



YOULEAD

# IMPACT

Together for a brighter future for the Youth of Sri Lanka

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## USAID supported initiative helps professionalize electricians' trade

The Public Utilities Commission of Sri Lanka (PUCSL) with support from USAID's youth employment and entrepreneurship project, YouLead, is carrying out an island-wide program to help build and assess the skills of more than 36,000 electricians so that they can be formally qualified in advance of a requirement that all electricians must be licensed by the end of 2025. Licensed electricians may be self-employed or operate their own small businesses.



An electrician undergoing training at a vocational training center

**Over 1,400 electricians from 16 districts, who are currently carrying out residential and institutional electrical installations, will have their experience evaluated under the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) system and will receive an NVQ Level 3 qualification at the end of the process.**

The qualified technicians will also receive a smart electronic license issued by the PUCSL, which will be mandatory for all electricians after 2025 to carry out electrical installations and to purchase the volume of electrical supplies needed for residential and commercial installations. This license is being rolled out as proof for customers and regulators indicating that an electrician is certified.

The program aims to train 1,200 electricians per month, across all 25 districts and will be implemented through the regional centers of the

Vocational Training Authority (VTA), National Apprenticeship and Industrial Training Authority (NAITA), and the Tertiary and Vocational Education Commission (TVEC).

In addition to the better jobs and safer businesses being created, the program aims to reduce the risk of electrocution and electrical fires that have negatively impacted thousands of households and business establishments.

**It is estimated that 85 percent of Sri Lanka's more than 45,000 electricians do not possess a formal qualification or professional training.**

This can contribute to low-quality electrical installations, electrical equipment failure, and public safety hazards. The PUCSL recorded over 100 fatal electrocutions in 2019, down from an average of over 180 from 2008 to 2012.

The PUCSL identified several safety issues including a lack of trip switches, irregular adaptors (to compensate for a mismatch in the plug and socket types used in Sri Lanka), and poor-quality electrical installations. This led to a 2018 mandate to standardize all electrical plugs and sockets to the Type G, or 13 Amperes plug and socket.

The program is helping to professionalize the electrical trade, improve remuneration, encourage self-employment, and reduce the risks of fire and electrocution.

**This also puts the electricians on a formal pathway to gain further qualifications and contributes to elevating the status of the individuals working in construction-related jobs.**

The PUCSL with support from YouLead is exploring expansion of the program to include other skilled trade persons such as solar technicians and plumbers.



## Serendipity Trails: Sri Lanka's first long-distance walking trail unveiled

*One of many stops along the trail that provide panoramic views of the hill country.*

Discovering Sri Lanka on foot is the premise behind Serendipity Trails-Sri Lanka Tourism's latest Signature Experience designed to demonstrate the island's diversity, encourage more sustainable travel and bring economic opportunity to underserved, rural communities. Launched with funding from the European Union (EU), 'Serendipity Trails' promotes a more holistic traveler experience in line with post-COVID trends embracing wellness, nature, and sustainability.

**'Serendipity Trails' identifies a collection of destination-based walking trails across the island starting with 'The Peko Trail,' a 300-kilometer walking path traversing the hills of Sri Lanka.**

The interconnecting trail will be the first of a series of walking trails that allow visitors to discover the varying terrain, history, culture, food, and the local community across Sri Lanka by foot, in short sections, or as part of a multi-day experience.

The development of the trails is part of the EU's 5.7 million Euro investment (2.2

billion Rupees) in the Tourism Resilience Project which aims to support Sri Lanka's national tourism strategy. The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) committed a further \$787,000 (approximately LKR 280 million) to support the initiative. The project is implemented by the International Executive Service Corps.

The Ambassador of the EU Delegation in Sri Lanka, H.E. Denis Chaibi together with Chairperson, Sri Lanka Tourism Ms. Kimarli Fernando unveiled the signage at the trailhead, marking the start of the first stage of the trail, an eight-kilometer stretch running through a tea estate and ending near a local community.

The first stage showcased trail branding and markings, which will guide visitors along the trail and featured audio stories about the history and prominent people like James Taylor, widely credited for pioneering tea cultivation in Sri Lanka, that visitors can listen to by scanning a QR code on the phones. The local community was also engaged, demonstrating potential livelihood opportunities based on local food and culture.

The TRP will also expand on the economic activities along the trail throughout the development phase and will include

providing capacity-building support to SMEs from within the communities along the trail. The community will receive training in relevant areas that uplift product quality, improve financial literacy, and strengthen sales and marketing.

***The project will also provide grants and mentorship support to entrepreneurs setting up businesses to serve the needs of travelers on the trail.***

Over 50 MSMEs will also receive support to obtain 'Health and safety' certifications that help improve personal and food hygiene standards, contributing to further enhancing the quality of the Sri Lankan tourism product and supporting the competitiveness of small businesses.

The Tourism Resilience Project will also conduct training for individuals working in the tourism industry in the Uva and Central provinces under its career guidance and industry training programs. The training will help bolster work-readiness skills that are strategic to improving the quality of the hospitality product and lead to improved bottom-line performance.



Above: The Ambassador of the EU Delegation in Sri Lanka, H.E. Denis Chaibi together with Chairperson, Sri Lanka Tourism Ms. Kimarli Fernando unveil the signage at the trailhead.  
Below: The Ambassador of the EU Delegation in Sri Lanka (left), USAID Mission Director - Reed Aeschliman (centre) and Secretary to the Ministry of Tourism - Mr. Siripala Hettiarachchi (right) participate in a Hindu religious observance at the end of the trail.

Above: The Ambassador of the EU Delegation in Sri Lanka addressing the guests after unveiling the signage at the starting point of the trail.  
Below: The Ambassador of the EU Delegation in Sri Lanka and USAID Project Director in conversation on the first leg of the trail.



Above: Signage along the trail identifying key points of interest and information about the local area.  
Top left: Ms. Jenny Correia Nunes - Head of Cooperation Section, European Commission and Ms. Michelle Koscielski, Economic Growth Director - of USAID walk ahead of other guests on the trail  
Below left: A naturalist working in the hospitality sector in the area sharing some historic facts about the locality.

# USAID's youth behavioral change campaign sets the benchmark for effectiveness



The two Effie Gold Awards won in the categories of Youth Marketing Effectiveness and Social Media Effectiveness for the viral "Kalumal Pokuna" campaign

USAID's youth employment and entrepreneurship project, YouLead, won two Effie gold awards this year for marketing effectiveness. YouLead was the only organization to earn two gold awards with the USAID-funded campaign beating out big-budget campaigns from top private brands in Sri Lanka. The awards were in the highly competitive categories of Youth Marketing Effectiveness and Social Media Effectiveness for the viral "Kalumal Pokuna" campaign, designed to encourage youth to sign up for career guidance and proactively chart their futures.

**Behavior change is a challenging task and development programs often struggle to create a significant impact on youth who are difficult to reach using traditional media.**

Therefore, creating a youth mindset that is proactive and receptive to a rapidly changing employment marketplace is a critical step in ensuring faster acceptance

and adoption of the tools and services that USAID funding makes possible.

Effie is an internationally recognized awards program that celebrates marketing effectiveness and is conducted locally by the Sri Lanka Institute of Marketing. This year, while a record number of 250 entries vied for awards, only three were deemed gold worthy. The double gold awards for 'Kalumal Pokuna,' from an independent jury of experts, are a testament to the effectiveness and impact of USAID's behavioral change communications.

Launched in the first quarter of 2021, the 'Kalumal Pokuna' campaign used a combination of engaging storytelling and innovative digital media techniques to create, and then bust a myth around career choices and achieving success. The campaign leveraged conversations on popular youth social media groups 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. The term 'Kalumal Pokuna' was soon trending as a

keyword on Google in the lead up to the launch of the two short videos portraying the story of three youth looking for a miracle solution to find success and their journey to find a mythical pond with the power to make anyone an overnight success.

The videos were seeded across popular youth social media groups and platforms. Beginning with 437,000 video views in just 24 hours, the 'Kalumal Pokuna' campaign went viral to reach more than 3.5 million social media users, predominantly in the 18-35 age group, with 1.5 million views of the two video stories, and generate over 5,000 conversations and shares by the end of March 2021.

The campaign also helped drive real-world, one-on-one, professional career guidance delivery to more than 10,000 youth within the three-month period following its launch.

**Unemployment among 15–24-year-olds rose to over 26 percent in 2020, up from a 20.4 average in the previous three years. This is nearly five times the overall unemployment rate of 5.5 percent in 2020.**

A long-standing factor contributing to the higher youth unemployment rate can be linked to most youth not having an independent choice in their educational or career paths and therefore passively accepting the outcome that unfolds before them. Creating a youth mindset that is proactive and more receptive to the transformative tools and services that USAID funding makes possible, requires a combination of engaging content plus innovative tactics that are finely tuned to take advantage of the evolving media consumption patterns and online behavior of youth.

### Who we are

YouLead is a 7-year project funded by USAID, the EU and the 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](mailto:vsilva@youlead.lk)**

## Our Community Impact

**29,242**

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



Female  
12,434



Male  
14,110

Unspecified  
2,698

**32,249**

Number of individuals completed project assisted workforce development program



Female  
15,334



Male  
15,326

Unspecified  
1,589

**70,953**

Number of individuals received career and occupational guidance and counselling services



Female  
40,223



Male  
30,083

Unspecified  
647

**800**

Number of new businesses start-up following the project support



Female  
598



Male  
161

Unspecified  
41

**30,648**

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



Female  
15,318



Male  
15,309

Unspecified  
57

**1,537**

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

**76**

**in the system**

Number of technical curricula developed or improved

**1,833**

Number of trainers receiving training by YouLead

