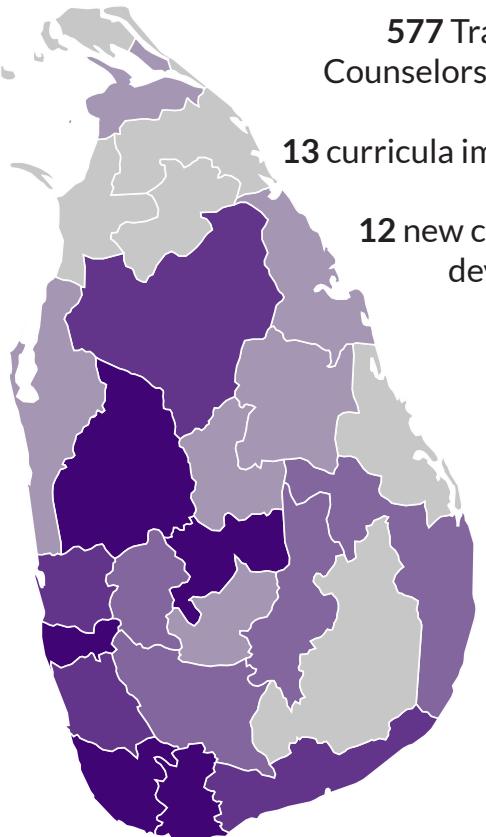
# PROJECT DASHBOARD

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT AND BUSINESS START-UP PROGRAM 2017-2021

YOULEAD

Cumulative results as at 31 March 2019

## Improved quality, relevance and delivery of TVET



Graph: Number of trainers & counselors trained

Completing workforce development programs	1,817	1,713
With new or better employment	414	372

\*As of September 2018

## Increased youth employability skills & increased prospects of successful employment



1,179 youth received career guidance & placement services



405 financial institution staff trained

## Outreach & behaviour change



9,700 page likes  
51,200 reach per week



3,100 impressions



959 views on tourism video  
398 views on construction video



## Partnerships

- 12 | Private sector partners
- 10 | Financial institutions
- 6 | Workforce development programs
- 3 | Regional chambers
- 3 | Sector skills councils

GENDER

56% female participation in verified project activities



**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

The US Government marked 70 years of support for Sri Lanka in 2018. Since the formation of USAID in the 1960's, that support has also included a close working relationship with some of Sri Lanka's most innovative and socially responsible entities.

Since 1956, U.S. supported programmes have invested in Sri Lanka, working in sectors such as agriculture, environment and natural resources, health, education, business development and trade, good governance, and humanitarian assistance.

In times of man-made and natural disasters, USAID has played a lead role in providing humanitarian assistance. During the past decades, USAID has mobilized emergency aid for recovery, reconstruction and rebuilding after the 2004 tsunami; the end of conflict in 2009; and the floods that have been occurring every year since 2010. USAID works with the people of Sri Lanka to strengthen democratic governance, social cohesion and sustained and inclusive economic growth.



Career guidance for 250 youth in Deniyaya



## Our Mission Our History

We apply private sector solutions around the world to improve standards of living, create and preserve jobs, and help enterprises grow. We leave behind sustainable businesses, robust institutions, knowledgeable and skilled people, and thriving communities.

International Executive Services Corps was founded in 1964 by a group of American business leaders, entrepreneurs, and philanthropists—chiefly David Rockefeller—who believed that businesses are the engines that drive economic growth and innovation and that supporting them can lift countries out of poverty.

In the beginning...

# Springboard 2017

The inaugural Youth Leadership Forum ended with 36 energised Youth Ambassadors ready to serve their communities



YouLead started with a blast in 2017 recruiting 36 youth ambassadors and sending them through the experience of a lifetime at a three day adventure camp in Kithulgala. The young people were carefully selected from a variety of ethnic and cultural backgrounds from all around the country to be groomed as youth ambassadors. The camp covered capacity building, sharing, and brainstorming with the aim of sharing knowledge and inspiring these young people to take the lead. It proved to be an excellent platform to build solidarity amongst diverse individuals from all walks of life, who were all eager to discuss and debate the issues surrounding youth employability.

The programme began with two days of leadership training and ended on the third day with 'YouLead Springboard'. The participants were energized by a selection of vibrant speakers. These included Suranga Nanayakkara, the visionary behind the 'Augmented Human Lab'; the inspirational Rathika Pathmanathan, writer and activist; Aruna Samarawickrema, the multi-award winning innovator and manufacturer of prosthetic limbs; Dr. Beshan Kulapala, CodeGen co-founder who together with Dr. Harsha Subasinghe built Sri Lanka's first advanced technology supercar; former Rotary International Governor and Entrepreneur K.R. Ravindran, and pop sensations Bathiya 'n' Santhush who enhanced their performance with an unplanned description of their journey to stardom and the challenges they went through as young performers and entrepreneurs. Other Springboard performers included the all-girl drummer group Thurya and the irrepressible Funky Dirt.

The 36 youth ambassadors put together a forum theatre addressing gender and cultural stereotyping that involved audience participation and role playing. The forum allowed the ambassadors to examine how they could change a given situation by changing the conditions.

The ambassadors also held a series of debates with the guidance of private sector representatives. These covered three themes - the dignity of a career in a skilled trade, increasing the participation of young women in the workforce, and the challenges and opportunities of entrepreneurship. Private sector representatives added value to the debates paving the way to a productive discussion on the employment challenges that youth face.

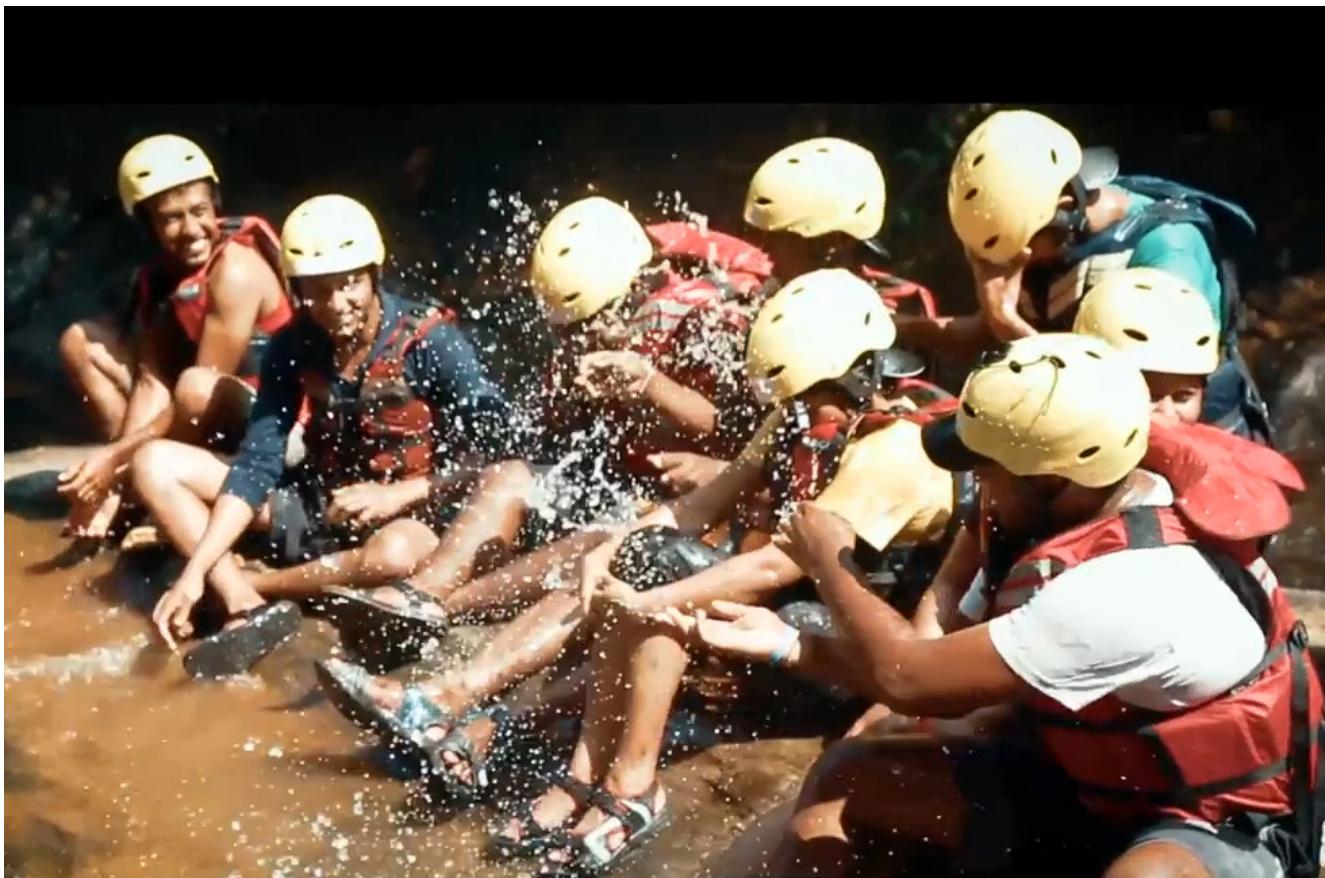
Samadanie Kiriwandeniya, Chairperson of the Sanasa Development Bank, who took part in one of the debates, said she was thoroughly impressed with the youth participating and pledged her support to YouLead's efforts to empower young people and finance startups.

The youth ambassadors returned to their communities ready to enable their peers and encourage them towards youth economic empowerment. They will be engaged in YouLead's activities throughout the duration of the project.

YouLead, with the support of World University Service of Canada (WUSC)-Sri Lanka, produced live radio shows on local Sinhala and Tamil stations in June to discuss the types of employment in demand by global markets and the associated challenges for youth to build their employability skills.

The youth ambassadors highlighted the need for improved career guidance for youth in the booming Sri Lankan economy and the importance of breaking down gender stereotypes in the workforce. Approximately 500,000 Sinhala and Tamil speakers listened to the show and it was also live-streamed to an additional 350,000 viewers.









# YouLead's

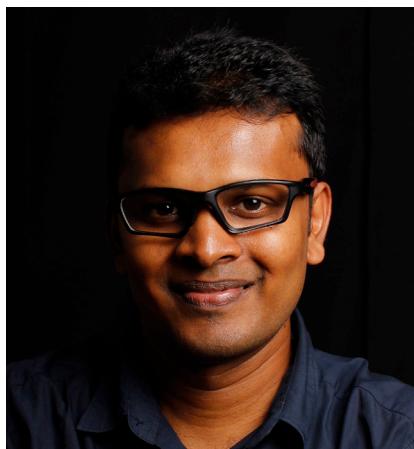
## inspirational role models

### Bathiya Jayakody & Santhush Weeraman

#### The journey to stardom

Starting as a two-man operation from their bedroom, BnS Production Group grew to house four companies. Bathiya and Santhush spoke about their journey to stardom and described how they standardised the country's music industry.

Bathiya and Santhush, known simply as BnS, are a Sri Lankan singer-song writer duo. They are the most commercially successful music act in Sri Lanka for the last two decades. Bathiya and Santhush mix Sinhala, Tamil and English rap verses in the original material they produce. With over 25 number one hit singles under their belt, Bathiya and Santhush have performed over 600 concerts worldwide.



### Suranga Nanayakkara

#### Secrets of making an impact

Suranga's journey as an inventor started at a very young age. Inspired by his mother and with an aspiration to create, he is now an award-winning innovator who educates youngsters on becoming the next generation of visionaries.

Suranga Nanayakkara is an Assistant Professor with the Engineering Product Development pillar at the Singapore University of Technology and Design (SUTD). After receiving his Ph.D. from the National University of Singapore, he founded the "Augmented Human Lab" in 2011 to explore ways of creating assistive augmentations. He has won many awards including young inventor under 35 (TR35 award) in the Asia Pacific region by MIT TechReview, Outstanding Young Persons of Sri Lanka (TOYP), and INK Fellowship 2016.



### Rathika Pathmanathan

#### Conquering pain and despair through art

Rathika described her journey from war combatant to writer and how she was inspired to find her voice through poetry. She explained that there were many young former combatants and military who still needed proper guidance from society and the government. She pointed out how their fear and pain needed to be channeled through something more constructive.

Rathika was in the LTTE for nine months in 2008-2009. She has been known by many tags; orphan, LTTE combatant, ex-LTTE combatant and call center girl but today she is a writer and activist. Despite all the challenges thrown at her, Rathika found forgiveness and resilience through poetry.



### Dr. Beshan Kulapala

#### Think big, then chase the dream

Dr. Beshan Kulapala and his CodeGen co-founder, Dr. Harsha Subasinghe, gave up plum jobs in the US, put their life savings on the line and risked everything to pursue their dream of building a world class reputation for Sri Lanka. In just three years their company, Vega, produced worldclass products, prototypes and firmware algorithms, pushing back the frontiers of technology.

Dr. Beshan Kulapala is the Director of Vega Innovation (Pvt.) Ltd. and chargeNET (Pvt.) Ltd. and is a research scientist at CodeGen International, Sri Lanka. Dr. Kulapala is leading Vega's and CodeGen's efforts to expand into electronic and mechatronic product development.

# YouLead's inspirational role models

## Jayanthi Kuru-Utumpala

### Woman on top of the world

Jayanthi Kuru-Utumpala is the **first** Sri Lankan to summit Mount Everest (8,848m/ 29,030ft); a record she achieved at 5:03 am on the 21<sup>st</sup> May 2016. She is a mountaineering professional and women's rights advocate. Her passion for adventure is balanced with her passion for gender equality. Jayanthi has been professionally involved with rock climbing as an instructor since 2003. She simultaneously works as a full-time women's rights advocate. Jayanthi is currently serving as the first ever Goodwill Ambassador for Women's Rights for the Ministry of Women's Affairs.



## K.R. Ravindran

### Life lessons

K.R. Ravindran, CEO/ Manager Director of Printcare and Past President of Rotary International, gave an inspiring talk on how to build your own roadmaps to achieve your dreams.

K.R. Ravindran joined Rotary when he was 21 and has coordinated some of the most significant Rotary projects in the world including the USD 12 million project to build modern schools for 15,000 Sri Lankan children after the 2004 tsunami. Ravi was the President of Rotary International 2015-2016 and received the title "Jewel of Sri Lanka" from his country. He established the best known anti-narcotics association in the country and is presently involved in a flagship project to detect early stage cancer.



## Aruna Samarawickrema

### When life sucks you under, kick against the bottom

Aruna started his career fixing cars as a motor mechanic but today, he's fixing lives. He has been awarded around the globe for his inventions. He is the founder of Awasa International, a social enterprise that supports both humans and animals living with disability.

Aruna Samarawickrema hails from a small village in Matara where he worked at a local garage while studying. Aruna used his limited mechanical knowledge to create an artificial leg with a natural look for a close friend who lost a limb in the ethnic conflict. Armed with only a water bottle and sleeping in a temple, Aruna set out to make his product available to all Sri Lankans and now is the sole manufacturer of prosthetic limbs in Sri Lanka.



*Awasa International created a prosthesis for an elephant who lost his leg in a landmine blast*

# Young people discover the tourist industry

Youth Tourism Ambassador Initiative pilot trains 45 young people on the hospitality industry



The Private Sector Tourism Skills Committee (TSC) and YouLead launched an exciting tourism internship programme in November 2018. Shangri-La's Hambantota Golf Resort and Spa, The Grand Hotel, Nuwara Eliya and Jetwing Jaffna partnered with the TSC to conduct the Young Tourism Ambassador Initiative.

45 youth took part in the pilot which was designed to familiarise post-A level students from the Hambantota, Nuwara Eliya and Jaffna areas with the opportunities available in Sri Lanka's modern tourist industry. The pilot was delivered via short but intense programmes that exposed the participants to a variety of career possibilities in the industry. The sessions were conducted by senior consultants from the tourism and hospitality industry, hotel staff and key resource personnel from TSC member hotels.

Each programme took advantage of the unique strengths and



*Yoga session at Shangri-La Hambantota*

***"The hospitality industry has changed dramatically in the past 20 years, but our youth—and particularly their parents—have never had this kind of opportunity to see the modern tourism industry up close."***

Srilal Miththapala,  
Tourism Consultant



*Shayanika Fernando, Partnerships Manager, YouLead*

locations of the individual hotels. The youth studied everything from housekeeping to horticulture. They learned how to cook for 300, how to conserve Sri Lanka's natural heritage, and how to engage and entertain visitors. Other modules covered topics ranging from chauffeuring and tour guiding as well as Corporate Social Responsibility and waste management. The Young Ambassadors were invited to apply for the job openings available at the hotels once the respective programmes ended.

Praneepa Pereira (19) who took part in the Nuwara Eliya programme said, "You can join this programme and learn different perspectives that you didn't know about this field. Actually, when I came here, I knew nothing about this field. I didn't know what tourism was. I didn't know what hotel management was. But here they teach us everything. Each and every thing. So, according to me, this is one of the best fields which a youth can succeed in their lives ... when you come to this field you will know how to succeed!"

The initiative included a session for the parents of the participating



*Checking out the local wildlife at Shangri-La Hambantota*



**November -December 2018**

*Presentation at Shangri-La Hambantota*



*Identifying glassware at Jetwing Jaffna*

youth allowing them to get a front row view of what a career in tourism would entail for their children.

"The modern industry is broader than most people realize," said tourism consultant Srilal Miththapala. "It's also more professional, more environmentally aware, better paying, and has great career prospects. I'm delighted that the TSC is taking aim at changing youth perceptions through this unique, innovative programme."

Chaired by Malik Fernando, Managing Director of Resplendent Ceylon, the TSC is an informal association of 10 private sector tourism leaders from the hotel and travel sector. These leaders came together based on a mutual desire to take action on an issue that endangers the growth of their industry - the lack of youth taking up jobs in tourism.

The TSC launched an eight-point plan on 25th June 2018 and has

proceeded to implement those initiatives one-by-one. The group has already developed and revised seven vocational curricula to make it more relevant to the needs of the industry. It has also circulated a short documentary showing the impact of Sri Lankan women in tourism.

"There are too many excuses not to move forward," said Shiromal Cooray, TSC Vice Chair and Managing Director of Jetwing Travels. She said, "Jetwing is one of the strongest players in inclusivity having already developed five female General Managers and has a three-fold higher representation of women than most of the others in the industry." Cooray explained, "This is one industry that globally has a skew to women averaging at least 60%. It is sad that Sri Lanka with its high level of education and gender equity has not surmounted the inclusion of women into hospitality with a dismal figure of 8% average for women in tourism. We can and must do better."

The Young Tourism Ambassador Initiative is a key deliverable in the TSC's plan presented as the recently launched "Sri Lanka Tourism and Hospitality Workforce Competitiveness Roadmap".



*The fine art of folding towels at The Grand Hotel, Nuwara Eliya*



*Team building exercises in the pool, Shangri-La Hambantota*

Hambantota participant, Dumindu Sandaruwan (18) said, "Before this programme, I did not have any experience in the hospitality sector, nor did I realise how much tourism has expanded in my region. I gained a lot of new knowledge and I am eager to share it with my friends. We are grateful to the Tourism Skills Committee and Shangri-La Hotel for giving us Hambantota youth a valuable learning opportunity in our distant corner of the country."

General Manager of The Grand Hotel, Nuwara Eliya, Refhan Razeen said the programme was conducted in an exemplary manner. Razeen noted, "I am confident that the youth who attended this programme would have received wide exposure in the arena of the hospitality industry. Programmes such as these give fresh, talented and multi-skilled youngsters exposure into the gamut of career choices in the industry and in turn the industry benefits from going back to their communities and schools and discussing this curated experience."

A.M. Lourdeshanah (19) who took part in the Jaffna programme said, "This programme helps me to gain more knowledge, not only about the hospitality management and tourism, but also the other skills. Our thinking about the hospitality sector is more different than before we came here. I think it's a blessing to get this opportunity."

**Srilal Miththapala**  
**Tourism Expert Consultant**



Srilal Miththapala has over 25 years experience in the hospitality industry. He was President of the Tourist Hotels Association of Sri Lanka from 2008 to 2010, board member of the Sri Lanka Hotel Classification Committee until 2012 and is a member of the Public Utilities Commission Consumer Consultative Committee. Srilal is presently a part time consultant on tourism for the World Bank, Washington D.C. He is a committed environmentalist with a special interest in wild life and elephants. Srilal has carried out research at the Uda Walawe National Park on elephant population dynamics.

The Jaffna programme had a unique strength in Sakila Panchatcharam who was one of YouLead's initial 35 Youth Ambassadors. Sakila was both a role model and success story whose life was transformed by the opportunity to build a career at Jetwing Jaffna. She played a pivotal role as a mentor to the Jaffna batch of Young Tourism Ambassadors—particularly demonstrating the excellent career opportunities available in the rapidly growing sector to the nine young women participating.



Front office operations, Jetwing Jaffna

***"I am so proud to see other youngsters given such a thorough and hands-on introduction to the industry. There is so much commitment and trouble taken to ensure the young people get a true flavour of the type of job and the exciting people and places one can work in. It is a job like no other."***

Sakila Panchatcharam  
YouLead Youth Ambassador  
& Jetwing Jaffna

U.S. Ambassador, Alaina Teplitz, met the Hambantota Young Tourism Ambassadors this February while on a visit to the town. The youth were delighted to meet Ambassador Teplitz in person. They shared their experiences and discussed the barriers that youth in the South face when seeking employment.



A selfie with U.S. Ambassador Alaina Teplitz, in Hambantota

# New entrepreneurship curricula adopted by 11 leading training institutes

Entrepreneurship development curricula launches in November

Eleven training institutes launched a set of common curricula for entrepreneurship training in November 2018. They expressed their commitment to improve vocational training, technical education, and enterprise development in Sri Lanka at the event. The new curricula was developed by officials of the Industrial Development Board, National Enterprise Development Authority, University of Vocational Technology, Vocational Training Authority, National Youth Services Council, National Apprentice and Industrial Training Authority, Small Enterprise Development Division, Department of Technical Education and Training, University College of Anuradhapura, Ceylon German Technical Training Institute and Sarvodaya Movement in partnership with YouLead.

"Helping bright young men and women to realise their dreams and set up a new enterprise is one of the most impactful activities we can do. Of course, not all will succeed, but those who do inject new ideas and energy in the economy, can employ other unemployed youth and help build a sustainable future for Sri Lanka," said Reed Aeschliman, USAID Mission Director for Sri Lanka and the Maldives.

To fill a long-felt need for an updated curriculum for the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) sector, YouLead brought stakeholders together to develop a common set of curricula based on international best practices and incorporating the latest competency standards. The new curricula introduced more effective teaching techniques including student-centered learning and case-studies. The global-standardised syllabi have been localised using Sri Lankan examples and case studies



Charles Conconi, Project Director, YouLead lights the lamp at the launch.



Several young entrepreneurs who had already used the curricula took part in the launch



Chrishan Pereira, Deputy Project Director, YouLead

where possible. The participating training institutes pledged to introduce the new curricula quickly and encourage Sri Lanka's youth to set up their own businesses.

"The literature on entrepreneurship training is limited, but training programs are often critiqued for their lack of practicality, lack of cultural sensitivity, and lack of long-term vision. The current entrepreneurial training system appears to be facing the after effects of transplanting global practices without significant localisation or identification of the grassroot-level challenges and therefore often don't resonate with our youth or build the confidence they need to start their own businesses. I am confident these joint curricula will be much more useful for our prospective entrepreneurs," noted Dr. Premasiri Gamage, Entrepreneurship Consultant.



Danushka Sandamali, one of the first trainees to follow the new ED curriculum



Q&A sessions at the launch



The curricula includes trainee workbooks, trainers guides and a resource book



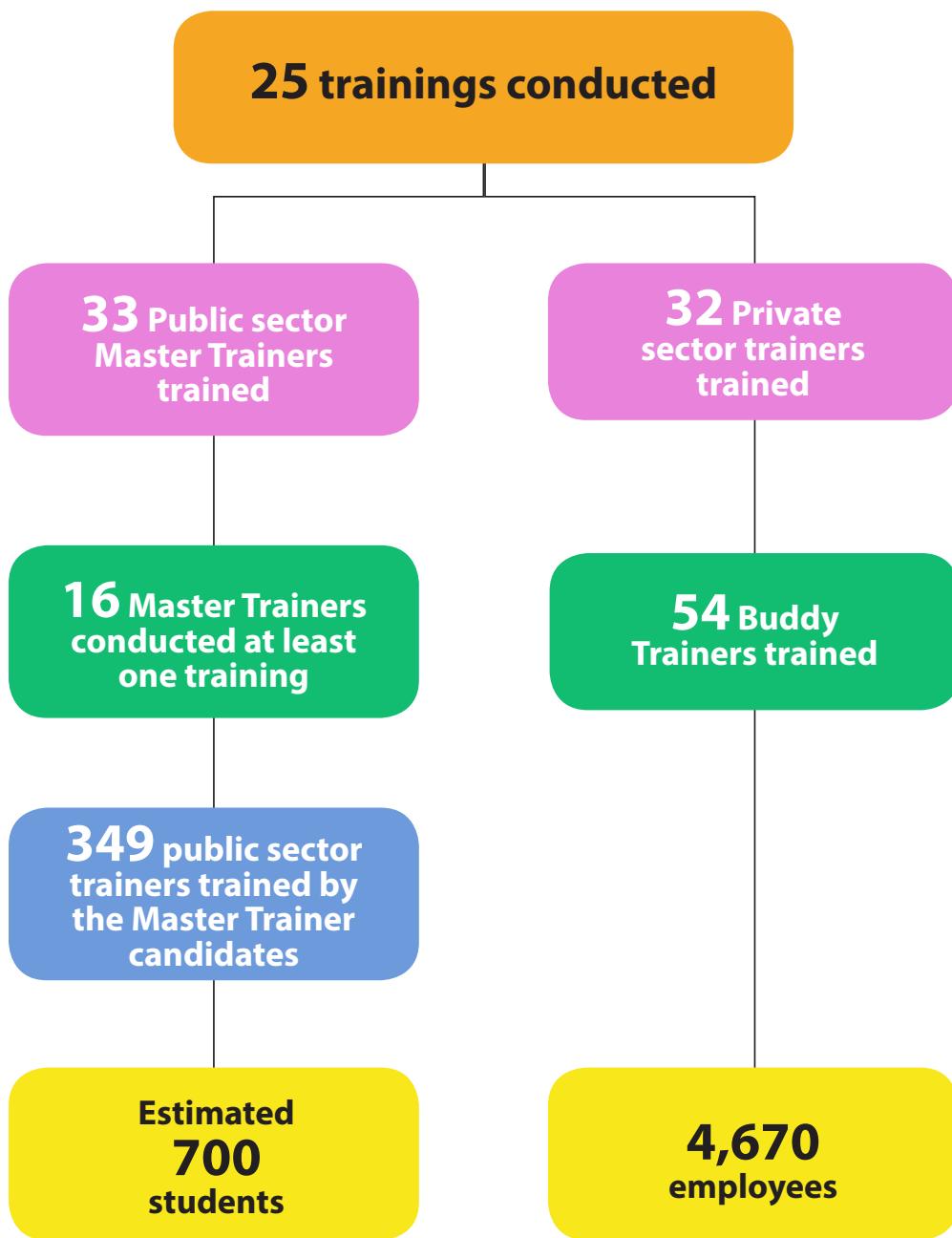
Brian Wittnebel, Deputy Director for Economic Growth Office of USAID delivers the keynote address



Dr. Premasiri Gamage, Entrepreneurship Consultant, addressing the plenary session

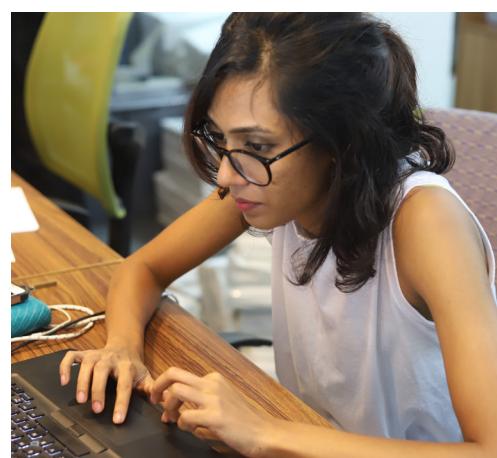
November 2018

# Hundreds benefit from YouLead's Training of Trainers programme



The Arizona State University (ASU) Master Trainer programme started in the last quarter of 2017. Candidates follow three levels of training; interactive pedagogy, soft skills and mentoring and are required to train at least 100 other trainers to receive ASU certification. The Master Trainer programme is conducted by Ann Nielson and Dr. Samuel DiGangi and covers the TVET sector.

Cargills Ceylon PLC received customized training in July of 2018: The training conducted by Dr. Tom Hunsaker and Kate Robertson of ASU's Thunderbird School of Global Management, focused on training methodologies and delivery. Cargills used Training Coordinators and a buddy training system to train its new employees in their work locations rather than bringing them all to the company's Albert Page Center in the capital Colombo.



Eshani Seneviratne, Training Manager, YouLead

# YouLead helps Jay Kay Marketing with distance learning design

With expansion plans for several hundred new outlets — almost all outside of the Colombo area — Jay Kay Marketing Services Ltd. (JMSL) needed help figuring out how to train and on-board thousands of new employees without bringing them all the way to Colombo.

The YouLead project worked with JMSL to take their nascent distance learning programme to a new level. JMSL formally launched its new distance learning platform in December 2018 after a few intense months of content development. YouLead interventions included a four and half day customised training for 19 master trainers on instructional design and educational media, tools, techniques, and approaches. The emphasis was on content production, delivery, and management.

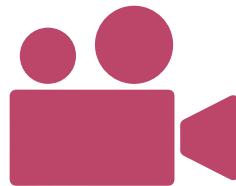
The training was conducted by Guy Mullins and Renee Deljon of Arizona State University's (ASU) Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College and resulted in the launch of JMSL's Keells Retail (KRA) Online training platform.

The effort resulted in 128 videos, 142 documents, and 15 courses converted to an e-learning format that meets best practice standards developed by ASU — a global leader



***"It was a great learning experience and the team gained a wealth of knowledge while enjoying every bit of it. More importantly, we have clear next steps on the application and applicability of the concepts. We are happy to say that JMSL was able to complete the project successfully by converting all our introduction level and advanced level curricula to e-content."***

Hiran Nugawela  
Manager Learning and Development,  
JKH



**128**  
**videos**



**142**  
**documents**



**15**  
**courses**



**2,796**  
**employees**  
**trained**

in distance learning. The initial content covers both introduction and advanced levels for all non-management positions in JMSL supermarket outlets. The objectives of the instructional design modules covered in the training were to provide skills, strategies and approaches to converting routine classroom training to e-modules for a blended approach, and to establish a self-driven learning culture within the training organisation. This while positioning the company's KRA-O training system as a knowledge platform for employees to access and learn how to perform simple job-related tasks anytime, anywhere and extending the role of a trainer to include e-content authoring added to the current role of classroom session design and delivery.

The initiative has reduced classroom sessions from 5.5 days to three for the introductory level and 42 days to 28 for the advanced level resulting in significant savings. It enabled the recruitment and onboarding of unemployed youth more quickly.

The development team was awarded the John Keells Group Chairman's Award under the category of Digital Disruption for their efforts.

# Arizona State University shares its world class expertise on interactive pedagogy training

From ancient palaces and temples to complex irrigation and aqueduct systems, it is clear that ancient Sri Lankans had developed a sophisticated understanding of engineering, art, agriculture, and many other vital disciplines necessary for a civilization to develop and prosper.

Ultimately, it is the synthesis of such knowledge that is the true cultural hallmark of Sri Lanka's ancient past and the common consensus today is that knowledge, skills and expertise are what will help drive the nation towards an equally bright future. The journey ahead, however is challenging and while Sri Lankans have demonstrated tremendous resourcefulness and tenacity in advancing development, systemic bottlenecks have hampered the nation's ability to develop. Today the lack of skills and expertise is often cited as one of the most significant limitations to growth, particularly in relation to young Sri Lankans entering the workforce for the first time.

The urgency of resolving this growing skills gap is further exacerbated by Sri Lanka's demographic dynamics. By 2041, over 25 percent of the country's population is projected to reach the age of 60. Youth unemployment meanwhile currently hovers at around 70% for those between the ages of 15-29.

Seeking to build capacity locally with a view to empowering Sri Lankans to resolve these challenges for themselves, the



Ann Nielson, Associate Director of the Center for Advanced Studies in Global Education (CASGE)

USAID-funded YouLead programme is collaborating with a wide array of partner organisations, government and non-governmental bodies, leading private sector companies and several local and international academic institutions, to bolster the country's education systems and re-align them to help young Sri Lankans become more competitive in the labour market.

## The role of education in the age of information

Prominent among YouLead's partners in this endeavour is Arizona State University (ASU). ASU topped the US News and World Report list of Most Innovative Schools in the United States for three years in a row ahead of Stanford, MIT and numerous other internationally renowned institutions. It is now leveraging its considerable expertise to help teachers and trainers across Sri Lanka's vocational training institutions to shape a common framework and understanding of education.

Leading the ASU team in the country are Ann Nielsen, Associate Director of the Center for Advanced Studies in Global Education (CASGE) in the Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College at ASU and Dr. Samuel DiGangi, Associate Professor of Special Education in the Division of Education Leadership and Innovation of Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College at ASU and affiliated faculty with the Center for Advanced Studies in Global Education.

Both are specialists in the field of pedagogy – the method and practice of teaching itself – and believe that concerted, home-grown reforms aimed at refining the approach that educators take in the classroom will be vital in bridging the growing skills gap. During a recent trip to the island they were eager to share some preliminary observations and insights into the challenges and opportunities in Sri Lanka's vocational training sector.

"Since arriving, we have met and shared experiences with some truly phenomenal Sri Lankan educators. All of the people that we worked with showed remarkable knowledge in their fields and were passionate and sincere about their motivation to improve the lives of their students. Our goal has therefore been to leverage a process of cooperative collaboration to work with these educators to further refine their instructional techniques and delivery while improving their ability to monitor and evaluate student performance in a manner that promotes the best learning outcomes," Nielsen explained.

Fundamental to this process according to DiGangi, is the need for a common definition of pedagogical concepts fitted to Sri Lankan requirements that in turn form the foundation of a common, standardised approach to teaching.

"Once we have all Sri Lankan educators working to a commonly agreed-upon framework, we are able to ensure that they are able to replicate teaching best practices and

extend them to cover the whole island. This will empower educators to build up their students to a professional level so that when they complete their training, they are already equipped with the skills necessary to have a strong impact in the workforce. The training programmes that we are developing are the first step in this journey. Through this process, we hope to consolidate their expert knowledge and content, and help them to draw connections to key pedagogical concepts. In many cases, these concepts are already embedded in their teaching methods and our job is to help to clearly define them so that the content and approach is consistent irrespective of where the teaching takes place," DiGangi stated.

### A systematic, data-driven approach to education

The Sri Lankan education system is frequently described as outdated; often better at producing graduates who are skilled in taking tests and memorising, rather than ones capable of retaining and actively applying knowledge to



*Participants at the training*

solve real world problems.

DiGangi notes however that such issues are not unique to Sri Lanka, and that all over the world, there is a vibrant debate raging as to what constitutes an effective education system in the first place.

"This is certainly a hot topic in the United States, especially in the field of comparative and international education and the feasibility and reliability of global learning metrics. While it is important to have these high-level debates to determine the ultimate direction these systems must take, it is much more difficult to influence this direction from the top-down. Meanwhile, educators are still focused on the immediate problems: What do I teach today and how do I teach it? That is a question which at some point, each individual educator needs to answer for themselves and their students. We believe that we can provide vital support to them by leading them to formative assessments that generate the information necessary to take such decisions."

### Home-grown solutions to bridge the skills gap

Given that the mandate of the YouLead programme spans a four year period, the work on enhancing opportunities and improving the employability of young Sri Lankans through skills development is only just beginning. Moving forward,



*Participants at the training*

the US\$12 million programme is working to directly improve the lives of over 100,000 young Sri Lankans by introducing 57 new or improved curricula, developed with the private sector and prioritised in high-growth sectors.

"At present Sri Lanka faces significant challenges arising out of the mismatch between the type of skills that the school system produces against those needed in high-growth areas of the private sector. But we believe that it is why it is more important than ever to identify 'bright-spots' in education. We must focus on our strengths and how they can be expanded and emulated in a way that provides the most benefit to the student," DiGangi noted.



*Dr. Samuel DiGangi, Associate Professor of Special Education in the Division of Education Leadership and Innovation of Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College, ASU*

# Former Kimberley Clarke President volunteers with Ceylon Biscuits for strategy and skilling up

Thomas Davis, a YouLead Volunteer Expert with decades of business management experience and former Kimberley Clarke President for Europe, Africa, and the Middle East, completed a five week consultancy in August 2018 with Ceylon Biscuits Ltd. (CBL).

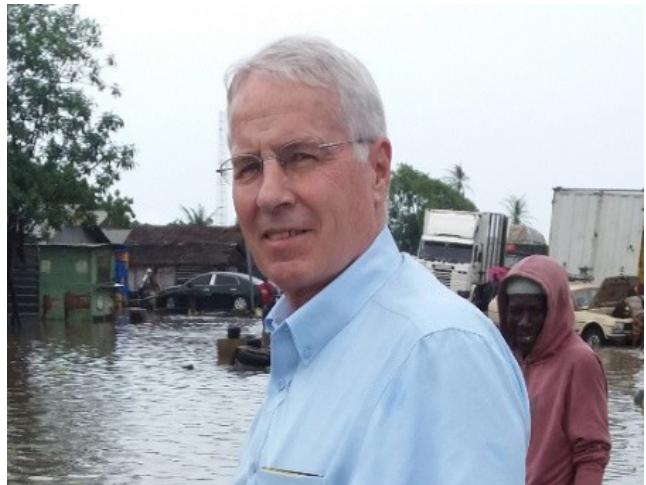
CBL is one of the fastest growing and largest conglomerates in Sri Lanka that manufactures and markets many leading brands of biscuit, confectionery, cereal, and organic fruit products. Recognised as a technology and innovation led producer, CBL caters to a large overseas market and has a global presence across all continents. CBL exports to more than 60 countries and is now aspiring to enter the retail grocery sector through a tie-up with SPAR, a well-established international chain of supermarkets based in South Africa. This will lead to new jobs and a need for skilling up to better serve this high-value business segment. Sri Lanka's supermarket reach grew 60% from 2005 to 2012, but with only an 8% national market penetration, there is room for growth and a lot of new careers for Sri Lankan youth to pursue.

Davis trained CBL's merchandisers, as well as their modern trade and marketing teams on best practices of modern retail trade—including the skill sets its team members will need to expand.

Thomas has 31 years of increasing responsibility in the Kimberly-Clark Corporation (K-C), the last 17 of those years based outside the US and the last six years responsible for all consumer products businesses and operating companies

in Middle East, Eastern Europe, Africa. In retirement he has leveraged his experience in volunteer consulting assignments and is described as open-minded, even-handed, non-judgmental with strong business ethics. Thomas' assignment was three pronged. It looked at CBL's ability to compete in the country's growing modern trade retail sector; the ability to expand in Africa; and the ability to improve middle management leadership for employee development.

Activities delivered were fact-finding interviews, one-on-one coaching, training templates, trade visits, classroom presentations, senior leader engagements – progress reports, meetings, and recommendations.



Thomas Davis, YouLead Volunteer

## YouLead trains over 400 credit and loan officers on cash flow based lending



YouLead trained 405 bank managers, credit officers and loan officers from its partner banks in 2018. The training covered lending practices and promoted cash flow based lending. This focuses on young entrepreneurs who often fail to qualify for loans as they don't have the collateral required by banks.

# Over 1,200 young men and women visit the Badulla career fair

## Youth get career guidance for the first time in their lives

Over 1,200 young job seekers visited the career fair held by the Department of Manpower and Employment (DME) in Badulla this September. Many of these received career guidance for the first time in their lives.

Young visitors to the fair were guided through the CareerMe vocational test to determine which vocations matched their personal interests and skills. They then met with 27 Human Resource Officers from the Badulla District Secretariat who had been trained with YouLead's support on how to interpret the test results and conduct career guidance.

The youth emerged equipped with a skills list and a list of stalls to visit at the fair. The participating companies were organised into categories and numbered to make the process more streamlined. The companies held on-the-spot interviews with the job seekers and were supported with a chart marking system. The charts and marks were shared with the youth at the end of the interviews, especially with those who failed to gain marks. The idea behind this was show the youth where and why they had failed the interview and how they could improve their interviewing skills for the next time.

Chrishan Pereira, Deputy Project Director of YouLead, said, "The focus is to come, realise who you are, then follow your path". Some of the youth received direct job placements at the fair while some even changed their planned career paths after taking the vocational test.

Chrishan said he hoped to include follow up training sessions for the youth based on the findings of the marking system – 'dress for success' for example. He also pointed out that the families of the job seekers had been left out of the process at Badulla and parents would be included in the next career fair.



Anjana Kulasekera, founder and operations director of CareerMe lights the lamp at the opening of the Job Centre booth.

500 young people were originally expected to visit the fair and take the vocational test but a whopping 2000 odd actually showed up on the day.

The Badulla pilot came out of YouLead's experience in Jaffna earlier in the year where 500 Human Resource Officers of the Jaffna District Secretariat supported by YouLead gave career guidance to the visitors at the career fair held there.

YouLead, the DME, and CareerMe jointly hosted a pilot career fair in Badulla to explore the benefits of adding career guidance testing and professional career counseling to the standard offering. The event drew more than 1,200 young women and men, many from remote tea estates. YouLead and CareerMe completed 130 online career tests in Tamil and Sinhala. The youth were then invited to one-on-one counseling session with more than 24 career counselors from the Badulla district trained by YouLead and CareerMe. 99% of those who received counseling were in the target 16-35 age range, 87 percent were school leavers and 71 percent were female. Many brought their parents. Thirty companies attended the event. The companies interviewed 150 young job-seekers each on average and collectively plan to invite more than 400 for second interviews. The companies reported that they felt the youth they interviewed were better prepared than in past events they had attended and attributed it to the career testing and counseling.



Young visitors at the fair

# Microsoft donates USD 3,000,000 YouthWorks platform

YouLead and Microsoft Sri Lanka signed a partnership MoU in February of 2018 to launch the new YouthWorks vocational education portal at the Ministry of Skills Development and Vocational Training in Colombo. The portal launched formally in March 2019 as youlead.lk and will act as a hub connecting stakeholders providing career guidance, job vacancies, entrepreneurship support, educational content and a variety of other tools to support Sri Lanka's young job-seekers and entrepreneurs.

The trilingual platform is presently being localised to the Sri Lankan context with a focus on a youth friendly layout. Once ready, youth can access the portal from any device anywhere in the country. Youth will also be able to access some of the platform's features offline in vocational training institutions, libraries and other information centers around the country. This will broaden the reach of the platform so users don't have to wait for last mile connectivity.

YouthWorks is presently being used in 18 countries worldwide and has helped more than 26 million youth to strengthen their skills, find employment, or start their own businesses over the past two years. Powered with Microsoft roots and developed by a professional team, youlead.lk will change the aspirations of vocational sector education in Sri Lanka. Welcoming public and private partners, strengthening

opportunities for each stakeholder, and providing uniform access to students are key objectives of the platform.

In simple terms, youlead.lk will be a place where Sri Lankan youth can obtain A-Z vocational education information, surrounded by domain specialist partnerships and future inside.

Come be part of the <http://youlead.lk> online community. The dream begins with you.



Microsoft and YouLead sign MOU for YouthWorks: From left to right: Hasitha Abeywardena, Microsoft Country Manager; Robert Hilton, U.S. Embassy Deputy Chief of Mission; Chandima Weerakkody, Minister for Skills Development and Vocational Training; Charles Conconi, YouLead Project Director.

***"This is a fantastic partnership between the public and private sectors. A great American corporation, Microsoft, is cooperating with USAID and the Ministry of Skills Development to address Sri Lanka's vocational education and employment needs. This benefits not only Sri Lankan youth, but also employers, educators, and policymakers."***

Robert Hilton  
Deputy Chief of Mission of the  
U.S. Embassy



# Private sector call to action “Tourism Workforce Competitiveness Roadmap 2018-2023” debuts

Actively seeking to fulfill a timely requirement, the Private Sector Tourism Skills Committee (TSC) launched its Tourism Workforce Competitiveness Roadmap. The objective of the Roadmap is to take on the challenge of showing the country's young women and men that a career in the fast-growing tourism and hospitality industry can be safe, stimulating, well-compensated and full of opportunity for growth.

The TSC was set up following a special request from the Tertiary and Vocational Education Commission (TVEC) and the Ministry of Skills Development and Vocational Training (MSDVT) to respond to the critical workforce challenges and skills supply in tourism. The committee is explicitly private sector-led and voluntary. The TSC also plans to ensure that the courses available in training institutes are practical, aligned with market needs, and taught according to global best practices.

Elaborating on the focus of the roadmap, TSC Chairman Malik Fernando, Managing Director of Dilmah Tea's leisure arm, Resplendent Ceylon, said, “Please don't call it a strategy. We have too many of those and no one ever seems to act on them. This roadmap is a call to action. We hope others will join us, but we don't intend to wait.”

The TSC has already revised seven entry-level courses that are going through the national vocational qualification (NVQ) validation and endorsement process.

Speaking at the launch, USAID's Mission Director to Sri Lanka and Maldives, Reed J. Aeschliman said, “This roadmap demonstrates the kind of vision, leadership, and cooperation from the private sector that is needed to ensure Sri Lanka gets the most from its incredibly talented young women and men.”

The roadmap was facilitated by renowned international experts James MacGregor and Srilal Miththapala and brought together by some of the leading minds in the industry.

Kavan Ratnayake, former Chairman of SLTDA and ex-officio member of TSC applauded the efforts of the council, “We've worked with most of these companies and many more to draft the Tourism Strategic Plan 2017-2020. It's extremely encouraging to see a few of them taking action. I hope the rest of the industry joins in. If that happens, SLTDA will be there to help.”

One theme in TSC's roadmap is to encourage more women to enter the industry.

“I love tourism, it has been an amazing career for me” revealed Shiromal Cooray, TSC's Vice Chair and Managing Director at Jetwing Travels, “Unfortunately many young women and their parents don't know how interesting and fulfilling it can be. We need to show them. I need to show them. This industry can't grow if half of our workforce sits on the sidelines.”

The roadmap is driven by the TSC with the support of TVEC, the Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority (SLTDA), SLITHM, the Ceylon Chamber of Commerce and YouLead.



Reed J. Aeschliman, Mission Director, USAID



The TSC panel: Left to right; Savithri Rodrigo (moderator), Kavan Ratnayake, former Chairman, SLTDA; Sanath Ukwatte, President, THASL; Malik J. Fernando, Chairman, TSC; James MacGregor, Tourism & Hospitality Workforce Strategy Consultant, YouLead; Shiromal Cooray, Managing Director, Jetwing Travels; Srilal Miththapala, Tourism Consultant, YouLead.



**James MacGregor**  
**Tourism & Hospitality Workforce Strategy Consultant**



James MacGregor has 40 years of experience as a tourism and hospitality consultant. He is an internationally recognised specialist in ecotourism, sustainable tourism, low carbon and tourism adaptation to global warming. He is the winner of four "Tourism for Tomorrow" awards awarded by the World Travel and Tourism Council. He has experience in project managements and has designed and facilitated over 250 workshops on tourism planning, product development and marketing. In addition, he is an official UNWTO Accommodation Star Grading Assessor and Trainer and has supported the development of over 1,850 star grading standards and implementation procedures across the industry.

# YouLead and Verité Research explore solutions to youth not working

Verité Research with support from YouLead conducted a thought provoking survey on youth unemployment in their Youth Labour Market Assessment 2018. The study has revealed several interesting insights on Sri Lanka's youth unemployment.

The year-long quantitative research focused on determining the key issues that impede youth employability and provides recommendations to address systemic constraints. Verité Research shared the research findings with the public and private sector, NGOs, INGOs and academia in January.



Nishan de Mel, Executive Director, Verité Research

The presentation included an in-depth discussion titled 'Solutions to youth not-working' and was commissioned to facilitate YouLead interventions in improving technical and vocational education. Verité Research's research identifies emerging trends in youth employment and provides key insights to YouLead's stakeholders on how to formulate progressive strategies to advance youth employability in Sri Lanka. The country presently faces an enormous labour scarcity in several fast-growing industries including tourism, construction and healthcare despite the fact that five million women and 70% of all youth are not part of the labour force.

The assessment notes that youth unemployment in Sri Lanka is directly connected to poor school-to-work transition. The research focused on employed, unemployed and constrained youth, the gender dimension of the labour market landscape,



Left to right: Mihindu Perera, Assistant Analyst; Sachintha Fernando, Team Leader, Economics Research; Rehana Thowfeek, Research Analyst

youth entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship training. Primary data for the survey was gathered through surveys of 2,000 youth, 200 employers, five key informant interviews and a survey of 400 students who underwent entrepreneurship training at the National Apprenticeship and Industrial Training Authority (NAITA), Industrial Development Board (IDB), National Enterprise Development Authority (NEDA) and the Small Enterprise Development Division (SED).

The research found that youth aspire to jobs that complement their existing skills and facilitate a safe working environment. It also found that youth spent an average 21 months searching for employment and that approximately 55% of constrained youth showed an interest to work. Women were found to be three times more likely to remain in their jobs and transportation was a priority when looking for an occupation regardless of gender.

The assessment presents a new index, the 'Youth Gender Gap Index' (YGGI), which measures gender inequality in the provinces and portrays data on district and provincial level by gender. This will allow YouLead to consider expanding its geographical reach to cover vulnerable areas of the island such as the Uva province. The research also shows that 20% of women who leave work for family reasons of childcare or care giving, wish to have return to work programmes to re-enter the workforce.

It makes a cogent empirical evidence based argument, that women are far more loyal in staying at workplaces and despite a pattern of some women dropping out in



Venya De Silva, Senior Analyst, Verité Research

the early years of childbearing, if companies factor in the replacement value of a job, it is men who constantly jump jobs and cost more to companies by around 50% of their pay scale making women far easier to retain despite popular perception otherwise.

The assessment puts the new business start-up rate at 19% among youth who have undergone entrepreneurial training and shows that there is gap between curriculum delivered and entrepreneur needs. The full report and accompanying data set is available for download at <https://www.veriteresearch.org/publication/youth-labour-market-assessment-sri-lanka/>

# SOLUTIONS TO YOUTH NOT WORKING

## FINDINGS FROM THE YOUTH LABOUR MARKET ASSESSMENT

### How big is the untapped resource pool?

**870,000**

Youth are Not in Labour Force, Education or Training (NLET)\*



**243,000**  
NLET youth are interested in working  
**627,000**  
NLET youth did not express an interest in working

**21% of employers**

RECEIVE APPLICATIONS FROM WOMEN WHO ARE INTERESTED IN RETURNING TO WORK

Introduce "Return-to-Work" programmes to attract these individuals into the workforce

### Women

Employed women are  
**MORE LOYAL**

Women are 3 times more likely to remain in their jobs

The costs of replacing an employee are equal to 50% of an annual salary



Despite prevailing perceptions that women cost more due to maternity leave, they actually may cost less due to higher loyalty

### How do we retain youth staff?

**Rs 40,000**

IS A SALARY AT WHICH JOB SATISFACTION STABILIZES AT A HIGH LEVEL



SATISFIED YOUTH ARE  
**8 TIMES**

LESS LIKELY TO LEAVE THEIR JOBS THAN DISSATISFIED YOUTH

Organisations need to grow salary levels to a baseline of Rs 40,000 to retain staff and understand that they would be saving on replacement costs

### Youth job preferences

According to youth...

What do youth look for in jobs?

Jobs that use existing skills

Safe work environments

Offers a letter of employment

According to employers...

Job title

Safe work environments

Reputation of the company



There is a job expectation mismatch that needs to be addressed

### Transportation

TRANSPORTATION IS A  
**KEY ENABLER**

FOR YOUTH TO TAKE UP JOBS



**46% OF EMPLOYERS**

ARE WILLING TO/ALREADY PROVIDE TRANSPORT SERVICES TO EMPLOYEES

Youth wish to travel a maximum of one hour from their place of residence to attend to work

Transportation should become a part of the standard benefits package offered to employees and clearly communicated at time of recruitment



Rehana Thowfeek, Research Analyst YouLead/ Verité Research.

YouLead's Rehana Thowfeek shared some interesting insights at the World University Service of Canada (WUSC) – Sri Lanka's national dialogue on 'Making Inroads: Advancing women in the workforce held in Colombo in December 2018.'

Rehana opened her presentation on gender related findings by sharing the main influences on young women's job preferences and their retention in the labour force. The findings were from her research for Verité Research on Sri Lanka's youth labour market. Rehana said her research showed that parental approval for a job was very important to young women. 30% of those surveyed were willing to accept a well paid, stable job only if their parents approved. Rehana stressed the importance of engaging parents especially in industries considered non-traditional for women such as construction, tourism, and gem and jewelry.

Rehana said her research found a direct connection between job satisfaction and increased working hours as well as time spent commuting to and from the work place. She reiterated that job satisfaction was extremely important as satisfied youth were eight times less likely to leave their jobs.

## Key recommendations of Youth Labour Market Assessment 2018

- Set up comprehensive and high-quality apprenticeship, internship and work-while studying opportunities in the private sector.
- Focus on skills development and entrepreneurship interventions for youth aged 15-24 years.
- Increase youth involvement in TVET by increasing awareness and attractiveness of the sector.
- Improve the provision and visibility of transport services provided by private sector to their employees and potential recruits.
- Tourism and construction industries to revise pay structures to ensure a fixed salary of LKR 40,000 a month.
- Implement return-to-work programs to attract young women into the labor force.
- Encourage public discourse on reallocation of household duties among men and women.
- Develop outreach material for youth entrepreneurs focusing on practical dimensions.
- Assure that the teachers who deliver entrepreneurship training at school and TVET levels are optimistic, well trained and advocate for entrepreneurship.

# Kandy's new startup Top Gem Lapidary: The jewel in the crown



Top Gem Lapidary opens in Kandy



Lapidary training



Lapidary training

Eight intrepid young entrepreneurs launched their own gem cutting start up, Top Gem Lapidary, in Kandy on the 13th of December 2018 after completing a 30 day pilot training programme in November. The eight were from among 24 young men and women who successfully completed a gem cutting training programme focusing on unemployed school leavers.

"We built a really close relationship while going through the training," said Dhanushka Sandamali, 27, Co-founder and CEO of Top Gem Lapidary. "As a new mother, starting a business wasn't anything I had planned for, but the industry allows a lot of flexibility to set our own work hours, and the other co-founders are supportive. I'm excited—and a little scared, but thanks to the YouLead project, Heshani Gem and Jewelry Training Centre, and an offer of outsourced work from Paradise Ceylon we are eager to get to work."

The majority women-owned company will provide outsourced gem cutting services to the Sri Lankan gem and jewelry industry catering to a niche market within it.

Hiruni Gunasekera, 21, a co-founder, said the startup would inspect, cut, polish, buy and sell gem stones. She said they also had plans to engage a silversmith and a goldsmith to create astrological jewelry and were working on ideas for Valentine's Day using birth stones. "It is a very interesting and respectable way to earn," she said.

The lapidary training programme came out of a public-private dialogue sponsored by YouLead, the Women's Chamber of Commerce in Kandy, and the Central Province Chamber of Commerce and Industry to discuss ways to match unemployed youth with available jobs and training opportunities. Several gem and jewelry companies taking part in the dialogue immediately guaranteed 200 jobs if youth could be found and trained to their specifications. Heshani Gem Training rose to the occasion to develop a pilot training programme with the private sector gem and jewelry companies. YouLead lent their support in identifying trainees and curriculum development.



Lapidary training

"This was an impressive group of young trainees and I'm happy to have had the opportunity to train them," said Kumuduni Heshani, founder and CEO of Heshani Gem Training. "With the success of this pilot training, we now have companies asking for up to 600 new trainees."

The trainees completing the programme were offered employment by Paradise Ceylon in Ratnapura, a gemstone supplier, that now employs more than 100 and serves jewelers across Sri Lanka and the world.

YouLead entrepreneurship trainer, Dr. Premasiri Gamage, held a two day workshop with Top Gem Lapidary to help them set up their new company. He said, "These young men and women are committed and really know what they are doing. They have a good mix of skills from design, to cutting, to marketing. I am confident they will be successful."



Examining a gem mine in Kuruwita



Top Gem Lapidary visits a gem and jewelry shop in Colombo



Fazal Mohideen, Proprietor, Jewel Qudsi mentors the young entrepreneurs



Top Gem Lapidary with (front row left to right) Charles Conconi, Project Director, YouLead; Fazal Mohideen, Proprietor, Jewel Qudsi; Chrishan Pereira, Deputy Project Director, YouLead; Brian Wittnebel, Deputy Director for Economic Growth Office of USAID and Top Gem's young entrepreneurs

# USAID's Development Credit Authority dedicates USD 8.9 million to power youth entrepreneurship

YouLead helped facilitate a seven year partnership between the United States Agency for International Development's (USAID) Development Credit Authority (DCA) and two leading commercial banks to power youth entrepreneurship in Sri Lanka. The USD 8.9 million guarantee commitment will enable financing for micro, small and medium private enterprise (MSME) across the island.

The two banks, Hatton National Bank PLC and Sampath Bank PLC, have extensive outreach as well as expertise in handling MSME and startup lending. The partnership will give local entrepreneurs increased access to capital enabling them to expand their businesses generating more jobs for the country's youth. The focus is on bridging the gap in financial availability to the key borrower groups.

YouLead supported this partnership as part of its commitment to improve youth employability and promote entrepreneurship. The intervention will allow the banks to offer increased credit access to youth startups and budding businesses. YouLead's mediation helps ensure that the strategic actions of the stakeholders align with their partnership objectives.

YouLead also partners with several other leading financial intermediaries including the Bank of Ceylon, Regional Development Bank, Sanasa Development Bank, Seylan Bank PLC, Sampath Bank PLC, Commercial Bank PLC and Hatton National Bank.



Harsha de Alwis, Director - Entrepreneurship, YouLead lights the inaugural lamp at a training



Left to right: Tharaka Ranwella, Senior Deputy General Manager, Sampath Bank PLC; Reed J. Aeschliman, Mission Director, USAID; Jude Fernando, Deputy General Manager - SME & Midmarkets, Hatton National Bank PLC sign the partnership MOU

## Girl power at team YouLead



***"A woman with a voice is by definition a strong woman. But the search to find that voice can be remarkably difficult."***

Melinda Gates

## Team YouLead



# A few Partner Profiles

**SANASA Development Bank PLC** is a licensed specialised bank and the apex financial institution of the SANASA Federation, the umbrella organisation of over 8,000 island-wide primary co-operative societies. The Bank has played a vital role in driving financial inclusion and socio-economic progress among grassroot level communities. It is in a unique position to deliver its services to a segment that is often overlooked by the formal financial system through its extensive network of co-operative societies and government organisations. The Bank serves an island-wide customer base primarily in the micro, SME, retail and co-operative society sectors through a network of 91 branches.



**The Women's Development Federation** (WDF) in Hambantota is one of the largest women run womens' organisations in South Asia and is engaged in poverty alleviation through the empowerment of women. The WDF started in 1989 with a few village level women's development



societies and has grown into an organisation of 1,272 women's development societies with over 70,000 members. They cover the entire Hambantota district as well as the Southern part of the adjoining Moneragala district. The WDF is a non-governmental organisation providing members a number of services including micro finance, its core service to empower families economically, socially, culturally and politically.

**The Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement** is a self-governance movement providing comprehensive development and conflict resolution programmes to villages. Founded in 1958, Sarvodaya is Sri Lanka's most broadly embedded community-based development organisation network. Sarvodaya works with 26 district centres, 325 divisional centres and over 3,000 legally independent village societies in districts across the country. The Movement seeks a no-poverty, no-affluence society in Sri Lanka through community-based efforts and volunteerism.



Sarvodaya

## YouLead's implementing partners

- **Arizona State University** named the "Most Innovative School in America" in 2015 and 2016 by its peers, brings exceptional academic and pedagogical qualifications in career counseling and curriculum development, as well as innovative technologies that expand the distribution and sustainability of those curricula.
- **Global Communities** guides our entrepreneurship team with experience facilitating more than 530,000 loans for micro, small, and medium enterprises in more than 12 countries.
- **Skills for Life** brings local curriculum development and teacher training experience, having sustained and expanded the soft-skills curriculum developed under USAID's Accelerated Skills Acquisition Project. Since 2009, the organisation has delivered training to more than 100,000 students and 3,000 teachers on a sustainable market basis.

- **American Chamber of Commerce** in Sri Lanka founded in 1992, brings together over 400 members representing over 260 leading Sri Lankan and American companies based in Sri Lanka. AmCham provides members with a platform for exchange of ideas and for identifying trade and investment opportunities with both the private and government sectors in Sri Lanka, the Asia-Pacific region and the United States.
- **Ceylon Chamber of Commerce** represents the majority of Sri Lankan businesses. The CCC's network includes 20 sector trade associations and 19 regional chambers which gives them an unmatched ability to build public-private linkages as well as bring private sector participation and leverage to rural areas.
- **Verité Research**, Sri Lanka's most respected think tank, brings rigorous, market-based analysis to their consortium. Verité's staff combine expertise with experience from varied sectors. In addition to its full-time staff, Verité also has Advisors and Associates who provide input on a regular basis..





Careerme is Sri Lanka's emerging professional career guidance company founded by a young Sri Lankan woman entrepreneur operating in technical partnership with Grow Careers, Australia. CareerMe provides career guidance services to youth to explore education and career options that match their personalities, skills, strengths and interests. All career guidance products and services, including psychometric testing, are specifically localised to Sri Lankan context.



Headstart Pvt. Ltd. is an award winning internationally recognised e-learning solutions provider in Sri Lanka and a subsidiary company of Dialog Axiata. They provide comprehensive solutions encompassing both high quality interactive multimedia content and a robust software platform to deliver content across multiple media such as web, mobile, tablet and CD.



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සංඛ්‍යා සේවකී  
*SampathBank*



# THE WIRE

“It’s not about winning, but what it’s about is not giving up. If you have a dream, fight for it.”

Lady Gaga

Come be part of the <http://youlead.lk> online community.  
The dream begins with you.



[www.iesc.org/youlead](http://www.iesc.org/youlead)



YouLeadSL



YouLead Sri Lanka



@YouLeadSL