

#LightingDigital

#SheMeansBusiness



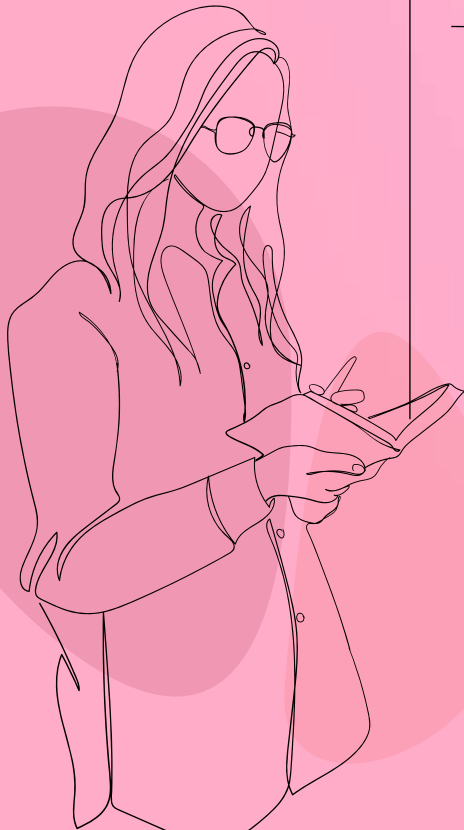
Suhuruliya

National Forum 2023

Women's Economic Empowerment
through Digital Technologies

Preface

Sri Lanka is developing fast with the adoption of digital technologies; thus, it is essential to improve digital capabilities across all segments in the society to convert them into active contributors within the digital economy. Therefore, it is pivotal to empower the rural woman, ensuring inclusive development and equal distribution of profits reaped by the digital technology to all corners across the nation, benefitting the whole community as one, single unit.



About Suhuruliya

The "Suhuruliya" Initiative, also known as "Pudumaippen" initiated by the Information and Communication Technology Agency of Sri Lanka (ICTA), together with the United Nations' Asian and Pacific Training Centre for Information and Communication Technology for Development (UNAPCICT), has made a significant impact in empowering rural women in Sri Lanka through ICT-enabled entrepreneurship and digital dissemination throughout its five year long journey. The Ministry of Women and Child Affairs and Social Empowerment and META (#SheMeansBusiness) partnered with ICTA along the line." So far, the program has capacitated more than 15,000 women entrepreneurs and enriched the lives of more than 175,000 women while contributing significantly to the economy in terms of improving digital literacy, economic contribution, and digital adoption of females. Sri Lanka being the first nation to launch the "Women in ICT Frontier" (WIFI) flagship initiative of the United Nations' Asian and Pacific Training Centre for Information and Communication Technology for Development (UNAPCICT), the transformative impact of digital technology on individual women, their families, and the wider community has been significant. Through this program, rural women are not only given access to digital tools and resources, but they are also exposed to comprehensive knowledge on how to use these tools effectively to conceptualize and run their businesses. This, in reflection, leads to increased economic opportunities and financial independence for them and their families, which creates a positive ripple effect on the entire community.

Objectives of Suhuruliya

- ◆ Empower them to overcome the challenges which refrain women from integrating ICT for business growth.
- ◆ Educate rural women entrepreneurs promptly on the effective use of ICT technologies and social media in economic activities for market penetration.
- ◆ Reinforce the abilities of state leaders and policymakers to create a positive environment to utilize ICT as a tool that supports sustainable development.

ACHIEVEMENTS

Boosting Digital Economy



Increased digital literacy by 47% among Suhuruliya participants



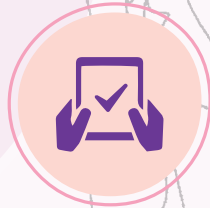
34% use digital marketing effectively



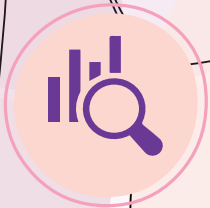
Increased income by 36%



25% of the participants are will to become entrepreneurs



98% positive sentiments on Suhuruliya



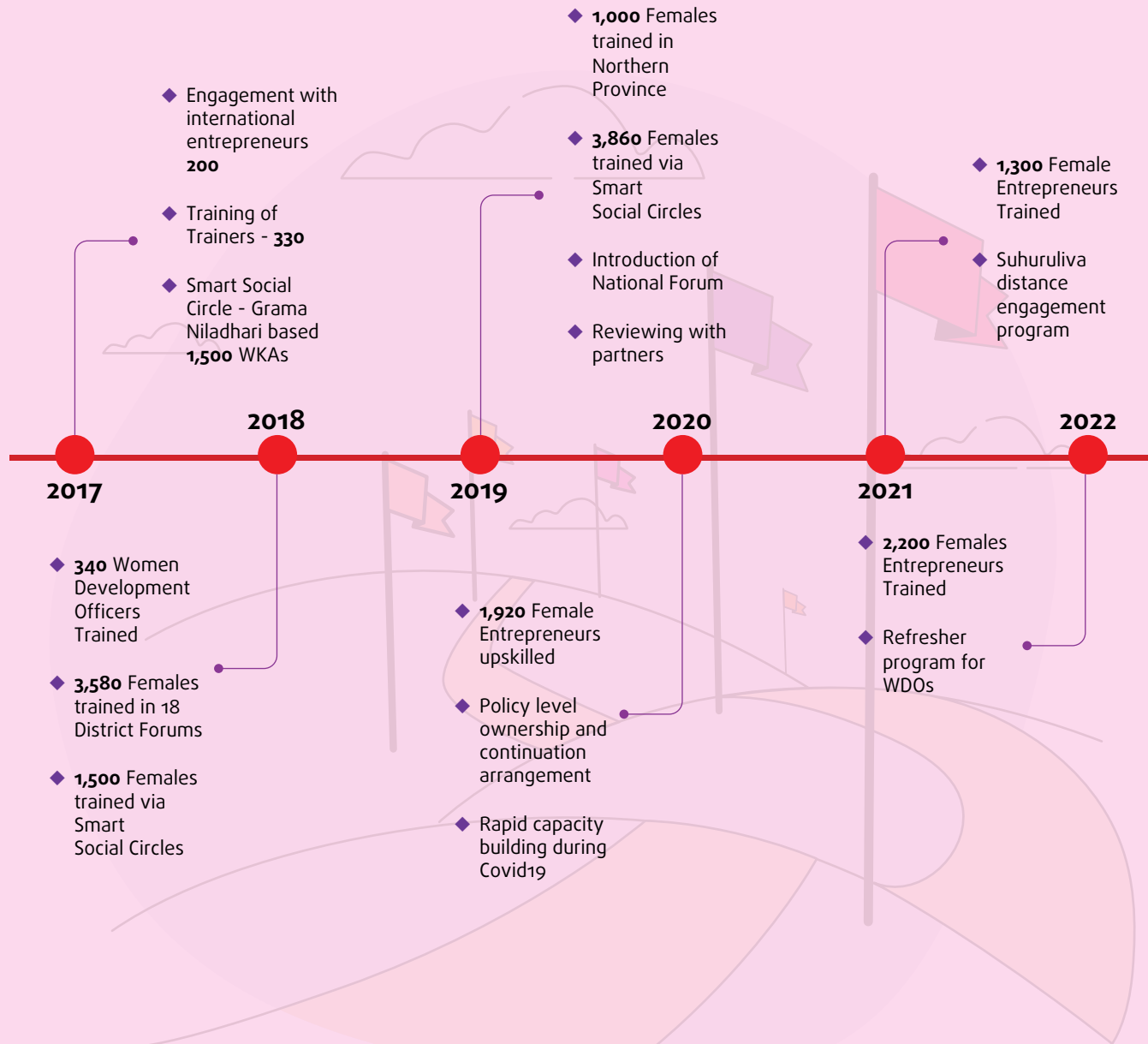
LKR 1.2 Bn annual increase in the income of the participants of suhuruliya

98% of the participants were happy about the content of the program

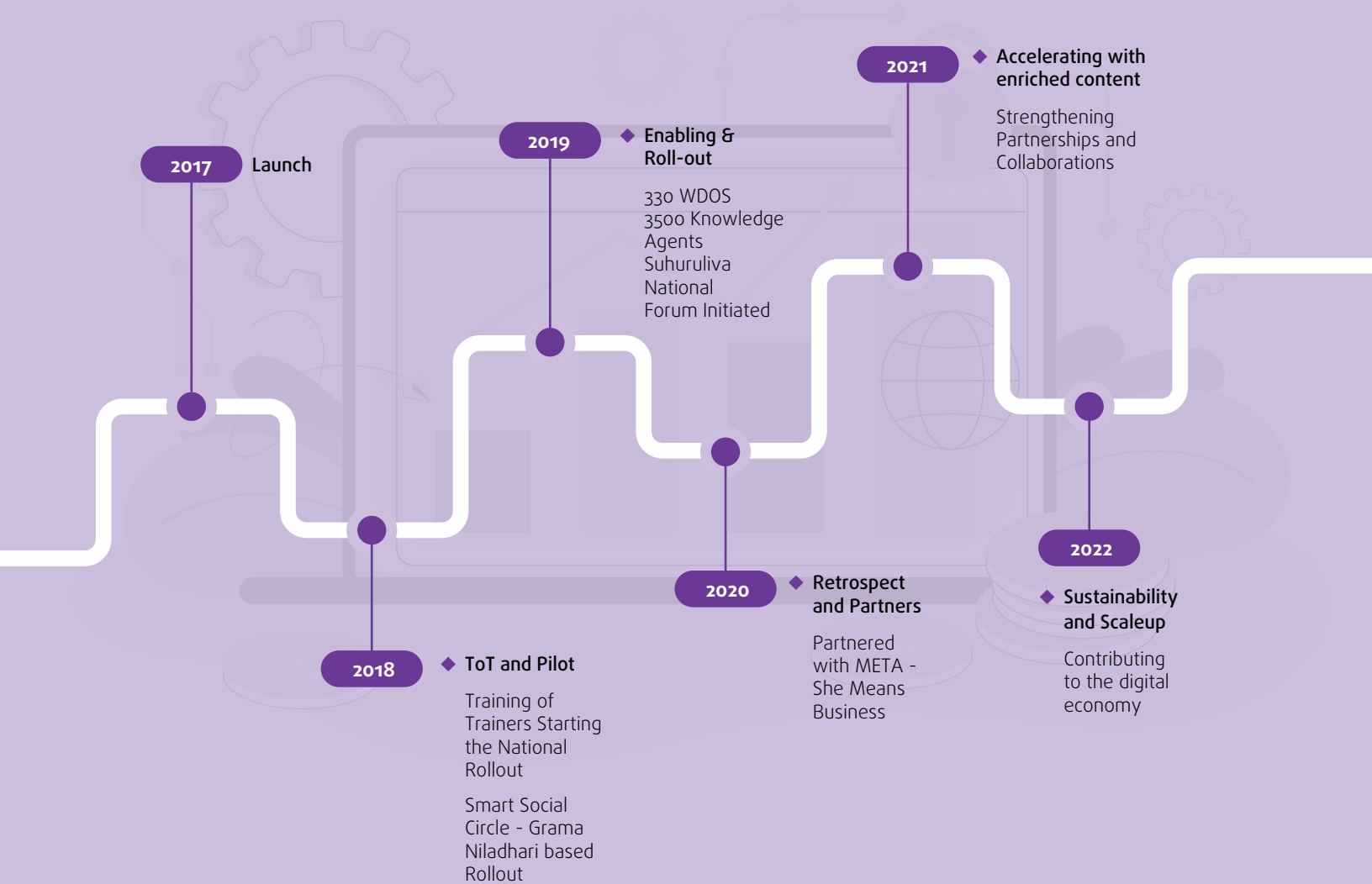
100% of the participants mentioned that the training was useful to them



JOURNEY SO FAR



MILESTONES



CASE STUDIES

Case No: 1

Facebook Page: Thurusingila Plant Nursery

Name: T M B Tennakoon

Link



"I have what they call a green thumb. Anything I plant grows and grows. Now my business is growing just like my plants, thanks to the social media and digital marketing skills I learned through the Suhuruliya program."



Case No: 2

Facebook Page: Crafting Hawi

Name: D.G. Nipunisha Nishadi Gamage

Link



"We design delightful keepsakes and invitations for weddings and other special occasions, using hand-crafted cards and "floral arrangements" with tiny baby's breath bouquets. My products are exquisite. But my lack of marketing skills restricted my opportunities. The Suhuruliya program was a "game-changer". Thanks to social media and digital marketing, I have customers placing orders from a wide range of places. My business is booming."



Case No: 3

Facebook Page: S&N Products

Name: Mrs. Jenika Senani Warushawithana

Link



"I make coconut vinegar, mango chutney, ambarella chutney and lime pickle, following "precious" old family recipes. Thanks to the social media skills I have learned through the Suhuruliya program, I have extended my customer base beyond my hometown of Panadura. And I have done all this without paying for advertising. Digital marketing made it possible."



For more case studies



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Empowering women entrepreneurs with digital knowledge is not just a goal; it's a necessity for a brighter and more inclusive future. Congratulations on the "Suhuruliya Initiative" and to ICTA and other partner entities for the efforts taking on empowering women nationwide.

Hon. Kanaka Herath, State Minister of Technology

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Empowering women is empowering the next generation. To adapt to this diversified world, and to face equality, digital transformation helps women a lot. Past 5 years, thanks to the "Suhuruliya program", women have brought a developmental revolution. All the best, "Suhuruliya" for making our women strong and vigorous by empowering them digitally.

Hon. Geetha Samanmalee Kumarasinghe, State Minister of Women and Child Affairs

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A digitally empowered woman is one of the pivotal factors in Sri Lanka's vision towards inclusive development. I recognize the "Suhuruliya initiative" that has paved the way by making a conducive ecosystem to accelerate women development in the nation!

Professor Malik Ranasinghe, Chairman, ICT Agency of Sri Lanka

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Efforts of making inclusive capacity building are essential to make the socioeconomic of the nation. "Suhuruliya", a strategic initiative of ICTA, can be considered one of the best case studies in the world.

Mr. Mahesh Perera, Chief Executive Officer, ICT Agency of Sri Lanka

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Digital technologies offer women entrepreneurs tremendous opportunities to manage and grow their businesses. I would like to commend ICTA for initiating the "Suhuruliya programme" and for helping thousands of women entrepreneurs embrace digital tools and platforms.

Mr. Kiyong Ko, Director, APCICT/ESCAP

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Empowering society with digital is essential to make Sri Lanka develop in an inclusive manner. The success of the "Suhuruliya" women empowerment drive is a result of wider collaboration of multiple stakeholders and partnerships.

Mr. Sameera Jayawardena, Associate Chief Digital Economy Officer, ICT Agency of Sri Lanka

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Due to the pandemic and the economic turbulence that followed, unlocking the potential of women entrepreneurs became vital. So, the 'Suhuruliya' program, in partnership with Meta's #SheMeansBusiness, became very important in Sri Lanka. We offered female entrepreneurs the inspiration to join the digital world that enables access to local and overseas markets

Ms. Beth Ann Lim, Director of Policy Programs and Campaigns, Asia Pacific, Meta

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The Way Forward

The Sri Lanka has been recognized as a successful case study by the United Nations - Asian and Pacific Training Centre for Information and Communication Technology for Development (UN-APCICT) and the next phase of this women's development initiative will be commenced in 2024 in collaboration with UNAPCICTs women in ICT frontier initiative.

Collaborations / Partners



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Ministry of Women, Child Affairs and Social Empowerment



Information & Communication Technology Agency of Sri Lanka

490, R. A De Mel Mawatha, Colombo 03, Sri Lanka

+94112369099

<https://www.facebook.com/suhuruliya>



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