

# Innovation for Change

## **APIIT partners with Citra Social Innovation Lab to design citizen-centric solutions for pressing socio-economic problems**

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Sri Lanka's Citra Social Innovation Lab introduced the students of APIIT to the fundamentals of Human-Centred Design and its application in designing innovative, citizen-centric, and sustainable solutions to pressing socio-economic problems. Students were equipped not only with an understanding of what Human-Centred Design is, but were also provided with a set of tools that can be applied to a vast number of situations to better understand a problem and design a solution to address it.

As the world changes, people need to change and adapt in order to thrive. This has resulted in the emergence of new approaches and ideas. Human-Centred Design is a creative approach to problem solving. It revolves around the people you're designing solutions for, and results in solutions that are purpose-built to suit specific needs and requirements. Human-centred design is about cultivating empathy, understanding and unpacking systems and relationships, generating ideas, building prototypes, testing, and finally, creating new and better solutions.

### **Thematic Areas Critical to Human Development**

The students had the opportunity to work in groups, and spend over 25 hours learning and engaging with technical experts from Citra Lab personnel. They worked under the thematic areas of Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, Sustainable Consumption and Production, Sustainable Cities, Tourism, Youth Employment, Equitable access to Education and Transportation.

The students were also introduced to simple tools and real-world examples of HCD in action. Through hands-on activities, they learned to apply Systems Thinking to help unpack an issue and identify the needs of an end user or beneficiary. Finally, they were guided to draw from their previous learnings and explore how the insights they have gathered through the workshop could be utilised to design citizen-centric solutions. They also explored the importance of fore sighting in designing sustainable, citizen centric solutions. Using the knowledge gained, students designed their own projects in areas such as a public transport, garbage disposal and education reform.

*"We made a great start, and that is mainly thanks to APIIT"* stated Kulunu Jayamanne, Coordination and Partnerships Associate, from UNDP in Sri Lanka. He explained the importance of Innovation and providing youth with the opportunity to explore their creativity through events such as this workshop.

*"Young people have enormous potential to contribute to solving the world's problems. We don't give them enough opportunity to do so. What we are trying to do here is very relevant, in this context. We are taking and a few small steps in the right direction by training the younger generation with the*

*tools they need to understand the world's problems and giving them an opportunity to present their solutions"* stated Gamindu Hemachandra, Chief Academic Officer, APIIT.

The workshop style all day events were held on 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> February at the APIIT City Campus. The Project Showcase was thereafter held on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of August at the BMICH in Colombo.

### **Inspire love for learning**

*"APIIT brings out the best in children"* said , Stefania Perera an APIIT Alumnus. The nurturing provided by the university enables students to become leaders and entrepreneurs. *"The projects done through this workshop are useful and will actually help society"* she said. She also stated that the experience at APIIT isn't confined to the classroom, and has a lot of practical activities such as this workshop. She testified that she had witnessed many successful people who have served the nation after graduating from APIIT.

*"Coming over here, doing a pitch and talking about the problems you are trying to solve has been a great opportunity, and you (the students) have grasped the school motto, 'Inspire love for learning'"* said Dr. Nirmal de Silva, of Lanka Impact Investment Network.

*"The change starts from us, from within"* Dr. de Silva said in conclusion.

### **APIIT**

Established in 1999, APIIT Sri Lanka is well known for its contribution to the higher education industry in Sri Lanka in partnership with Staffordshire University in the UK and Asia Pacific University of Technology and Innovation in Malaysia.

APIIT is the exclusive partner for Staffordshire University, UK degree programmes (both undergraduate and masters) in Business Management, Computing/IT and Law. With over 1,800 students in enrolment and an annual intake of over 700 students, the institute is one of the largest and oldest providers of foreign degree programmes in Sri Lanka.

APIIT is also proud to partner with NCUK and through its International Foundation Year, open the doors for admission into more than 50 top universities in 7 countries.

While pursuing their studies, students are also exposed to a myriad of extracurricular activities for soft skills development. Partnerships with local and foreign organizations ensure that students receive the best of global education and are updated on developments in all industries.

For more information on how you too can benefit from these opportunities, call APIIT Colombo on 0765 788 788 or APIIT Kandy on 0773 577 877 or email [info@apiit.lk](mailto:info@apiit.lk).

### **Citra Social Innovation Lab**

South Asia's first Social Innovation Lab, Citra was established as a joint initiative between UNDP in Sri Lanka and the Government of Sri Lanka (GoSL) in 2018. Citra 2.0 is Sri Lanka's pioneer Social Innovation Facility that offers human-centered design and systemic design thinking approaches to solve complex development problems. Together with the United Nations Development Programme

(UNDP) in Sri Lanka and first established as a joint initiative with the Government of Sri Lanka in 2018, Citra Lab focuses on learning and adopting innovative tools in its work to build solutions to the challenges faced by the general public. For more information, log onto [www.citralab.lk](http://www.citralab.lk).