



Peace Corps

SRI LANKA

Annual Report

2021- 2022





Message from the Country Director



In heading this call, Peace Corps Sri Lanka “met the moment” and implemented several programs, with the support of the Ministry of Education, that sought to support teachers, principals and students as they navigated this new virtual learning environment.

In this annual report, we are proud to share with you the major activities implemented by our team in 2021 and 2022. Looking to the future, in 2023 Peace Corps Sri Lanka is committed to continuing to support Sri Lankan schools with unique and impactful programs to support the strengthening of English Language Education while we also prepare for the arrival of Volunteers, in late 2023.

Over the past three years, the world has seen monumental change brought on by the global COVID-19 pandemic. As countries worked diligently to protect their populations from the global health emergency, all countries recognized the long-term effects the pandemic had on education, the economy and many other sectors. Peace Corps Sri Lanka, while waiting for the arrival of our first group of Volunteers, was committed to providing any support we could to our partners: the Ministry of Education and our school and community partners in the rural communities of Sri Lanka.

On behalf of Peace Corps Sri Lanka, I would like to express our deepest appreciation to our partners and stakeholders. First, thank you to the Government of Sri Lanka and the Ministry of Education for being such a supportive partner for our program. Second, thank you to our Sri Lankan schools, principals, teachers, students and communities who have patiently waited for Volunteers and eagerly participated in our programs over the past two years.

We are proud to be of service to Sri Lanka and look forward to the bright future that 2023 holds for this wonderful country and remarkable people.

Kavita Pullapilly
Country Director

Overview of Peace Corps

Established in March 1961, by President John F. Kennedy, Peace Corps’ mission is to:

Promote world peace and friendship by fulfilling three goals:

1. To help the people of interested countries in meeting their need for trained men and women.
2. To help promote a better understanding of Americans on the part of the peoples served.
3. To help promote a better understanding of other peoples on the part of Americans.

Peace Corps’ history is rooted in a shared vision for what is possible by working with, living alongside, and celebrating the diversity of cultures around the world. At the invitation of governments around the world, Peace Corps Volunteers work alongside community members on locally-prioritized projects that build relationships, promote knowledge exchange, and make a lasting and measurable impact.

The Peace Corps’ approach, grounded in mutual respect and collaboration, is a catalyst for grassroots development. Through service, members of the Peace Corps network, including Volunteers, host country partners and community members, hone transferable skills that help them become and inspire the next generation of global leaders.

Since March 1961, over 240,000 Peace Corps Volunteers have served in 142 countries. Currently, Peace Corps has programs in 61 countries supporting the priorities of host countries in the areas of Education, Health, Youth Development, Economic Development, Agriculture and Environment.





Peace Corps Sri Lanka Today

The Government of Sri Lanka considers English language skills as essential to the development of Sri Lanka's global labor market and economic stability. English also is a common language among all Sri Lankans, providing an invaluable link between ethnic groups.



In August 2016, the Government of Sri Lanka invited the Peace Corps to re-establish a program to support efforts in English language education. Peace Corps Volunteers will live in rural Sri Lankan communities and support Sri Lankan teachers in their efforts to improve English education. A Country Agreement was signed in February 2018 and a Memorandum of Understanding with Sri Lanka's Ministry of Education was signed in August 2018 to support the Government of Sri Lanka and the Ministry of Education's priority to strengthen English language education in rural Sri Lankan schools.

In 2019, Peace Corps established the English Language Education (ELE) project in partnership with the Ministry of Education with the following project goal:

Students and teachers in Sri Lanka will be better equipped to fulfill educational and professional aspirations, and to contribute to the creation of strong local and global communities, as a result of improved English language skills.

The ELE project includes the following project objectives that will guide the work of Peace Corps Volunteers as they work with Sri Lankan teachers and students:

- ▶ Increase the capacity of teachers to use general and/or English teaching skills.
- ▶ Increase the English proficiency of English teachers (as measured through the use of classroom procedural language).
- ▶ Increase achievement of students in English (particularly speaking skills).
- ▶ Increase the ability of community members to support students' access to learning.

Peace Corps Volunteers serving under this renewed partnership will follow more than 520 Volunteers who served in 21 districts throughout Sri Lanka between 1962 and 2006. These Volunteers worked in Education, Health, Agriculture, Community Development and Tsunami Relief Programs.



Meeting the Moment

Due to the global COVID-19 pandemic, the arrival of Peace Corps Volunteers was delayed, however Peace Corps was committed to supporting its partners. The Staff team met with the Ministry of Education to understand the Ministry's priorities, given the pandemic and having to institute virtual learning. The Ministry asked Peace Corps with helping to strengthening teacher's skills in providing quality education through virtual learning as well as supporting teachers as they strove to provide students with a means to practice spoken English. Peace Corps developed a series of programs which it implemented in 2021 and 2022 to support the Ministry's efforts in both these areas. In the next few pages, you'll find more information on the impactful programs that Peace Corps implemented with the Ministry of Education to support English Language development in rural Sri Lankan schools.

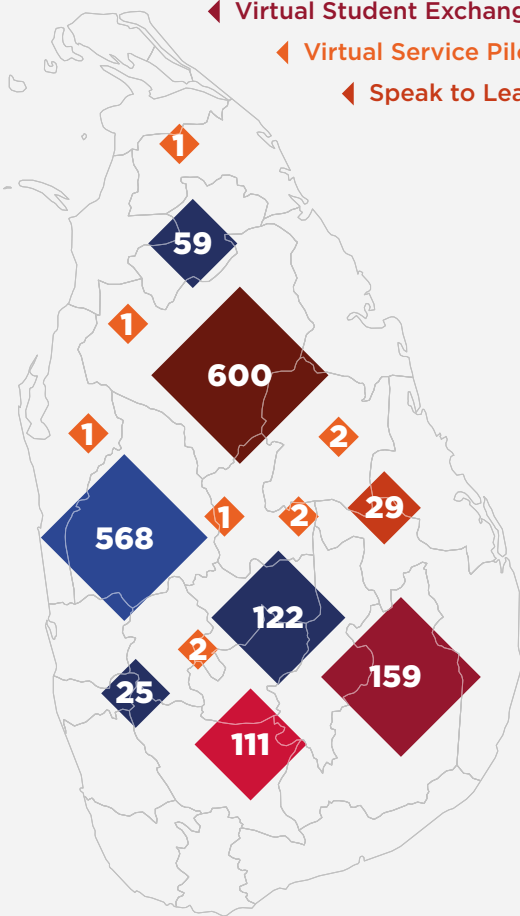
1639 Educators Reached
Teachers and Principals

188 Students Reached

42 Schools Reached

International Webinar Series: Support & Connections for English Education

- ◀ Teacher Capacity Development
 - ◀ English Conversation Sessions
 - ◀ Forum for English Teachers
 - ◀ Virtual Student Exchange
 - ◀ Virtual Service Pilot
 - ◀ Speak to Lead



Teacher Capacity Development

The Teacher Capacity Development (TCD) program was developed by Peace Corps to address the Ministry of Education's priority to support teachers' continuing education needs, even in the face of COVID-19 and virtual classrooms. The TCD program's objectives are to:

- Strengthen the professional skills of English teachers by equipping them with techniques and strategies to improve their skills in teaching spoken English.
- Provide teachers with strategies in using student-centered approaches in their classroom to strengthen the use of communicative English among students while also fulfilling the needs of the English curriculum.

"This TCD programme is very valuable to me because I learned a lot of new things from this programme. My fluency in English language has been built up since I joined the programme. I got to know new faces and they are very cooperative with me. As this programme is conducted virtually, it is convenient for me. After participating in this programme it helps me to conduct online classes for my students."

Victoriya Alexander
English Teacher

Initially, given the COVID-19 situation, TCD was conducted online using the Zoom platform. Each training session was 1.5 hours long, covering 12 hours of training and 9 hours of conversation practice. The training topics included:

- ▶ Teaching Listening
- ▶ Teaching Speaking
- ▶ Classroom Management
- ▶ Error Correction & Giving and Receiving Feedback
- ▶ Lesson Planning with SMART objectives
- ▶ Co-planning & Co-teaching

Peace Corps also created an online platform, called the Learning Management System, which is an interactive website which houses all the resources from the TCD program that participants use during and after the TCD program. Participants found this approach of using a flipped model of learning very effective as they were able to refer to and complete session tasks before sessions that helped them participate more impactfully in the sessions. Participants were also able to view video recordings of the sessions and have access to the presentation materials after the session for their ongoing needs.

From March 2021 to the end of 2022, over 200 teachers from Uva, Central, North Central, Northern and Western provinces have participated in the TCD program.

"I cannot thank you enough for your dedication over the TCD program and for the very helpful and thought-provoking sessions. It has been invaluable. Thanks for the great training course for the teachers because your enthusiasm and humour were very motivational. Hope to join soon."

Jayamini Konara
English Teacher



Support and Connections for English Educators (SCEE)

The challenges of COVID-19 affected educators and students all over the world. Peace Corps programs that support education development in its countries identified a unique opportunity to share best practices across countries as teachers around the world faced the challenge of delivering quality education to students virtually.

Peace Corps Sri Lanka worked with Peace Corps Thailand and Peace Corps Cambodia to host the International Speaker Series: Support and Connections for English Educators (SCEE) in November 2021. The goal of the series was to share international best practices and offer a space for connection and support to English educators, teacher trainers and teachers during these challenging times of the pandemic.

Nov 1, 2021	Creative Writing in Challenging Times	Luis Humberto Valadez Director of Programming & Training U.S. Peace Corps, Viet Nam
Nov 2, 2021	Critical Thinking in the Pandemic	Dr. Pragasit Sitthitikul Associate Professor Thammasat University
Nov 3, 2021	Teaching in the Time of COVID 19: Strategies for Virtual Learning	Brock Brady Education Expert U.S. Peace Corps



Over 650 educators from Sri Lanka, Thailand and Cambodia participated in SCEE and networked with each other to share best practices as they navigated this new virtual world for teaching their students. All three sessions were made available to the public on Peace Corps Sri Lanka's YouTube channel.



Forum for English Teachers (FET)



Building on the success of SCEE and to address priorities identified in a survey conducted with TCD participants, Peace Corps Sri Lanka decided to host the Forum for English Teachers (FET), a 9-session interactive virtual workshop for teachers to learn from American and Sri Lankan experts in Education.

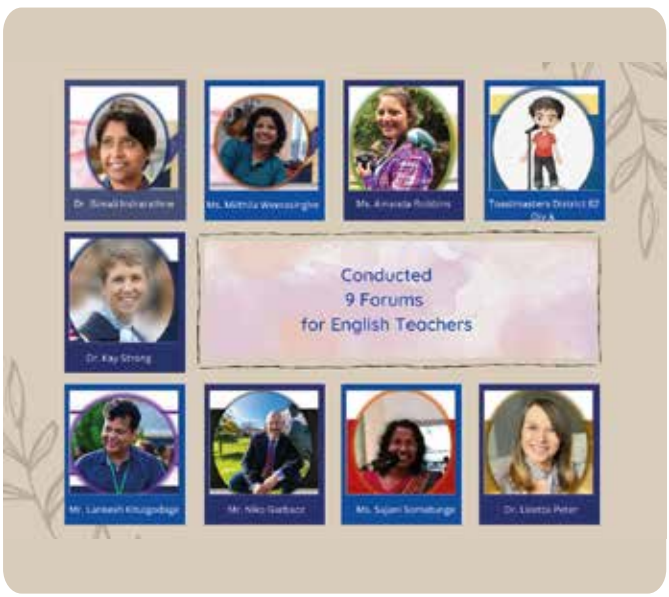
Session topics were developed based on needs assessments among Sri Lankan teachers. When FET was first started in March 2022, teachers were still teaching virtually due to COVID-19, so Peace Corps invited Dr. Bimali Indraratne to speak on “Blended learning and flipped classrooms.” The speaker used the flipped model to demonstrate and to guide the participants on how exactly these models can be used. In the “Workshop on speaking activities session”, Ms. Mithila Weerasinghe, a seasoned teacher trainer for the Ministry of Education, provided an interactive session full of practical tips and guidance on how to more effectively incorporate speaking activities into the English curriculum. Taking the focus away from purely English Teaching the session on “Fostering the student teacher relationship,” conducted by Ms. Amanda Robbins, focused on the importance of creating a conducive environment for students to learn. Toastmasters International Sri Lankan, District 82/Division A, opened a completely new approach that teachers may use to help students build their confidence in speaking English before learning too much grammar.

Peace Corps Sri Lanka posted all FET recordings on our YouTube channel for any educator to watch in the future.

Conversation for Principals



2 Provinces
5 Districts
25 Schools
25 Principals



Peace Corps Sri Lanka also wanted to support the priority of school principals to strengthen their spoken English skills. From August 2021 to January 2022, Peace Corps facilitated online conversation sessions for 25 school principals from Uva and Central province to build their confidence in speaking English in the hopes that principals would, in turn, promote the use of English in the schools. By the end of the program school principals greatly improved their ability to discuss complex topics in English and also build a network among themselves to share best practices in promoting the use of English language.

*“Now we can speak English – right or wrong – we can speak. That is important for us.
I went to many classes – but could not achieve this. This method is good.”*
-Principal Participant

On average, around 350 participants registered for each FET program while around 80 – 100 registered participants attended the live sessions and countless others viewed the recorded sessions.





Virtual Student Exchange Program

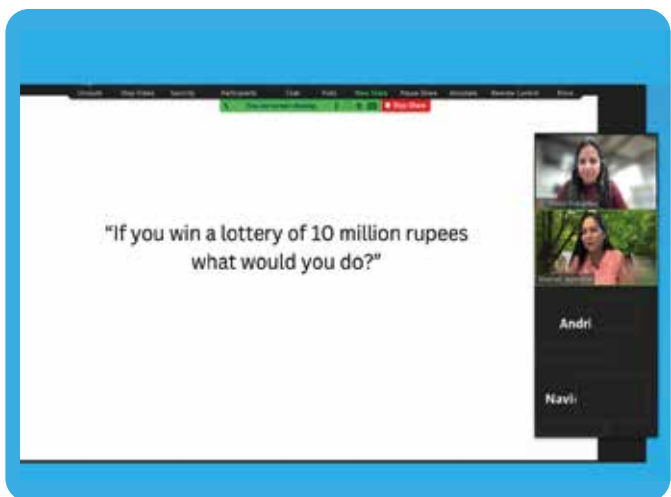
A characteristic of all Peace Corps programs is a people to people exchange of cultures. Peace Corps wanted to find a way to give rural Sri Lankan students the opportunity to do just that, partnering with the Overseas School of Colombo (OSC). From January to May and September to December 2022, Peace Corps Sri Lanka and OSC conducted a series of Virtual Student Exchange Programs (VSEPs) for rural Sri Lankan students in Uva and Central provinces and students at OSC. The VSEP supported Sri Lankan and OSC students to engage in conversations to learn more about each other, each other's countries and cultures all while also supporting Sri Lankan students to practice conversational English with native English speakers and build their confidence in using English. In 2022, 93 Sri Lankan students and 30 OSC students participated in the programme.

Since then, Peace Corps has hosted two VSP programs with 7 Virtual Service Participants that supported 7 schools, 7 teachers and over 70 students in Uva and Central Provinces.

Alongside Sri Lankan English teacher counterparts, virtual service participants developed live, online English enrichment activities for 6-10 students. It allowed students to:

- Increase speaking fluency, grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary by exploring and discussing English songs, movies, idioms, games, activities, and current events.
- Explore and appreciate cross-cultural aspects of the English and Sri Lankan languages such as American and Sri Lankan holidays and cultures.
- Develop presentation skills and the ability to use communicative English.

The Sri Lankan teachers worked with the American Virtual Service Participants to identify and use online resources for developing English language skills and were supported by Virtual Service Participants to strengthen their English teaching methodology and online facilitation, particularly in relation to promoting conversational English.



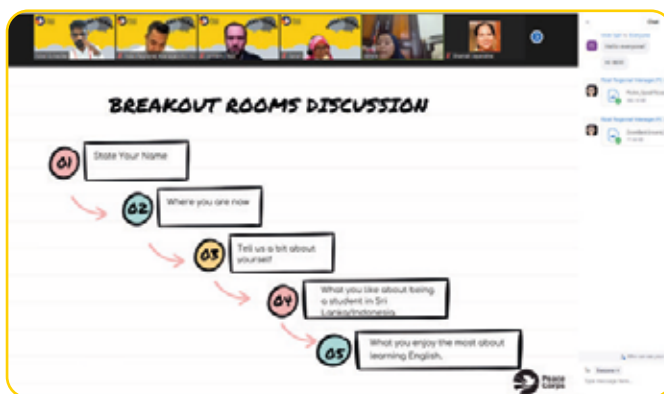
Virtual Service Pilot Program

In late 2020, Peace Corps started the Virtual Service Pilot (VSP), a program in which former Peace Corps Volunteers could donate their time and expertise to various projects in Peace Corps countries around the world. Even if Peace Corps Volunteers could not serve, in person, in our Peace Corps countries, the needs of our countries were still ever present and, even more vitally important given the impacts of COVID-19 on health, education, livelihood development and so much more.

Peace Corps Sri Lanka hosted its first group of Virtual Service Participants in March 2022, who donated their time to work virtually with Sri Lankan teachers to conduct English enrichment activities for students in grades 6-9.

Speak to Lead

Speak to Lead was a joint Virtual Student Exchange program with Peace Corps Indonesia. 30 students from Uva and Central provinces participated in this virtual program along with 40 students from various schools in Indonesia. The program focused on improving communicative English skills by engaging in small group conversations on topics related to their school, community and culture. Students were assigned to breakout rooms and they were able to get to know each other and engage in conversation.





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