

Sarvodaya Development Finance Marks World Literacy Day, Demonstrating its Commitment to Education

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Sarvodaya Development Finance (SDF) marked World Literacy Day by highlighting its education-related initiatives. World Literacy Day is marked each year on the 8th of September, and is being celebrated this year under the theme, “Transforming Literacy Learning Spaces”. World Literacy Day is an opportunity for individuals, organizations and societies to reflect on the fundamental importance of literacy learning spaces to build resilience and ensure quality, equitable and inclusive education for all.

Commenting on the efforts of SDF in this regard, over the past years, Nilantha Jayanetti – CEO said, “Our Company is amongst the most active corporate entities in terms of social activism and creating genuine progress for education in Sri Lanka, in addition to its primary purpose of empowering Sri Lanka’s rural and urban communities through financial services. Our goal is to create better literacy learning spaces in Sri Lanka through initiatives such as the Sarvodaya Institute of Higher Learning, the Early Childhood Development Unit and a network of preschools under the Sarvodaya Suwasetha Society. Our preschools in particular are very dear to our hearts as they ensure that children receive a good educational foundation, based on the Sarvodaya philosophy. In addition to these ongoing projects, we have also provided a computer learning centre to promote IT literacy in rural areas, along with a programme to uplift education for rural students, this year. We intend to continue with these efforts and

ensure that every Sri Lankan can enjoy a good education and the benefits that come with literacy, especially amidst the challenges we face as a nation.”

The Sarvodaya Institute of Higher Learning helps to build networks and bring good education and literacy learning spaces to rural areas, while also bringing organizations together to create a more unified curriculum. The Early Childhood Development Unit supports preschool and childcare centres in villages and rural areas to educate parents, children and the community. Sarvodaya Suwasetha Society Preschools and Day Care Centres operate under the care of trained instructors in early childhood development and under the direct supervision of the Department of Probation and Childcare Services. At present, the network operates 1,427 preschools and day care centres, where children are engaged and provided with safe and welcoming literacy learning spaces.

During the year, SDF has also set up a computer learning centre to uplift IT literacy in rural areas. This was the result of a ground-breaking initiative between SDF and Mithra Innovation, a leading software developer in Sri Lanka. Through this initiative, rural students are provided with opportunities to learn software programming and expand their horizons. Within the first 6 months of the initial pilot project, 25+ students were trained and provided with recognized certification and guaranteed job opportunities. SDF is presently working to expand the size of this programme to include 100 students per batch in the near term, with further expansion and development planned in due course.

In another initiative to uplift the standard of education in Sri Lanka, SDF collaborated with the University of Colombo Graduates Association to conduct seminars for GCE Ordinary Level students in rural areas who obtained less than 40 marks in mathematics at their last school-level examination. At the initial seminar, over 500 students participated in a 2-day programme at DS Senanayake Maha Vidyalaya in Ampara and Uhana Maha Vidyalaya, also in Ampara. SDF conducted another seminar at Kebithigollewa Central College recently with the participation of 17 schools from the Kebithigollewa Education Zone. The seminars are conducted by a competent and qualified teaching faculty, specializing in mathematics, in an easy-to-understand and concise manner that is appealing to students. Participants were provided with 2 meals each day, along with stationery and model exam papers, all free of charge. The goal of the programme was to give a boost to students with difficulties, to empower them to pass the GCE Ordinary Level. An assessment conducted across the students who participated found that 80% passed their mathematics exams, enabling them to continue with their higher studies.

SDF is a leader in development finance in Sri Lanka, particularly in the agricultural sector, including the North and East, with an islandwide presence.