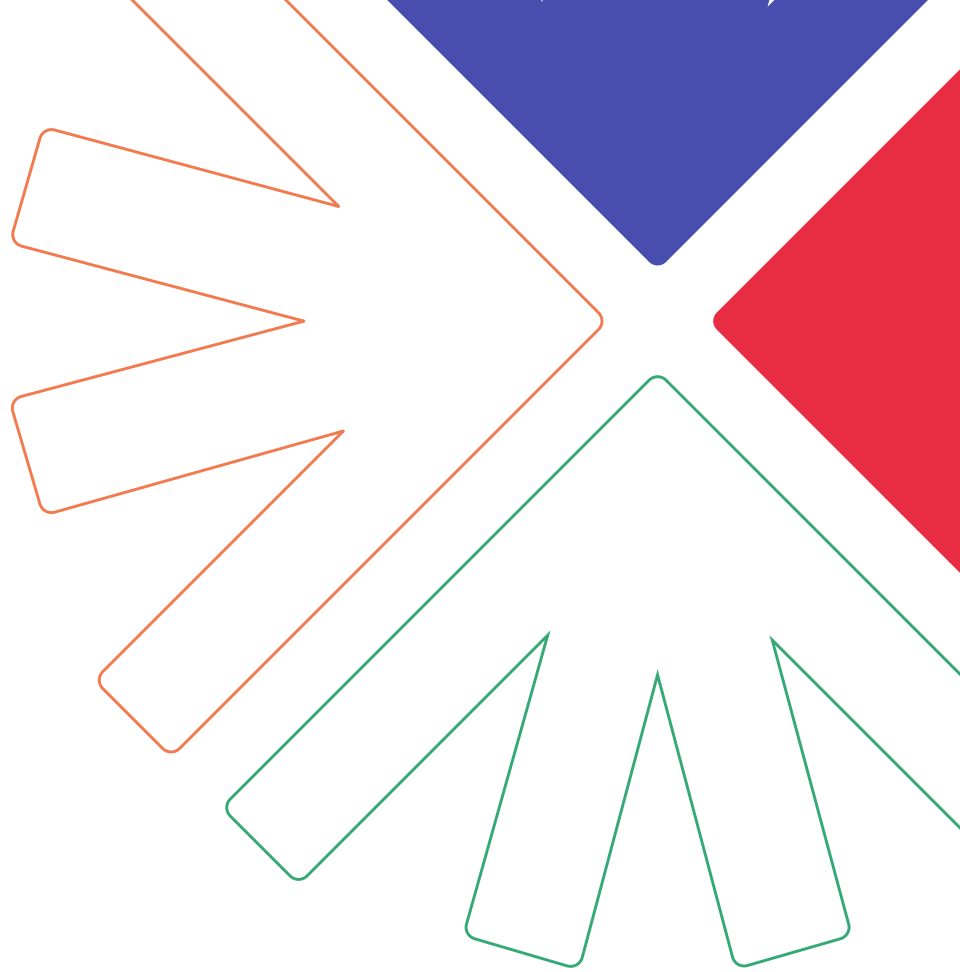




teach first
sri lanka



UNLEARNING & RELEARNING SRI LANKA'S EDUCATION

Who will lead the change we need?



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A TEACHER'S NOTE

Dear Friends,

You are reading this invitation because you care about children's education as much as we do at Teach First Sri Lanka. We are experienced educators, change-makers, policy-shapers, technologists and social entrepreneurs. While we come from multidisciplinary backgrounds, we are united by a common goal: that change is possible when the desire for change is combined with action. For that, we need your help to bring the mission of Teach First Sri Lanka to life.

It is an invitation to reflect on the root causes that plague Sri Lanka's education system, which, in turn, leaves society's most vulnerable children without the emotional and cognitive tools needed to meet the challenges of a rapidly changing world.



It is also an invitation to join us in our mission to give every Sri Lankan child, regardless of their socio-economic background, a holistic education that encourages critical thinking and creativity over rote memorization.

Let us state at the outset our foundational belief: we are on this journey together.

It will take a collective, long-term, and focused attempt at addressing the fault lines that plague our education systems before we can see the fruits of our efforts.

It is only right, then, that we begin on a hopeful note: it can be done, it has been done.

Local partners in the Teach For All network – including our peer organizations in India, Malaysia and Nepal – bear testament to a shared mission: when there is a sincere, collective effort to ensure children's education is given the care and attention it deserves, from all members and levels of society, the children themselves – and this is true in classrooms across the world – inevitably respond.

In Batticaloa, we have seen first-hand how changes in approach to teaching can have on how children respond to teachers and the materials being presented, especially in STEEM (Science, Technology, English, Engineering and Mathematics) subjects.



We owe it to the children to listen.

Listening is fundamental to how effective, innovative organizations operate across the world. This is why we spent the last two years listening, researching and studying the fault lines in Sri Lankan education – these are the cracks through which most of our most vulnerable children fall into, leaving them with little option and choice on imposing direction to the trajectory of their lives.

Among the values that bind the various independent organisations that fall within our network, is a powerful idea: to be locally rooted and globally informed.

This implies that our mission begins in the grassroots, in the most neglected communities, before working its way up the ladder towards systematic change at the policy level.



That journey from grassroots to policy discussion is a long one, but along the way we, as a society, need to grapple with some hard truths around ethnicity, class, and caste: we also need to understand that neglect of one community is essentially neglect of all Sri Lankan society.

A truly world-class, equitable, and empathetic Sri Lankan education system will offer a child born in the most rural hamlets the same avenues for intellectual development as it would offer a child born in privilege. Only then, can we expect a Sri Lankan society that is socially, intellectually, and economically vibrant.

Our mission also means that the voices of communities that have long been starved of educational resources, are centred, and given space to influence how we prepare our children for the challenges of the future.



Finally, it means that we aren't operating in a vacuum.

Some of the systematic flaws that blight children's education in Sri Lanka find echoes in the issues being addressed by our colleagues and partners around the region.

Similar social impact organizations like Teach for All partners in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, for instance, have demonstrated real world impact on millions of children's lives.

At Teach First Sri Lanka, we will listen and learn from their successes, and tailor their best practices to fit the needs of Sri Lankan children in Sri Lankan classrooms.

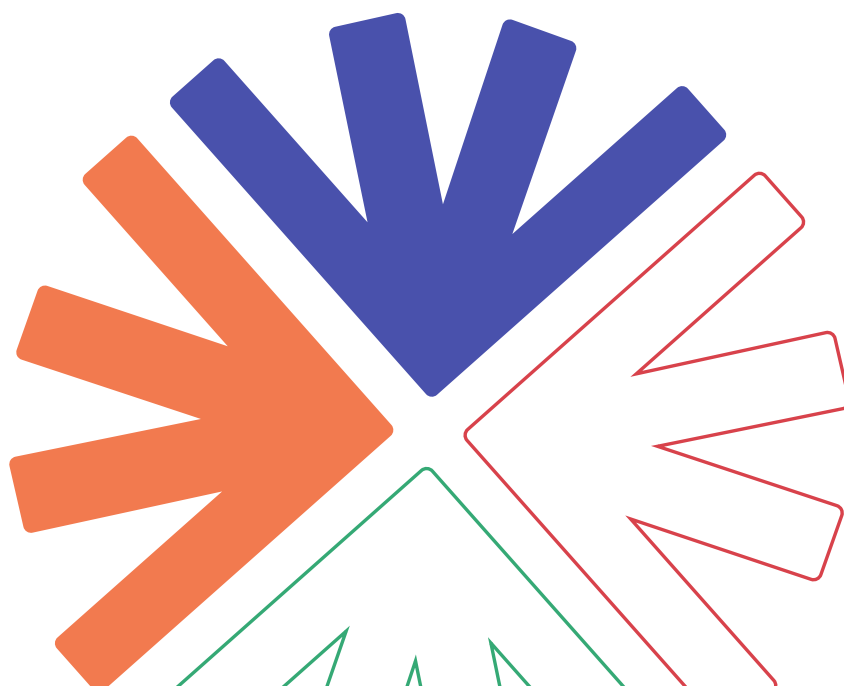
Indeed, as you will come to learn, there is no single solution to bring about long overdue change to how we educate society's most vulnerable children: the world is changing too fast for any single individual, government, organisation, or approach to solve the issues that plague education. Only a society working together towards the betterment and constant refinement of our education system can ensure that it meets the emotional and intellectual needs of young children, today and tomorrow.

Teach First Sri Lanka's mission, therefore, is to bring about a collective consciousness about our national education system. It is only that collective consciousness that will drive every level of society to come together to make education work for every Sri Lankan child.

There is work to be done, and together, we can and will make an impact in the lives of all children across Sri Lanka – inside and outside the classroom.

You, too, can play a role in addressing the education crisis in a meaningful and sustainable manner. I hope you will join us in this effort.

Yours Sincerely,
DAVID



EDUCATION CRISIS

In the 75 years since gaining Independence, Sri Lanka has consistently achieved remarkable literacy rates, often exceeding 90%. Nevertheless, the nation has encountered ongoing challenges in adapting to the ever-changing and sometimes turbulent demands of our world. It is disheartening to witness the failure to prioritise education at the policy level, as it carries grave consequences. This neglect perpetuates a scarcity of innovation and critical thinking, which ultimately hampers the progress of our society.

The gravity of this situation demands immediate and collective action. It is high time for us to unite and forge a path of transformative change. The pressing need to revitalise Sri Lanka's education system cannot be overstated. Through collaborative efforts and unwavering dedication, we have the opportunity to usher in a new era of educational excellence, equipping future generations with the indispensable tools to thrive in our ever-evolving world. Together, we possess the capacity to bring about the profound changes that are urgently required within Sri Lanka's education landscape.

Within this context, we introduce Teach First Sri Lanka, a pioneering social impact enterprise committed to identifying and addressing the most critical socio-economic factors contributing to the shortcomings in Sri Lankan education. Our approach is firmly rooted in local perspectives, while also drawing insights from global best practices. We believe in extensive collaboration with a diverse range of stakeholders, including organisations and individuals from all segments of society. Moreover, we leverage the extensive network of Teach For All partners worldwide to amplify our impact.

Let us join hands and embark on this crucial journey towards a brighter future for Sri Lanka's education.

Together, we can make a meaningful difference and shape the trajectory of educational progress in our beloved nation.

THE HISTORICAL UNDERPINNINGS OF SRI LANKA'S EDUCATION SYSTEM

Exploring the intricacies of Sri Lanka's education landscape reveals a diverse and complex tapestry of systems that are profoundly difficult to navigate. As we examine Sri Lanka's education system, it becomes clear that it is a patchwork of different systems, each with its own unique challenges. To truly address the shortcomings of this system, we must understand the historical causes that led to its current state.

THE LEGACY OF BRITISH COLONIALISM

The education system in Sri Lanka carries the lasting imprints of its colonial past. During British rule, a dual system emerged, providing free primary and secondary education in Sinhala and Tamil languages to the general population, while wealthier urban families had access to a separate, fee-based education. The colonial rationale was clear: to prepare the more privileged and influential segments of society for an industrialised, Euro-centric worldview embraced by the European powers of that era.

Since gaining independence in 1948, Sri Lanka has continued with the British system. Although most schools came under the control of local councils with the devolution of power to Provincial Councils in the 1980s, government-managed colonial-era schools of prestige and influence remained. Consequently, the education landscape now comprises three types of government schools: National Schools, Provincial Schools, and Pirivenas (Buddhist monastery schools).



10,146

Government Schools

4.1 million

Students

241,000

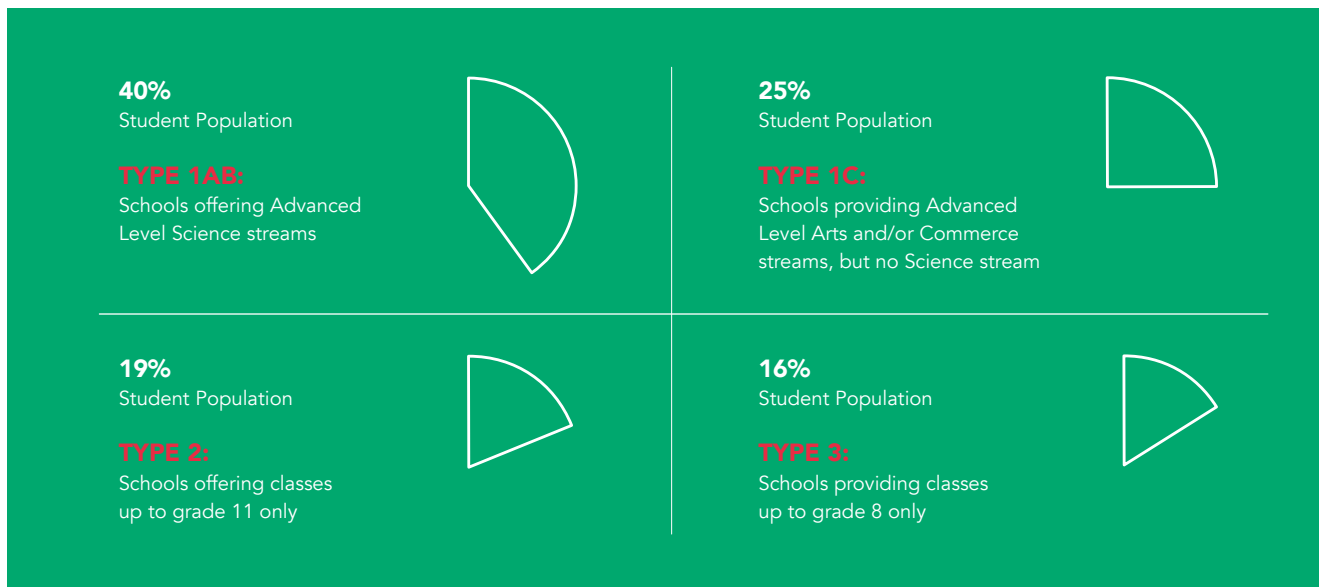
Teachers



A comprehensive network of 10,146 government schools (Census, 2021) caters to the educational needs of 4.1 million students, employing 241,000 teachers. Unfortunately, significant disparities in resources and teaching methods already exist within this vast system. Studies reveal that over 25% of public provincial schools in Sri Lanka face resource deficiencies (IPS, 2018).

CATEGORIZATION OF GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS IN SRI LANKA

Government schools can be categorised as follows:



This breakdown illuminates the different types of government schools. It is disheartening to note that 60% of local schools experience a severe and persistent shortage of teachers, preventing them from adequately teaching STEEM subjects. As a result, the majority of secondary students are compelled to pursue Arts for their A Levels, which further restricts their prospects for higher education and employment. This snapshot underscores the significant influence of location and socio-economic background on the quality of education that students receive.

BEYOND GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS

In addition to the three types of government schools, Sri Lanka's educational landscape encompasses government-approved private schools [GAPS], International Schools regulated by the Company Registration Act, special schools catering to children with specific learning needs, and the aforementioned Pirivenas. However, the existing disparities within government schools are further magnified by the inclusion of GAPS and International Schools. The latter, not bound by the National Curriculum, instead receive overall guidance on syllabus and objectives from international examination bodies, primarily benefiting urban, middle, and upper-middle-class Sri Lankans.

POLICY PRIORITIES

Education holds immense importance in the development strategy of any nation. In 2021, the Sri Lankan government allocated Rs 306 Bn to education, which represents a mere 2% of the overall GDP. This is less than half the average allocation of 4% observed in other middle-income countries.

Out of this allocation, 53% (Rs 162 Bn) is dedicated to government schools. However, only 65% of this amount is spent on rural provincial schools, which constitute 95% of all schools. The remaining 35% is allocated to National schools, which account for just 5% of local schools. This further widens the inherent inequalities already ingrained in the system.

Over 95% of the Rs 162 Bn allocated to education is utilised for salaries of individuals working in the education system, including non-teaching staff. Consequently, a mere 5% of the amount is left for infrastructure and essential resources that schools, particularly rural ones, desperately require.

THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONTEXT

Amidst the current economic crisis, our nation is grappling with widespread malnutrition, the frustration of day-to-day life and travel, and a stark reduction in opportunities for economic progress. Unfortunately, the brightest minds of the next generation are seeking better prospects abroad, leaving our struggling island behind.

This brain drain is not just devastating for our present circumstances; it is robbing Sri Lanka of the essential human capital we desperately need to rebuild our economy, institutions, and society.

The economic downturn has impacted every facet of our society, and one of the hardest-hit areas is our education system. The consequences of children missing two crucial years of schooling during the pandemic have been left unaddressed. Not only have these children lost valuable developmental time, but many have also regressed in their learning. **Tragically, child poverty is on the rise, with an estimated 4.1% of Sri Lankans living below the poverty line, subjecting around 16.5% of children to the harsh realities of malnutrition (IPS, 2018).**



Yet, funding for primary and secondary education has been further reduced, making our percentage of GDP allocated to education one of the lowest in the region. Teachers are being asked to bear the weight of widespread systemic failures while striving to provide a supportive learning environment for their students. All this, despite facing their own daily economic challenges.

In the midst of the looming spectre of malnutrition, other aspects of child poverty are also taking a toll on children's education. Local schools, already grappling with limited resources, find themselves even more under-resourced.

Financial constraints restrict educational choices, while parents, in search of employment, migrate away from rural areas. Consequently, we witness an increasing number of children who are abandoned, neglected, and burdened with household responsibilities far beyond what should be expected of them. These children are being robbed of their childhood by socio-economic factors beyond their control.

As we confront the pressing challenges facing Sri Lanka's education system, it is imperative that we acknowledge the broader socio-economic landscape. By recognising the intricate links between poverty, malnutrition, and educational opportunities, we can work towards comprehensive solutions that uplift our children, empower our teachers, and pave the way for better days to come.

OVERCOMING CHALLENGES

'..an education system grows rapidly out of date in a world of rapidly changing values..'

CWW Kannangara,
Preface of The Special Committee Report

RETHINKING EDUCATION SYSTEMS AND PRACTICES

In light of the current economic crisis, there is an urgent need to fundamentally rethink the education system in Sri Lanka. It is crucial that policymakers and community stakeholders work together to identify and implement sustainable solutions that create a comprehensive, relevant learning environment. This will help develop competencies such as creativity, collaboration, and problem-solving skills that are critical for the future success of students.

Unfortunately, many of the current educational practices and procedures in Sri Lanka are outdated, inequitable, or based on erroneous assumptions. While this is a global phenomenon, it is essential to invest in policy, governance, regulations, budgeting, operational models, and pedagogical design to ensure that teaching methods and content are relevant and engaging. By drawing on hindsight and international engagement, new systems can be designed and implemented to produce globally competitive graduates.

CHALLENGES IN EDUCATIONAL REFORMS AND CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

Past efforts to reform the Sri Lankan education system between 1996 and 2005 were unsuccessful due to the polarised political climate at the time. Although the reforms proposed during that period aimed to address issues from primary to tertiary education, they were insufficient and did not bridge the gaps that still exist today.



One of the progressive ideas that emerged at that time was the need for curriculum reform. It called for a shift away from an exam-centric system to a 21st-century approach that emphasises collaboration, communication, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills. However, modernising schools cannot be limited to revising the curriculum alone. It is equally essential to improve teacher recruitment, preparation, and ongoing professional development, especially in STEEM subjects, to improve graduates' employment opportunities and contribute to the nation's future. Our ancient culture prided itself on innovative and sustainable thinking, and we can see many of the benefits of a STEEM-based education in Sri Lankan history. To achieve these educational goals, it is necessary to critically examine, reflect, and take collective action at every level of society to regain economic competitiveness.



TEACHER RECRUITMENT, TRAINING, AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

One of the significant challenges in the education system is the severe shortage of STEEM teachers, particularly in rural areas. The socio-economic pressures faced by teachers in underprivileged regions make it difficult to recruit and retain qualified STEEM educators. Consequently, schools are forced to limit curricular options for students.

Furthermore, many teachers lack formal training in teaching, resulting in a high percentage of inexperienced and untrained teachers in classrooms. There is a need for pre-service training programs and ongoing professional development opportunities that focus on modern pedagogical approaches and curriculum resources, especially in economically disadvantaged school districts.

IMPLICATIONS FOR STUDENTS, SCHOOLS, AND SOCIETY

There are significant inequities between National and Provincial Schools in Sri Lanka, as highlighted by the internal classification system used by the Ministry of Education. Approximately 60% of students, or roughly 2.5 million students, attend schools that are incapable of teaching any STEEM subjects. Moreover, 15% of students attend rural, provincial schools that only provide education up to Year 8. These limitations have long-term implications for innovation, economic opportunities for youth, and addressing the ongoing socio-economic crisis.

The inconsistencies in pre-service teacher training programs, particularly in economically disadvantaged areas, further contribute to the challenges faced by teachers. Teachers require training that addresses practical issues encountered in the classroom, such as learning gaps resulting from school closures during the pandemic and the socio-emotional impact of the economic crisis on student attendance and engagement. Unfortunately, the current emphasis on syllabus completion and standardised exam results overlooks these crucial aspects of teaching and learning.

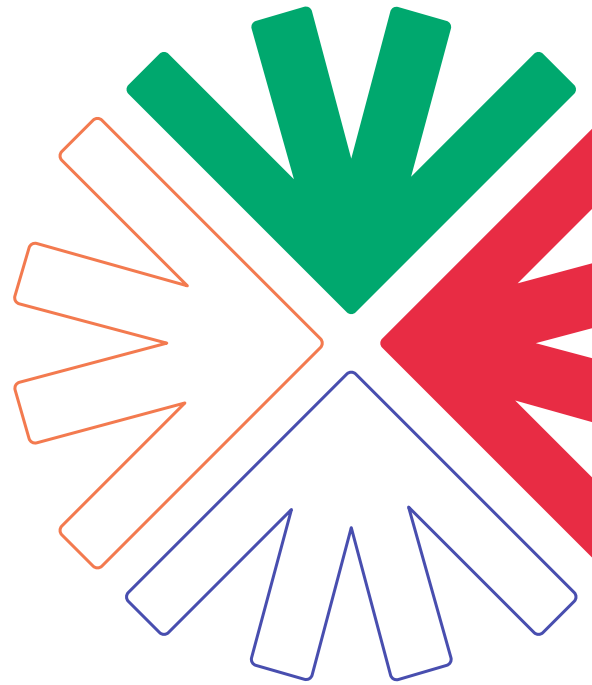
Despite the political influence on education policy, it is imperative to provide all children with inclusive, high-quality education, regardless of their race, gender, or income level. Education not only plays a pivotal role in reducing poverty and improving individual life outcomes but also promotes social cohesion in Sri Lanka's post-conflict, multi-ethnic, and multi-religious society.

TEACH FIRST SRI LANKA

At Teach First Sri Lanka, we recognise that there is no singular solution to address the myriad challenges facing Sri Lanka's education sector. We firmly believe that lasting and effective change can only be achieved through collective leadership.

We envision a future where much-needed transformations and fundamental reforms originate from the grassroots and flourish at the policy level. It is with great passion that we advocate for a sustained, collaborative effort from local communities and educators at every level, working together to tackle the interconnected barriers that hinder underprivileged children in rural areas from accessing a quality education.

Our TFSL Fellows, who dedicate two years to teaching in the most deserving schools across the country, embody the spirit of change. They serve as catalysts for progress, partnering with parents, teachers, and school leaders to promote modern, holistic approaches to education that profoundly impact the lives of children both inside and outside the classroom. By doing so, we aim to create a lasting, positive effect on our nation as a whole.



VISION:

All children, no matter their socio-economic or demographic background, receive a high-quality, holistic and inclusive education to reach their full potential.

This is the world we strive for every single day because every child deserves an equal chance in life. We need more champions for children's right to education.



MISSION:

To empower students, educators, and parents, to transform education through collective leadership.

Teach First Sri Lanka is a champion for the interests of our nation's children - empowering promising young leaders to join hands with local school communities and lead this transformation. This is how we, together, can build a vibrant, innovative and inclusive Sri Lanka for all.



OUR VALUES



Change springs from the power of hope

We believe in the power of hope, that there are endless opportunities for people to lead change and ensure equal access to a high-quality education as a fundamental human right. Hope starts at the highest levels of our organisation and trickles down to how we interact with all community stakeholders in our schools.



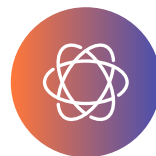
We embody hope at every turn.



Change requires collective leadership

Systemic change can only happen when there is an acceptance that we are all in this together. If the challenge of the future affects each and every one of us, then it stands to reason that each one of us are, and should be, part of the answer.

We foster and value diversity at every level.



Change is the only constant in life

Teaching and learning are at the very centre of our experience. As life-long learners, our organisational approach to classroom instruction, curriculum design, professional development and community engagement will evolve as emerging global best practices and partners' experiences deepen our understanding of how best to educate Sri Lanka's next generation.

Learning never stops - that's our mantra!



OUR APPROACH

We are dedicated to nurturing compassionate leaders who will ignite transformative change within their classrooms and school communities. The TFSL Fellowship program is a profound learning experience, teaching for two years in Sri Lanka's most deserving schools. Through this intensive two-year educational leadership development program, we equip our Fellows not only to excel in the classroom but to drive profound change positively impacting our education system.

Our approach embraces the best instructional practices from around the globe, tailored to address the unique challenges faced by our most disadvantaged children and under-resourced schools in Sri Lanka. By working closely with local parents, educators, and school leaders, we strive to identify and implement modern, holistic approaches to education that will bring lasting and meaningful change to the lives of thousands of children, both inside and outside the classroom.



At the heart of our approach lies a deep commitment to compassion and empathy, informed by data-driven decision-making, benchmarking, and evaluation of instructional impact. We have carefully defined teaching competencies and leadership skills that serve as guiding beacons on our path towards realising our vision. This evaluation framework shapes our recruitment and selection process for Fellows, guides our coaches and program managers in their observations and feedback, and provides external stakeholders with valuable insights into the impact TFSL has on the communities we serve, and hopefully, on the broader Sri Lankan education system.

We firmly believe that teaching is a profound act of leadership.

Our Fellowship program begins by identifying exceptional young leaders who embody the values and qualities required to create transformative change in the lives of our students. These aspiring change-makers are placed in provincial schools that bear the brunt of educational inequities, where their dedication can make a significant difference.

After undergoing a rigorous selection process, we invite those candidates who not only share our vision of an equitable, holistic, and high-quality education for all Sri Lankan children but also demonstrate intelligence, empathy, resilience, and leadership potential to join us as TFSL Fellows. Once they accept the invitation, they embark on a comprehensive six-week pre-service training program that equips them with the skills and confidence needed to overcome the challenges they may face. We are wholeheartedly committed to nurturing teacher-leaders who go above and beyond traditional expectations. As compassionate and engaging young educators, they not only advocate for their students' academic and personal growth but also strive to create nurturing learning environments and strengthen the bonds within their school communities.

Throughout their initial two-year classroom experience, Fellows receive unwavering support from experienced instructional coaches, their cohort members, and mentors from the TFSL network. This guidance enables them to grow not only as educators and advocates but also as catalysts for change within the wider school community.

Inspired by their initial experiences, many Fellows choose to continue teaching in under-resourced schools, while others explore opportunities within the broader educational community, such as becoming principals or district leaders, curriculum designers, educational technology professionals, or social entrepreneurs. Together, we collaborate tirelessly to achieve positive change and create a more compassionate and inclusive education system.



**RECRUITMENT
FIND PROMISING
LEADERS**

We seek young leaders who share our passion for providing world-class education and skills that positively contribute to our mission. We focus on individuals who are committed to making a difference in their communities and improving children's lives.



**DEVELOPMENT
TRAIN AND
SUPPORT**

Our TFSL Fellowship is an internationally recognised teacher-leadership program that equips fellows with exceptional teaching and leadership skills. Through training, mentorship, and ongoing support, our fellows grow both professionally and personally.



**PLACEMENT
CULTIVATE
LIFELONG
LEADERSHIP**

Fellows are placed in schools where their presence is most needed, and they develop a growth mindset that will last a lifetime. We believe that every child deserves a quality education, and our fellows cultivate lifelong leadership skills to make a lasting impact.



**CONTINUOUS
SUPPORT
CREATE ALUMNI
FOR CHANGE**

Our alumni program offers ongoing professional and peer support. Fellows benefit from regular coaching, attend workshops, and join a community of like-minded individuals committed to making a difference. Our goal is to create alumni who continue to drive change and positively impact children's lives and their communities.

In short, we identify young people with both leadership potential and a burning desire to change the world. We coach them, develop their knowledge and skills and place them where they can have the most impact – our nation's classrooms.



OUR THEORY OF CHANGE

TFSL Fellows are agents for change, ensuring all children, no matter their socio-economic or demographic background, receive a high-quality, holistic and inclusive education.

Our Fellowship program goes beyond teaching, empowering compassionate leaders who are committed to reshaping Sri Lanka's education landscape. Fellows witness first-hand the realities of educational inequity, and this experience becomes the catalyst for their lifelong dedication to ensuring that every child, regardless of their background, receives a high-quality, holistic, and inclusive education. They forge deep professional connections, engage stakeholders, and work collectively to address systemic challenges and create equal opportunities for all students. Through their unwavering commitment and compassionate approach, they instil hope, resilience, and empower young hearts, bringing about positive transformations that resonate throughout their lives.

Together, we strive towards a future where education is a powerful tool for empowerment, compassion, and equality. Our Fellows are at the forefront, advocating for comprehensive reforms and championing the rights of every child. With their unyielding passion and tireless efforts, they create a society where every individual has the opportunity to thrive. Join us in this transformative journey, where we develop highly-skilled, innovative leaders who will shape the future of education in Sri Lanka, one classroom at a time.

DEVELOPING COLLECTIVE, GRASSROOTS LEADERSHIP REQUIRES:

- Building strong relationships among all stakeholders in the school community.
- Identifying and empowering exceptional, passionate, young individuals to lead the change.
- Maintaining our focus on improving student outcomes - developing the next generation of human capital.
- Passion AND patience - systemic change comes slowly, but opportunities to Be the Change never end.

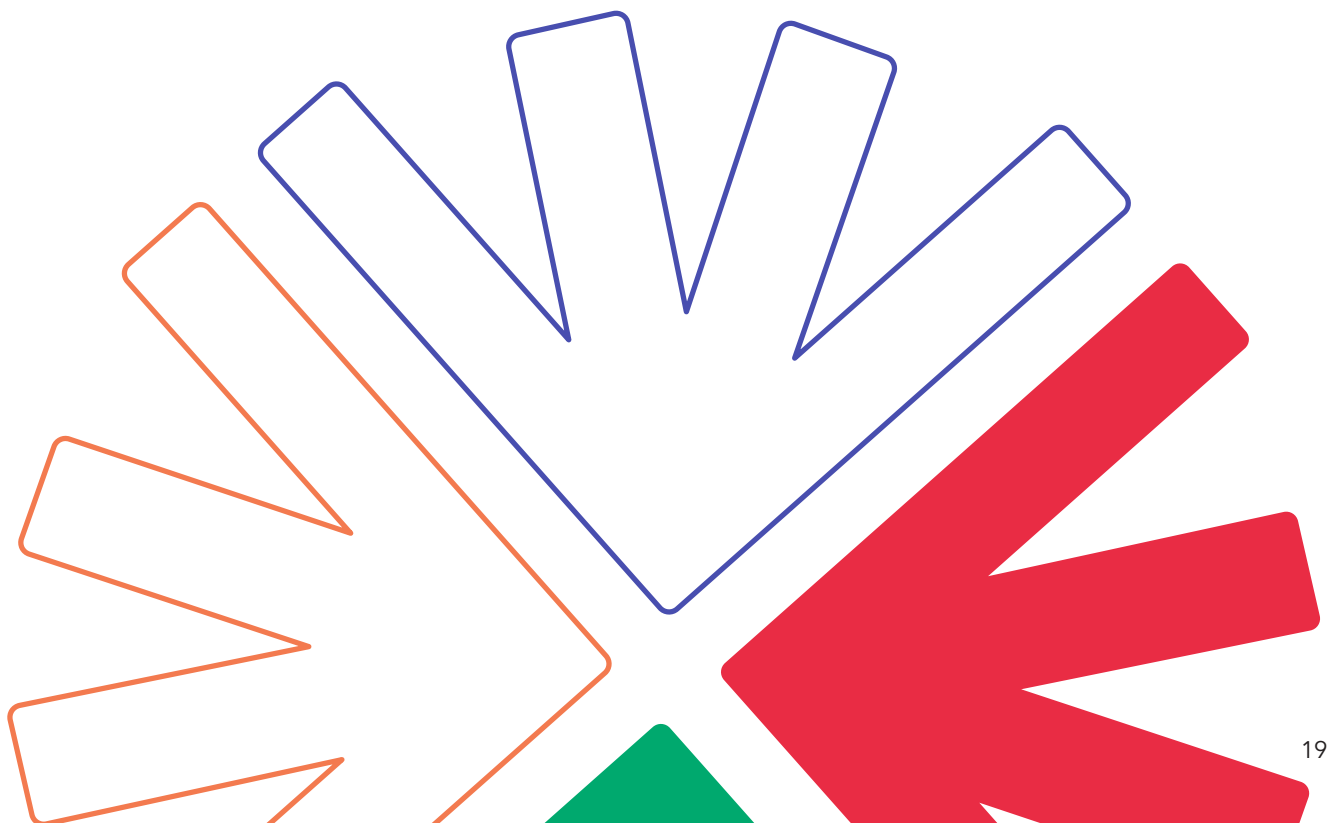


As TFSL Fellows complete their transformative two-year commitment, they transition into esteemed TFSL Alumni, equipped with invaluable classroom experience and ready to embark on new challenges. These emerging leaders, within classrooms, schools, and the wider education system, join hands collaboratively, leveraging their Fellowship experience and the expansive TFSL network. Together, they strive to enhance school and district capacity, while developing sustainable, replicable solutions that amplify their impact in educational development.

At the heart of their leadership journey lies the essence of teaching, nurturing a growth mindset that empowers Fellows to become influential community leaders, driving systemic change and championing equitable access to education for the most vulnerable children in our nation. As these young learners blossom into problem-solvers, innovators, and entrepreneurs themselves, the ripple effect on socio-economic development through education will be truly transformative.

Our theory of change beckons Sri Lanka's most promising young leaders to embrace the noble task of rebuilding our beloved nation. To build a truly prosperous, equitable, and liberated society, we need extraordinary leaders who possess the knowledge, skills, and unwavering commitment to ignite meaningful and lasting change.

And what better way to embark on this transformative journey than by starting as a teacher in a rural classroom?



OUR FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM

The TFSL Fellowship stands as a remarkable and globally recognized teacher-leadership program. Our Fellows undergo comprehensive pre-service training and receive ongoing classroom coaching to ensure they possess the knowledge and skills needed to guide their students towards significant academic progress. Through a six-week residential training, Fellows acquire essential 21st-century teaching frameworks, curriculum expertise, and effective lesson planning techniques.

To foster collaboration, emotional support, and peer mentoring, Fellows are placed in groups of three within their assigned schools. With the support of our local and international partners, Fellows gain access to a wide array of frequent online and offline professional development activities, as well as opportunities to connect and collaborate with like-minded educators worldwide.

Addressing the immediate need for trained STEEM (Science, Technology, English, Engineering, and Mathematics) particularly in provincial schools, remains our short-term goal, however the core objective of our program is to cultivate leadership skills through practical, experiential learning.



Our two-year, school-based Fellowship experience nurtures robust professional networks, encourages data-driven decision-making, sparks intrinsic motivation for purposeful action, and emphasises the value of personal reflection.

We expect to realise a singular landmark on our organisational journey when government authorities recognize the Teach First Sri Lanka Fellowship as a certified teaching pathway for young graduates.

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

- Attract talented graduates and young leaders from all backgrounds to the teaching profession.
- Create learning environments that foster an inclusive culture and encourages students to enjoy learning.
- Achieve significant, measurable impact on student academic performance and social emotional development.
- Identify systemic educational issues that can be addressed leading to improved outcomes for all students.

Each Fellow in our program is matched with a dedicated "teacher-leadership coach" who provides invaluable support and guidance throughout their journey. These coaches visit Fellows on a weekly basis, observing their classroom practice and offering direct assistance during their first year. Even during the second year, TFSL coaches continue to work closely with Fellows, fostering their development as both educators and leaders. **This coaching element is a distinctive feature of our program, recognizing the immense value of real-time support and guidance in the classroom over mere training or instruction.**

The role of instructional coaches in nurturing effective teachers cannot be overstated. Having an experienced educator working directly with young teachers to establish curriculum goals, design engaging lessons, and implement effective assessment strategies is tremendously valuable. Equally important, these coaches serve as mentors, providing emotional support and helping Fellows navigate the challenges that may arise in their work environment. A recent survey conducted by Teach First UK revealed that over 75% of Fellows reported a positive impact from having a coach, and an impressive 90% strongly recommended having a coach to their teaching colleagues.

OUR EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY

At our core, we firmly believe in providing children with a comprehensive, holistic education that equips them to thrive as they grow into responsible, compassionate adults. We understand the importance of cultivating thoughtful, analytical leaders who can effectively tackle the challenges that lie ahead for our society and the world at large. Our educational approach rests on four fundamental pillars, each playing a vital role in shaping well-rounded individuals.



CRITICAL THINKING

We empower children to harness their existing knowledge and experiences, fostering their problem-solving abilities and teaching them to evaluate diverse ideas. Through this process, they develop the skills to arrive at logical conclusions independently, enhancing their critical thinking capacities.



LITERACY AND NUMERACY

We recognize that a strong foundation in literacy and numeracy is crucial from the earliest years of a child's education. By nurturing these fundamental skills throughout their academic journey, we lay the groundwork for the development of higher-order, critical thinking abilities.



GROWTH MINDSET

Embracing a growth mindset is fundamental to our educational philosophy. We instil in children the belief that their talents and abilities can be cultivated through curiosity, creativity, and personalised learning experiences. We encourage a lifelong love of learning and foster an environment where curiosity is nurtured and celebrated.



SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING

As society evolves, classrooms become pivotal spaces where children learn crucial social dynamics and emotional boundaries. We understand the significance of equipping students with social and emotional learning tools that enable them to navigate challenges, emotions, and their socio-economic context in a healthy manner. We strive to create inclusive environments, destigmatize differences, and adapt our schools to meet the needs of all students.

By prioritising these four pillars, we are committed to providing children with an education that not only imparts knowledge but also cultivates critical thinking, fosters a growth mindset, and supports their social and emotional well-being.



FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM FRAMEWORK

Building upon each other, our core program components - Effective Teaching, Personal Leadership Development, and Movement & Mission - provide a broad, comprehensive perspective for Fellows to begin addressing educational inequity directly.

Our program aims to create lasting change in the education system, as Fellows and Alumni build capacity across multiple school communities.

EFFECTIVE TEACHING

Critical component of improving educational outcomes for students. This element of the Fellowship focuses on developing the skills and knowledge Fellows need to be effective, innovative classroom teachers. They receive extensive professional development training on instructional strategies, classroom management, and curriculum development.

PERSONAL LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Developing local leadership is critical to affecting lasting change in the education system. Here we focus on developing Fellows' interpersonal, decision-making and communication skills needed to become effective leaders. Fellows participate in activities such as goal setting, self-reflection, and leadership coaching to develop their ability to lead teams, collaborate with stakeholders, and drive change.

MOVEMENT & MISSION

We are in the business of building a diverse movement of young leaders committed to improving educational outcomes for all students. This requires Fellows developing a deep understanding of systemic issues contributing to educational inequity and empowering them to become change agents in their school communities. Fellows engage in activities such as community organising, advocacy, and policy analysis to drive systemic change.

FINDING CHANGE-MAKERS

We believe in the power of finding individuals who possess not only exceptional qualities but also a genuine passion for creating positive change in our schools. We seek out remarkable young people who embody the drive, dedication, and heartfelt commitment needed to make a lasting impact. To be considered for admission, candidates must demonstrate a range of competencies that align with our values and vision during the Fellow Selection Process:

ALIGNMENT WITH TFSL

A profound understanding and alignment with the mission, vision, and values of TFSL that reflects a shared commitment to transforming education.

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

The ability to express thoughts and ideas with clarity and empathy, forging meaningful connections with students, colleagues, and the wider community.

RESILIENCE IN THE FACE OF CHANGE

A resilient spirit that embraces challenges and transforms them into opportunities for growth and learning in the ever-evolving educational landscape.

ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP AND LEADERSHIP POTENTIAL

A demonstrated engagement in community initiatives, coupled with the potential to inspire and lead others towards positive change.

CRITICAL THINKING AND DECISION-MAKING

A capacity for critical thinking and making well-informed decisions, enabling thoughtful problem-solving in complex educational contexts.

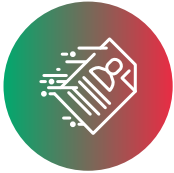
HUMILITY, RESPECT, AND EMPATHY

A genuine humility that values the unique strengths and experiences of others, fostering a culture of respect and empathy towards all individuals.

We actively seek diverse young leaders from various backgrounds, including recent university graduates, impassioned career-changers, and current teachers who yearn for meaningful opportunities to make a tangible difference in their local school community and the wider nation.



Our meticulously crafted recruitment process is designed to discover individuals who not only embody our values but also demonstrate the core competencies necessary for success. It entails multiple stages to ensure a comprehensive evaluation:



APPLICATION

Candidates are encouraged to share their past academic and professional experiences, illuminating the motivations that drive their desire to become part of the Fellowship.



LEADERSHIP ASSESSMENT ACTIVITY

A transformative day-long event that fosters teamwork, encourages thoughtful discussions, and showcases teaching demonstrations, providing insights into candidates' overall competency and social skills.



VIDEO INTERVIEW

Invited candidates engage in an interview where we explore their motivations, leadership potential, and teaching abilities, aiming to truly understand their unique qualities.



OFFER AND ACCEPTANCE

Candidates who are selected for the Fellowship program receive an offer that outlines the program, placement details, and the extensive support we provide. This offer is extended approximately 4-6 weeks prior to the commencement of the residential institute.

By mindfully seeking out and nurturing extraordinary individuals, we equip our Fellows with the finest global best-practice teacher training, coaching, and ongoing developmental support. Together, we strive to create a kinder and more compassionate educational landscape.

PRE-SERVICE PROGRAM

We select exceptional individuals with great care and consideration, who share our vision of equitable, holistic education for all Sri Lankan children and possess qualities of intelligence, empathy, fortitude, and leadership potential. These candidates are invited to become TFSL Fellows, embarking on a transformative journey that starts with our six-week residential learning institute.

Our comprehensive pre-service training program covers various topics essential to effective teaching and learning, providing a supportive space for Fellows to develop their teaching philosophy, immerse themselves in proven learning theories, and bridge the gap between theory and practice. It includes training in modern pedagogical practices, observation and co-teaching opportunities, professional development workshops, community building, and classroom preparation. At TFSL, we empower Fellows to exceed conventional expectations and become exemplary teacher-leaders who make a lasting impact.



The pre-service entails the following specific areas of support:

- **Training in Modern Pedagogical Practices:** We equip our Fellows with the knowledge and skills in modern teaching methods, classroom management techniques, and curriculum development. The majority of the pre-service training is dedicated to instructional excellence.
- **Observation and Co-Teaching:** Participants have the invaluable opportunity to be paired with experienced classroom teachers in their host schools for observation and co-teaching experiences. This hands-on involvement allows them to gain practical insights and real-world experience in the classroom setting.
- **Professional Development Workshops:** We provide global best-practice seminars and hands-on directed instructional activities, led by seasoned educators. These workshops offer continuous growth opportunities and keep our Fellows at the forefront of educational advancements.
- **Community Building:** We believe that a sense of community and day-to-day support are integral to the success of new teachers. Our program fosters opportunities for participants to form meaningful relationships with their fellow Fellows and members of the local school community, creating a supportive network that contributes to their professional growth.
- **Classroom Preparation:** Fellows engage in preparing their classrooms for the upcoming school year, which includes designing visual resources, organising the physical layout, and arranging teaching materials. This meticulous preparation ensures an optimal learning environment for their students.

UNDER THE FELLOWSHIP FRAMEWORK THE FELLOWS WILL BE TRAINED IN THE FOLLOWING AREAS:

FOCUS	EFFECTIVE TEACHING	PERSONAL LEADERSHIP	MOVEMENT & MISSION
Week 1	Setting Vision and Goals Understanding Holistic Education Philosophy of Teaching and Learning	Developing a Personal Vision Your Personal Leadership Journey	Understanding inequity in your school, community, and country
Week 2	Building Relationships, Classroom Culture and Community	Reflective practice	Community and Cultural Immersion
Week 3	Lesson Planning and Delivery	Building Resilience Understanding Your Response to Challenge	Transforming Student Outcomes Classroom Leadership Competencies
Week 4	Assessment and Reflection	Developing a Growth Mindset	Vision for Student Impact
Week 5	Engaging All Learners	The role of Leadership	Systemic Leadership
Week 6	Adaptive Teaching for Student Development	Developing strong relationships	Social innovation for Development

IN-SERVICE PROGRAM

TFSL provides Fellows with unwavering support from a knowledgeable and dependable network. Over the course of their two-year classroom experience, Fellows are encouraged to broaden their horizons, deepen their understanding of local contexts, and develop their skills in change management. They receive daily and weekly guidance from experienced instructional coaches, fellow cohort members, and mentors within the TFSL network. This support nurtures their growth as educators and advocates, empowering them to become catalysts for positive change within their school communities.



Collaboration among peers is a cornerstone of our approach. By sharing experiences and emerging insights with their fellow teachers, Fellows quickly disseminate successful classroom strategies and practices. They maintain personal teaching journals, diligently documenting their experiences and engaging in self-reflection, which is an essential part of the learning process. Additionally, weekly workshops provide a platform for Fellows to celebrate instructional breakthroughs and successes, with the sessions open to local educators as well. Through this collective effort, we foster a culture of continuous improvement and facilitate the rapid spread of effective teaching practices across our network.

- **Theory:** Global best practice workshops expose Fellows to the latest ideas and trends on how best to educate children from around the region
- **Practice:** Fellows are tasked with applying these new learnings and perspectives in their classrooms. A unique aspect of our Fellowship, as opposed to traditional teacher training programs, is the daily presence of an experienced educator in Fellows' classrooms, coaching, mentoring and guiding them to improve student outcomes.
- **Reflection:** Fellows keep a Teaching Journal to consistently record and document their school experience. This facilitates Fellows' self-reflective learning, but more importantly, classroom insights and other 'lessons learnt' can be shared immediately across the entire cohort and fed back into the program.
- **Report:** Fellows will summarise their progress and observations on a periodic basis. These valuable insights will be incorporated into TFSL's reports to zonal/school leadership and chart Fellows' personal development.



PROGRAM EVALUATION

Once Fellows have been deployed to schools, we conduct thorough assessments to evaluate their progress and impact. The assessment includes the following key areas:

- **STUDENT OUTCOMES:** We measure the success of our Fellowship program and the progress of individual Fellows by tracking various student outcomes. This includes academic achievement, exam pass rates, college enrollment, and more.
- **PARTNER SCHOOL FEEDBACK:** We collect valuable feedback from our partner schools to gauge the effectiveness of our Fellowship and the development of our Fellows. Surveys and individual interviews with principals, teachers, parents, and students help us understand the impact and areas for improvement.
- **LEADERSHIP EVALUATION:** To assess the effectiveness of our program, we conduct an internal evaluation based on organisational success metrics. This involves analysing program design, implementation, current outcomes, and conducting a rigorous assessment of our Fellows by our instructional coaches.
- **EXTERNAL EVALUATION:** We seek independent assessments from partner organisations in the region to evaluate our program's effectiveness and identify opportunities for growth. This includes quantitative data analysis, qualitative research, and stakeholder interviews.
- **ALUMNI OUTCOMES:** Tracking the achievements of our alumni is crucial in realising our vision. We collect data through alumni surveys, interviews, and social media to understand their career paths, professional roles, and overall impact beyond the Fellowship.

ALUMNI PATHWAYS

Teach First Sri Lanka is more than just a two-year Fellowship program. Our commitment to our Fellows extends well beyond their time in the classroom, and we strive to maintain strong connections with our Alumni, helping them find new leadership opportunities where they can make a lasting impact.

Many of our Fellows are inspired to continue teaching in under-resourced schools, while others choose to pursue opportunities in other areas of education. These opportunities may include roles as principals, district leaders, curriculum designers, edtech professionals, or social entrepreneurs. By leveraging the talent developed over the two-year Fellowship, we can create a multiplier effect across the education system, working towards lasting and systemic change.

We believe that sustainability is key to achieving lasting change.

To this end, we are committed to mobilising our Alumni, providing them with access to the tools, networks, and opportunities they need to continue to be agents of change. We are dedicated to working with all stakeholders in the education system to encourage further innovation and to support our partners' learning journeys as we work together to be the change, we seek.



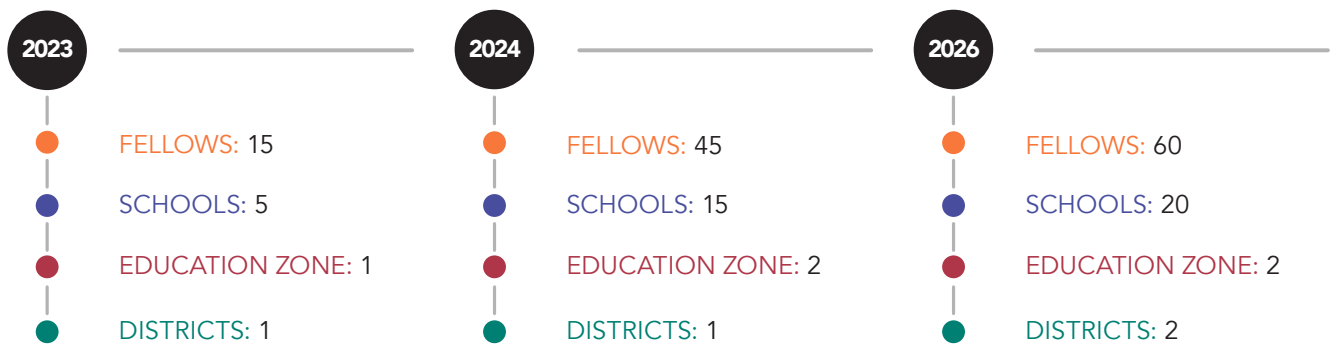
PROGRAM SUSTAINABILITY

We recognise that creating meaningful change takes time and sustained effort. As a 21st century learning organisation, we are committed to continuously refining our practices and procedures to ensure that our mission to eliminate education inequality in Sri Lanka becomes a reality. This is not a short-term goal, and we know that systemic change requires a long-term approach. That's why our Fellowship programme is designed to be sustainable, with support from our community partners, local school leaders, and committed funders.

We are constantly gathering information about ourselves and our students, reviewing and refining our approach to teaching and learning, and collaborating with stakeholders across the education system to drive progress. By taking this long-term view, we are confident that we can create lasting change in Sri Lanka, and build better opportunities for generations to come.

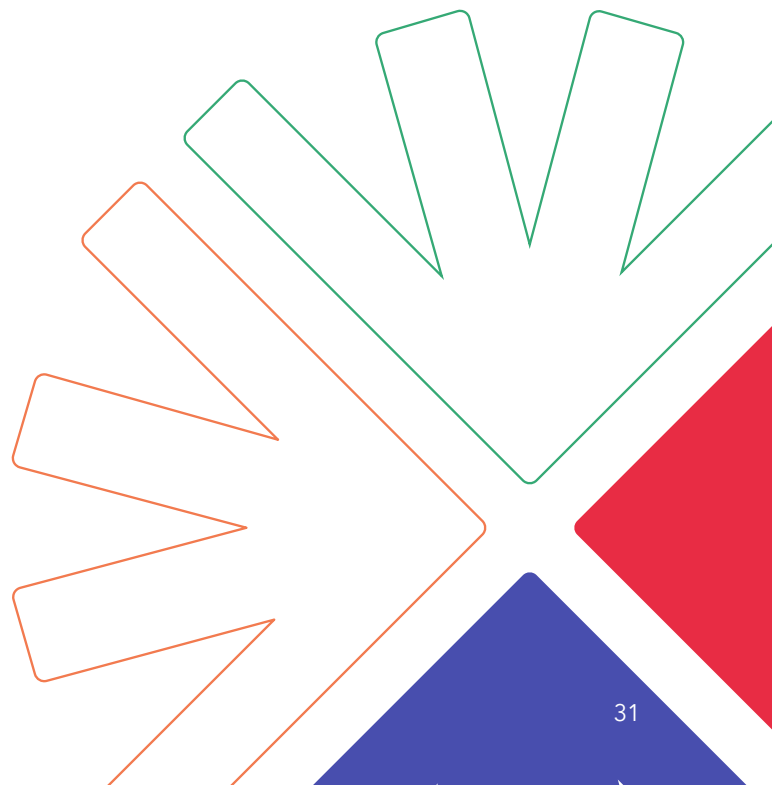


3-YEAR GROWTH PLAN



Determining geographic locations for expansion are based on where TFSL Fellows can achieve the greatest impact. Our key evaluation criteria include:

- Existence of High-Need Schools
 - Socio-economic inequity
 - Severe teacher shortages (particularly STEEM)
 - School dropout rates
- Local pool of high-quality Fellowship candidates (local Universities and Colleges)
- Strong support from Zonal Education officers, school Principals, school community
- Presence of local partners (logistical feasibility)

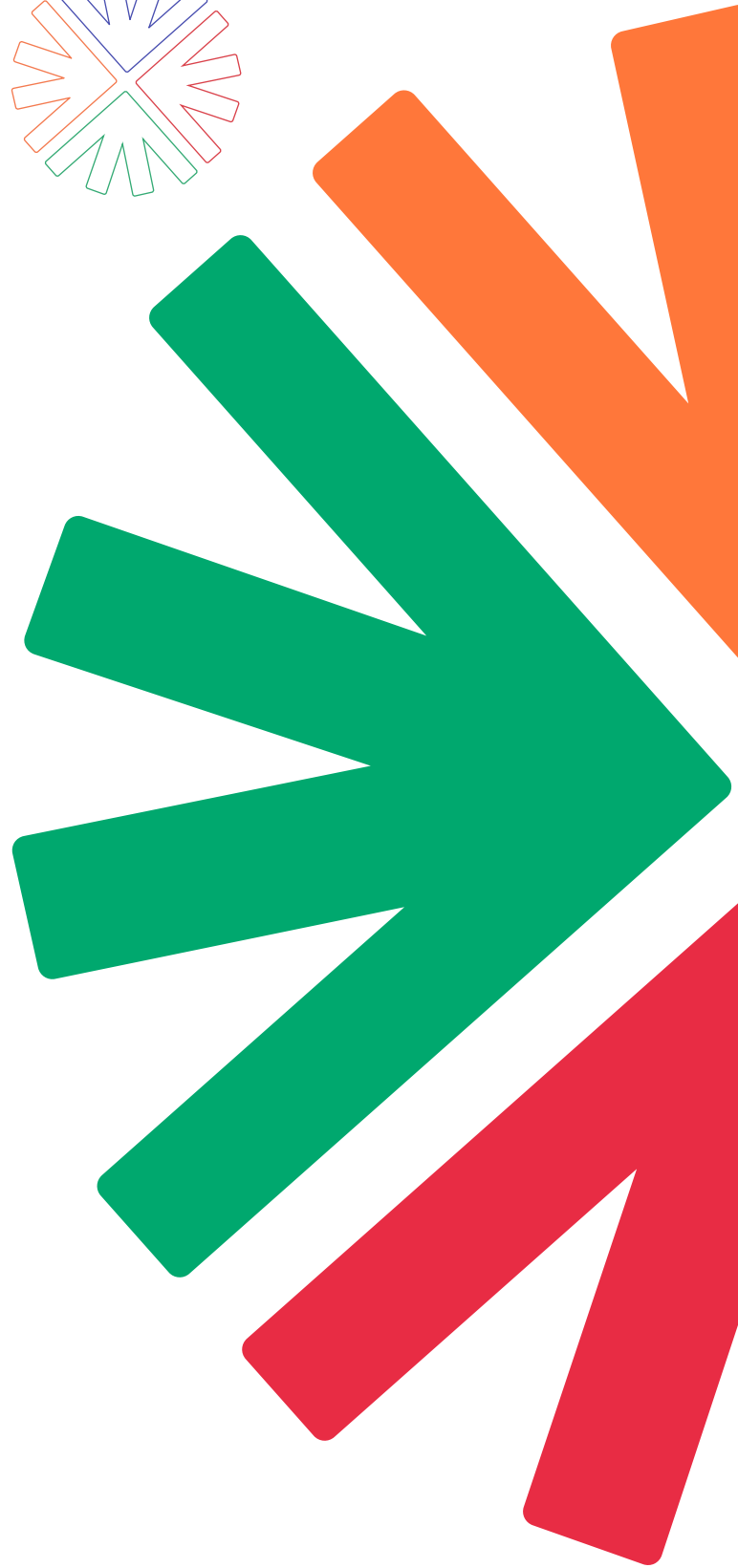
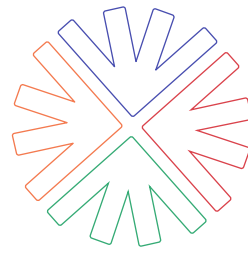


ALIGNMENT WITH UN'S SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

We are dedicated to achieving our objectives in line with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4 - Quality Education. Our Fellowship programme is thoughtfully designed to integrate the Design Thinking Method as an approach to Social Innovation. This empowers our Fellows to generate ideas that are aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and defend their proposals throughout the fellowship.

We are committed to raising our Fellows' awareness of the SDGs and how they can apply them to address challenges in Sri Lankan education, both during and after the fellowship. By adopting this approach, our Fellows can make a lasting impact on a broader range of Sustainable Development Goals beyond the fellowship, building upon their social innovation projects.

We strongly believe that this initiative will inspire our exceptional Fellows to actively implement their best ideas as alumni and contribute towards other SDGs. Our Fellowship is strategically aligned with SDG 4, and it encompasses various steps and activities that support the targets set for quality education. Through our programme, we aim to provide all children with an inclusive, high-quality education, regardless of their race, gender, or income level. By improving student outcomes, our Fellowship program also nurtures a vibrant community of young innovators and advocates for change, creating a holistic education ecosystem.



4 QUALITY EDUCATION



Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

OUR TEAM



We are experienced educators, change-makers, and policy shapers, coming from diverse backgrounds and multidisciplinary skill sets. We believe that change is possible when the desire for change is combined with action.

Our common goal is enabling equitable access to free, high-quality education for all children in Sri Lanka.



David Boehm - Founding Director

David Boehm is an experienced educator, advocate for quality education, and an eternal optimist. David left a successful career in capital markets and banking to pursue his passion for teaching mathematics in a New York City public school. While teaching in Sri Lanka he witnessed the pressing need to improve the country's education system. To address this challenge, David co-founded Teach First Sri Lanka. He firmly believes education is a fundamental right of every child and investing in our future leaders is key to creating a better tomorrow. In addition to his teaching experience, David has also held senior leadership positions in finance, technology, and strategic consulting. He currently serves as the Director of Technology at the prestigious British School in Colombo.



Lilani Munasinghe - Founding Director

Lilani Munasinghe is a highly experienced educator, counsellor, and certified teacher trainer, as well as a devoted mother of two. With over two decades of experience in classrooms across Sri Lanka, Lilani has gained a reputation for her empathetic and research-grounded approach to communicating with children. Despite the challenges within the Sri Lankan education system, Lilani remains a pragmatic optimist, believing in better possibilities for all. She began her career in Special-Needs (SEN) and pre-school education in Colombo, before progressing to teach middle and high school in diverse instructional capacities. In addition to her extensive experience, Lilani has a background in Child Psychology, which she incorporates into her teaching, ensuring her students' emotional needs are met. Prior to her current role teaching English at the British School in Colombo, she taught at St Thomas' College Mount Lavinia.



Jeremy De Zilwa - CEO

Jeremy De Zilwa is an experienced professional who transitioned from banking to pursue his passion for education. At Next Campus, he gained valuable experience in program delivery and identified a significant gap between local and international education. This led him to Teach First Sri Lanka, where he plays a vital role in the organization's operations and strategic direction. In addition, he has volunteered with Hype Sri Lanka and participated in the PeaceX Fellowship program. Jeremy holds a Masters in Project Management from Birmingham City University and is dedicated to continued learning in educational development.



Charith Abeyratne - Director

Charith Abeyratne is a positive realist who has a strong passion for helping children learn. He has taught at Teach First UK where he witnessed the transformational impact that well-trained and empathetic teachers can have on society's most vulnerable children, both inside and outside the classroom. His experience as a Fellow changed his perspective and helped him change his career path and find his true passion. He is a passionate teacher that has seen how this model works first hand and wholeheartedly believes in it. Charith places great emphasis on the relationships between the teacher, student, and parent, believing that when these relationships work together in harmony, it benefits the overall well-being of a child. Outside of teaching, Charith is an Artificial Intelligence and Data Consultant at Deloitte, London.



Dr. Nirmal De Silva - Director

Dr. Nirmal De Silva is a visionary leader who has devoted a significant portion of his career to exploring the significance and worth of education. In his current position at Global Entrepreneurship Network Sri Lanka, he has played a vital role in developing a curriculum that focuses on comprehensive learning and cultivating the right mindset. Dr. De Silva is deeply committed to inspiring individuals from all walks of life to become catalysts for change and enhance the well-being of society as a whole. As an award-winning strategy consultant, SME advocate, impact investor, and associate professor with over 20 years of experience in top leadership roles, including with Fortune 500 companies, he sits on the boards of multiple public and private sector organisations.



Deb Edirisinghe - Director

Deb Edirisinghe is a passionate advocate for children's welfare and social justice. She founded Child Action Lanka, an organization that provides safe spaces for vulnerable children across eight high-need locations. Additionally, she holds the position of Director at Anugra Asia and Asia Director at Epiphany Trust, while maintaining a close working relationship with Global Goodwill Ambassadors. Her remarkable work has been recognised with numerous accolades, including the Lifetime Achievement Award (Women World Awards 2019), Zonta Centennial Award, and Female Entrepreneur of the Year at the World Zinta Awards 2019. She is currently pursuing a PhD from Durham University.



Naushalya Rajapaksha - Director

Naushalya Rajapaksha is a legal expert and founder of The Yeheliya Foundation, an organisation dedicated to addressing the social, political, and legal barriers that prevent women from achieving leadership roles. Her career in law has allowed her to initiate discussions and debates on important social issues such as gender discrimination and sexual harassment. In addition to her role at The Yeheliya Foundation, Naushalya works as a media trainer consultant, DRI election expert, and National Consultant on Prevention and Response to Sexual Exploitation Abuse, and Harassment and Gender and Human Rights for the World Health Organization (WHO) Sri Lanka. Her legal expertise includes criminal law, fundamental rights, litigation, policy advocacy, and gender training and development. Naushalya is known for her rebellious nature and her commitment to bringing about change and justice.



Dr. Tara de Mel - Director

Dr. Tara de Mel is a distinguished figure in Sri Lanka's education landscape, with over two decades of experience working to improve the country's education system. She is a passionate advocate for quality and equality in education, as well as child protection and preventing bullying in schools and universities. Her impressive career includes serving the government of Sri Lanka for almost twenty years, as Secretary to the Minister of Education and Advisor to the President of Sri Lanka on Education, among other high-level positions. Dr Tara is also co-chair of Education Forum Sri Lanka, a member of the Worldwide Commission to Educate All Kids and the UNESCO Advisory Board of the Global Education Monitoring Report. She holds a research-based MD from the University of Colombo and an MPhil from the University of London, and is the author of 'Reforming Education: Challenges to Change'.







HOW YOU CAN HELP

Teach First Sri Lanka invites you to play a part in addressing the symptoms that plague our nation, preventing us from delivering a high-quality, holistic education for all children.

You know how flawed and broken our education system really is. The consequences of a failed system are there for all to see. The time for action is now - action from all of us! Join us in our mission.

You can be the change too.



JOIN THE FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM

The Teach First Sri Lanka Fellowship Program seeks passionate individuals who share our vision of equitable education for all Sri Lankan children. As a Fellow, you will be a champion for children's development, not only academically, but also in terms of their holistic skills, such as creativity, critical thinking, communication, empathy and more, alongside taking a leading role in improving the school learning environment and community.

SPONSORSHIPS

We are committed to providing high-quality education to children and rely on the generosity and support of individuals like you. Your contribution will go a long way in empowering young minds and creating a better future for us all. We appreciate your support and look forward to working together.

EMPOWER A CHILD	Help 1 Child have a teacher in key subjects like Maths, Science, English, or IT for 1 year.	LKR 30,000
EMPOWER A FELLOW	By sponsoring a Fellow, 180 children will have a qualified teacher in key subjects for 1 year.	LKR 1,650,000
EMPOWER A SCHOOL	540 students will have multiple qualified teachers in key subjects for 1 year.	LKR 5,000,000
EMPOWER OUR PILOT PROGRAM	Provide for 15 innovative educators, teaching thousands of students in over 90 different classrooms for 1 year.	LKR 25,000,000

BECOME A TFSL PARTNER ORGANISATION

The ongoing education crisis presents an opportunity for public-private partnerships to make a significant, positive impact on students in the short term. By supporting TFSL in recruiting, training, and placing a diverse group of university graduates, young professionals, and innovative teachers in deserving rural provincial schools, we can truly change the game. TFSL aims to mobilise a talented pool of effective STEEM teachers who can immediately expand educational opportunities for thousands of students. Moreover, they will showcase innovative pedagogical models and methods that can revolutionise the education landscape. We seek the support and collaboration of the government, parents, teachers, and school leaders to join us in fostering innovative approaches to education. Together, we can make a transformative impact on the lives of our students.



BECOME A TFSL MEMBER

Joining Teach First Sri Lanka as a member opens up a world of unique opportunities to contribute to the success of individual schools, Fellows, and, most importantly, the students. As a member, you become an integral part of the change we strive to create in the education system.

Your membership empowers you to make a difference on multiple levels. By supporting individual schools, you play a crucial role in improving the learning environment and educational outcomes for students. Your involvement can range from providing resources and mentorship to organising events and workshops that enhance the overall educational experience.

Moreover, as a member, you have the chance to support and uplift our dedicated Fellows who are working tirelessly to bring about positive change in classrooms across the country. Your guidance, encouragement, and mentorship can have a profound impact on their personal and professional growth, enabling them to become even more effective in their roles as educators and change-makers.

Most importantly, being a member means being an advocate for the students themselves. Your commitment to their success and well-being can make a lasting impact on their lives. By championing their rights, providing them with opportunities, and nurturing their potential, you contribute to a brighter future for them and the entire community.

Together, as members of Teach First Sri Lanka, we can create a network of compassionate individuals dedicated to transforming the education landscape. Join us and be part of the change we want to see in schools, in Fellows, and in the lives of the students we serve.



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