



**2022**

# **Visions Sri Lanka Annual Report**



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# 1,000 Leaders Campaign

We launched the 1,000 Leaders Campaign! This campaign was made possible by donors who believed that together, we can enable opportunities for youth to realize their aspirations, make a positive impact, and become community leaders. Despite an extremely difficult year in Sri Lanka in 2022, our Visions team successfully launched this campaign in 10 schools in Jaffna. They also opened a Point Pedro office, held staff capacity building trainings, and ran leadership trainings at a variety of institutions. We look forward to your continued support to enable all of the amazing things that can be accomplished through this initiative.

**Thank you donors! You make our work possible.**

<b>Country Director</b>	Mayuran Antony Jeevaratnam
<b>Staff</b>	4 full-time, 4 part-time employees
<b>Team Members</b>	Trained trainers: 12, School Teachers: 16
<b>2022 Program Cost</b>	\$18,000*
<b>Training Hours</b>	235 hours of Life Skills sessions conducted across 10 Jaffna Schools
<b>Beneficiaries</b>	1,082 6th-9th graders; 500+ attended at least 6 Life Skills sessions

\*The economic crisis in Sri Lanka and Covid-19 disruption to schools significantly impacted our program implementation. In 2023, our projected budget is significantly larger, at \$58,000.

# Realizing Dreams, One Youth at a Time

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## BACKGROUND

Since 2003, Visions Global Empowerment (USA) has implemented over \$835,000 USD worth of educational programs and projects in Sri Lanka through local partnerships.

- In 2022, after one year of networking and planning spearheaded by the Visions Country Director, Visions Sri Lanka was registered as a nonprofit under the Companies Act. We are currently applying for NGO status.
- The ongoing economic crisis is the worst since Sri Lanka's independence, and continues to have humanitarian consequences for millions of vulnerable people. Twenty-eight percent of the population – or 6.3 million people – face moderate-to-severe food insecurity.
- Learning has been disrupted for 4.8 million children, owing to frequent school closures and declining attendance rates.
- The crisis exacerbated nutritional issues, protection risks, and psychosocial issues among children and youth.
- Over 10,000 children are in institutions, as families cannot afford to feed or educate them.





# Life Skills Education (LSE) In Schools

## KEY PROGRAM COMPONENTS

Life Skills Education sessions were conducted by trained teachers in nine schools for grade 6 to 9 students. These sessions were conducted by LSE teachers trained through Visions, with the monitoring of Visions Trainers. Visions regularly supported and monitored the trainings, providing supplies and 40 minute activity-filled lesson plans.



### 01. TRAINING TEACHERS

Visions trained 2 counselor teachers per school to teach Life Skills Education sessions to Grade 6-9 students.



### 02. CAREER GUIDANCE

Preparation for career guidance and counseling for Grade 10 students is in underway.



### 03. CAPACITY BUILDING TRAININGS

Visions conducted ongoing capacity building trainings for school counselors and Visions trainers.



### 04. LEADERSHIP TRAININGS

310 individuals participated in Visions leadership trainings. More than two-thirds (71 percent) were female.

## TEACHER TRAINING

# 22

Teachers Trained

The reasons for teacher turnover in the program varied. Among these were a son's medical needs (1), transferring to new schools (2), inability to allocate class periods (1), and non-cooperation with Visions staff (1). Two teachers were replaced and trained through direct Visions trainings and one-to-one guidance support.

# 16

Teachers Currently  
facilitating LSE in  
Schools

A major learning for the program in 2022 was how to select cooperative schools for the program. Despite significant efforts to train and orient schools to the program, in some schools, the program was hampered by teacher turnover. In 2023, Visions Sri Lanka will re-evaluate the geographic location of our school programs. We are likely to prepare for increased programming in Killinochchi and Mullaitivu districts in future years.



### ABOVE

Visions Sri Lanka Country Director, Mayuran Jeevaratnam, in action during a Jaffna University leadership training.



## PROGRAM LOCATION

Our program is at 10 schools in three education zones in Jaffna district: Valikaamam, Thenmadarachi, and Vadamarachi.

### The 10 pilot schools participating in LSE are:

- Kachchai Maha Vidyalayam
- Chavakachery Hindu College
- Varany Central College
- St. Henry's College
- Tellippalai Union College
- Uduvil Girls' College
- Gnanasaariyar College
- Nellyadi Central College
- Thevarayali Hindu College
- Udupitty American College

## LIFE SKILLS SESSIONS & TOPICS

We conducted 349 total sessions for students in grades 6-10 on the following topics:

- Introduction to Life Skills
- Self-Awareness
- Empathy
- Effective Communication
- Interpersonal Relationship
- Critical Thinking
- Creative Thinking
- Decision Making
- Problem Solving



*"I was shy and kept myself isolated from classroom activities. Consequently, I was unable to showcase my hidden talents. As a result of the LSE sessions, I was able to recognize my shyness and overcome it. Now, I volunteer for classroom activities."*

- Life Skills Student





## LIFE SKILLS EDUCATION PROGRAM OUTCOMES

- Improved peer relationships, with increased feelings of friendliness and solidarity.
- Students practiced communicating with respect and understanding.
- Improved teacher - student relations, including a new willingness for students to express their problems to teachers, and teachers offering mentoring support to resolve them.
- Positive acceptance of their self and self-image.
- Recognition of strengths and weakness and a professed commitment to strengthen weaknesses.
- Equal learning opportunities were provided irrespective of a learner's learning level
- Innovative activities and games invited everyone to actively engage in the sessions with increased participation and enthusiasm.
- Teachers reported positive changes in their students' thinking patterns and behavior. Student interest in learning increased; they volunteered in co-curricular events more often, such as in morning speeches, skill-based events, competitions, and more. Teachers also reported improved academic performance.
- Increased empathy among students. For instance, a shoe activity provided a simple analogy of empathy to put oneself in the shoes of others. As a result, students reported having an improved understanding of their parents' hardships.
- Students were taught to channel creative and positive behavior, leading to an expected decrease in negative behavior. Students referred to the LSE sessions as a 'happy learning' process.
- Most children requested to increase the frequency of the LSE sessions.

*"I was able to learn how to resolve small problems among friends and follow different techniques to resolve them. Similarly, I was able to control my anger to be kind towards others."*

- Life Skills Student

# Leadership Training Program

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*"I learned some excellent lessons... [to] get out of your comfort zone, fly high, [and] be courageous..."*

**- Leadership Training Participant**

Visions conducted eight leadership trainings across seven different institutions for teachers, teachers training students, undergraduate students, student prefects, and government officers. In total, 310 individuals participated in the leadership trainings. More than two-thirds (71 percent) were female.

We are delighted that Visions Sri Lanka is receiving such positive response to its leadership and life skills programs. We are especially pleased that the University of Jaffna and the College of Education institutions have requested our services. This is a great opportunity for us to help shape future leaders and equip them with the skills necessary for success. We look forward to working with these institutions and others in 2023 and beyond.



Institution	Leadership Training Participants	Hours of Leadership Training Conducted
University of Jaffna	38 (Group 1); 37 (Group 2)	25 (Group 1); 15 (Group 2)
College of Education, Kopay	39	22
Divisional Secretariat Office, Kopay	41	8
Nelliyady Central College	37	15
Telipallai Union College	46	3
Gnanasariyar College	23	5
Divisional Secretariat Office, Uduvil	49	8
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>310</b>	<b>101</b>

## CHANGING THE CULTURE OF TRAINING IN THE NORTH

Active training methods included videos, activities, and discussions. Participants expressed that they had never experienced such engaging, participatory methods.

### SESSION TOPICS

- Self-awareness
- Empathy
- Effective Communication
- Interpersonal relationships
- Creative thinking
- Decision Making
- Problem Solving
- Conflict Management
- Coping with Emotions
- Leadership
- Teamwork
- Confidence
- Building Social Cohesion
- Peace Building



# Other Initiatives

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## STUDY WITHOUT HUNGER

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Visions responded to Sri Lanka's economic crisis with nutritional support for 103 students and home gardening supplies for 35 families. Home-based cultivation was encouraged with seed packets for growing okra, brinjal, chilly, bitter gourd, snake gourd, pumpkin, tomato, beans, and more. Beneficiaries were selected from the 10 pilot schools based on their vulnerability to food scarcity. Instructors from the Agrarian Service Center helped coordinate and monitor this program.



## GROUP COUNSELING SESSIONS

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Life skills sessions raised complicated issues such as teasing, sexual harassment, disrespect towards teachers, and drug use among students. At one school, responding to a request from the management, a Visions staff who is a trained para counselor conducted group counseling sessions with 22 tenth grade students. Through 12 sessions involving group-based activities and reflection exercises, including 'healing the wounds', and transforming negative energy with the support of nature', students increased their self-awareness and group solidarity. They were taught to maintain daily self-evaluation notebooks to stay on track towards achieving good G.C.E. (O/L) results.

## ACTIVE GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP PROGRAM

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In partnership with York University, Canada, and the University of the Philippines - Dilman, graduate students from these universities worked with the Visions Sri Lanka team to plan, strategize, and implement an Active Global Citizenship training for 38 undergraduate students at Jaffna University. The program culminated with participants developing Social Action Plans (SAPs) to implement social service projects in community settings.



### ▲ ABOVE

Trainers and participants of the Active Global Citizens program conducted by Visions Sri Lanka, York University, and University of Philippines- Dilman



# Case Study #1

## Meet Priya

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Priya is in ninth grade at a rural school in Jaffna district. A shy student, she lives with her father, a farmer, her mother, a teacher, and her third grade younger sister. In the past, Priya rarely participated in extra-curricular activities and competitions, even though she is good at writing. "I didn't have anyone around me encouraging me to hone my writing skills or spend more time on what I liked about writing. Instead, many pushed me to only focus on my studies and achieve good marks. As a result, I have been under constant stress and felt depressed."

While participating in the Visions Life Skills Education program conducted by her school's counseling teacher, Priya found the activity-based training methods impressive and interesting.



*"I am so happy to be pursuing my dreams with full confidence and interest...I am committed to building skill-based programs for the younger generation in the future. I am ambitious about building a hospital in Kachchai Village too".*

-Priya, Visions Life Skills Student

She felt encouraged and happy, stating, "While I started to become aware of myself, I learned to be humble and love others from the sessions. It is very important to be empathetic with others. I learned this through the sessions."

*"I have sensed changes in me and my personality. Specifically, I am more self-aware." -Priya*

Priya also shared that she used to not manage her time well. She felt that she never had enough time to study while also supporting her mother with daily household chores. Through the life skills session on goal-setting, she learned to set her career goals based on what she likes and loves, and to manage her time daily to reach such goals. "I have sensed changes in me and my personality. Specifically, I am more self-aware...I liked the session on creative thinking the most, as it induced my interest to be imaginative, innovative, and create new things. As a result, I started contributing my time to pursue my wish to become a writer."

Following ten sessions of the Life Skills classes, Priya's confidence increased enough to participate in a story-writing competition! Her story "Let's Build an Intellectual Society" won third prize at the zonal level. She was elated to have won a prize and it increased her interest in writing. She is now writing stories for a book she wants to publish. Although her classmates sometimes tease her, she ignores them with confidence and moves strongly toward her goal of becoming a proficient author of short stories.

# Case Study #2

## Meet Rekan

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*"If I learn and follow life skills, I realize that I will be able to be a leader and extend mentoring support to my fellow students. I don't want to imitate others. Instead, I want to create something that is really needed."*

-Rekan, Visions Life Skills Student

Rekan, a ninth grade student in Jaffna, has aspirations to become a doctor and enjoys playing football. Despite living in a school hostel away from his home, he has grown significantly with the help of a mentor, his counseling teacher. Through Life Skills Education sessions, Rekan has gained confidence and understanding in areas such as empathy, problem-solving, and communication. He has used these skills to have conversations with his father about his alcohol addiction and advocate for fellow students in the hostel. Rekan believes that by following life skills, he will become a leader and support others in his community.

Rekan has learned to think critically through activities like reflecting on riddles and has discovered positive values that he wants to embody in his life. The Life Skills Education sessions have given him the confidence to express himself and find solutions to problems, such as advocating for a fellow student who was mistreated by a hostel staff member. Rekan wants to create something meaningful and not just imitate others. He is determined to use the skills he has learned to make a positive impact in his life and community.

# Invest in Tomorrow's Leaders Today.



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