

ANNUAL REPORT 2019/20

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The year, (April 2019 to March 2020) has been the most noteworthy year for SDJF. This was the 10th year of the SDJF. We have achieved a great deal of success in using the opportunities to work with recognized development support organizations. I am proud to say that SDJF also successfully faced substantial challenges, while making good progress on most of the strategic initiatives. Our main strategy has been empowering those involved in improving the usage of media for social change, which was unique as a creative learning experience.

SDJF was able to develop its capacity to serve the community through substantial Organizational Development. SDJF signed a contract with the European Union for the first time to implement an innovative program for the benefit of students from Sri Lankan Universities. SDJF also reached another milestone by facilitating the establishment of “Centre for Media and Information Literacy” (CMiL). This is an initiative of the MediaCorps Fellows, a group of young journalists trained and affiliated to SDJF. The development communication programs implemented during the last part of the year faced unprecedented challenges of Covid-19 pandemic. Since then, the major projects implemented had to be re-designed with creative alternatives.

I am happy that SDJF was able to launch a novel publication on Mobile Journalism in all 3 languages for the first time in Sri Lanka.

Despite difficulties, we have been able to use the opportunities, especially the endowment of financial and intellectual resources available to make our vision a reality and make the world a better place for all. Our annual budget for the year 2019/2020 is 379, 834(USD)

On behalf of SDJF I thank the donors, partners and all stakeholders for their continued support and trust placed on us. We look forward to maintaining long-term relationships with them to serve the needy.

Dr. Padmasir Wanigasundera
CEO | SDJF

Year 2019/20 has been an eventful year for the organization. We could define it as the year of evolution in consolidating a strong identity in media development. The winds of change have pervaded every aspect of SDJF’s operations, from our activities to our beneficiaries. It is my pleasure to provide a brief on the major milestones of the year and give you a taste of the surprising achievements you will encounter through the report. We have grown to an extent of expanding our staff to 15 members, with a fully-fledged organizational infrastructure. This growth required more space. The milestone came in June 2019, when SDJF opened its second office to expand its activities to all beneficiaries. The new facilities opened up a wealth of new opportunities at least to set up a small production house for SDJF.

I am very happy and proud to state that, immediately after its establishment, Centre for Media and Information Literacy (CMiL), joined hands with SDJF to counter fake news and misinformation around the pandemic of Covid-19 from March 2019. Yes, we launched our first ever online news magazine “MediaCorps Watch”, to provide factual information, counter fake news and stories that are sidelined by the mainstream media and issues of marginalized communities. The news magazine program is one of the key milestones for SDJF. Meticulous planning and quality assessment methodology were done to produce 50 news magazines, with the support of 60 reporters across the country, including 46% of female journalists. SDJF produced 7 news magazines during this reporting period and reached an audience of 110K within a short span.

SDJF achieved yet another milestone in 2019 January, having signed a contract with the European Union for the first time. This partnership has added more value to the work we have done in the past. We have trained more than 100 young peace journalists on mobile journalism to promote peace and reconciliation in Sri Lanka through collaborative journalism, engaged with organizations that work for women, LGBTQ+ and other marginalized communities to ensure their freedom of expression and information rights.

We have grown into a fully-fledged media development organization in Sri Lanka, playing a pivotal role in promoting freedom of expression and information rights of the excluded and promoting a “hygienic” news culture among youth.

I wish to thank all the donors, beneficiaries, partners, management of SDJF, board of directors and our passionate staff for these achievements.

Mohamed Azad.LL.B
Attorney-at -Law | Program Director | SDJF



A civil society where there is no voice poverty.



Advocate for democratic and pluralistic values, strengthen community media, and amplify the voice of the excluded, based on development communication principles.

IMPACT MADE BY SDJF 2019-2020



450+

TRAINED BENEFICIARIES



15

TRAININGS



400+

MEDIA PRODUCTIONS



07

MAGAZINES PRODUCED



858K

REACH

PROMOTING GENDER SENSITIVE REPORTING & INCLUSIVITY IN SRI LANKAN MEDIA

The Media Gender Charter (MGC) has been formulated in the light of Sri Lanka's national and international commitments to achieve gender equality. Considering continuous gender-insensitive reporting, stereotyping and non-conducive working environments within the media sphere, SDJF supported 3 stakeholder consultations in 2018 to generate content for MGC. In its 2nd phase (2019), 21 one-to-one targeted interviews with editors and 25 regional stakeholder consultations were conducted to further develop the Charter to be utilized as a guiding instrument by media institutions and other relevant parties in the sphere of media.



I. PRODUCING A POLICY DOCUMENT

After three major consultation rounds with gender & media experts, researchers, academics, CSOs & NGOs, SDJF conducted one-to-one meetings with editors and regional journalists, and has produced the second draft of the policy document titled Media Gender Charter (MGC) to address gender implications in Sri Lankan media. Gender dimensions in the Sri Lankan media is least satisfactory since there is continuing gender-insensitive reporting, objectification, stereotyping, exclusion of the voice of different gender groups, and non-conducive working environments within the industry. The second draft of the document has been produced as a result of consultations with more than **200 journalists, 21 media institutions, 20 women and gender based civil society members, academia & media unions**. The MGC will serve as a guiding instrument for media houses in Sri Lanka to promote gender sensitive reporting and inclusivity.

II. PROMOTING MEDIA LITERACY

SDJF engaged in promoting media literacy on consuming reliable news among media users through Vox Pop video discussions across the country to understand their reactions/responses and opinions on the behavior of media in Sri Lanka and proposed solutions to regulate it. More than 55 % of media consumers expressed the need for policy guidelines to regulate and guide the media for the benefit of its media consumers.

 **03**
STAKEHOLDER
CONSULTATIONS

 **21**
ONE-TO-ONE
TARGETED INTERVIEWS

 **25**
REGIONAL STAKEHOLDER
CONSULTATIONS

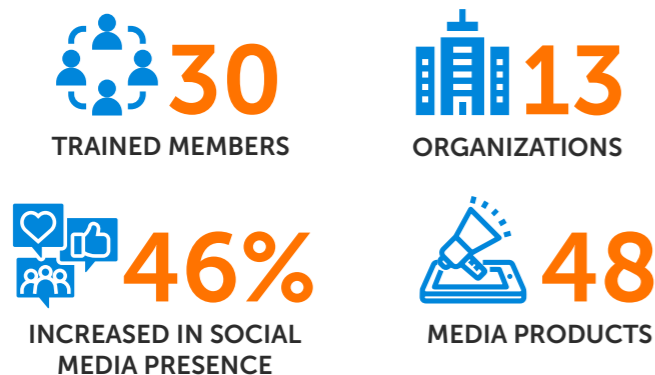
 **200**
JOURNALISTS

 **21**
MEDIA INSTITUTIONS

 **20**
WOMEN AND GENDER
BASED CIVIL SOCIETY
MEMBERS

REVEALING THE UNHEARD VOICES OF THE MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES

Vibrant Voices (VV) is a capacity building program, which empowers organizations that work for marginalized communities and aims to alleviate voice poverty through multimedia storytelling. The program was launched in 2018. Since then, SDJF has trained 30 members from 13 organizations who work for women, LGBTIQ+ and marginalized groups from around the country. The program focused on;



I. ENSURING THE FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION OF LGBTIQ+ COMMUNITY

Organizations such as 'Heart to Heart' and 'Venasa' work for LGBTIQ+ community and have utilized mobile storytelling as a tool to ensure their freedom of expression within the limited space in media. Venasa produced awareness video content on "Transgender issues & Challenges", in the local language- an initiative of their own, accomplished for the first time in Sri Lanka.

II. INCREASING VISIBILITY AND SOCIAL MEDIA PRESENCE

During the reporting period the proportion of women's organizations that worked with SDJF, having Facebook accounts have increased from 30% to 46%. It is noteworthy that the Women's Education & Research Centre launched their own YouTube channel and disseminated their stories, achieving unprecedented visibility.

III. ENCOURAGING DIGITAL ADVOCACY

The Vibrant Voices program provided in-depth knowledge and skills to develop expertise on the advocacy platforms, facilitating 13 grassroots level organizations to disseminate their stories with a minimal cost. This has led these organizations to be more visible in the new media such as Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, etc., for their advocacy initiatives.

Women's Education & Research Centre (WERC) and Women's Development Centre (WDC), started their own YouTube channels for advocacy purposes and achieved significant progress after the Vibrant Voices program. They have disseminated valuable content on marginalized communities.

WDC, Kandy started their own YouTube channel, 'Sthree' and included numerous contents. Thus, they created content and used digital advocacy to empower women and support small businesses of women.

IV. EVIDENCE BASED REPORTING

Women's organizations who participated in the VV program produced more than 50 stories on gender equality, women empowerment, small enterprise support, LGBTIQ+ issues, estate workers' issues, disability issues, political participation, climate change, leadership, etc.

"If you peep into the history of WERC, during the past 37 years of its existence, there haven't been any documented video productions of the programs or workshops, except for two or three DVDs. The VV program crafted us mobile storytellers to produce more video contents",

- Chamalee
recalled the past with a smile on her face.

BREAKING CULTURAL & ETHNIC BARRIERS THROUGH PEACE JOURNALISM

MediaCorps Fellowship Program for Young Peace Journalists and Undergraduates is one of the most successful signature programs under the MEND Project. The Fellowship aims at capacitating young storytellers from diverse communities to tell stories of the post-war and marginalized communities while transcending the traditional bounds of storytelling. In 2019/20, the Fellowship trained 103 MediaCorps Fellows and produced around 250 appealing stories under a range of themes including **Equality, Diversity, Human Rights** and **Inclusive Development**. Over the course of one year, the MediaCorps Fellowship has been able to create a greater change in the media landscape of the country as well as in the personal lives of the Fellows trained.



I. BRIDGING THE ETHNIC DIVIDE

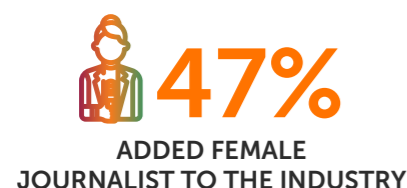
In a media landscape that has confined journalists to their ethno-linguistic contours, MediaCorps has encouraged them to step out and collaborate with a fellow from a different community. Fellows **Prasad Purnamal** from Puttlam, **Vanitha Senathirajah** from Vavuniya and **Ahsan Afthar** from Kurunegala are among many Fellows who reported diverse issues from post-war resettlement to school dropouts, beyond the comfort zone of their own community and society.

II. EMPOWERING FEMALE JOURNALISTS

The presence of female journalists in Sri Lankan media is rather scarce. Even the existing female journalists are often compelled to report on issues conventionally associated with women. But MediaCorps has promised female journalists an equal and fair space to report stories of greater concern that really matter the society at large. This year's Fellowship includes more than 46% of female fellows who have produced appealing stories reflecting a wide range of issues specifically affecting women from the impact of micro-finance schemes, war widows, women-headed businesses and numerous other development challenges they are confronted with. Among these championing women are **Kamali Dedigama**, **Kalavarshny Kanagarathnam**, **Prabasha Charithangi** and **Nirosha Sandamali** who continue to produce stories to date.

III. AMPLIFYING THE VOICE OF THE MARGINALIZED

Mainstream media provide limited space for the subaltern voices of the marginalized, but MediaCorps has come to their rescue. Our Fellows, scattered in all 25 districts of the country have been committed to report uncaptured stories from every nook and corner. The stories by **Prasanga Chathuranga**, **Dilanka Lakmal**, **Irajendran Kaushalya** and **Kuwaldeen Rasool** are only a few examples from a pool of such heart-warming stories.



CREATING A NETWORK OF RESPONSIBLE MEDIA CITIZENS IN UNIVERSITIES

SDJF in partnership HELVETAS officially signed an agreement with the European Union on 10th December 2019, to install interactive learning spaces within the media and communication departments of 3 state universities, namely Sri Jayewardenepura, Peradeniya and Jaffna. The project "Incubator Spaces for Promoting Information Rights and Freedom of Expression" will equip a network of 350 students with knowledge and skills on new media tools, gender sensitive reporting, right to information and freedom of expression in creating a community of responsible media citizens. These beneficiaries will receive in house mentoring and training from the expertise in the selected field to produce 150 multimedia products, in a gender sensitive and socially responsible manner.

 **04**
STATE UNIVERSITIES


 **350**
STUDENTS

 **150**
MULTIMEDIA PRODUCTS



COUNTERING FAKE NEWS

SDJF in partnership with **NEWSEUM ED Washington** and **American Centre in Colombo** developed 2 localized tools namely "**ESCAPE**" & "**SEED**" to identify fake news, mis-information and dis-information in the real world. More than 300 youths, university students, community leaders & school teachers were trained on using these tools. They also participated in a series of webinars.

 **Programs** **4**

300+ **Trained** 

 **Toolkits** **2**



REPORTING AUTHENTIC INFORMATION ABOUT COVID-19

The MediaCorps Watch (MC Watch), is an online news magazine, produced by the Centre for Media and Information Literacy (CMIL) in partnership with the Sri Lanka Development Journalist Forum (SDJF) and the International Research & Exchanges Board (IREX) to help the members of marginalized communities and women in rural settings to overcome and face the challenges of the Pandemic. More than hundreds of mobile journalists were trained across the country to produce stories that provide authentic & vital information needed for livelihood enhancement, address GBV, hate speech, fake news and amplify the voice of small-scale rural business holders to promote their businesses innovatively, in the digital sphere.



LIVELIHOOD ENHANCEMENT

One of the biggest achievements of the MC Watch program was to voice the economic challenges and the struggles of rural communities. Some stories highlighted the struggle of people who are self-employed, fisheries communities, vegetable farmers and small scale businesses.

INCLUSION OF EXCLUDED

One of the core features of MC Watch program is that it addressed multiple social challenges faced by rurally marginalized communities due to COVID-19. The program highlighted major livelihood problems and struggles encountered by marginalized fractions in the society such as agriculture, plight of estate workers, construction sector workers, rural communities with lack of regular water supply, distribution of dry rations, inconvenience in receiving the Samurdhi benefit etc. As a result of MediaCorps, several marginalized communities received relief packages from the government and individual donors.

NOFAKE AND #NOHATE

One of the vital features of MC Watch is to address issues of increased disinformation and hate speech around the Pandemic. The special #NoFake segment provided credible and vital information to rural communities on dealing with COVID-19.

SOCIAL JUSTICE

MC Watch critically covered a range of rights-based issues such as human rights violations, deprivation, discrimination in the rural areas and reported to ensure social justice.

FINANCIAL REPORT

O.T. David & Co.
Chartered Accountants

SRI LANKA DEVELOPMENT JOURNALIST FORUM

NO.3/8, SWARNA PLACE, NAWALA ROAD, RAJAGIRIYA

STATEMENT OF INCOME FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2020

(All Amount In Sri Lankan Rupees)

	NOTES	2019/2020	2018/2019
INCOME			
Funds Received	1	24,939,291.00	48,397,535.00
Less:- EXPENDITURE			
Project Expenses	2	20,117,004.55	37,935,128.00
Administrative Expenses	3	1,978,769.38	3,394,589.00
Personal Expenses	4	3,495,974.50	4,886,728.00
Finance & Other Expenses	5	26,553.89	50,561.00
TOTAL EXPENSES		25,618,302.32	46,267,006.00
Net Surplus /(Deficit) before Taxation		(679,011.32)	2,130,529.00
Less : Provision for Taxation		49,384.07	-
Net Surplus /(Deficit) After Taxation		(728,395.38)	2,130,529.00



DONORS



European Union
යුරෝපා සංගමය ඉගෙනුම් මධ්‍යස්ථානය



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC



PARTNERS



#SDJF



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