

UPF Illukkumbura, Sri Lanka Commemorates UN International Youth Day 2023

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Illukkumbura, Sri Lanka - In celebration of UN International Youth Day 2023, UPF and the Religious Youth Service (RYS), in partnership with the International Association of Youth and Students for Peace (IAYSP), an affiliated organization, and with support from Sri Lanka's Ministry of Wildlife and Forest Resources Conservation, organized the Youth Leadership Development Project from August 11 to 17 in Illukkumbura village in Matale district, situated 145 km. (90 miles) from Colombo, the capital.



The theme of the project was "Green Skills for Youth: Towards a Sustainable World," the 2023 theme of the international day, which is observed annually on August 12, sought to encourage green values and skills that can transcend all ages and cultures. It is essential that youth can use these skills to protect the environment for not only the present generation, but also future generations.

UPF-Sri Lanka launched its first regional project with participants from several countries in 1991. Since then, it has held service projects every year - even during the many years of the 26-year Sri Lankan Civil War, which ended in 2009, and despite many challenges - bringing together many young people from the country and internationally to serve the community and promote peace leadership.



The project officially started on August 12 with prayers and blessings from representatives of the Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim, Catholic and Unificationist faiths. Forty-eight Sri Lankan youth from different religions and cultures in the country and two international participants, both from Malaysia, took part in it. Many of the participants were university students, some of whom are attending Sri Lanka's prestigious universities, and were taking part in a RYS project for the first time.

The welcome address was given by UPF-Sri Lanka Secretary General Dr. Chula Senaratne, who explained the aim of the project, and the message of UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres for International Youth Day 2023 was read by RYS-Sri Lanka Secretary General Ms. Dinesha Liyanasuriya. The president of the Village Welfare Society, Mr. Jayasinghe, also spoke. Several cultural performances were performed by the participants and a vote of thanks was delivered by the project coordinator, Mr. Pulinda Prabath.

Among the leaders and UPF representatives who were present at the event were Ven. Seelarathana, head priest of the village temple; Mr. Alvin Pang, Ms. Fazida Razak and Ms. Angielia Devi from Singapore, who were special guests; IAYSP Sri Lanka President Mr. S. Sarraj; UPF-Sri Lanka's Mr. Gayan Kahawela, the national organizer, and Ms. Champa Kumarathunga, the financial officer. Also in attendance were Mr. Namal Pradeep, manager of the Midlands Tea Estate, the biggest tea estate in the area and other guests.

The service component of the project directly benefited more than 40 families living in Illukkumbura through the fortification of the infrastructure of a water filtration unit in the village.