



SNAPSHOT Creating a Network of Future Leaders

Community service-learning makes leaders out of conflict-affected youth, encouraging civic engagement to meet actual community needs.



Ethnically diverse youth from eastern, southern, and northern Sri Lanka laugh while implementing community service projects in Tellapalai.

“The momentum [USAID has] created within all of us has just started. We have a lot more to do to uplift our communities.”

*--Rajan Paruvanila,
youth participant from Tellapalai*

Telling Our Story
U.S. Agency for International Development
Washington, DC 20523-1000
<http://stories.usaid.gov>

May 2013 – After receiving leadership training targeted to encourage civic engagement, 90 youth from one of Sri Lanka’s most conflict-affected areas are sharing their new skills with others from around the country. At a USAID-funded forum held in May 2013, young people from the community of Tellapalai in northern Sri Lanka interacted with 80 youth representing six districts in the eastern, southern, and northern regions of the country. The exchange promoted cooperation, respect, and friendship among the youth, as well as a commitment to serve their communities.

Youth in Tellapalai suffered greatly during Sri Lanka’s 30-year civil war. All were displaced and some became combatants; many lacked access to education and economic opportunities. All felt the impact of war on their families and community. Even today, some remain displaced, with their land still under military control. USAID’s Office of Transition Initiatives has worked to help them emerge as leaders within their community, and then to establish an inter-regional youth network to promote civic engagement and community service.

As part of the recent youth exchange, Tellapalai youth worked side-by-side with youth from Batticaloa, Kilinochchi, Mannar, Matara, Mullaitivu, and Vavuniya to carry out volunteer activities throughout Tellapalai. Activities included painting a community building, renovating an outdoor volleyball court, and conducting an awareness raising campaign on health issues.

“Today the understanding among youth has increased,” said Mohamed Rifath, 21, of Batticaloa. “[Tellapalai] youth have been an inspiration for me in many aspects: their commitment, activeness, and the way they have treated us with respect.”

These Tellapalai youth are also now committed to be leaders within their own community.

“The momentum they have created within all of us has just started,” said Rajan Paruvanila, a participant from Tellapalai. “Now we have a lot more to do to uplift our communities.”

Contact: Shane Perkinson Sri Lanka Program Manager
sperkinson@usaid.gov; (202) 712-0811

Follow us! @usaidoti

Visit us! <http://www.usaid.gov/what-we-do/working-crises-and-conflict/promoting-peaceful-political-transitions>