



# “THE VOICE” VOL. 1, APRIL 2025

Newsletter of the Project for Women’s Economic Empowerment through Entrepreneurship, Leadership and Networking



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*The Project 1<sup>st</sup> Batch Women Entrepreneurs with Equipment Boucher Handed Over in March 2025*

## Introduction of the Project for Women’s Economic Empowerment through Entrepreneurship, Leadership and Networking

[The Ministry of Women and Child Affairs \(MOWCA\)](#) has been facilitating women’s access to various government services to enhance their economic empowerment, political participation, and the elimination of gender-based violence through Women Development Officers (WDOs)/ Women Development Field Assistants (WDFAs). Furthermore, MOWCA established Women’s Action Society (WAS) at the Grama Niladhari Division level, organizing women in the community to promote gender equality and women’s empowerment.

To support further strengthen these initiatives of the MOWCA, [Japan International Cooperation Agency](#)

[\(JICA\)](#) launched the **Project for Women's Economic Empowerment through Entrepreneurship, Leadership and Networking**, a four-year technical cooperation project in March 2023 with the Women’s Bureau of Sri Lanka (WB) as the implementing agency. The Project is expected to create and institutionalize a project model for women’s economic empowerment (WEE) through the implementation of pilot activities in the two (2) fields of **WAS activation** and **WEE** in the Ampara and Monaragala districts. JICA experts and project staff together with the WB and in cooperation with the District Secretariats of Ampara and Monaragala have been implementing a series of activities for this objective.

Overall Goal	The project model for women’s economic empowerment developed by this project is applied in areas beyond the project target Districts.
Project Purpose	The project model for women's economic empowerment through entrepreneurship development and enhancement of women's leadership and networking is institutionalized.
Outputs	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Partners and resources to implement pilot activities in the target Districts are identified.</li> <li>2. Knowledge, good practices, and lessons learnt in strengthening women's entrepreneurship and business, leadership, and networking through pilot activities are verified.</li> <li>3. The project model for women's economic empowerment through entrepreneurship development and enhancement of women’s leadership and networking is created through the implementation of the pilot activities.</li> <li>4. The capacity and mechanism of the Women's Bureau and WDOs/ WDFAs for the implementation of the project model are enhanced. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. WAS Activation Component</li> <li>b. Project Model Institutionalization Component</li> </ol> </li> </ol>
Project Sites	Colombo, Ampara District, Monaragala District
Project Period	March 2023 to March 2027

## Activation of Women Action Society (WAS)

The project activities to activate WAS were concluded in March 2025 with substantial achievements. The activities focused on the development of a model for WAS Activation in the country. The project has been instrumental in empowering women at both social and societal levels through various activities implemented in the Ampara and Monaragala and districts. Among the many initiatives undertaken, [the constitutions of WAS](#), [Divisional Women's Federation](#), and [District Women's Federation](#) were amended, and [a new constitution for the National Women's Federation](#) was developed. These mandates were launched at the International Women's Day ceremony held in 2024, under the patronage of the HE. President.

Additionally, the project facilitated all WDOs/WDFAs in the two (2) districts to formulate action plans to activate WAS and support implementing selected action plans. Experience, lessons learned, and best practices from the action plan implementation were compiled into a guidance note outlining strategies to activate the WAS for gender equality and women's empowerment. The Guidance Note was printed in three languages and distributed to the WB for dissemination among all WDOs and Federations across the country.

The project also took steps to revise the terms of Reference (TOR) for WDOs and WDFAs under the WB.



*The constitutions were handed over to the President in March 2024*



*16 days of activism in Ampara, one of the action plans implemented.*

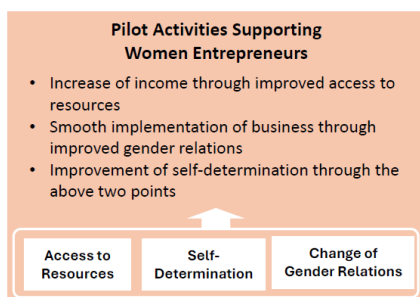


*Guidance Note for WAS activation*

## Supports to Women Entrepreneurs (WEs)

The project will support 64 women's businesses in two (2) batches in Ampara and Monaragala districts as pilot activities to develop a project model for women's economic empowerment through entrepreneurship development and enhancement of women's leadership and networking. The pilot activities would emphasize three (3) key components of women's economic empowerment: 1) Access to resources; 2) Self-determination; 3) Change of gender relations.

The first batch will support 18 women entrepreneurs from both districts. The selection process started in February 2024 by collecting applications from businesswomen/women's groups, after the training to all WDOs/WDFAs in the two (2) districts on the pilot activity implementation because they are the ones who will be responsible for advancing the pilot activities.



*WDOs/WDFAs taking gender training*

Through a process that included field visit verification on business status of the applicants, business plan development and motivation training and business plan presentation, which were conducted in collaboration not only with the WB and WDOs/WDFAs, but also with the District Secretariats and other government organization such as Small Enterprise development Division (SEDD), Industrial Development Board (IDB), National Enterprise Development Authority (NEDA) and Vidatha Resource Centre, 18 women entrepreneurs from Ampara and Monaragala were selected in October 2024 as the final target group for the first batch pilot activities. The information of 18 WEs in Monaragala and Ampara districts is shown in the right map.

After the selection, the project conducted the baseline survey with the 18 women entrepreneurs to understand their current situation as well as their needs to develop their business. Then the project started supports to the 18 women entrepreneurs: providing general training from January to March 2025; exposure visits to apparel and food processing sectors in March 2025; technical training on clay pot in April 2025; provision of equipment/machinery. After May 2025, the project will conduct technical training on apparel and food processing and organize a networking meeting with private sector.

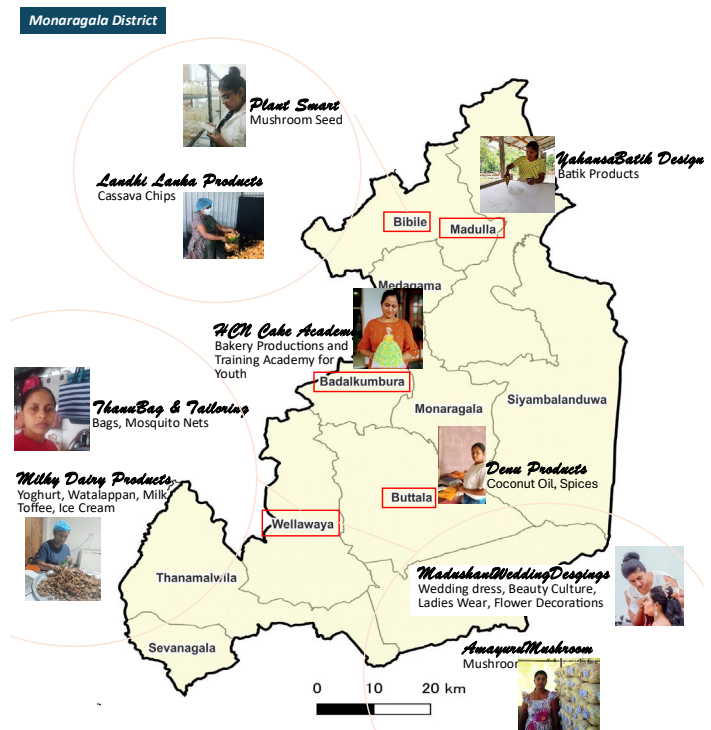
The second batch will support 46 businesswomen/ women's groups, and the selection process will start in May 2025.



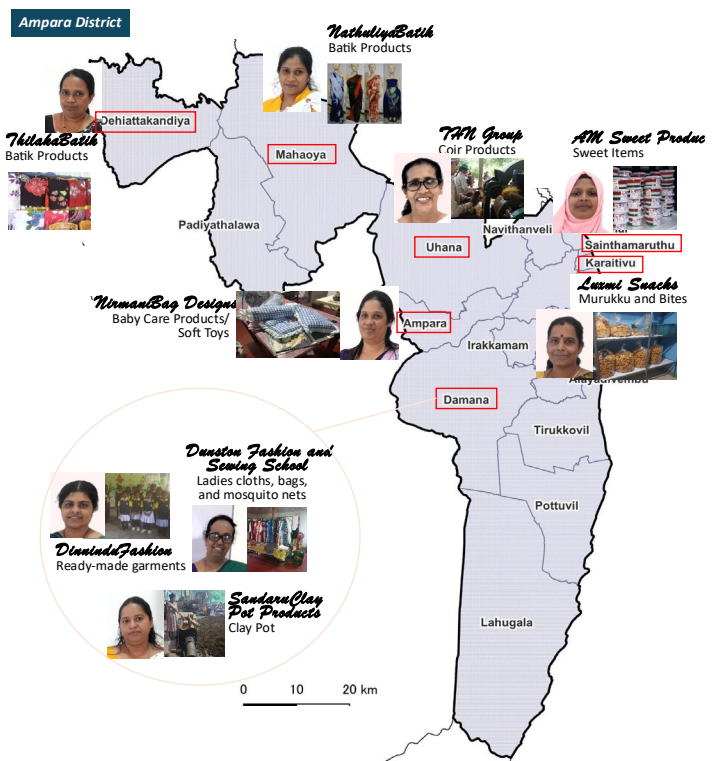
*Exposure visit of apparel sector to Omega Line Garment factory, Sandalankawa, organized*



*Activity in the training for WEs on export development procedures organized by EDB*



*WEs selected for the 1<sup>st</sup> batch from Monaragala*



*WEs selected for the 1<sup>st</sup> batch from Ampara*

## International Women's Day (IWD) 2025

### “Liya Shakthi” Trade Fair Prior to IWD, 2025

The Women's Bureau of Sri Lanka, JICA Sri Lanka Office and Sejaya Micro Credit organized “**Liya Shakthi (Power of Women)- Women Entrepreneurs Open Market and Exhibition**” in Wiharamahadevi Park, Colombo on March 6-5, offering support to 213 women entrepreneurs around the country to sell their products, among whom the following four (4) were

Ampara



“Nirmai Baby Care” for Baby care item



“Luxmi Product” for Murukku and Bite Items

Monaragala



“Yuhasa Bathik” for Bathik items



“Thanu Bag Centre” for Bags

from Ampara. Staff from the Women's Bureau indicated that this initiative provided invaluable exposure for all participating women, enabling them to comprehend market trends and learn effective market strategies relevant to their entrepreneurial endeavor

**Voice from Yuhansa Batik owned by Ms. G.G. Ruwini Lakshani Kumari, Medulla, Monaragala:**

*Participating in the trade fair in Colombo was a pivotal experience. I achieved sales of Rs. 80,000, which not only bolstered my revenue but also served as a testament to the effectiveness of the support I received from the project such as a series of training and provision of equipment/machinery.*

*In addition to direct sales, I secured orders for family kits—coordinated outfits aimed at the upcoming New Year season. This opportunity allowed me to network with other women in the same industry, fostering potential collaborations for future ventures. Moreover, I found inspiration in the products showcased by other entrepreneurs, providing insights into innovative items we could develop and introduce into the market.*

### International Women's Day (IWD)

The celebration of International Women's Day is organized annually by MOWCA. This year, it was held under the theme of “**Strong She Will Be a Pathway to Build a Sustainable Future**”, on March 7 in Battaramulla, bringing together more than 550 participants, including ministers, parliamentarians, diplomats, ministerial staff and development partners, which was chaired by Hon. Prime Minister, Ms. Harini

Amarasoriya. During this inspiring gathering, the 18 passionate women entrepreneurs under the project, each driven by their unique visions, were presented with essential equipment and machinery, as a pilot activity support from the project, designed to elevate their businesses. The Secretary of the MOWCA expressed heartfelt gratitude to JICA Sri Lanka for their unwavering support and generous cooperation extended to the people of Sri Lanka.



Hon. Prime Minister addresses the gathering



The Secretary and WB Director, JICA CR and SR presenting a voucher to a WE

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