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SRI LANKA

SNAPSHOT

Skills training and career guidance offers opportunities for sustainable livelihoods in post-conflict areas of eastern Sri Lanka.



Students work on business plans and sales ideas for their new trades.

USAID assistance helped conflict-affected youth acquire new job skills and the confidence necessary to successfully contribute to their families' finances.

Telling Our Story

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Opening New Doors for Eastern Youth

February 2013 – Following a training and career mentoring program, youth in eastern Sri Lanka have begun small enterprises.

“For a long time, we’ve been jobless, earning a little money during harvesting season and looking for other laboring opportunities. This training has given us new energy, strength, and confidence,” said Kanthasamy Nishanthan, 22, from Marappalam. “We’ve started plumbing in our friend’s house and electrical wiring in our neighbor’s. Now we have a career path to ensure the survival of our families.”

Kanthasamy is one of the many youth in eastern Sri Lanka still struggling to overcome the legacy of war. Economic recovery and reintegration since the war’s end nearly four years ago has been slow. With few prospects for steady employment, youth are left searching for day-labor opportunities and are vulnerable to poverty, exploitation, or antisocial behavior.

As part of its program to foster greater social cohesion and improve livelihoods in this region, USAID’s Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) recently provided fifty-seven young people like Kanthasamy with skills training and career mentoring in order to open new doors for longer-term employment. This training focused on skills development in practical trades like plumbing, electrical wiring, and food preparation, and then linked them with local government personnel — first trained by USAID in career counseling — who will serve as mentors in the future. These new relationships between youth and local officials will also enhance community cohesion, something lost during the conflict.

The youth participants reported that it was not only their technical knowledge that improved; their attitudes toward the future also underwent significant changes.

“At the beginning of the training, I was nervous to interact with new people and in a new environment. However, by the end, my self-confidence improved,” said Kanapathipillai Jeyamalar, 25, from Vahaneri. “I have many new friends. We will work together to make and sell jewelry. I’m proud to say this will contribute to my family’s income.”

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