Yarl IT Hub
Annual Report
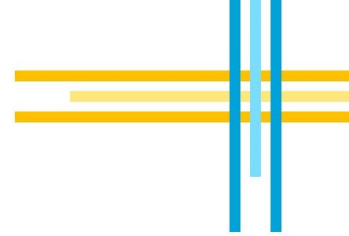# 2019

Contents

About Yarl IT Hub

Yarl IT Hub (YIT) is a not for profit social enterprise dedicated to inspiring, supporting and fostering Technology, Innovation, and Entrepreneurship in the community. It is an organization by the community for the community that is comprised of all those who share the core values of YIT and the dream of making Jaffna into the next Silicon Valley.

Founded in 2011, YIT continues experimenting, growing and positively impacting more lives at the grass roots level by organizing and operating these programs and competitions:

Yarl Geek Challenge Senior: startup accelerator and competition

Yarl Geek Challenge Junior: community engagement and technology competition for school children

Uki: full scholarship based technology school

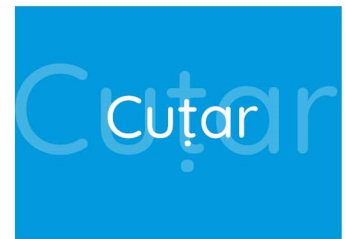Aki: digital education platform for secondary school children

Thulir: social innovation center

Hatch Kalam: co-working space and Makerspace

Cutar: encouraging and supporting women getting in to technology and entrepreneurship

These programs are made possible by the more than 150 volunteers from the community, our partners, and sponsors who support us technically and financially.

Our Vision

Our vision is to make Jaffna the next Silicon Valley

Our Mission

Making Jaffna a innovation hub

Our Values

To nurture and develop talent in ourselves and others

Operate with transparency

Empower the community with technology

Be technology and corporate independent

Be innovative

Be apolitical

Not for profit
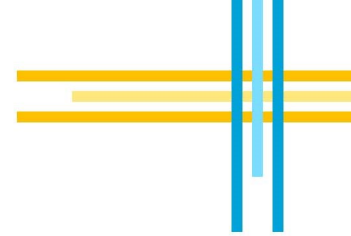
2019: At a Glance

YGC JUNIOR

| 250+ school students | 75+ Teams | 1 Webinar | 100+ Volunteers |

YGC Senior

| 50+ Applications | 100+ Participants | 2 Webinars | 150+ Volunteers |

| 3 Online mentoring sessions | 21 Semi finalist | 10 Finalists |

Events

| 10+ Community Meetups and Workshops | 50 Average Participants |

Launches

| Uki The technology school in Kilinochchi | Aki e-learning platform |

Executive Summary

- Launched Uki, the technology school in Kilinochchi and successfully completed two cohorts in Kilinochchi.

- Increased capacity at Uki Jaffna and Kilinochchi locations which has increased the total capacity from Uki coding school to 100 graduates per year.

- Successfully finished roadshows in New Jersey, Los Angeles, San Francisco and Sydney to showcase the talent pool and the growing startup ecosystem. The San Francisco event event with the attendance of over 140 people was a highlight.

- Successfully completed Yarl Geek Challenge season 8, arguably the best yet with respect to the quality of teams. Almost four teams are looking at taking it forward as startups.

- Launched www.aki.coach , the e-learning platform.

- Created the model for Franchising Uki, so it can be replicated in other provinces by organizations who are interested.

- Introduced a new prize in YGC Junior for other innovations, allowing non tech innovations to be highlighted as well.

Executive Summary

In 2020 we have planned these four major initiatives:

- Expand Uki by opening more centers and increase the number of completions

- Commence an online version of Uki, where course delivery is done entirely online

- Launch YGC Accelerator, a six-month program to help accelerate the startups journey towards revenue generation and seed funding

- Increase the number of community engagement programs

The community is steadily growing and the impact of the Yarl IT Hub activities is clearly felt at the grassroots level. We now see Jaffna getting recognized as the second most important place for startups in the island after Colombo in many of the ecosystem studies and reports published by multiple agencies.

It is only with the support of the community, our partners, and sponsors we have been able to accomplish so much. By keeping the focus on fostering entrepreneurship, education, innovation, and technology adoption, we can and will grow opportunities for the community.

Our Strategy (2017-2022)
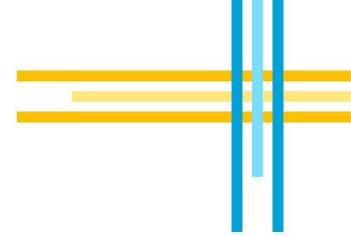
Our five year plan was first devised in 2017 and we are on our way to achieving the goals we have set as we pass the halfway point to 2022.

The Goal

To have 10,000 students learning via the Digital Education Platform

1000 students from Uki Technology school gaining Jobs in Tech Industry

Be a catalyst for the formation of 100 start ups and enterprises from the community

Our plan to do so consists of the following five points:

Capacity Building

- Through a digital secondary education initiative
- By scaling the Uki coding school to increase our number of graduates

Ideation

- Through a research and social innovation center established in 2018

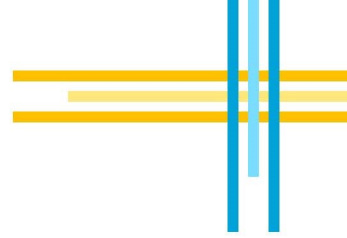### Networking and Community Building

- Through active diaspora engagement

Funding

- Seed funding for very early startups

Ūki (ஊக்கி)

Uki is a full scholarship based accelerator program for coding with classes online and at centers in Jaffna and Kilinochchi. Uki engages students who have not got access to tertiary education or any form of vocational education and provides them with the necessary training to enter the tech industry or to attempt a startup.

Uki Jaffna

Uki Jaffna began operations in early 2017 and has now successfully completed five cohorts with 68 students completing the program.

Uki Jaffna's fourth cohort began on the 7th of November 2018 and concluded on the 30th of April 2019 and 18 students graduated from the program. Those who were available got internships in well-known companies and startups. A group of four from the batch has a startup called "Smiley Gifts", an online gift delivery platform.

Uki's fifth batch started on the 6th of May 2019 and concluded on the 26th of October 2019. 11 students graduated from this batch.

Uki's sixth batch began on the 6th of November 2019 with 20 students.

The teams from Uki Jaffna have been consistent participants at Yarl Geek Challenge and UNDP's hackathons.

Ūki (ஊக்கி)

Uki Kilinochchi

In the year 2019 Uki commenced operations in Kilinochchi. The first cohort of Uki Kilinochchi successfully completed the six-month training program and all the students who were available for the internship got internships.

From Cohort 1, Team Olai & Team Thoori were finalists of Yarl Geek Challenge, Season 8. Team Olai was the Runners Up of YGC 8 Senior. Both team Olai & Thoori have started their e-commerce business and are in operation now.

Uki Cohort -2 has commenced and the cohort size in Kilinochchi has been increased to 20.

Yarl Geek Challenge Season 8 – Junior

The students were asked to send their applications under any of these four categories: Web application, mobile application, hardware application, and innovative product. The deadline for sending the applications to the school was on the 9th of June 2019. Applications were received from 75 teams, and the teams competed in their respective zones on the 15th of June 2019. Following the evaluations, 30 teams were selected to compete in the two-day hackathon in Jaffna on 29th and 30th of June 2019.

The following teams won in their respective zones:

Jaffna: Sivastika Sugumar, Kowishika Ilangowan from Vembadi Girls' High School.
Valikamam: Sivarooban Praveenskan, Perinbanathan Sankavan.
Vadamaracchi: Rameshkumar Rajinthan, Srivalakanthan Sanjayan, Umachandran Jananan
Vavuniya South: Pushpanathan Dhanojan, Nadarajah Milakshan
Vavuniya North: Ponnuchchami Visovan, Pushparajah Lakshikan, Thushanthan Krishnakumar
Thunukkai: Balasingam Arjithan

The overall title winners for the four categories were as follows:

Best Web Application was won by Kokuvil Hindu College for developing Class Time Manager, a mobile app for private institutions to map their schedules and classes.

Best Hardware application was won by Hartley College for its home automation and security system. The team designed a home security system which does motion detection, controls electronic products and detects gas leakage and CO2.

Best Mobile Application was won by a team from Jaffna Hindu College for an Order Management System.

Best Innovative Product was won by Jaffna College for its Auto Bubble Car.

Yarl Geek Challenge Season 8 - Senior

Yarl Geek Challenge was held this year for the 8th consecutive year. The lead up to the main event saw the webinars to the teams on Business Modelling Canvas and Pitch Deck Preparation. Thereafter teams were paired with International mentors in Canada and US to have one-on-one mentoring sessions. After a rigorous round of filtering, 21 teams qualified for the Yarl Geek Challenge weekend in Jaffna.

The Yarl Geek Challenge weekend in Jaffna was again run on a packed agenda with the following keynote speakers delivering excellent and relevant content to the community.

- Darryll Sinnappa - Country Managing Director, Edotco Sri Lanka
- Jeeva Perumalpillai-Essex - Development Economist and Advisor Comdu.it
- Prajeeth Balasubramaniam - Managing General Partner of BOV Capital Limited and Digital Innovation Fund
- Shan Nantha Kumar - President ITEE Foundation, USA
- Velan Thillairajah - CEO/Founder of EAI Technologies, USA

While the teams were going through Tech and Business mentoring from a prominent panel of Entrepreneurs and Technologists. In parallel following mini events were organized allowing visitors to get some insights into the budding tech and start up ecosystem in North.

Industry forum

Maker Exhibition by school children

Annual networking dinner

Yarl Geek Challenge Season 8 - Senior

At the end of the YGC weekend in Jaffna 10 teams were chosen for the finale held in Colombo.

At the finale Team Magenda was declared as winners, Team Tharuvi were the runners up and Team Musketeers were the 2nd runners up.

Magenda (Winning Team)
Magenda has an app as a hub for event organizers. The app aims to offer attendees information about the event, live feedback and reactions to programmes.
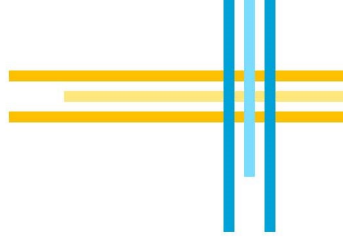
Tharuvi (Runners Up)
Dubbed Olai, the team proposes an online store to promote Jaffna's high-quality palmyra products through the digital space.

Musketeers (2nd Runners Up)
Happy Petal is an automated smart greenhouse. It includes an automated water system and temperature control system. The lack of any artificial fertiliser makes the harvest organic.

Āki (ஆக்கி)

www.aki.coach was launched in 2019 with the following learning courses and forums:

- Year 10 and Year 11 Mathematics and Science lesson videos with self-diagnostic tests for students.

- Advanced level question and answer forum with more than 500 questions in the following subject areas - Combined Mathematics, Biology, Chemistry and Physics

- Node JS Programming course

The Team also worked on developing a content in the box solution, which will allow students in schools with sporadic internet access to access the content of Aki using offline mode, which will get synched with Aki's cloud infrastructure as and when connectivity is available.

Digital Learning Platform

Tuḷir (துளிர்)
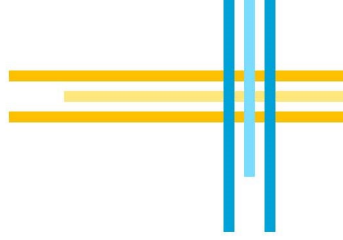
In order to achieve the strategic goal of Yarl IT Hub being a catalyst in the formation of 100 startups and SMEs by 2022, one of the actions was to create a social innovation center. In September 2018, this took shape and it was named as Thulir.

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

They have published one reports from the researched they have done and some of the community members have already shown interest to work on proposals mentioned in the report.

Hatch Kaḷam (ஹட்ச் களம்)
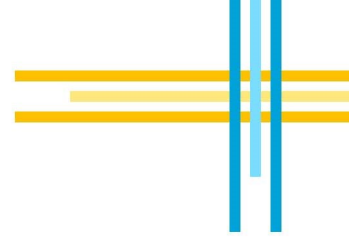
Hatch Kalam is a co-working space and maker space in Jaffna. This is a joint initiative by GIZ, Hatch and Yarl IT Hub. Tech-related workshops are conducted at the maker space and day to day occupancy of the co-working space has seen a steady growth, which is encouraging for the future.

The maker space gives an environment for kids to come and create or build new things. We encourage kids to come here and make use of this space.

Hatch Kalam played host role to most of the Yarl IT Hub Jaffna events in 2019, which included the networking dinner of Yarl Geek Challenge, Yarl Geek Challenge Junior etc. Hatch Kalam is also used by other organizations to run their events.Events such as workshops, exhibitions, community meetups etc. are held here on a regular basis. We welcome anyone who is interested to use this space.


hatch kaḷaⵔ
By
GIZ   Yarl IT Hub   Hatch
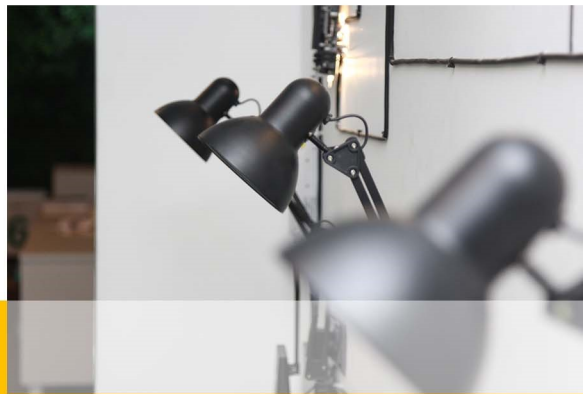
Cuṭar (சுடர்)

Cutar is another initiative of Yarl IT Hub which was started with the idea of encouraging and supporting women getting into technology and entrepreneurship.

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. This year too there was a workshop conducted to encourage and support girls who would like to learn coding.

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. We also put the girls together with successful women entrepreneurs.
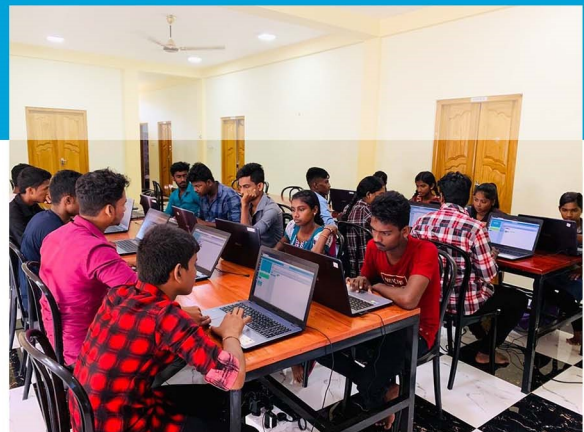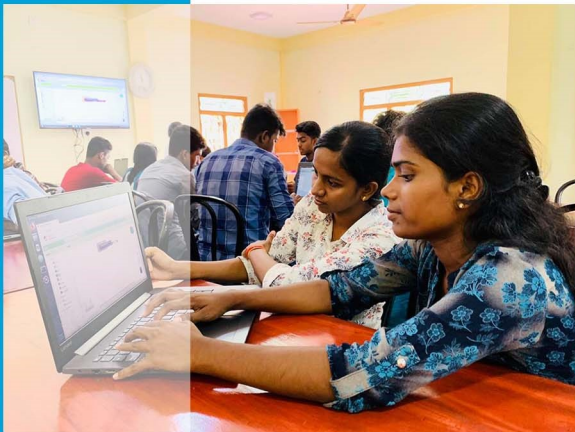
Events

The following events and short courses were held during the year:

- Becoming an Entrepreneur - Short Course in Jaffna

- Introduction to IT and Web Development - Short Course in Kilinochchi

- Ideation Workshop on Food Technology, Environment and Tourism

- Google Study Jam - Getting Started with Machine Learning Tools in Jaffna

Events

- Mini YIT Community Meet Up in Kilinochchi on "Bringing Ideas to Life"

- Workshop on creating an e-commerce website with Wordpress and WooCommerce for school children in Jaffna

- Yarl IT Hub Community Meetup on Deep Learning | App Development | Robotics in Jaffna

- Yarl IT Hub Workshop - Introduction to Programming in Java held in Jaffna

- Yarl IT Hub Workshop - Coding for Kids Age 7-15 in Jaffna

Events
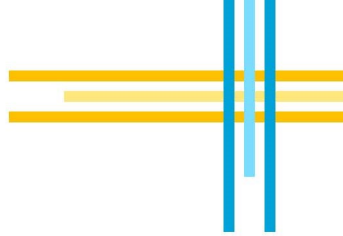
Global Events

These events were organized to connect the diaspora to Yarl IT Hub:

- Event in San Francisco was organized by ITEE Foundation, USA with more than 140 attendees, (professionals and entrepreneurs) flying in from Sri Lanka, UK, Canada and all parts of US

- Event in Sydney was organized by Tamil Engineers Foundation where a potential collaboration between Yarl IT Hub and Tamil Engineers Foundation was discussed to develop real-world technological solutions designed to encourage young people in entrepreneurship

- Smaller events were held in New Jersey and Los Angeles

Our Partners and Sponsors

Partners

YGC8 Senior - Partners and Sponsors

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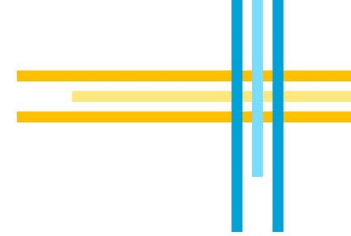**GOLD SPONSORS**

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MEDIA PARTNER

YIT Impacts

Start ups	25+

200+	Employments

YGC Juniors	4000+

900+	YGC Seinors

Tech Meetups	25+

50+	Community Engagement Events

Yarl IT Hub   - 82, Cross Road, Nallur, Jaffna
Uki (Jaffna)   - 124 Rasavinthoddam Rd, Jaffna
Uki (Kilinochchi) - No 423 Thirunagar, Kilinochi
Hatch kalam   - 4th Floor, 218 Stanly Rd, Jaffna

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youtube.com/user/yarlithub