

Agents of Change in Hambantota District

HDCC and WUSC partner to provide better employees to industry sectors

This is a small story within a long and mighty partnership. HDCC and WUSC have been partnered for over 20 years now, beginning in 1997. However, the latest project together has focused more on developing links to the private sector, something HDCC is an expert at.

WORLD UNIVERSITY SERVICE OF CANADA



A Canadian NGO with a global mandate to educate, empower, and employ youth around the world.

HAMBANTOTA DISTRICT CHAMBER OF COMMERCE



Sri Lanka's first district level Chamber of Commerce established in 1993 they now have a membership base of 350 business across all sectors with a mandate to spur the economic growth of the Hambantota District.

WUSC is in year four of a five year project called ASSET (Advanced Skill Specialization for Economic Transformation). In this project they have taken a three tiered approach targeting vocational training, social media marketing, and building private sector partnerships to improve recruitment, training, and employment of Sri Lanka's underutilized youth, female, and disabled workforce. The partnership is synergistic as WUSC works to provide better training and employment for youth, women, and disabled people, while HDCC works to grow the business sector in Hambantota and enhance economic growth.

Through the help of partners like HDCC WUSC works strategically with over 72 business associations and forums across Sri Lanka to reduce the skill gap between trainees and employee requirements by creating a dialog between businesses and training institutions.

Four Sector Focused Business Stakeholder Forums

The government of Sri Lanka has identified four sectors where there is high potential for economic growth, ICT, tourism, construction, and automotive servicing. To aid in the workforce requirements of strategic economic growth, HDCC and WUSC established in partnership to form four district level business stakeholder forums (BSFs) representing each of the government's strategic sectors, ICT, tourism, construction, and automotive. These BSFs now operate to help develop their respective industry sectors, with a particular focus in workforce planning, skills matching, and labor recruitment. WUSC provides funding and mentorship for the formal establishment and professionalization of the forums, while HDCC provides a network to source the best individuals, and helps with managerial and scheduling activities for the busy volunteer members.

Four sector BSFs (ICT, tourism, construction, and automotive) now operate to help develop their respective industry, with a particular focus on workforce planning, skills matching, and labor recruitment.

In addition over the years WUSC and HDCC have:

- **provide a soft skills program for trainees, with over 280 attendees this year alone, to help them better meet employer expectations when they get a job,**
- **created an on the job training program, placing over 40 youth and women with Hambatota businesses over the last 4 years.**

HDCC provides access and understanding of the business sector in the south, while WUSC provides a voice to include women and youth in the development of the region. As stated by Sudamkia, General Manager of HDCC "WUSC is the best platform for youth and women to develop their careers, skills, and application of their professions".

Now

HDCC is a strong partner for WUSC and creating great change in the Hambantota District and is a great role model to other regions of Sri Lanka. Upon completion of the ASSET program the ongoing activities and sustainable operations of the district BSFs can be largely attributed to the great facilitation work done by HDCC. .

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