



YOULEAD

# IMPACT

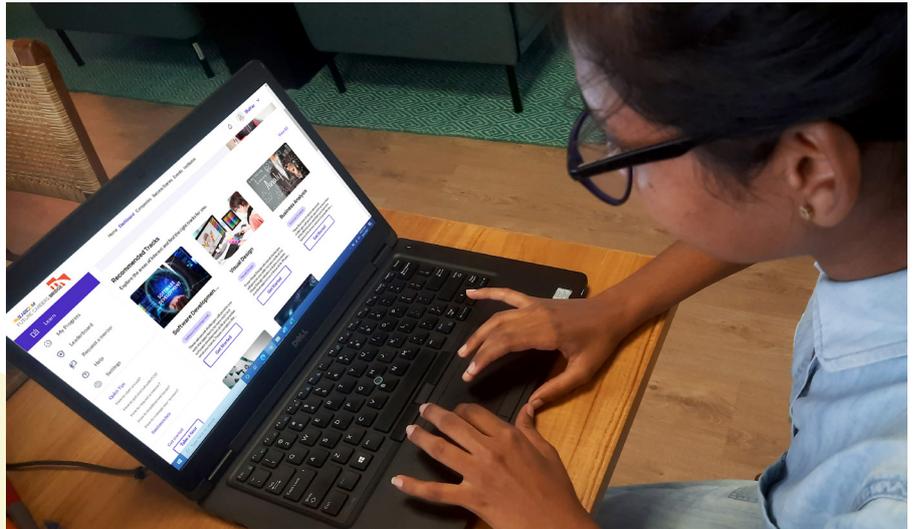
Together for a brighter future for the Youth of Sri Lanka

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## OUSL adds USAID-supported digital learning module to its Software Degree Program

All first-year Software Engineering students at the Open University of Sri Lanka (OUSL) will be required to complete the BRIDGE program jointly developed by the Sri Lankan Association of Software and Services Companies (SLASSCOM) and USAID's youth employment and entrepreneurship project, YouLead.

**The BRIDGE program's 30, gamified modules operate as a kind of ICT survey course requiring students to complete online challenges across a wide breadth of skill sets important for success in the ICT industry.**



The BRIDGE program offers 30 gamified modules across a wide breadth of skill sets important for success in the ICT industry

Many students will continue on for a degree, but the program is designed to allow for workplace learning, as well as the option to leave the program earlier with a certificate or a diploma depending on their level of achievement. BRIDGE helps to fast-track subject orientation and qualify for internships with leading IT companies.

BRIDGE was first conceived as a way to identify and evaluate youth without a university degree, but had IT skills and ready for employment in the ICT industry.

It has evolved and expanded over the past two years, into an innovative course in its own right. OUSL is the first national university to institutionalize the BRIDGE program and the second national institution overall after the Vocational Training Authority (VTA) adopted it as a national vocational qualification (NVQ) Level 3 course earlier in the year.

With institutes such as VTA and OUSL formally institutionalizing BRIDGE as a part of their curricula, the platform is expanding to reach a larger audience and prepare youth for a wider range of employment opportunities through the introduction of technical tracks beyond software development. These include quality assurance, customer service, data analytics, and computer networks.

The ICT Association of Sri Lanka (ICTA) estimates that there are more than 21,000 vacancies in the sector currently, and projects the need for approximately 12,000 new recruits annually. Sri Lanka's university system, however, currently produces fewer than 9,500 IT graduates each year.

More than 23,000 youth, of which 45 percent are women, are currently enrolled in the BRIDGE program. Nearly 6,000 of these students are progressing through

**This enduring public-private partnership complements Sri Lanka's ICT industry vision to create 350,000 jobs for skilled youth in the industry. A significant number of those jobs will be filled by youth receiving training through OUSL and VTA.**

the leaderboard and will be engaging with ICT companies to find internships and employment.

YouLead has also trained 58 OUSL staff and volunteer instructors from the industry in a pedagogy program to assist them in the application of the BRIDGE learning modules in their courses and further improve the quality of delivery.

# Training new talent to help drive Sri Lanka's tourism revival



One in the series of work-readiness skills training programs for the employees of Micro, Small and Medium Scale (MSME) tourism institutions in the Nuwara Eliya, Hatton and Haputale regions by the Tourism Resilience Project (TRP).

Sri Lanka's tourism industry has had four, consecutive years of reduced visitors and revenue due to a series of crises starting with the terrorist attacks in 2019, the pandemic in 2020 and 2021, and culminating in the economic crisis and protests earlier this year. Thanks to comparatively robust visitor numbers in July and August, however, the latest government statistics have shown an uptick to more than 500,000 tourists so far in 2022.

The European Union-funded Tourism Resilience Project (TRP), implemented as part of the YouLead program with additional support from USAID, is helping small businesses prepare for the resumption of international tourism.

**TRP commenced its work readiness and skills training programs in June 2022 targeting employees of Micro, Small and Medium Scale (MSME) tourism businesses and students enrolled in tourism-related training programs.**

To date, 135 youth, mostly from local communities in the Uva and Central

Provinces, have participated in training programs aimed at improving learning outcomes for workers in the tourism industry and better preparing their employers to welcome more guests.

MSME accommodation providers make up more than half of all room nights in Sri Lanka, but most remain unregulated. The sector also witnessed higher staff turnover during the last two years, due to severe financial constraints brought on by the slowdown in tourism arrivals. A poor tourism service offering, or a few sick travelers, can negatively impact the reputation of all hospitality and food providers. This has created an industry-wide need to attract and train recruits to cater to the resurgence in arrival numbers.

TRP's programs directly support MSMEs to be more resilient and sustainable. Such initiatives also help drive their competitiveness—a key component of building the resilience of the tourism sector.

TRP has developed training content for seven work-readiness subjects including skills and knowledge transfer methods. TRP expects to train over 550 youth in the tourism sector over the next six months. The training focuses on better

work-readiness skills for the tourism sector with special emphasis on hygiene, communications, problem-solving, and introduction to wellness tourism.

**Training will also include basic IT and financial literacy, which was identified through a needs assessment conducted in early 2022 with the Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority and MSMEs registered under the regulatory body.**

TRP is part of the European Union's 5.7-million-Euro investment in support of Sri Lanka's tourism recovery after the COVID-19 pandemic. Workforce and enterprise capacity-building projects are key components of TRP to foster upskilling, retain employees, and encourage repatriation in the tourism sector.

As work-readiness skills training is a priority for both the government and the industry, TRP is developing digital work-readiness content that will be made available free of charge to the public on youlead.lk - a sustainable online platform for career guidance and skills training.

# Creating sustainable career paths for youth in the solar industry



An instructor explaining the individual components of a solar power installation and what their function is to the participants of a two-day orientation program organised in Kalutara by the PUCSL and YouLead.

The Public Utilities Commission of Sri Lanka (PUCSL), together with USAID's youth employment and entrepreneurship project, YouLead, conducted a pilot program to promote careers in the solar power industry among school leavers and vocational youth.

In June 2022, PUCSL and YouLead, with support from the Sri Lanka Sustainable Energy Authority (SLSEA), launched a pilot program focused on introducing school leavers and vocational youth to potential careers as Solar Technicians.

***The series of two-day immersion training programs were aimed at improving public-private coordination in relation to training and encouraging employment of participating youth in the solar energy sector.***

Over 3,000 applications were received in the first four days, which included 200 female applicants. Of this, 1,200 applicants were shortlisted to participate in the program, which prepares youth for on-the-job training opportunities in over

100 private sector solar installation companies registered with PUCSL across the country. On completion of the two-day orientation and six months of on-the-job training, the youth are eligible to sit for the NVQ Level 3 Certification, giving them better career opportunities here and abroad. During the last quarter, over 600 youth had been trained and were ready for on-the-job training.

"This is the first time a training program specifically for the solar power sector was introduced," noted Director General of the PUCSL, Mr. Damitha Kumarasinghe. "This is a growing industry, and we also need to start building capacity to achieve the Government's vision to generate 70 percent of the county's energy needs through renewable sources within the next 20 years."

Higher energy costs and greater awareness of renewable energy, coupled with increased availability of solar energy products in the market have spurred demand for household and industrial solar energy solutions. The government of Sri Lanka is also exploring options to increase renewable energy sources in its power generation mix, reducing its dependence on fossil fuels.

SLSEA estimates that at least 10,000 new solar technicians will be needed to meet the growing demand for household and industrial solar energy solutions.

***YouLead is also training 120 instructors and assessors in collaboration with TVEC, NAITA, and VTA to help ensure that there is an adequate amount of qualified trainers and assessors to sustainably expand the program.***

The solar technicians pilot program follows a successful collaboration between PUCSL and YouLead, carrying out an island-wide program to help build and assess the skills of more than 3200 electricians so that they can be formally qualified in advance of a requirement that all electricians must be licensed by the end of 2025.

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

### Who we are

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

### How to reach us

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

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

## Our Community Impact

**29,242** | Number of individuals with new or better (self) employment following the participation in YouLead program



**32,249** | Number of individuals completed project assisted workforce development program



**77,359** | Number of individuals received career and occupational guidance and counselling services



**800** | Number of new businesses start-up following the project support



**31,985** | Number of youth (age 15-29) trained in social or leadership skills through project assisted programs



**1,892**

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

**76**

**in the system**

Number of technical curricula developed or improved

**1,866**

Number of trainers receiving training by YouLead

