

UPF: Youth Support UN SDGs through RYS Service Project in Sri Lanka

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Bandarawela, Sri Lanka – To mark UN International Youth Day on August 12, Sri Lanka's Religious Youth Service, which operates under the UPF umbrella, held a weeklong service project in rural Bandarawela from August 7 to 13, 2025. The project, coordinated by Dr. Chula Senaratne, secretary general of UPF-Sri Lanka, brought together 44 student leaders and 12 staff members, from five nations.



Bandarawela, in Sri Lanka's Badulla District at about 1,000 meters above sea level, is a scenic hill country town famed for its lush tea plantations, cool climate, and vibrant multicultural community. The project's schedule combined service work, cross-cultural interaction, and deep learning experiences.

Following an orientation designed to foster group bonding and a shared commitment to selfless service, the young people participated in interactive sessions on taking initiative, teamwork, and conflict resolution. They also joined together in daily meditation sessions and special lectures to foster self-awareness and maintain a "happy state."



The main project was the renovation of a water storage tank and distribution pipeline serving the village of Allimalai in the Makulella Grama Division. The project's impact was immediate and transformative: all 30 households – approximately 150 residents – now enjoy a secure, reliable water supply, bringing health, dignity, and hope to the entire community, primarily the families of hardworking tea plantation workers.



An International Youth Day ceremony was held on August 12, with local school and government leaders in attendance. **Mrs. Ursula McLackland**, secretary general of UPF-Asia, explained the significance of the day, while **Mr. Alvin Pang** of RYS Global read a message by the UN secretary-general. During this event RYS donated a volleyball and net to the village. Following the program, participants enthusiastically mobilized to clear land for a new volleyball field and to install the poles and draw its

perimeter. This practical, community-centered initiative will bring lasting benefits to the village's youth.

The link between the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and youth-led local action was also thoroughly explored. Participants reflected on potential projects for their home communities, setting the stage for ongoing engagement and follow-up.



Multi-faith understanding was also deepened through visits to an Anglican church, a mosque, a Hindu temple, and the luminous Mahawana Buddhist Monastery. Bathed in peaceful, ethereal light, the monastery offered a magical space for contemplation, bringing together the participants in a shared sense of awe and spiritual unity.



Each evening, participants shared songs, dances, and faith traditions from their heritage. The audience was treated to remarkable talent and vibrant displays of energy, especially in the traditional dances. Other fun highlights included energizer games, a river bath at a scenic waterfall, and a finale campfire, nourishing friendships and joyful memories.

Each participant departed with new bonds, treasured memories, and a profound sense of unity, as well as a commitment to take action in their own communities to advance the SDGs.