



YOULEAD

IMPACT

Together for a brighter future for the Youth of Sri Lanka

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Career Bus provides Career Guidance to youth across the nation

On 8th March, YouLead in close collaboration with the Vocational Training Authority (VTA) recommenced the ambitious journey of the Career Bus, taking world-class, professional career testing and guidance to youth across the length of the nation from Dondra to Point Pedro, under strict Covid-19 spread-prevention guidelines.

The bus which was supplied by the VTA, was refurbished and converted into a mobile career guidance unit by YouLead, complete with mobile broadband and tablets for online career assessments. Its maiden journey included stops at 21 locations in 13 districts in 26 days, until a temporary COVID-19 lockdown in Jaffna district curtailed the journey at Kilinochchi.

Career Bus provided more than 2,600 youth with career guidance services, of which 61% were women.

This outreach activity kicked off with a social media campaign to create awareness and interest in career guidance and counselling service offered by the Career Bus, among youth in the 13 districts. On radio, the host DJs of the popular morning and evening talk shows urged parents to participate along with their children, directing them to a special registration site which allotted time slots in locations closest to them.



“Through the Career Bus, I learned how to choose the career that suits me best and how to make decisions that will affect my future. This will help me to pursue my goals.” VTA student, Vandaramullai, Batticaloa.

At each venue, youth together with their families were encouraged to participate in carefully designed activities. While Career Guidance practitioners trained in the latest career guidance techniques, helped them understand their potential and provided the guidance to take the appropriate, proactive decisions towards their education and future career or entrepreneurial success. Parents were provided with career awareness to better support their children.

Private sector partners collaborated in creating awareness about the world of work and conducting recruitment drives through spot interviews for eligible youth.

Pizza Hut, a main sponsor of technology, provided six tablets to youth to review educational material, conducted a recruitment drive and a world of work awareness campaign for 150 youth. Keells Retail conducted spot interviews of 400 youth in six locations, while Jetwing Hotels provided industry-specific awareness for more than 80 youth on the tourism and hospitality industry in Wellawaya. Nestlé Lanka PLC provided free food and beverages for all participants in six locations while Maga Engineering provided free stationery for youth.



Upon completion of its maiden journey, YouLead will soon hand the bus over to the Vocational Training Authority who will sustain its impact by facilitating many such journeys across Sri Lanka, continuously providing Career Guidance services and promoting vocational education to youth with a special focus on rural areas.

New partnerships that expand youth Career Guidance reach and create rural entrepreneurs

YouLead broke new ground in partnership initiatives, forging three significant alliances with ChildFund International, Save the Children International and Sri Lanka Unites. These non-profit agencies will leverage USAID-developed content and capabilities to significantly increase career guidance, employment and entrepreneurship outcomes.

These new partnerships will provide 2,900 youth with career guidance and help create 100 rural youth entrepreneurs.

ChildFund Sri Lanka is an international development organization that supports and improves the livelihoods of unserved, excluded and vulnerable children and youth in 10 districts and providing support to over 200,000 individuals including youth in Sri Lanka. YouLead entered into a partnership with ChildFund Sri Lanka on 8th January 2021, to train, upskill and mentor 1,050 emerging young entrepreneurs selected from 11 districts in Sri Lanka, support the accreditation of at least 35 ChildFund's entrepreneurship development trainers based on YouLead's curriculum and facilitate business counselling and mentorship services to potential youth entrepreneurs linked to ChildFund.

YouLead will also co-create and implement employment-focused training and upskilling initiatives for youth with disabilities through this partnership.

ChildFund has further pledged to provide financial support as grants to ten percent or more of the youth who complete the YouLead entrepreneurship development skills training.

With the shared objective of supporting rural and estate youth to develop sound technical and life skills, YouLead and **Save the Children International (SCI)** established a partnership on 11th January 2021. This partnership will provide professional career guidance for at least 2,400 rural youth from tea estate families each year, train 130 SCI managers located at their 66 information centers and provide them with learning material and toolkits for their beneficiaries.

It will also promote YouLead's online youth portal services, effectively disseminate information related to career guidance, employability skills, outreach and educational content through SCI's 66 information centers operating in Badulla, Monaragala and Nuwara Eliya districts.

Sri Lanka Unites (SLU) is a grassroots movement with a youth reach of more than 25,000 representing 25 districts in Sri Lanka. SLU, through its network of ten centers located island-wide, offers short courses in ICT and tourism and provides career awareness to youth on selected industries.



Sri Lanka Unites youth center Managers trained by YouLead in 1st Quarter 2020.

YouLead entered into a partnership with SLU on 13th January 2021, to promote effective career guidance services for at least 500 youth each year, by leveraging SLU's pre-existing network.

This collaboration will also feed in new participants for the YouLead-SLASSCOM 'Future Careers BRIDGE' program from SLU's ICT student population.

Partnerships are vital to combining resources, skills and networks to reach more youth and provide access to tools and facilities that will help them realize their full potential. YouLead will continue to strengthen existing collaborations and forge new partnerships to expand its impact on the youth of Sri Lanka.

Enabling rural Sri Lankan women to succeed in micro businesses

As many as 65.5% of working age women in Sri Lanka are not in the workforce, according to the 2019 Sri Lanka Labor Force Survey. There are however many determined, informally self-employed women across the country without any formal training who struggle to help their families make ends meet. They are now faced with added challenges due to the prolonged pandemic. These grassroots women entrepreneurs have the potential to be far more productive with help to transform their improvised self-employment efforts into micro businesses. YouLead collaborated with the Department of Samurdhi Development to kickstart this effort.

In commemoration of International Women’s Day, YouLead & Samurdhi launched an outreach campaign to encourage and upskill rural women entrepreneurs.



The campaign commenced with inspiring success stories of four women who participated in YouLead supported phase 1 entrepreneurship development training for Samurdhi-supported women in 2020.

These engaging video stories detailing each woman’s heartwarming journey to overcome challenges and transform ad-hoc self-employment to successful micro business, reached 1.4 million women on social media and viewed over a million times.

On International Women’s day 2021, YouLead kicked off entrepreneurship development training workshops in Matara.



The International Women’s Day commemorative ceremony to kick off phase 2, training workshops were held observing strict pandemic spread prevention guidelines with a limited representation of women entrepreneurs from Matara, at the Samurdhi Training Center. It featured motivational speakers and lessons from the women featured in the four success stories as well as established women entrepreneurs.

The workshops that commenced thereon provided training to 1,500 Samurdhi-supported women in the Matara district and will shortly be rolled out to an additional five districts thereafter with the potential to reach another 4500 rural women entrepreneurs.

Online entrepreneurship development training made freely available to women entrepreneurs islandwide.

YouLead also developed and launched a beginners online micro entrepreneurship development training program, featuring a series of video episodes rolled out weekly, hosted on www.youlead.lk/learn, giving all aspiring women entrepreneurs the opportunity to acquire basic skills at their own pace. This learning content attracted 15,000 users to the website in the month of March demonstrating the enthusiasm and demand for such learning.



Entrepreneurship trainers will soon begin to use these training videos as instructional tools in their classes along with the success stories as case studies.

YouLead recognizes the importance of developing rural women entrepreneurs and the vital role they can play to uplift their families and the country’s economy. In close collaboration with its partners, YouLead will continue to provide upskilling tools and opportunities to transform their lives as well as their livelihoods.

Campaign encouraging youth to make proactive education and career choices, goes viral



Geography, economic class, poor access to information and cultural or parental preferences, frequently combine to leave youth in Sri Lanka with little independent choice in their educational or career paths. Therefore, they are in the habit of passively accepting the outcome that unfolds for them based on their environment and circumstances and do not realize that there are resources that can help change this status quo.

YouLead launched an online campaign encouraging youth to take charge of their future education and career choices through YouLead's transformative tools and services.

The campaign leveraged conversations on popular youth social media groups and influencers to first build the myth of 'Kalumal Pokuna', a mysterious and elusive pond which magically transforms anyone who dips in its water instantly into the successful person they were meant to be. Unfortunately, the pond also attracts a terrifying Gaur, a mythical South Asian creature, that wants the pond all to itself.

Curiosity was so piqued within two weeks that youth were actively posting about the myth on their own pages and 'Kalumal Pokuna' was trending as a keyword on Google.

Hot on the heels of this heightened level of interest, two highly engaging video stories of a trio of young people with different dreams traveling in search of Kalumal Pokuna were released on 3rd March on YouLead social media channels. The videos effectively 'busted' the myth and conveyed the message that success can only be achieved by taking initiative on their own.

Kalumal Pokuna videos aimed at the youth audience on social media, reached 437,000 views in just 24 hours.

The campaign went viral and reached more than 3.5 million social media users, predominantly in the 18-35-year age group and the two videos received

1.5 million views and generated over 5,000 conversations and shares by the end of March 2021. Timed to coincide with the relaunch of the USAID-supported Career Bus, those viewing the videos were directed to take the first step in the right direction by visiting the Career Bus to receive career guidance and counselling.

"We watched the videos in the Career Bus and learned that we can achieve anything, if we make the effort and try!" Student of St. Xavier's Girls' College, Chinnakkadai.

Through the combined application of engaging thought-provoking content and innovative tactics, the Kalumal Pokuna campaign has succeeded in making youth re-evaluate their role in their future success. It is part of a sustained effort to convince youth to play a more active role and make use of the transformative tools and services that are made freely available by YouLead.

Who we are

YouLead is a 7-year project funded by USAID, EU and 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 finance.

Upcoming partnership opportunities

Private sector collaboration in the Construction Sector:

YouLead is seeking partnerships with medium to large scale private sector organizations in the construction industry who are interested and committed to jointly implementing workforce development programs addressing skills gaps at different levels of labor, uplifting the industry’s image and attracting more women to the construction sector.

Collaborations in gender specific upskilling programs: YouLead welcomes the opportunity to collaborate in public, private or donor project initiatives in the ICT, Healthcare and Tourism sectors.

TVET approved private training and higher education institutes: YouLead will explore opportunities to collaborate on internal capacity building, youth career guidance, the creation of industry-led curricula, etc.

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 impact partners

The partnerships that create an impact together for a brighter future for the youth of Sri Lanka.

