



ANNUAL REPORT

2018





Yarl IT Hub (YIT) is a not for profit social enterprise which strives towards inspiring, supporting and fostering Technology, Innovation and Entrepreneurship in the community. It's an organization by the community for the community. The Yarl IT Hub community consists of all those who share the dream of making Jaffna in to the next Silicon Valley and abides by the core values of the organization.

Since it was founded in 2011, YIT keeps experimenting, evolving and growing while staying hungry to impact more and more lives positively at the grass root level.

As of now YIT runs startup accelerator programs and competitions (Yarl Geek Challenge), full scholarship based technology school for students in need (Uki), Digital education platform for secondary school children (Aki), Social Innovation Center (Thulir), Makerspace (Hatch Kalam), Co-working space (Hatch Kalam), Community engagement programs and Technology competition for school children (Yarl Geek Challenge Junior).

All of the above is made possible by more than 150 volunteers from the community who volunteer every year, our partners and sponsors who support us technically and financially and our full time staff.

About Yarl IT Hub





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Our Vision

To Make Jaffna the next Silicon Valley

Our Values

Nurture and develop talent

Empower the community with Technology

Innovative

Not for profit

Transparency

Apolitical

Technology and corporate independent

Our Vision & Values

2018 At a Glance

YGC Junior

550+
school students trained

100+
teams for YGC Junior

YGC Senior

70+
applications

2
Webinars

3
Online mentoring
sessions

23
semi finalist

11
Finalists

10 Yarl IT Hub Community Meetups

2 New initiatives

Āki

Thuḷir



Executive Summary

2018 has seen the most rapid growth for Yarl IT Hub since its inception. It's an year in which,

- Uki, the coding school proved it was phenomenally successful with all its passouts who were available for internships, gaining internships. For the 4th cohort, we had a 75% increase in the number of applications and we increased the cohort size by 50%. Hatch Kalam, the co-working space and maker space in Stanly road Jaffna became operational.
- Thulir - Our social innovation centre was launched and it released its first concept paper.
- We witnessed the best Yarl Geek Challenge yet. We had more than 20 dignitaries flying in from different countries to grace the event, including Rajan Anandan, Managing Director of Google India and Juergen Samuels, CEO of iQuest Group. There are at least 5 teams continuing with their start ups as of now. Four would secure seed funding via Aavishkaar.
- The Symposium on E-Learning for Tamil medium education was held. It was a momentous occasion, being the first time all important players in the ecosystem convened to create awareness on their activities and share findings and best practices.
- We established three key partnerships - ITEE foundation, GIZ and LBR Foundation, who have committed to support over our 5 year 1000x expansion plan.

In 2019 we plan to accelerate our growth to ensure we are on track to achieve our goals by 2022. This includes the following strategic targets.

- Launch www.aki.coach and acquire students to learn via the Digital Platform.
- Launch and execute Uki in Kilinochchi
- Increase the coverage and quality of the trainings delivered as part of Yarl Geek Challenge Junior covering all the educational zones of Northern Province.
- Push for successful market adoption of concepts and products from Thulir

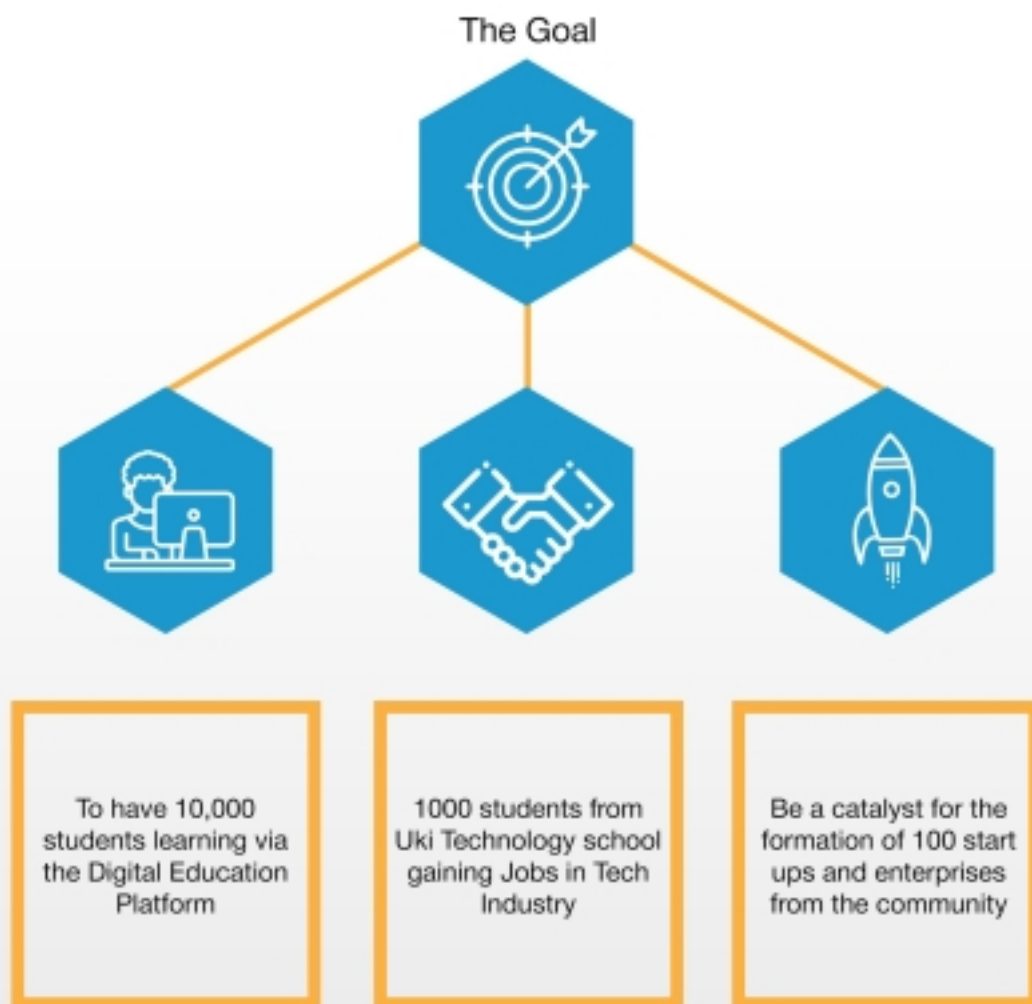
Achieving our goals will only be possible by the drive and support of the community. Together we can!



Our Strategy

[2017-2022]

At the end of 2017 Yarl IT Hub set up the five year strategic plan to increase the impact by 1000x. As part of the plan the following goals were set to be achieved by 2022.



Our Strategy [2017-2022]

In order to achieve the goals a five point action plan was devised.



Capacity Building



- Digital Secondary Education Initiative
- Scale Uki the coding school

Ideation



- Establish Research and Social Innovation Center

Networking



- Active Diaspora Engagement

Funding

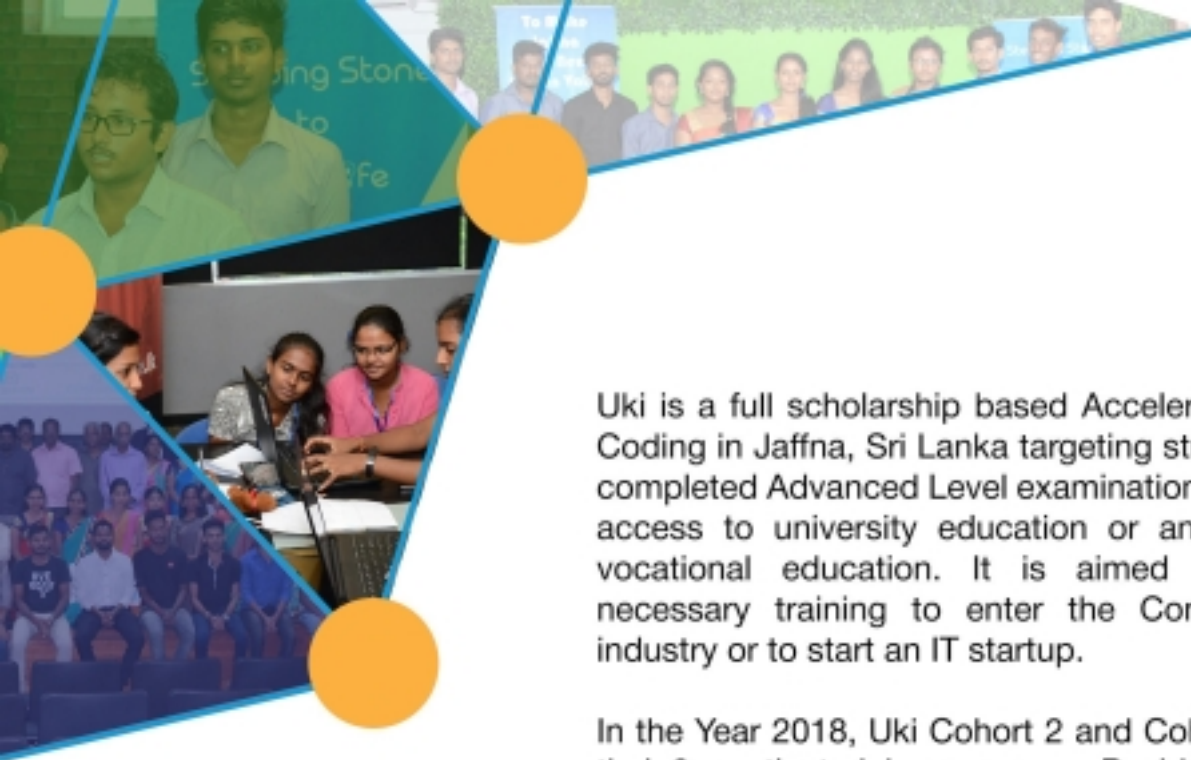


- Seed fund for very early stage start ups

2018 was the first year in executing the above described strategic plan. This annual report highlights the progress against each of these action points in the year 2018.

We are glad that we have the following partners who had come on board to support the 5 year plan,

ITEE Foundation - Pioneer Partner
GIZ - Innovation Partner
LBR Foundation - Platinum Partner



Uki is a full scholarship based Accelerator program for Coding in Jaffna, Sri Lanka targeting students who have completed Advanced Level examinations and don't have access to university education or any other form of vocational education. It is aimed to provide the necessary training to enter the Computer Software industry or to start an IT startup.

In the Year 2018, Uki Cohort 2 and Cohort 3 completed their 6 months training programs. Besides the internships at the tech companies the students from Uki had been performing well at startup competitions.

From cohort 2, teams Cookoo and Skyline were picked as top 3 most promising startups, out of the 16 startups who pitched at the Venture Frontier Lanka Jaffna edition. Further these two teams were finalists of Yarl Geek Challenge, Season 7. The Backpackers was selected to South Asia Connect 1, Cookoo was selected to South Asia Connect 2 and participated in the trainings held in New Delhi in 2018.

From cohort 3, three teams, including 13 students were shortlisted to HackaDev - UNDP Social Innovation Program and One of the teams was selected to phase 2, a five days camp at Habarana Village, and they got selected to Incubation Program too. Teams IO Space and Angaadi from cohort 3 got selected to participate in Yarl Geek Challenge 7 IO Space and Angaadi, they got selected to compete in the finale as well.

In 2019, Uki intends to grow aggressively, the cohort size in Jaffna has been increased to 24 in Jaffna and during the first quarter Uki intends to open a center in Kilinochchi.



Yarl Geek Challenge Season 7 - Junior

Yarl Geek Challenge Junior is a school level Technology competition organized by Yarl IT Hub to encourage school children to use their creativity and innovate tech-based solutions to real-time problems. Students are evaluated and given awards under the categories of Overall Winners, Best Mobile Application, Best Web Application, and Best Hardware Application.

Yarl Geek Challenge Junior Season 7 was launched in April, 2018. Initially seminars were conducted to introduce the students to different technologies. These seminars were conducted in 5 centers for 12 different zones and around 500 students took part in these seminars. As the second stage, applications were called and hands on workshop sessions were conducted for the students and around 200 students took part in these workshops.

The competition evaluation happened in two faces. Initially the zonal level competitions were held during the first week of June and out of 100+ teams, 31 teams were selected for the finals. The finals then commenced in a two day hackathon style on the 16th and 17th of June, 2018. On the first day students got the opportunity to work with mentors from the industry and refined their products. They were also coached on product pitching.

Final evaluations took place on the second day. Best hardware project, mobile application, web application and the overall winner were selected. During the award ceremony the final winners, zonal winners and finalists were recognized with medals and certificates.



Yarl Geek Challenge Season 7 - Senior

Yarl Geek Challenge Senior is an entrepreneurship competition organized by Yarl IT Hub with the intent of fostering the startup ecosystem. This platform is a bridge for wannabe entrepreneurs, their customers, and the investors.

The intent of the competition is to nurture startup mindset, business skills, technological skills, innovation and creativity while fostering a spirit of entrepreneurship among the entrants.

Yarl Geek Challenge Senior Season 7 kicked off in August 2018. Initially applications were called and interested teams applied by submitting the proposals. We received 70+ applications this year which was an increase by 71%. All the teams who applied for invited for a webinar on "Business Modelling and Customer Validation". After the webinar, the teams were asked to submit their first version of the business model canvas and 57 teams managed to do the submission on time. These teams were invited for the second webinar on "How to present the ideas effectively". After the session 46 teams submitted their draft presentation and got qualified to the hackathon. Due to logistic issues, a further review was done and 23 teams got qualified for the hackathons in Jaffna and 17 teams made it to Jaffna. Before coming to the Hackathon, these 17 teams were mentored by a team of Toronto based entrepreneurs.

During the three day hackathon on the 2nd, 3rd and 4th November, 2018 in Jaffna there were many activities lined up for teams. Each team was assigned with an industry expert technical mentor and the team worked with the mentor to refine their products during the first two days. In parallel they were also give mentoring to improve their business plan and pitch deck. They also had the opportunity to listen to keynotes by Rajan Anandan (Vice president and Managing Director Google India), Jurgen Samuel (CEO of iQuest Group) and Nathan Sivagananathan(Chief Growth Officer MAS Holdings and Member of the Board MAS Capital) and Shashvat Rai (Investment Manager, Avishkar).

On the second day in parallel to the hackathon YGC7, several other events were held highlighting passionate individuals, companies and organizations who had sewn the seeds in Jaffna to build their ventures to develop the Northern peninsula.

- An academic forum was organized bringing together representatives from almost all the main organisations in Jaffna related to Tech Education, to share ideas with the visiting panel for YGC and create an opportunity to network.
- Following that an industry forum was organized, which brought together companies, start ups and community organisations who are working on Technology and Innovation while operating from Northern Province. This was mainly to create awareness and showcase the work that was happening and to explore more opportunities to collaborate.



Yarl Geek Challenge Season 7 - Senior

- A full day maker exhibition was running at Hatch Kalam, where secondary school children exhibited their creativity, showcasing their talent. A range of creativity and innovations were on display from a photography exhibition, art work, smart post box to even a safety connected helmet.

On the same day evening we had a fellowship dinner for the mentors, volunteers and representatives from our sponsors. Hosted annually, this brings together the extended community, to network and meet people from both academia and industry. This year was special, giving rise to meet prominent figures from around the globe, enabling the establishing of key relationships. The event also marked an important milestone in YIT's journey, as we proudly launched our strategic plan for YIT, the 1000x program.

On the final day, 17 Teams had the opportunity to pitch their start ups in front of the eminent panel of Judges which included Rajan Anandan, Juergen Samuel, Prajeeth Balasubramaniam and Dr. Roshan Ragel. Out of the 17 teams, 11 teams qualified for the finals.

Soon after the YGC finals, we also hosted the YIT-MQED Agro Tech Challenge. Two challenges were issued on Agri Tech. One was to develop a Semi-Automated Harvesting Machine for Use in Open-Field Systems and the other one was to develop a portable growing ecosystem. The MQED team which initially pledged Rs. 200,000 as prize money, decided to increase the prize pot to encourage the teams to take their innovations forward. The winner was awarded a Rs. 200,000 prize money followed by Rs. 100,000 each to 3 three joint runners up teams.

The 11 teams who qualified for the YGC finals presented their products with many refinements at the finale which commenced on the 17th of November, 2018 in Colombo. Team Porukki emerged as winners while Team Phoenix and Team TJAMS followed as 1st and 2nd runners up respectively.

We are thankful for the sponsors of YGC7,

Innovation Partner	- GIZ SME
Pioneer Partner	- ITEE Foundation
Platinum Sponsors	- Lebara Foundation, MQED, EAI Technologies and Aavishkaar
Gold Sponsors	- Ideamart and HNB
Silver Sponsors	- Hsenid mobile, Ideabeam, Comdu.it, WSO2, StartupX Foundry and Extreme SEO
Strategic Partner	- Lankan Angel Network
Accounting Partner	- V-Ignite
Green Tech Partner	- Eco Steem Pvt. Ltd.
Media Partners	- Readme, Pandagraph and Brandme



2018 was an year of building for Aki (ஆக்கி). Continuing the years of good work done by SERVE foundation on building content for secondary education, our main task in 2018 was to build the digital infrastructure to launch the content as MOOCs, which can be accessed via the web and mobile. The following activities were completed in 2018.

- Conducted a Symposium on E-Learning for Tamil Medium Education, bringing together organizations and practitioners working on this ecosystem to create awareness of each others activities, share knowledge and best practices.
- The programming content taught at Uki, the coding school, has been created in to a MOOC and will be available for any student.
- Created a 500+ question and answer bank for Advanced Level Combined Mathematics, Biology, Physics and Chemistry subjects, to kick start a 'stack over flow' style online forum to be used by students.





thulir

In order to achieve the strategic goal of Yarl IT Hub being a catalyst in the process of forming 100 start ups and SMEs by 2022, one among the action plans was to create a social innovation center. In September 2018, this took shape and it was named as Thulir (துளிர்).

Thulir started with three full time researchers, who has been given the mandate of creating reports, business models and pieces of technology which can be transferred to the community. In turn the community could make use of these to create economic opportunities and employment at grass root level.

As its first initiative Thulir team has started work on a series where they spot and share possible 'low hanging fruits' to create economic opportunities via innovation in Jaffna. The first report in this series explores the potential around Tamil Language Technology for SME development which was released in December and open to everyone.

The team has been supported and mentored voluntarily by Professor Prema Arasu and Mr. Jekhan Aruliah.



Hatch Kalam (ஹட்ஷ் களம்) is a joint initiative by GIZ, Hatch and Yarl IT Hub. It is a co-working space and a makerspace on Stanly Road Jaffna. The fully operational Hatch Kalam was in place from May 2018 and since has become the home to entrepreneurs and teams who occupy the co-working space on a daily basis.

It has also become the venue for a lot of Yarl IT Hub events including community meet ups, workshops and trainings. Other organizations had also been renting the venue during the weekends to organize their events. Hatch Kalam has created a conducive environment for networking, knowledge sharing and collaboration for technologists and entrepreneurs in Jaffna.

hatch kala 

By

GIZ

Yarl IT Hub

Hatch



CUTAR

Cutar (കുട്ടർ) is another initiative of Yarl IT Hub which was started with the idea of encouraging and supporting women getting in to technology and entrepreneurship.

Cutar is working with the main goals of motivating women to take on roles in IT/Tech/Business fields, providing a channel through which more women can take part and contribute to different sectors and building a potent community by exercising the untapped talent.

We identified that promoting diversity starts from encouraging girls at school. Hence, right after the launch in 2018, the first event was a forum with ICT teachers from girls schools to identify the challenges and needs from their perspective. As the next step we conducted a workshop to encourage and inspire girls to code.

We also understand that it is very important to provide access to role models from the same environment to motivate the younger generations. Hence we are in the process of connecting women who have braved and succeeded in the tech industry, as well as with successful entrepreneurs.

Events



Community meet ups have been a key factor for the continuous engagement and networking for the Yarl IT Hub community from its inception. In 2018 we had the highest number of community meet ups in a calendar year.

Meetup with Stanford MBA students [January]

33 MBA students and two faculty members from Stanford visited Jaffna and during the visit a community meet up was arranged to give the opportunity to network between Yarl IT Hub community and the Visiting delegation from Stanford.

Community Meetup and YGC Junior Launch [April]

YGC Junior Season 7 launch was held on the 21st of April, 2018. After a brief introducing to the competition, there were three sessions related to YGC. First one was on developing a mobile application using ionic framework, second one on cyber security and the third one was on blockchain. These sessions were conducted to inspire the students to develop innovative solutions.

Workshop on Robotics [June]

Introduction to Lego robotics using Mindstorms EV3 kit was conducted for students on the 29th of June, 2018. This was conducted by Rishathvik Ramoshan and it was supported by Rishenth Ramoshan and Ramoshan Canagasaby.

Meet up on Human Technology [July]

A community meetup on human technology was held on the 22nd of July, 2018. This meetup helped the participants to explore how to improve our core human foundations while we see growth due to technology advancement. We had two eminent speakers Jurgen Samuel (CEO of iQuest) and Simone Heinzelmann (Founder & Managing Director | Creator of Human Technology | bei QuantHum GmbH) for this meetup.

Meet up on Machine Learning [July]

On the 26th of July, we organized a meetup on Machine Learning. This session was conducted by Dr. Murugiah Muraleetharan. It helped the participants to get a good understanding of machine learning and different usecases where machine learning is very useful.



Events

Workshop Series on Robotics and Programming for kids. [August]

In order to give the school students a fulfilled learning experience, we organized a series of workshops during their school holidays. The first workshop was held on the 18th of August. This focused on robotics and was a hands on session where the students were given different robotic kits. The second session which was held on the 25th and 26th of August, focused on web development. Students were taught to build simple websites using html5.

Workshop on Accounting and Financial Practices for startups [September]

A workshop to share the knowledge on how accounting & financial practices would complement and deliver fast growth to a startup was held on the 1st of September, 2018. The sessions conducted by Vijeykanth Rajalingam (Managing partner of VJM partners), Mathushangar Yogendran (C.E.O V-ignite) and Raguram Raamakrishnan (Research team lead) covered topics such as taxation regulations, Business Incorporation, implementation of accounting controls, business valuation etc. This was very much useful for those who wanted to start their own venture.

Pre University skills development workshops [September]

A pre university skills development workshop was conducted on the 29th of September 2018 to teach the basics of programming that will be mostly taught in universities. The intention of this course was to give prior knowledge for those who have not learnt programming during school.

E-learning Symposium [September]

An e-learning symposium was organized on the 13th of september 2018. The main objective of this symposium was to discuss the issues in electronic education, what is the current status of electronic education and what we can do. Private institutions, state institutions, old student organizations, and international organizations that provide electronic education presented their ideas in this symposium. Participants also presented their goals to be achieved by 2020 along with the plan to achieve it.

Learn to Code [December]

Learn to Code was a programming workshop organized and conduct by the Cutar team to inspire girls to code. During this session participants were guided to implement a simple mobile application using MIT App inventor and they were introduced to basic programming.



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