



Emerge Global
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Emerge Lanka Foundation
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Emerge Lanka Foundation Press Kit

****IMPORTANT** A Note on Privacy/Protecting Our Participants**

Emerge Lanka Foundation exists to empower teenage girls who have survived abuse with business acumen, life skills and support systems that they need to lead healthy, self-sufficient lives. The girls who EmERGE works with are courageous: they are testifying in court against their perpetrators in order to make better lives for themselves, their sisters, and their children.

Because of the sensitivity of such court cases, their security is our top priority. We therefore do not reveal names or identifying photos and it is critical that no public articles jeopardize their safety in any way. If you have any questions about this, please contact us at emergelanka@emergeglobal.org. We are excited to work with you and appreciate your thoughtful consideration and respect in this matter!

For All Articles

Please include our website at the end of all articles so that viewers can get involved in supporting our work:
www.emergeglobal.org

Overview

Mission

To empower girls who have survived abuse in rediscovering and celebrating their personal beauty, developing their self-sufficiency, and becoming leaders in their own communities.

Overview of EmERGE Lanka Foundation

Emerge Lanka Foundation is a charitable organization that supports Sri Lankan girls, ages 10-18, who have been removed from their homes due to past abuse or the threat of abuse and are courageously testifying in court. These girls are placed into shelters that typically lack resources and educational opportunities; EmERGE partners with these shelters to transform them into entrepreneurship hubs, where girls develop the business and life skills needed for self-sufficiency. EmERGE empowers these girls with skills and resources for their futures, using a comprehensive curriculum that emphasizes leadership, life skills, and business knowledge, while simultaneously generating a financial foundation for each program participant through the creation of unique jewelry. EmERGE currently works in three homes with up to 75 teenage girls at a time.

The Story of EmERGE

During the summer of 2005, 19-year-old Alia Whitney-Johnson arrived in Sri Lanka as a tsunami-relief volunteer, sponsored by a fellowship from the MIT Public Service Center. During this trip, she encountered a heartbreaking reality: Girls as young as 11 who had survived rape or incest and had the courage to stand up for themselves in court were cast out of their own families, denied the right to formal education, and locked-up for their own protection.

A jewelry-maker since age seven, Alia decided to host a beading workshop to better acquaint herself with the girls. The act of creating jewelry soon became a tool for transformation, uplifting the girls' spirits and ultimately helping them to overcome the emotional, social, and economic obstacles they faced. The EmERGE Beads-to-Business program was born as a way to help girls heal while learning critical life and business skills through jewelry design.



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Bead by bead and girl by girl, Alia and a dedicated group of volunteers began to develop curriculum that would help these courageous young women lead safe, healthy and self-sufficient lives.

After piloting the program for several years, Alia founded EmERGE Global in 2008 with the goal of empowering girls all over the world who have survived sexual abuse to rediscover and celebrate their inner beauty, develop their self-sufficiency, and become leaders in their own communities. EmERGE Lanka Foundation was founded in 2009 as EmERGE Global's sister entity and implementing partner in Sri Lanka.

Quick Facts

- **Number of girls supported to date:** 450+
- **Mission:** To empower young women who have survived abuse to rediscover and celebrate their personal beauty, develop their self-sufficiency, and become leaders within their own communities.
- **Founded:** EmERGE Lanka Foundation was officially founded in 2009 as a charitable organization in Sri Lanka, though its programs were piloted before this. EmERGE Lanka's sister entity in the US, EmERGE Global, was founded in 2008.
- **EmERGE operates with a philosophy that we call Collaborative Capital Creation**, which lies between traditional non-profit models of service delivery and micro-finance. Rather than receiving a hand-out or a loan, the girls participate in the process of *generating* their own financial capital while also learning how to leverage this capital.
- **Sales:** 50% of the selling price of EmERGE jewelry goes directly into the designer's savings account, which she may access the age of 18. The remaining 50% covers the cost of materials and product distribution, so that EmERGE can support the healing of more survivors. All additional costs, such as program staff, are covered by individual donations.

EmerGE Programs

- **Beads-to-Business**
The girls learn to make high quality jewelry and can use this skill as the foundation for setting up and managing their own small businesses. The curriculum tackles concepts such as budgeting, inventory management, product development, marketing, branding, and financing. The jewelry (each piece is unique) is sold in the United States, Sri Lanka and online with 50% of the selling price going back to the girls' individual savings accounts so that when they turn 18, the girls have money to take care of themselves and, in some cases, their children. The remaining 50% covers the cost of materials and product distribution.
- **Life Skills Training**
The Life Skills program teaches girls about goal setting, reproductive health, job readiness, money management, communication, crisis management, and community engagement. The curriculum includes monthly outside speakers, demonstrative activities, and journal entries. During the community development theme, girls design and implement their own community projects by using a fund comprised of \$0.25 of every product they make.
- **Mentorship**
Each girl is paired with an adult role model who works with her during mentorship sessions on topics such as body image, childcare, mental health, social responsibility, goal-setting and more. An African based narrative therapy model for post-traumatic stress, "The Tree of Life" is incorporated into the sessions. Mentors provide inspiration and motivation to the girls, encouraging them to plan their own adult lives.



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Additionally, former participants return as “Peer Educators” to relay their own personal transitions into society, to inspire girls with stories of their successfully launched businesses, and to help teach various workshops.

- **Reintegration**

Emerge also supports girls as they transition from the women’s shelters to society by hosting annual alumnae reunions, providing general support and check-ins, and connecting them to a variety of local resources and service providers. Alumnae also have the opportunity to join the Emerge staff through the **Peer Educator Internship Program**. Emerge is committed to ensuring the girls it has touched stay on the path to a successful and bright future even after they leave Emerge’s program.

Our Impact

To date, Emerge Lanka Foundation has worked with over 450 girls from across Sri Lanka. Every Rs. 100 invested into a girl’s materials helps her generate more than Rs. 380 in savings. Some girls have made more than Rs. 190,000 within a year of participating in Emerge’s program. **Girls have used this money to finance their future education, take care of children, pay for medical support, run businesses, and even build homes.**

Much of our impact is harder to measure but is just as important. Girls who entered our program too broken to speak are now comfortable sharing their ideas. Participants have expressed increased confidence and self-worth. Through their Community Fund, participants have collectively identified communal challenges and worked together to change them. Participants have learned important life skills such as CPR and first aid, discussed career options with local professionals, and learned about their health and rights. Past participants return to the program to teach and mentor new participants and provide feedback about Emerge Lanka’s curriculum

Testimonials

Emerge Alumna, Age 20

“My life had taken a very unexpected turn and I was very sad about it. I felt trapped between four walls, cramped in a building, alone among people I didn't know. I couldn't imagine how long I would have to stay like that, sad and hurt. It was during these days of helplessness that the Emerge team came into my life. My life changed with their arrival. They taught us how to string beads to make a necklace. This was a simple thing but it made a vast difference in our lives, because we could generate savings by making these necklaces. They opened bank accounts for us and deposited our savings in them, which we could access once we become 18 years old. This is a tremendous service to us. I am 20 now. I have made a fixed deposit of my savings. I will use it for my dream one day, which is to build my own house. The Emerge team did not forget me. They have made me a part of them and I work happily in their care. I live my life happily today because of them. I thank Emerge a hundred thousand times for what they have done for me. I pray to god for them to have strength and energy to help many more like me.”

Emerge Alumna, Age 21

“An unexpected event changed my life one day. My fate was changed in a way that I never thought it would. It left me at my lowest, heart broken and lonely. At that time, when I was without any help, feeling sad, it was the beading workshop that helped ease my pain and loneliness and helped me make up my mind and console myself. The satisfaction I feel in combining beautiful colors, designing and completing a beautiful necklace or bracelet is hard to describe in words. These workshops have helped me succeed in life and face life as a successful human being to this day. I thank the people who helped me and guided me through this difficult time. Now as my career, I have dedicated myself to teach girls that have faced the same challenges as me. I do it with immense happiness. I believe I can empathize with our girls and be a friend to them. I have had many diverse experiences ever since the



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beginning of this program. From the savings generated from this program, girls have been able to build their own house and care for their child. I am happy to witness these events. Its good to be part of something that is so helpful to another person. All this is possible because of Emerge. I feel that people who were from Emerge as well as those who partnered with us from the start were able to understand the feelings of the children they work with. I believe they have shown immense dedication towards these children. To this day, three years of my life have been spent with Emerge. I feel it is a great achievement to have been able to work with Emerge for three years.”

Emerge Alumna, Age 21

“I learned a lot from [Emerge]. I learned how to make beautiful bracelets and necklaces. We generate savings for the jewelry we make. We can access these savings once we are 18. When I left for home, I didn't have any money with me. Neither did my husband. Our house was half done. I completed our house with the money I saved. It was truly an immense help. I still use that money. I also improve the knowledge I gained through them. I would like to work with the Emerge team again and would gladly accept such an opportunity with all of my heart. I like to teach what I have learned to others. Thank you so much Emerge!”

Why Emerge Matters

Dr. Vivimarie VanderPoorten, award-winning writer and Emerge Mentor

“Emerge matters because it is empowering, not only to the girls but to the mentors who volunteer because it makes us see life in a different way, and trains us to take a fresh approach to the concept of victimhood, by celebrating and nurturing the strength of the girls as survivors. It provides a forum for exchange of values, ideas, knowledge and friendship. In both its beads to business project as well as its mentorship program, the focus of Emerge is on creativity and critical thinking, on building bridges and fitting pieces together. Emerge is special because it demonstrates both practically and symbolically that what is broken can be repaired, that parts of a whole that have fallen asunder can be put back together, and that what can emerge out of such an enterprise is something that is not only complete again but perhaps more beautiful than what was before.”

Stephanie Siriwardhana, Miss Sri Lanka (2011-2012)

"Being a woman, the cause Emerge Global stands for is obviously very close to my heart. Many of us have been blessed to never endure the hardship and trauma that many girls in Sri Lanka, and throughout the world, sometimes silently, have to go through. There are too many innocent young girls here who have their dreams and hopes for the future ripped away from them due to sexual abuse and the stigma that comes with it. Unfortunately there are also many other odds against these girls and so I think what Emerge does is magical and inspirational. It gives these young girls a second chance, not only to dream, but, to make their dreams a reality through concrete means of empowerment, self-sufficiency, education and support."

Emerge Lanka Staff

Mumtaz Aroos Faleel – Country Manager
Nirukshi de Lanerolle – Programme Coordinator
Iroshini Kalpage – Programme Development Officer
Uadaya Sivakumar - Finance and Administration Officer
Charuni Ranchigoda – Reintegration Officer
Udani Ranatunga – Administration & Program Assistant



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Ways to Get Involved

There are many ways to get involved with EmERGE Lanka's work:

- Volunteer as a mentor in the EmERGE Mentorship Program
- Purchase EmERGE jewelry (on sale at Barefoot Café in Colombo, Dutch Hospital and Galle Fort, Cozy Linen, White Walk Unawatuna)
- Host a fundraiser event or jewelry sale
- Contribute skills and expertise
- Make a contribution
- Sponsor a Girl

Additional Information

Emerge Social Media Links:

- Web: www.emergeglobal.org
- Facebook Page: <http://www.facebook.com/EmergeGlobal>
- Twitter: www.twitter.com/EmergeGlobal
- Blog: www.emergeglobal.org/blog
- Etsy/Online Store: www.emergeglobal.etsy.com
- Flickr: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/EmergeGlobal>

Press, Awards, and Recent Successes:

- **Endorsed by Miss Sri Lanka 2011-2012**
- **Major Press in Sri Lanka:** *The Sunday Times, Good Morning Sri Lanka, The Sunday Leader, Hi Magazine*
- **Major Press in the US:** *The Boston Globe, Glamour Magazine, the Chronicle of Philanthropy*
- **Emerge Global (our sister entity based in the U.S.) was named Boston's Small Charity of the Year in 2010**
- **Since August 2008, more than \$100,000 USD of jewelry has been sold**

To view a complete list of all EmERGE press appearances, visit www.emergeglobal.org/press.

Emerge Photography:

To view some of the EmERGE Photography for use by the press, visit:
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/EmergeGlobal/sets>

Contact

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