

Empowering Diverse Communities Through Democratic Media



Sri Lanka Development Journalist Forum | **NEWSLETTER**

EDITORIAL COLUMN

Marginalisation, also known as social exclusion is a major cause of vulnerability that heavily affects children, women, elderly persons, the differently abled, the LGBTIQ and other minorities. These individuals and groups are quite often relegated to the fringes of society due to lack of access to rights, resources and opportunities. The downfall of many countries results mainly in their failure to recognize the importance of including these groups into the mainstream, in attaining socio- economic growth and improvement.

“Marginalised minorities often constitute the deepest pockets of inequity and thus impact significantly on growth prospects”
- UNDP

Sri Lanka Development Journalist Forum (SDJF) since its inception in 2009, has been playing a pivotal role in prioritising diverse

communities, especially the marginalised. Dedicated in its vision to reduce voice poverty of the excluded and marginalised communities, SDJF has created a unique platform through its broader goal - media for democratisation to build respect, dignity, fairness, equality and self-esteem of these communities. With the aim of empowering the voiceless to overcome discrimination and to challenge stereotypes for better inclusivity, SDJF through its numerous approaches such as mobile journalism, community story telling, radio drama, forum theatre, etc. have provided a great foundation to many individuals and groups across the country to vocalise their successes and struggles, through a wide range of initiatives, aiding the development and improvement of their lives.

We continue to create lasting impacts through innovative and effective interventions, which are very much resonant through our work.

BRIEF UPDATE OF OUR CURRENT PROJECTS

MEDIA EMPOWERMENT FOR A DEMOCRATIC SRI LANKA (MEND) PROGRAM

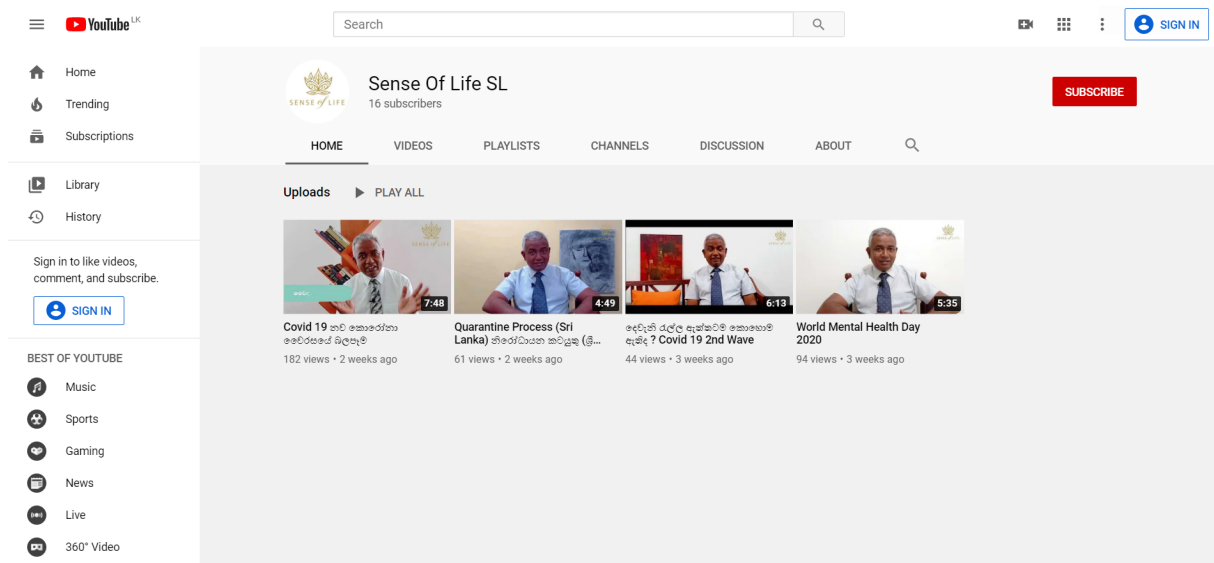
The Media Empowerment for a Democratic Sri Lanka (MEND) program is an intervention to support and facilitate media transformation that can empower Sri Lanka's democratic values and right to information of citizens.

VIBRANT VOICES

Raise your voice and make it heard

'Sense of Life' is an organisation that works for the marginalized communities such as migrant workers, people living with HIV, LGBTIQ + community and youth empowerment in 4 districts namely, Kurunegala, Gampaha, Kandy and Colombo for the past 3 years. In the past, they have invested around RS. 240,000/= for creating awareness videos and documentaries. They did not have solid social media platforms to publish their stories, except for a Facebook page. The opportunity to participate in the Vibrant Voices program, designed and implemented by SDJF in partnership with IREX and supported by USAID, was a rewarding experience for the organisation.

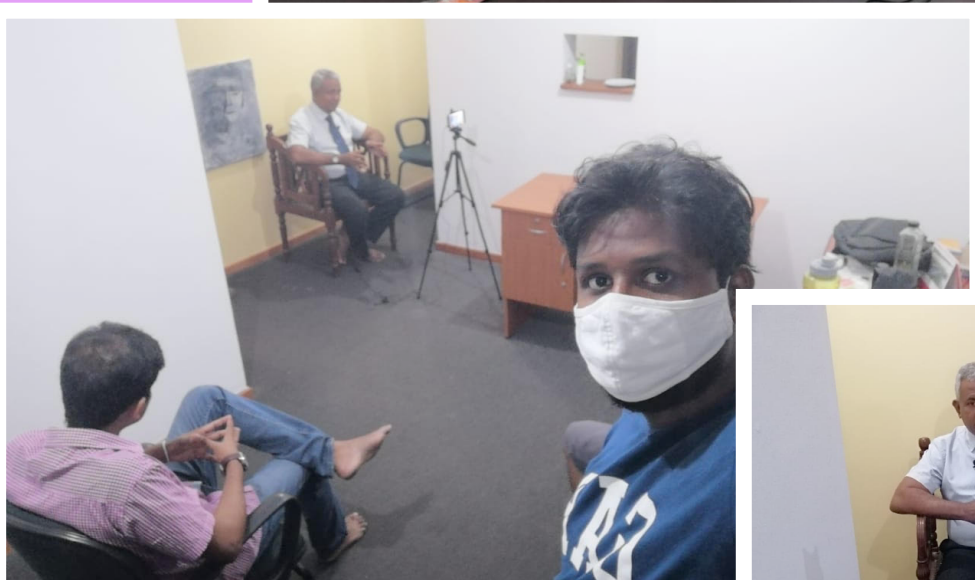
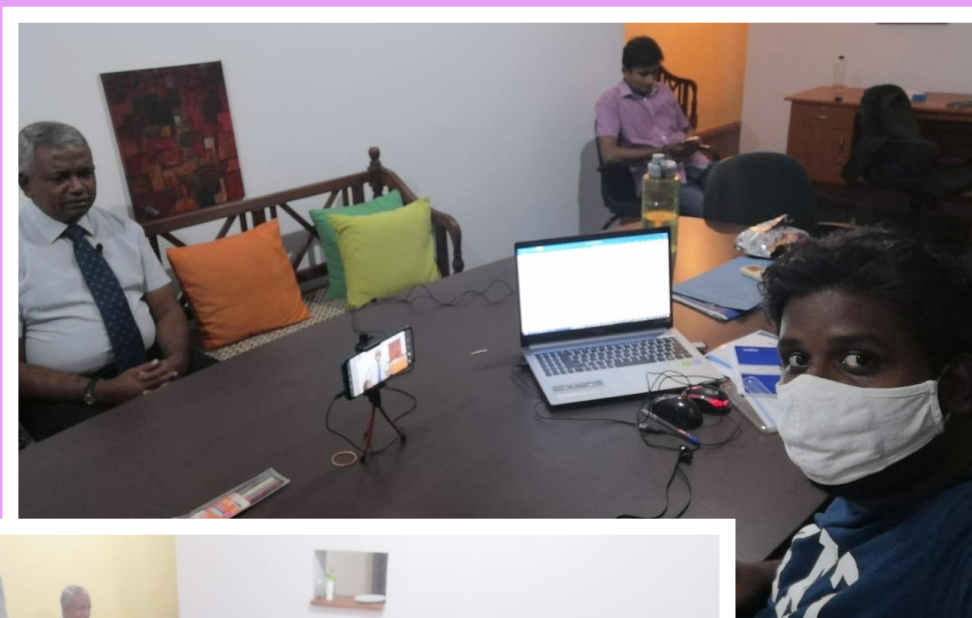
Three staff from 'Sense of Life' attended a 5 day intensive training program on mobile storytelling and digital advocacy. The organisation also received 3 MoJo Kits in order to produce their own documentary and awareness videos, which undoubtedly benefited them. As a result, they have produced more than 6 videos worth RS. 80,000/= within 3 hours and created their own YouTube Channel to upload those videos. It is vital to mention that within half a month they have reached 16 subscribers. One of the videos, created to raise awareness on Covid-19 had received around 180 views within a week. This is recorded as a significant change in the journey of 'Sense of Life'. The VV program and the new tool paved the path for them to better engage with their beneficiaries and audiences, through new technology.



YouTube Channel of Sense of Life;
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCaR9B5mk3gOc7kEZkAya50A>

“We have always wanted to start a YouTube channel, yet we didn’t have any idea of what to put in it as we didn’t know how to create content. Also if we were to make a video earlier we had to hire lighting and everything, but now it is so simple and cost effective with the technology we received from Vibrant Voices program. We filmed 6 videos within 3 hours. We never thought it would be this easy”

says one of the VV participants,
Asitha Darshana,
Program Manager of the Sense of Life Foundation.

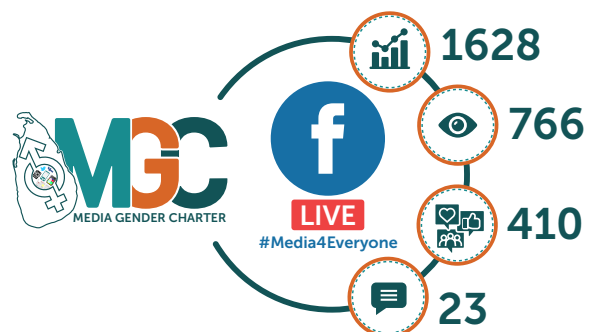


MEDIA GENDER CHARTER (MGC) FOR SRI LANKA

Media4Everyone live discussion series is gradually picking up steam!

The necessity of creating a thought-provoking dialogue on the subject of gender portrayal in Sri Lanka was apparent by the active engagement of participants on the 3rd live discussion, which was held on Sunday, October 18, 2020. This was conducted via Zoom & Facebook live from 6.00 - 7.15 pm. The topic for the discussion was, 'Do we have a fair portrayal of gender in Sri Lankan media?'. Nearly 20 participants representing diverse spheres of academia, gender, and media took part in the Zoom discussion while 540 viewers joined via Facebook live during the livestreaming. The speaker of this discussion was Dilrukshi Handunneththi, the co-convener of South Asian Women in Media while Nethmini Medawala, Attorney-at-Law was the moderator.

The discussion was very interactive since there was active engagement of the audience both on Zoom and Facebook. It enabled them to come up with different questions related to the topic and thereby to directly interact with the speaker to find answers. In order to expand the discussion to a wider audience, SDJF launched 8 Facebook watch parties. As a result, SDJF received 766 views, 409 engagements and 23 constructive comments through Facebook. "We often see roles of women being embarrassed in the media. It is sad to notice, the same society which considers women as noble, has also branded women as media commodities" mentioned Shavini Wathsala in the Facebook comments section, by drawing a sensitive yet critical standpoint. After an interactive discussion, Dilrukshi concluded the discussion by saying, "There are more engagements and the industry does have futuristic conversations, yet women are a bit reluctant to point out or raise their voice against any kind of negative gender portrayal in the media".



To access the live discussion please click the link below:

<https://www.facebook.com/LDJF.org/videos/670579150130559>

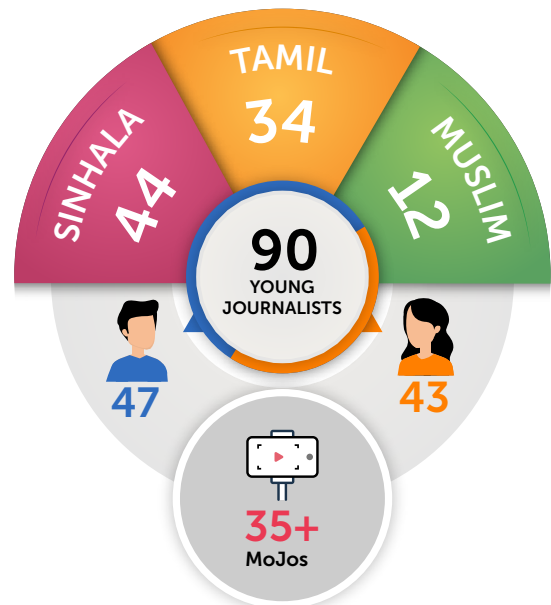
MEDIACORPS FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM

The month of October started for the MediaCorps team with a long anticipated event; Reunion of Young Peace Journalists. MediaCorps Reunion marks the final stage of the Fellowship process in which the MediaCorps Fellows, having undergone a residential training, subsequent field experience in a community different from their own, and story production based on their host community, convened once more to recollect, share and self-assess their experience and lessons learnt.

The Reunion was held from October 2 to 4 at Global Towers, Colombo, for the MediaCorps Fellows of four batches. This massive reunion was attended by 90 Fellows including 43 female and 47 male Fellows (Sinhala: 44 Tamil: 34 Muslim: 12). Needless to say it was a moment of catching up with fellow partners, reminiscence of old memories from training days to field visits. It was also an opportunity for the Fellows to share their experience and self assess the impact the Fellowship had on their personal and professional lives.



The Fellows also undertook an evaluation test - Most Significant Case Analysis Tool (MSCAT) through which they identified the most significant changes the fellowship had on their lives. The tool allowed Fellows to evaluate their personal changes under five broad themes or change domains; cross cultural experience, improved understanding and ability to foster diversity, enhanced relationships with the people in the host and other communities, ability to produce gender- and conflict-sensitive multimedia stories and commitment to facilitate dialogue. Being passionate Mojo storytellers they didn't just stop there! They also produced a Mojo story documenting their success stories under their most significant change domain to amplify how it changed their lives for the better, which was all thanks to their journey in the Fellowship process!



MEDIACORPS FELLOWSHIP EXTENDED PROGRAM

October brought fresh hopes for the MediaCorps Extended Program, as the preparations for its next training batch started. We have received over 146 responses for the Call for Applications published last month, an unmistakable evidence of the success and the popularity of the previous program. This month, we have been busy sorting and receiving the applications received to choose the cream of the most eligible applicants and we can't wait to meet these enthusiastic undergraduates from all over the country for an exciting learning experience like they have never had before!!!

INCUBATOR SPACES FOR PROMOTING INFORMATION RIGHT & FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION (InSPIRE)

The InSPIRE staff experienced an interesting learning endeavour in early October. Understanding the notion of Gender and its core concepts such as gender relations, gender discrimination, gender equity and equality and gender mainstreaming are central in the implementation of projects. Therefore, in light of capacitating the project staff to be equipped with the most essential knowledge and skills and also to include a gender lens in the project cycle, HELVETAS organised a 2 day capacity building workshop on Gender and Project Cycle Management on October 5&6 for both its own project staff and partner organisations. The program was held at Renuka City Hotel Colombo 03.



The training consisted of 2 major sessions, out of which the 1st, focussed on understanding “Gender and Sex”. This was a discussion carried out by Ms. Sriyani Perera, the Gender Consultant to the European Union in Sri Lanka and Maldives. During this very engaging dialogue she highlighted the importance of identifying specific gender issues and addressing

the situations of those individuals or groups in a manner that best interests them. The second session was focused on Gender and Media, where the participants engaged in a practical exercise in identifying negative, positive and harmful portrayal of gender in newspaper reporting. Ms. Deepanjali Abeywardana, Head of Media Research at Verite Research, facilitated this session.



The participants expressed their appreciation for the very productive and insightful training, and especially found the in- detail discussion on the Project Cycle Management the most effective and appealing. It was unfortunate that the 2nd day’s training had to be held back due to the outbreak of the Covid 19 situation.

WOMEN LEAD

SDJF reached out to more than 50 women local government members in the Northern province to get their responses to understand their needs and gaps in critical media and communication skills. The research team is in the process of tabulating and analyzing the data. Based on the analysis, SDJF will develop an exclusive training manual to improve the critical media and communication skills of local women politicians in the Northern Province as a pilot project, which is supported by Neelan Tiruchelvam Trust (NTT).

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Sri Lanka Development Journalist Forum (SDJF) is a non-governmental organization that promotes democracy, rule of law, governance, peace and reconciliation, gender equality and justice through creative media products, training, research and advocacy, across the country. For more information please visit us www.Ldjf.org and follow us:



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