

# BOC empowers young entrepreneurs through beyond banking



Rohana Kumara, DGM –  
Business Revival Division,  
BOC.

BOC empowers young entrepreneurs through beyond banking-sized enterprises (SMEs), which have faced severe setbacks in recent years due to the 2019 Easter Sunday attacks, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the prolonged economic downturn. Through its Business Revival Division, BOC has revived nearly 700 distressed businesses, of which 97 percent were SMEs. According to Kumara, experience revealed that many failures stemmed not only from external crises but also from internal weaknesses, such as poor financial management and structural inefficiencies. These insights led to the launch of BOC's Entrepreneur Development Program (EDP), designed to equip business owners with the skills needed to sustain and grow their ventures. The program targets SME entrepreneurs aged 18 to 45 with annual turnovers between five million rupees and 50 million rupees, representing sectors such as exports, manufacturing, IT services, and agriculture. The EDP focuses on non-financial assistance. Internal experts from trade finance,

HR, research, and other divisions, alongside external resource persons, deliver sessions on entrepreneurial mindset, cash flow management, financial discipline, marketing, digital marketing, supply chain management, taxation, and valuation. While the program does not directly provide funding, it guides participants on accessing concessionary and collateral-free loan schemes. A panel of Assistant General Managers continues mentoring participants even after the sessions conclude, maintaining engagement through a dedicated WhatsApp group. Conducted free of charge over five consecutive Sundays, the program is open to entrepreneurs regardless of their banking institution. With strong feedback from its inaugural round, BOC plans to roll out the next phase in 2026, significantly scaling up its reach. Kumara emphasized that the initiative is driven by national responsibility rather than commercial interest, with the ultimate goal of strengthening SMEs — the backbone of Sri Lanka's private sector — and fostering long-term economic resilience.