

GetUp+Vote: Our Country, Our Time



GetUp+Vote was a non-partisan, non-biased, and nonpolitical workshop to discuss the significance of voting. It featured a diverse panel of accomplished speakers who addressed voting related issues faced by Sri Lanka. Organised by Ragi and Ajita Kadirgamar of The Kadirgamar Trust, the son and daughter of the late Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar, GetUp+Vote was held to commemorate his tenth death anniversary. Launched by the Circle for Democracy, the workshop was an initiative to promote awareness and to motivate youth to implement the power of the vote; creating a generation that will reach out to the multitudes and influence change for the betterment of Sri Lanka. The conference was dominated by information on the voting process and generated interest on the issue of women in

politics while maintaining an impartial stance. The workshop, commenced by Sri Lankans for Sri Lankans, integrated interactive discussions in addition to several musical segments and a debate.

Our Common Value and the Power of the Youth
-Ragi Kadirgamar

The Voting Process: How to Vote, When, Where, and What to Look for
-Rohana Hettiarachchi

The Power of Our Vote: Our Democratic and Constitutional Rights
-Dr Paikiasothy Saravanamuttu

Selecting a Candidate: The Qualities to Look for in a Politician
-Jehan Perera

The Disease of Corruption
-Sashee De Mel

Women in politics and governance
-Inthumathy Hariharathamotharan

Understanding parliament and parliamentarians
-Asoka Obeyesekere

GetUp+Vote incorporated the involvement of several organisations to expand the scope of participation.

Thiken is a web and mobile app development company based in North Dakota,

which, targets startups and enterprise clients in developing strategies, apps, software, marketing research, cloud based mobile and web solutions. Having commenced startups in university, Pasindu Withanage, CEO and Pavithra Lamahewa, COO and Kalith Kumasaru, CTO initiated Thiken in January 2015, to enhance the capabilities of the mobile market, which according to the founders is very receptive and adventurous in Sri Lanka. Thiken designed an Augmented Reality (AR) app that permits a subject to visualize a three dimensional object in the real world that can be explored in depth via smartphone; the camera is directed at a specific marker and a 3D object is visible on the mobile.

Ajita Kadirgamar contacted Thiken to utilize their augmented reality technology and they developed a ‘GetUp+Vote’ app which features three-dimensional videos of various personalities and individuals sharing their impartial opinion on voting; whether they should vote and why. The app, available in the Google Play store and the App store, provided a platform for Sri Lankans to voice their non-partisan opinions in a safe and protected environment.

GetUp+Vote collaborated with Emojot, an audience engaging mobile and web app that enables individuals to express their opinion during a particular event with the simplicity of emojis. The app allows for aggregated instant feedback and the ability to capture an audience’s perception immediately in a language agnostic manner. Emojot, founded in March 2014 by Founder and CEO Shahani Markus, a serial technopreneur and Manjula Dissanayake, Co-Founder and COO, was inspired by a successful research project conducted at the University of Moratuwa in which Shahani was a lecturer in the Department of Computer Science and Engineering. The enterprise stands out due to its ability to obtain the sentiment of a congregation instantly through customisable emotifs in real-time. Emojot, also available as an email plug-in and web widget, provided its services complimentarily for the GetUp+Vote workshop; it was used to ascertain the perception of the audience at the end of every session.

Hash Bandara, Graphic Designer, CEO and Co-Founder – Push Skateboards and Umanga Samarasinghe, Head of Design – Push Skateboards also offered their services to the GetUp+Vote workshop. Push Skateboards, the first and only skateboard brand in Sri Lanka drove the social media for the event, and undertook the photography and

videography. Push Skateboard’s affiliation with GetUp+Vote as stated by Hash Bandara represented the voice of the youth. “As young people we believe that everyone has to vote, and if we do not vote, there is no way of making a change for the improvement of the country.”

Also involved in the photography was Revolution Portfolio, the first and only youth operated portfolio, completely comprising of youth below the age of 20. Revolution Portfolio, founded by Shadir Hisham and Ihthi Fahim, provides a platform for teenagers to obtain a sound knowledge in all media aspects, training them to cover events and through experience, to mature into professional photographers.

The workshop, inspired by Ragi Kadirgamar’s desire to support the election in his personal capacity, was targeted at 300 first time voters in the 2015 Parliamentary Election, envisioning them to divulge their new found wisdom in their spheres of influence to maximise impact. GetUp+Vote was streamed live across the country where online viewers could also participate by calling or texting.

The workshop would not have been a reality had it not been for a voluntary team that worked tirelessly with the Kadirgamar siblings to make their vision a reality. One key statement of the workshop was “Vote. This is our country. This is our time.”


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