



YouthForce Carries on His Legacy

Dr. A.T. Ariyaratne, Tiara and Niven Ganegama ,
Youth Force / Sarvodaya, Sri Lanka

☀ Call to Action

Support Sarvodaya's work of building and sustaining healthy communities in Sri Lanka:

www.sarvodaya.org

☀ Values

- Compassion
- Commitment
- Shramadama
- Community Service
- Environmentalism

☀ Lessons Learned

Helping one person see the truth can lead to the whole world opening their eyes to the truth.

Real change is born out of inspiration.

Be an example. Inspire people to be better!

When faced with war, take a stand for peace.

Niven and Tiara Ganegama were born in the United States, after their family was forced to flee their beautiful country of Sri Lanka for their safety, because it was in a state of war.

Their grandfather, Dr. Ari Ayratne, led peace marches that eventually led to an end to the civil war, and the ability of Niven and Tiara to return to Sri Lanka with their parents. Now in their teens, Niven and Tiara are carrying on their grandfather's legacy in a variety of ways, from collecting books and school supplies for children in a remote village, to helping village children learn English, to sponsoring tree planting programs through YouthForce, an organization they founded. Dr. Ari's message has always been the same: by awakening one person, it could lead to awakening a whole family; then an entire community; and one day, even the world. "I'll never forget my grandfather's message," Niven says. "Awakening, caring for others, sharing our gifts. That is his legacy."

☀ Language Arts

What is the importance of service? Conduct research on the importance of getting young children involved in helping others. Then create a 5-7 minute video in which you share your findings and encourage others to get involved with charitable work. (Hints: look up the concept of empathy; but also look at the practical skills people who work at nonprofits need to develop).

Working in groups of 3-5 people, create a 10-15-minute presentation about the effects of climate change in Sri Lanka, especially the 2004 tsunami. Research the economic, social, and environmental consequences of the tsunami, and the recovery process. (How long it has taken? How much money has it cost? What role have nonprofits played in the recovery of the

country?) Dr. Ari's organization, Sarvodaya, won an award for their involvement in the recovery efforts after the tsunami. What was their role during the recovery? Why did they win this award?

How do people learn a new language? Write a research paper in which you explore how a new language is learned, and why Youth Force's involvement in teaching English while engaging children in environmentally friendly practices is a great approach to learning a new academic skill while also learning how to take environmental action in their community.

STEM Activities

Sri Lanka is one of the biodiversity hotspots in the world, but its environmental ecosystems are being threatened by climate change. Research one species or type of ecosystem present in Sri Lanka and learn about how climate change is affecting it. Are there any Sri Lankan policies that are helping to reduce the impact of climate change on this species or ecosystem? If not, what are some policies the government could implement to reduce the impact?

Climate change and extreme weather affect Sri Lanka at large, but farmers and agricultural workers face the worst consequences. Research agricultural industries in Sri Lanka and learn how climate change is impacting it. How might the success or failure of these agricultural businesses affect the country's economy?

Identify a problem in your community like Niven and Tiara did, and then create a project to address it. Maybe you would like to organize a tree planting effort, or a reading program to help improve literacy rates. How would you carry out your plan? As an option, you might want to connect with your school administration or local government to help you expand the effort.

Read this [article](#)¹ about a cargo ship carrying dangerous chemicals that sank off the coast of Sri Lanka, causing an environmental disaster. What was the impact of the cargo sinking? How many pounds of microplastics leaked into the ocean? [One study](#)² estimated that Sri Lankans release 3 kilograms of plastic waste per capita each year. How many Sri Lankans would it take to produce the amount of plastic waste spilled from the cargo ship in a single day?

Sustainability Innovations

Review the [Youth Force Website](#)³. Does it accurately present the work that Niven and Tiara have accomplished? Why is it important to get funding and support for small nonprofits, and spread awareness of their success?

In addition to the voices of youth, it is important to have support from businesses and organizations. The [National Cleaner Production Centre Sri Lanka](#)⁴ is a leader in addressing sustainability goals through improved resource productivity.

Sarvodaya⁵ is one of the largest and most unique organizations in Sri Lanka. Their practices are based on the concept of *Shramadama* (sharing of one's time, thoughts, labor, and energy). Review the organization and compare its core principles with U.S.-based charitable organizations.

Sustainability Career Pathways

English Teacher. English teachers are in high demand all around the world. And English opens up many doors, making this a good subject to teach. Any subject can incorporate sustainability education-- English, history, social studies, and other subjects too. Here's a [good guide](#)⁶ on how to become a teacher.

International Sustainable Development Officer. Sarvodaya is a leader in sustainable development in Sri Lanka. Many international organizations are increasingly important in helping with community and regional development around the globe. Read this primer to [learn more](#)⁷.

Hydrologist. Hydrologists play a role in finding and researching water availability and quality. Sustaining the availability of clean, fresh water--especially with increasing climate change--is a challenge. Learn how you can help [here](#)⁸.

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- 1 <https://www.npr.org/2021/06/05/1003445739/the-ship-sinking-off-sri-lanka-looks-like-a-lasting-environmental-disaster>
 - 2 <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/action/doSearch?ContribAuthorStored=Samarasinghe%2C+Keshan>
 - 3 <https://youth-force-sri-lanka.business.site/#testimonials>
 - 4 <https://www.ncpcsrilanka.org/>
 - 5 <https://www.sarvodaya.org/>
 - 6 <https://www.teachercertificationdegrees.com/become/>
 - 7 <https://www.netimpact.org/careers/international-development/big-picture>
 - 8 <https://www.thebalancecareers.com/hydrologist-525671>

