



MOSVOLD-MARTINUS
FOUNDATION

Ako Scholarship Programme, Sri Lanka

Implemented By Mosvold-Martinus Foundation



Consolidated Report 2018 - 2022



Programme Overview.

1.

1.1 Background

1.1.1 Mosvold-Martinus Foundation

The Mosvold-Martinus Foundation (MMF) was established in 2013 as the corporate social responsibility arm of Mosvold Sri Lanka with the construction of a new home for orphaned children. Since then, it has evolved into a development organisation that aims to promote sustainable development through the education of the poor and marginalized. The MMF's mission is to distribute its resources by assisting local organisations, communities, and civil society in addressing poverty thereby creating opportunities and employment for underprivileged Sri Lankans. MMF focuses on 4 broad areas, viz. Formal Education, Child Care and Protection, Skills Training for Employment Creation and Promoting Entrepreneurship.

Under the AKO Scholarship Programme, the MMF gives children and youth who are most in need of the resources they require to make informed choices that can lead to a brighter future. Facilitating education and skills development for Sri Lankans who need and desire change is one of the most crucial interventions of the Foundation.

1.1.2 AKO Scholarship Fund

The AKO Scholarship Programme, which is awarded in partnership with the Mosvold-Martinus Foundation (MMF) was initiated in 2018, to support economically disadvantaged youth, in successfully overcoming the challenges in their higher education.

The initial partnership agreement was for three (03) years (2018 – 2020); however, at the end of 03 years, the agreement was extended for another 02 years.

Since 2018, MMF conducted the scholarship programme with several local partners who are directly engaged with empowering Sri Lankan youth via higher education or vocational training.



1.2 Programme Objective

The overarching objective of the five-year programme was to support youth who are unable to meet the financial requirements necessary to continue with their higher education and skills development owing to economic and/or social reasons.

1.3 Target Group

The AKO Scholarship Programme is a children and youth-focused initiatives carried out by MMF with funding assistance from the AKO Foundation. The programme provided scholarships for university undergraduates and trainees attached to vocational training institutions from low-income households.

1.4 Review of the 5-Year Programme

The AKO Scholarship Programme is a children and youth-focused initiatives carried out by MMF with funding assistance from the AKO Foundation. The programme provided scholarships for university undergraduates and trainees attached to vocational training institutions from low-income households.

1.4.1 Scholarships Awarded

A total of 1,752 scholarships, each worth LKR 5,000 per month were awarded over the 5 years from 2018/2019 to 2022/2023. A majority of the scholarships were awarded during 2022/2023, accounting for 32% of all scholarships disbursed.

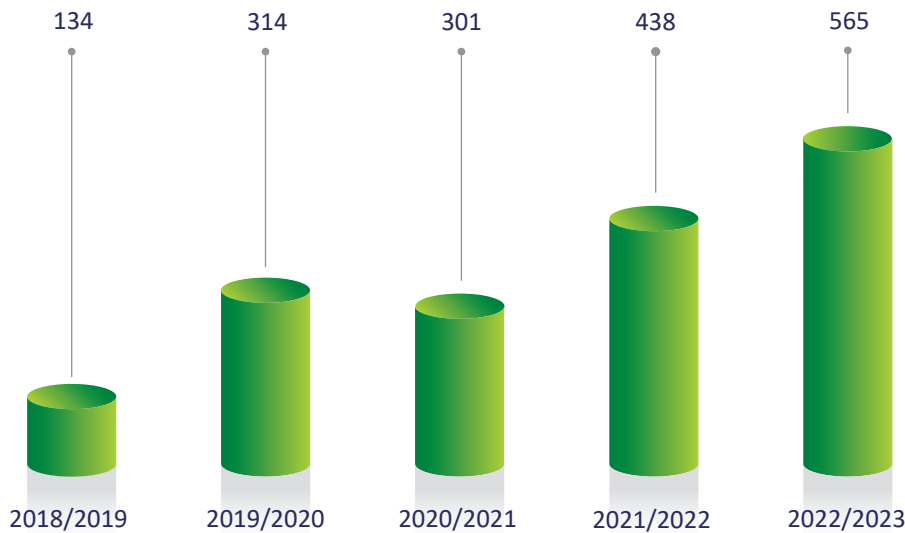


Figure 1 : Total Scholarships yearly basis



1,094 (62%) of the 1,752 scholarships were provided to vocational training students, while the remaining 658 (38%) were for university undergraduate students.

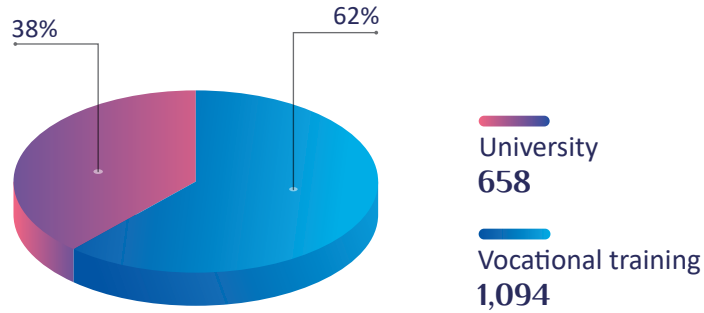


Figure 2 : Total Scholarships as a percentage

Figure below shows the scholarships granted for Universities and Vocational Training Institutions on an yearly basis.



Figure 3 : Yearly Scholarships for Universities and Vocational Training Institutions

A total number of 1,752 scholarships were awarded to 1,401 recipients viz. 650 (46%) females and 751 (54%) males.

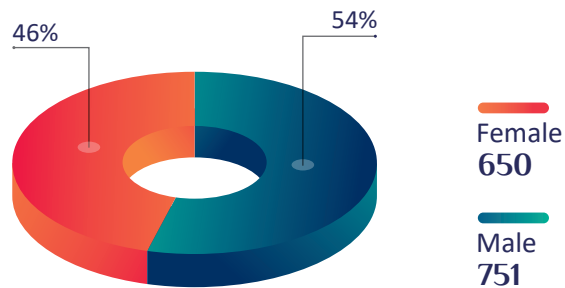


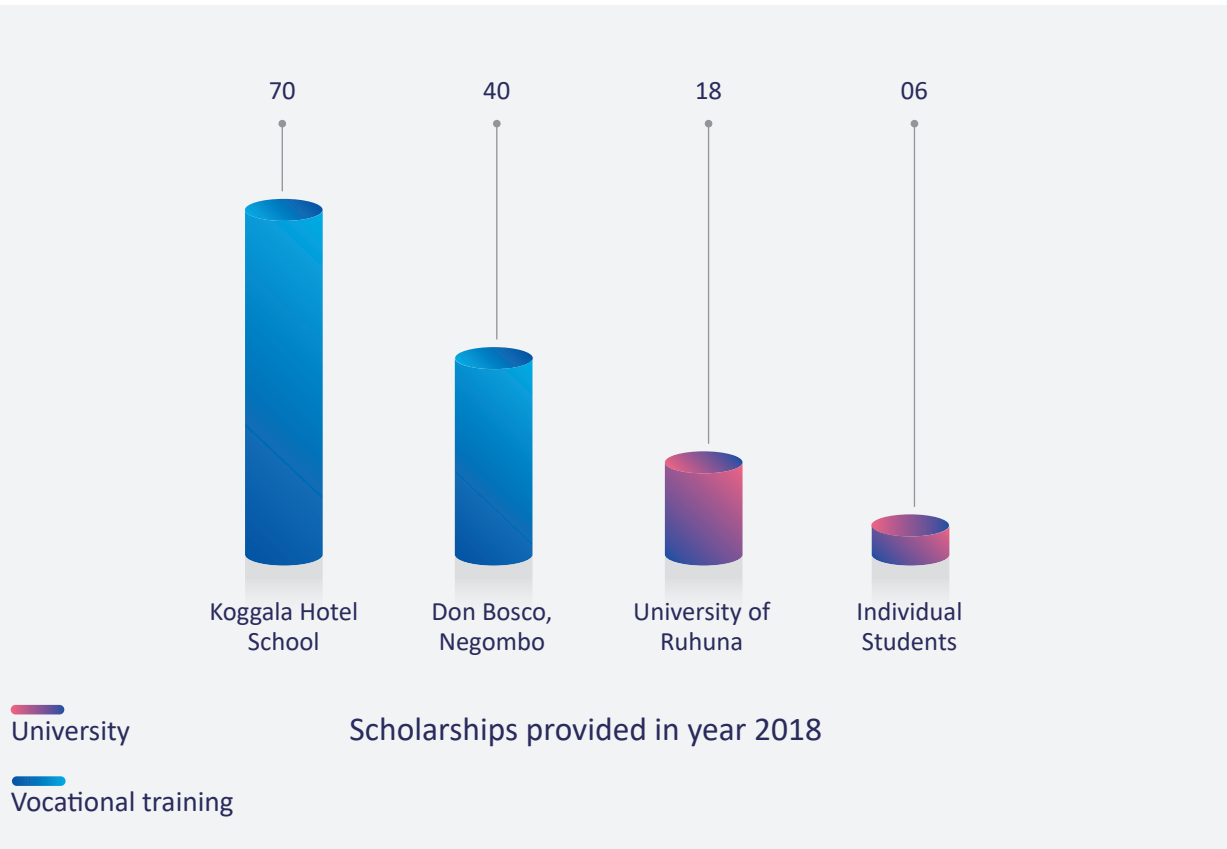
Figure 4 : Gender Proportion of Total Scholarships



1.5 Programme Review 2018 – Year 1

The AKO Scholarship Programme, launched in 2018, partnered with 3 institutions, University of Ruhuna, Don Bosco Technical Training Centre, Negombo and Koggala Hotel School. In addition to the student selected from these 3

institutions, 6 meritorious students with similar criteria were selected from other universities as well. In total 134 students benefitted.



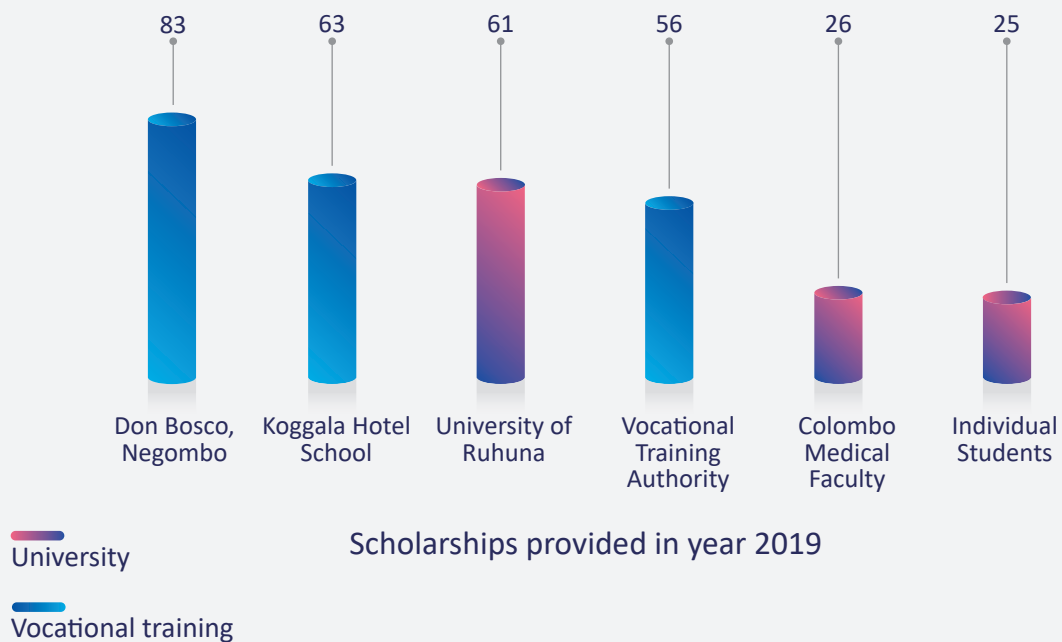
Don Bosco, Negombo – Automobile Workshop



1.6 Programme Review 2019 – Year 2

During 2019 – The second year of the AKO Scholarship Programme, the programme enlisted 2 additional partner organisations to the initial 3 the Programme started with in 2018. In total 289 students across 5 partner organisations were provided with a monthly financial package enabling them to carry out their higher studies without being a burden to their families. In addition, the individually supported students rose from 6 to 25, bringing the overall total to 314.

Despite the fact that there is a big demand for monthly scholarships from students who are eligible for higher studies, either in universities or in technical training institutes, Mosvold-Martinus Foundation has been adopting a rigorous selective process to ensure that the most vulnerable students obtain the scholarship facility.



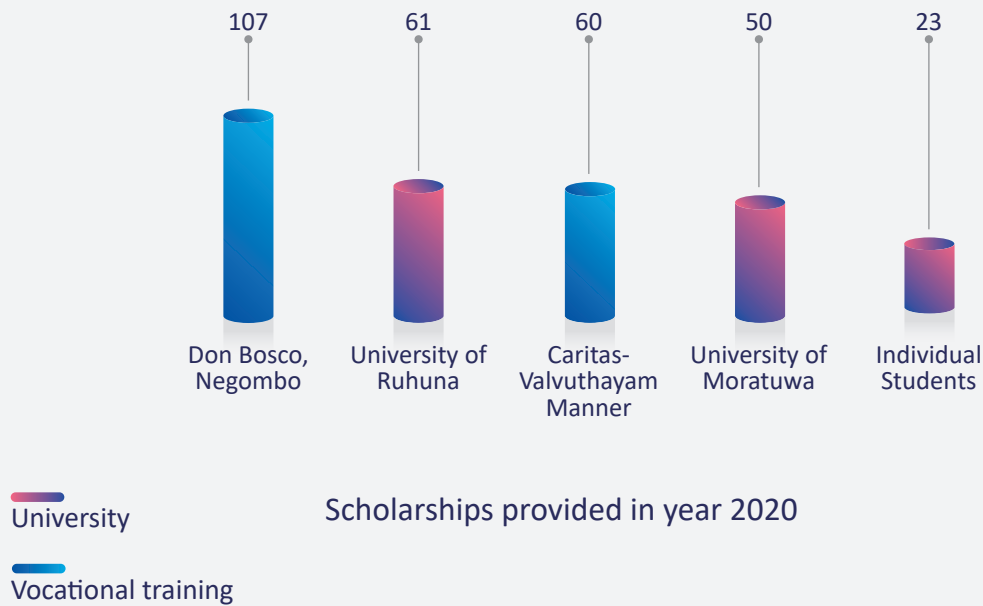
Koggala Hotel School – Cookery Training Session



1.7 Programme Review 2020 – Year 3

A total of 301 students were paid a monthly stipend to ensure that they continue their higher education and vocational training without dropping out. As with previous years of the programme, all beneficiaries from under-privileged homes were chosen after a proper screening by the partners on the basis of their vulnerability.

Two (2) universities and two (2) vocational training institutes supported 111 undergraduates and 167 students respectively. With 23 university students directly supported by MMF, the total number became 301.



Caritas, Valvuthayam - Computer Training Session



1.8 Programme Review 2021 – Year 4

The Covid-19 pandemic affected the country’s educational system, leading to the near closure of schools, early childhood education and care service centers, universities and vocational training institutes. The most

affected youth were the students who were attached to vocational training institutions as they were prevented to have practical training.



Rajarata Praja Kendraya - Computer Training



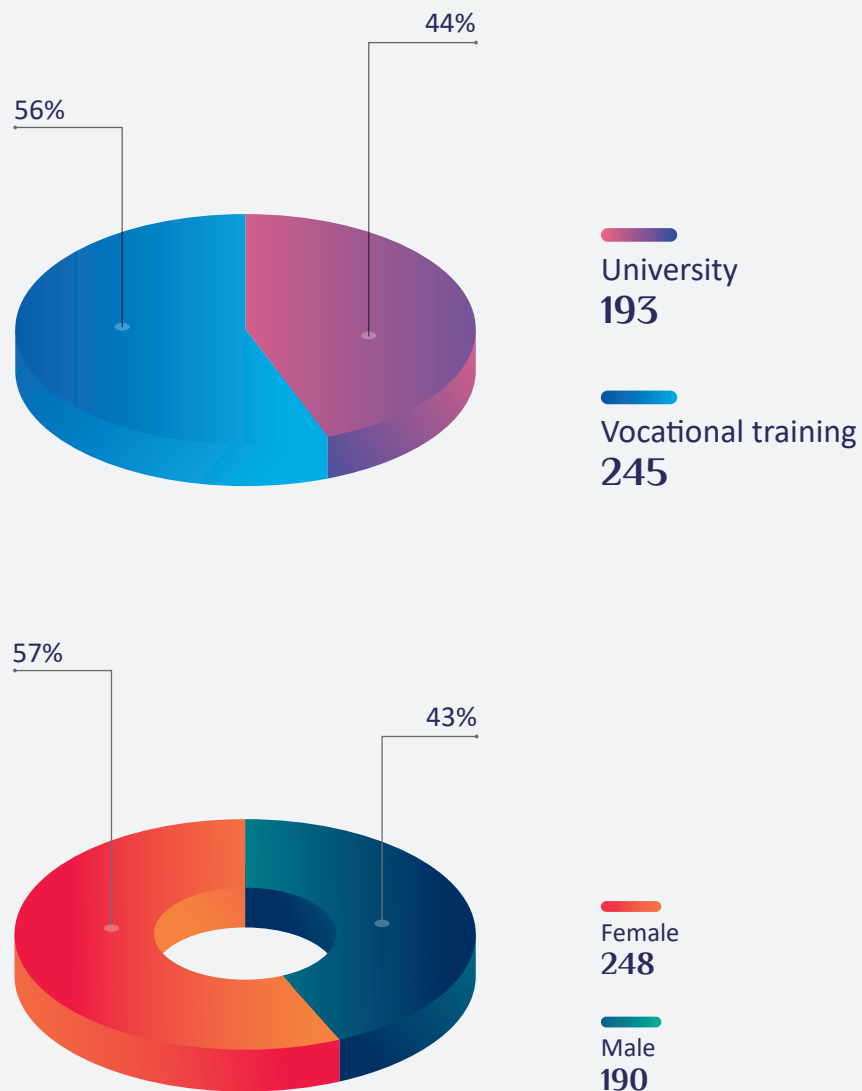
AKO scholarship programme enabled many vulnerable students to have access to online education by supporting them with equipment support. Computer lending facility was one such activity.

06 Vocational Training Institutes engaged in supporting 245 students in total. 170 undergraduate students from 03 universities were supported, while another 23 directly by MMF, bringing the total number of university undergraduates supported to 193.

In 2021, more attention was given for students in the northern part of Sri Lanka with a view to

support those students of war affected families. This geography also reports a relatively higher percentage of women headed households, disabilities and extreme poverty.

During this period, MMF entered in to 5 new partnership agreements, all of them operate in the northern part of Sri Lanka. Four (4) of them are vocational training institutes and the fifth is University of Jaffna.

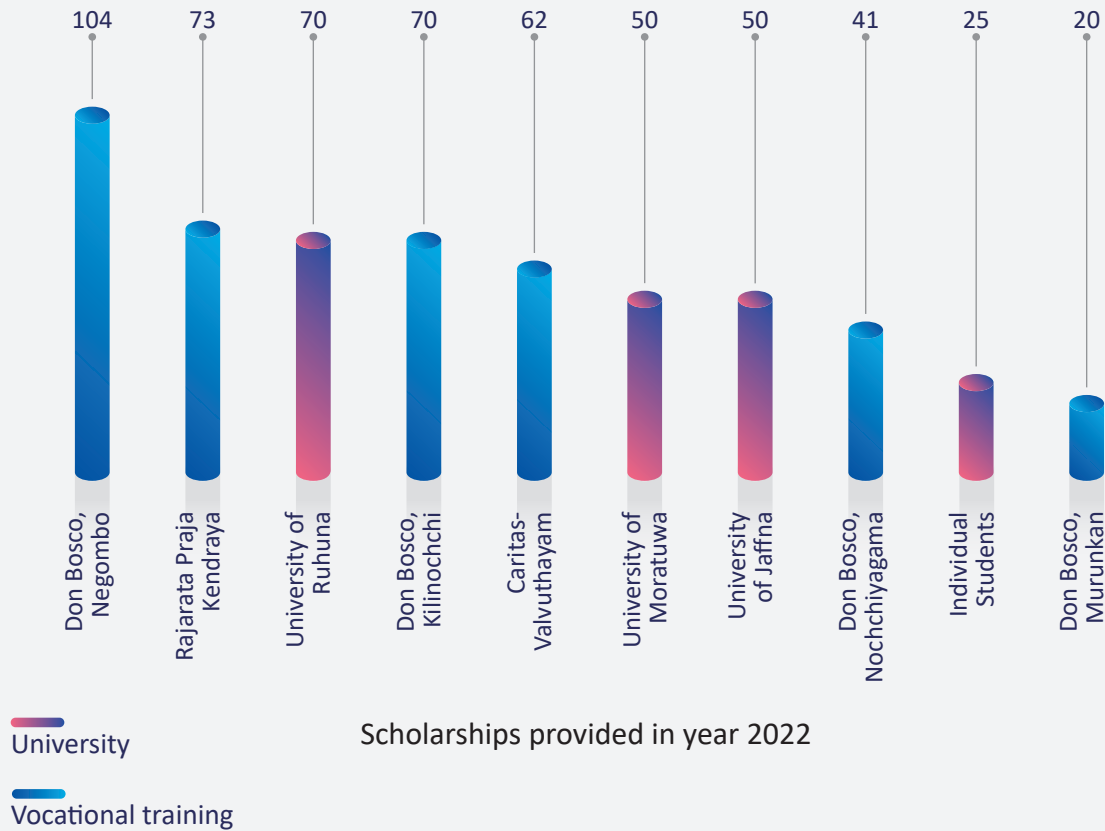




1.9 Programme Review 2022 – Year 5

While trying to recover from the economic downturns associated with Covid-19 pandemic, country experienced its worst economic crisis in history during the first quarter of 2022. The economic growth was

completely turnaround again with unprecedented daily power cuts, which further crippled the foreign exchange earnings and the production of goods & services.



University of Ruhuna

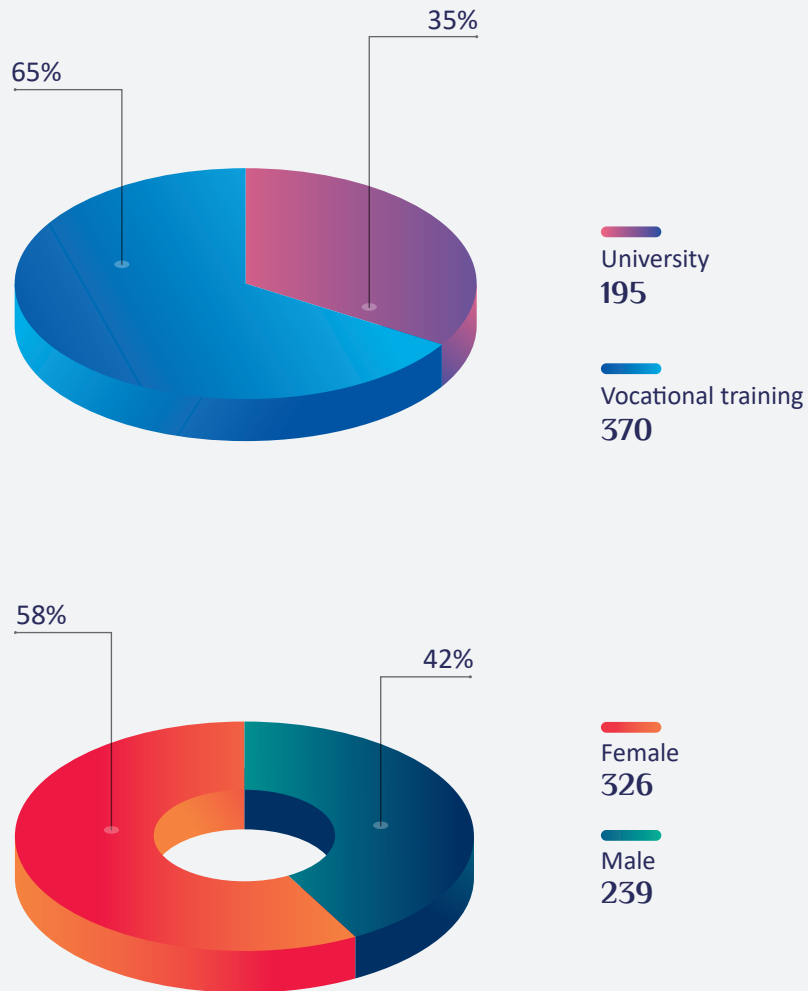


Situation further deteriorated with the acute shortages of fuel, food, cooking gas and medicines, which helped to push up the cost of living to record highs. The AKO scholarship programme became more prominent as the high cost of living had a direct negative impact on the education of all youth.

While keeping the number of partners at the same level, MMF was able to increase the number of scholarships from 438 in 2021 to

565 in 2022. Keeping in line with the objective of MMF, students engaged with vocational training have been increased in absolute numbers as well as in proportion compared to previous year. i.e. From 245 (56%) in 2021 to 370 (65%) in 2022.

During this period, female beneficiaries have also been marginally increased from 57% to 58%.





Ako Scholarship Programme- Impact Study.

2.

2.1 Objectives of the Study

The study was conducted with the following objectives in mind.

1. To assess the impact of the scholarship on the recipients,
 - academic performance
 - personal development
 - study choices, career aspirations, future aspirations
 - life during the pandemic and economic crisis in Sri Lanka
2. To evaluate the socioeconomic impact on both society as a whole and the families of scholarship recipients.
3. To assess the institutional perceptions at which the recipients were studying.
4. To identify the challenges the AKO Scholarship Programme encountered during its implementation and,
5. To identify the lessons learned and recommendations for implementing similar programmes in the future.

2.2 Study Findings

2.2.1 Impact of the AKO Scholarship on Academic Performance

2.2.1.1 Undergraduates

Students in all 3 universities agreed unanimously about the importance of the Scholarship Programme to improve their academic performance. University administration too stated that these scholarships allow students to concentrate on their academic studies without having to work part time to earn money.

The majority of interviewees stated that the AKO Scholarship Programme was critical in helping students pay their monthly board fees while also covering other expenses. They said they were able to settle their monthly due payments because the AKO Scholarship was providing monthly disbursements on time. On top of that, some university students managed to get professional certifications using scholarship money. According to them, professional certification has been instrumental in making them employable.



2.2.1.2 Vocational Trainees

1,094 scholarships have been given over the past five years to pursue courses in a variety of training fields. The institutional administrators of the scholarship programme emphasised that the dropout rates caused by financial difficulties have been significantly reduced with the financial support received through the scholarship, indicating a high rate of academic completion.

2.2.2 Impact of the AKO Scholarship on Personal Development

The scholarship benefited undergraduate and vocational trainees directly by focusing on their academic performance, which ultimately benefited their personal growth and values. All the survey respondents perceived a high degree of personal development in the areas of social awareness, management skills, self-understanding, teamwork skills, English language skills and communication skills. Among the respondents, 98% of the vocational trainees and 90% of undergraduates agreed that the AKO scholarship was instrumental in achieving those skills.

2.2.3 Study Choices, Career Aspirations, and Future Aspirations

According to the survey, 100% of vocational trainees and 98% of undergraduates had career aspirations with plans to achieve them. Some of them were beyond the typical career aspirations. For example, some of these students expressed a desire to become entrepreneurs and thus enrolled in appropriate coursework.

The vocational trainees' career goals were all related to their fields of study. Many of them desired to find jobs abroad after finishing their courses and receiving some training.

2.2.4 Impact on Life During the Pandemic and Economic Crisis in Sri Lanka

The COVID-19 pandemic affected students at both universities and vocational training institutes. Ninety per cent (90%) of the undergraduates who responded indicated they completed all or most of their academic work remotely during the pandemic. While 57% of the vocational trainees did not participate in remote learning, the remaining trainees occasionally took courses online.

The pandemic caused the parents of the scholarship recipients to lose their already meagre income, which made the students more vulnerable. For such students, whose families had lost their primary source of income as a result of the pandemic, the AKO Scholarship and any other scholarship were their only means of support.

2.2.5 Socioeconomic Impact on the Wider Society and the Families of Recipients

Relief to families: The Scholarship Programme has benefited the poorest students, including those from low-income, single-parent, female-headed households or families with parents who have a variety of ailments. Without outside assistance, such families might not be able to support an undergraduate or a trainee.

Development of values among recipients to give back to society: All of the undergraduates who were interviewed felt it was their duty to give back to their families and society. They were all aware of the hardships their families were going through and expressed their desire to support their families and improve their socioeconomic circumstances.

Values developed to give back to society: There were vocational training institutions that had put systems in place to instil values in their students. The Don Bosco Technical Training Institute has established a scholarship



fund for future students and encourages all students to contribute to this fund when they start employment.

The scholarship as a means of channelling young people's energies into worthwhile endeavours: Seventy-seven per cent (77%) of respondents who were vocational trainees were under the age of 20. The economic crisis has caused some students, especially those who are in senior grades to drop out and find employment. School dropouts and school leavers from low-income families who have no career goals are at risk of engaging in a variety of social problems and antisocial behaviours. The scholarship has been a huge help in reducing such risks for current and future students.

2.2.6 Institutional Perceptions Towards the Scholarship Programme

All of the institutional administrators claim that the Scholarship Programme is now more helpful than ever amid the economic crisis in Sri Lanka. The following characteristics of the Scholarship Programme received favourable feedback from the Partner Organisations.

Implementation through the existing institutional mechanisms and structures: The institutional processes have been used to administer scholarships ensured that the programme's high level of accountability and transparency.

The level of flexibility that the AKO Foundation has given to the Partner Organisations in beneficiary selection: They all appreciated the flexibility the AKO Scholarship Programme gave the institution to choose the recipients within the framework and criteria the programme had given them. In general, all institutions have used a selection criteria to ascertain the eligibility of

the applicants, such as the income level, the number of siblings and dependents, etc.. Other than that, some points are awarded for academic achievement, engagement in extracurricular activities, including sports and clubs, and membership in societies.

Disbursement is very straightforward and open: All institutional respondents thought the AKO Scholarship fund disbursement was very straightforward and open. According to them, the Scholarship Programme transfers funds to the implementation body of the university, which subsequently distributes them to the students directly.

The administrators of Vocational Training Institutes also stated that funds from the Scholarship Programme were transferred directly to the Partner Organisations to pay the ongoing course fees for vocational trainees.

Punctuality of the disbursement: Both the students and the scholarship administrators confirmed that, in comparison to other scholarships, the students received the scholarship on due dates. As a result, students can budget for their monthly expenses.

Support provided to the Partner Organisations in their growth and realisation of organisational missions: The administrators of the Vocational Training Institutes expressed their gratitude for having such a fruitful Scholarship Programme as it has not only provided the scholarships, but also assisted the Institutions in achieving their organisational goals



2.2.7 Challenges Faced by the AKO Scholarship Programme

The perspectives of the recipients, the administrators of the scholarships and the AKO Scholarship Programme have all been considered when writing the section below.

2.2.7.1 Challenges in the University Set Up

Reaching those who need it most: It was identified as a difficult task to ensure that the scholarships are awarded to the most deserving students among a large number of underprivileged students. Accurate fact-checking, data verification and the inherent complexity of assessing eligibility were challenging tasks. Nevertheless, scholarship administrators stated that they regularly modify their selection procedures based on their evaluations and lessons learned from past practices to ensure the most deserving students access the opportunity.

Difficulties in allocating full-time staff for scholarship management: In the universities, there is no dedicated administrator who manages the AKO Scholarship Programme. As a result, the administrators may not give enough attention.

Some delays in scholarship disbursement due to communication gaps between the Scholarship Programme and the university departments: There were few occasions where the undergraduates experienced delays in fund transfers. The Accounts Department of the university distributes money to students, but the AKO Scholarship Programme doesn't communicate directly with Account Department.

Lack of awareness about the scholarship provider among the scholarship holders: Covid-19 pandemic along with the recent socio-economic crisis hampered the physical interactions of the AKO programme with its

beneficiaries during the last two years. Due to this communication gap, some students lacked knowledge and understanding of the objectives of the Scholarship Programme.

2.2.7.2 Challenges in the Vocational Training Sphere

Reaching those who need it most, and with genuine interest: Despite the fact that Institutions use the most appropriate criteria to identify beneficiaries, there is always a great chance that the programme will miss the most deserving beneficiaries, who are economically and socially disadvantaged.

Dropouts of the students: Dropouts of trainees in the middle of the course and during on-the-job training can be a great challenge, which hinders the realisation of the objectives of the AKO Scholarship Programme.

The need to improve the course content and the facilities: Some factors have a big impact on the quality of the courses they deliver, like the accessibility of training tools, supplies, facilities, and up-to-date course materials.

2.3 Lessons Learned and Recommendations

2.3.1 Lessons Learned

a) The relationship style has increased institutional trust, engagement and ownership: The autonomy that AKO Scholarship Programme has provided to the Partner Organisations appears to have resulted in a favourable outcome in the form of their trust in the AKO Scholarship Programme and their sense of ownership over the scholarship programme.

b) Financial support is important, but the genuine interest of the applicant matters: When it comes to the vocational training component, it is crucial to evaluate the applicant's enthusiasm and career aspirations to reduce any dropouts and ensure that the scholarship funds are fully utilised to meet the program's objectives. This is in addition to using poverty as a primary criterion.



2.3.2 Recommendations

a) Sharing best practices with other Partner Organisations regarding beneficiary selection:

Few university administrators suggested a participatory selection process, which can help the programme screen the applicants more accurately. One suggested approach was going for an open application process as step one and then using student representatives to recommend the most eligible candidates as the next step in a confidential manner.

b) Increasing the scholarship amount to match the current economic context:

Due to the economic crisis and the rising costs of goods and services, students find it challenging to manage their studies with the same amount they used to receive. If the Scholarship Programme can increase the value of the scholarship, especially for university students (who need to manage the cost of food, transportation, rentals, and academic materials in comparison to vocational trainees whose courses and academic materials are fully funded by the scholarship), the students will benefit more.

c) Encouraging graduates to acquire skills to compete in the job market:

There was evidence that graduates with professional certifications had better career prospects than those without. The impact will be maximised if the scholarship can offer additional help to set it as a requirement for the beneficiaries to acquire other skills while on the course.

d) Providing cashless or intangible support for skill development and improving self-confidence:

Both English and communication skills were another crucial aspect that was recognised as lacking among students. It would be worthwhile if the Scholarship Programme could seek an opportunity to provide these students with English language and communication skills that can improve their self-confidence.

e) Providing career guidance to help students find the right course:

The majority of students choose their training courses haphazardly without considering their innate abilities. Such students frequently drop out of classes, creating a significant loss for the institute and the Scholarship Programme. Future students should be able to do extensive self-evaluations and choose the right courses with the help of career guidance.

f) Providing advance assistance to students studying fields in high demand:

Addressing the current financial crisis, the Sri Lankan government has made policy changes restricting imports, thus making and repairing some electronics, electric household goods, and automobiles more in demand within the country. Such a background has created an accelerated demand for local substitutions as well as repairs. Supporting vocational skills that are in demand, will make better returns on investments in scholarships.

g) Recipients' awareness of the scholarship and its goals is imperative for the programme to achieve its goals:

Some students were not aware of the Scholarship Programme and not fully able to comprehend the value of the scholarship as they had not been adequately informed about the scholarship, its objectives, and what made them eligible. The students' understanding of the scholarship and its goals is essential for the AKO Scholarship Programme to meet its goal.



Financial Information.

4.

RECEIPTS	USD	LKR
2018/2019	33,333	5,056,718
2019/2020	78,508	13,503,440
2020/2021	178,506	33,544,690
2021/2022	99,975	28,990,250
2022/2023	169,975	61,697,425
Total	560,297	142,792,523

DISBURSED	USD	LKR
2018/2019	33,333	5,056,718
2019/2020	78,508	13,503,440
2020/2021	78,514	14,996,174
2021/2022	99,992	18,546,016
2022/2023	99,975	28,990,250
Total	390,322	81,092,598
Carried forward balance as at 1st April 2023, which will be used during the financial year 2023/2024.	169,975	61,699,925

“Education is
the most powerful
weapon which you can
use to change the world.”

– Nelson Mandela.

GRATITUDE

Our heartfelt gratitude to the Founder, Board of Directors, Executive Director and the Management Team of AKO Foundation, for being a significant element in the process of uplifting vulnerable students and providing them an opportunity to improve their employable skills, thereby enabling them to step out of poverty

OUR PARTNERS

We thank all our partners and supporters for their dedication and commitment to our mission, in uplifting the economic well being of the least privileged youth and their families.

- University of Ruhuna
- University of Moratuwa
- University of Jaffna
- Don Bosco Technical Centre, Negombo
- Don Bosco Technical Centre, Kilinochchi
- Don Bosco Technical Centre, Nochchiyagama
- Don Bosco Technical Centre, Murunkan
- Caritas Valvuthayam, Mannar
- Rajarata Praja Kendraya, Kekirawa



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