

SDJF Newsletter

“End racism. Build peace.”

By Ayodhya Krishani Amarajeewa

Spearheading a much-anticipated need, on the 21st September, the world celebrated the International Day of Peace with its theme “End racism. Build peace.”

The UN General Assembly has declared “this as a day devoted to strengthening the ideals of peace, through observing 24 hours of non-violence and cease-fire.”

Sri Lanka is still recovering from the negative peace as the absence of war and violent conflict for a more than a decade now. In the absence of war, Sri Lanka still has to pursue positive peace introducing the structural changes to the governance system in place. People are not aware of the importance of bridging the gap from merely enjoying the absence of war to living comfortably with inclusivity and diversity which are the fundamentals of positive peace.



Sri Lanka is still facing number of racially motivated violent conflict and terrorism. Irrespective of the fact that all communities of different races and ethnicities can live in harmony in the country, the country witnessed a violent terrorist attack in 2019 as many lives were lost as the terrorists attacked the Churches and hotels in the country. This shows the importance of overcoming the biases that the communities have and the understanding required of the strength of the diversity and inclusion to promote non-violence and peace.

*“There is no way
to peace;
peace is the
way.”*

~ A.J. Muste

Considering the current trends in conflict and peace in Sri Lanka, Sri Lanka Development Journalist Forum promotes peace by adhering to the principles of non-violence and youth and women empowerment. In most of its media trainings and communications interventions, SDJF takes a leading role to prevent future crisis by promoting the media use to promote ethnic and racial harmony. For example, in the InSPIRE (Incubator Spaces for Promoting Information Right and Freedom of Expression) project, the ethnic and racial divide was eradicated by promoting interaction among the Tamil, Sinhala and Muslim youth from different part of the country.



As Secretary-General António Guterres [has said](#): “Racism continues to poison institutions, social structures, and everyday life in every society. It continues to be a driver of persistent inequality. And it continues to deny people their fundamental human rights. It destabilizes societies, undermines democracies, erodes the legitimacy of governments, and... the linkages between racism and gender inequality are unmistakable.”

Adhering to the United Nations principles and values in progressing with peace, it is reiterated that laying down arms does not mean peace. Working hard towards eradicating racial discrimination in our social structures and systems is mostly encouraged by the United Nations so that people can feel their diversity is a strength and society is inclusive so that even the minority communities can voice for justice and peace.

Come join with us! Let's be kind to one another and let's promote peace by being empathetic towards one another! World can be conquered if we act on non-violence and peace.

Inspiration in Action: University Youth Becoming Socially Responsible

Another round of successful Idea Markets was organized by SDJF in Kandy and Oluvil in the first week of September 2022. Idea Market is a space given to the InSPIRE (Incubator Spaces for Promoting Information Right and Freedom of Expression) students to interact with one another and get the mentorship from the experts in the media field in order for students to take part in the Inter-university competition organized by SDJF. The main focus is to promote learning through mentoring and strengthening the students' story ideas giving them the opportunity to pitch the ideas to mentors and get approval. Idea Market is followed by the Practical Trainings organized for students on new and modern media skills such as digital drama, mobile film making, mobile photography, DSLR photography, doodle art and blog and multimedia article writing.

SDJF initiated the small grant program for these InSPIRE university students to encourage participation in the inter-University Competition. The students were very keen on exploring more possibilities to produce media products that have a socio-cultural and economic value. They took upon the role of becoming change agents in the society, as they realized the power of media in giving a voice to the voiceless and becoming socially responsible media citizens by reporting news on matters related to various communities. Being creative in finding solutions to various social issues in the country is the driving force behind their inspiration at the Idea Market.



There were 28 (F- 22 M-6) students from University of Peradeniya who took part in two Idea Markets held at the Suisse Hotel, Kandy. The two sessions which were held at Green Villa Guest House in Oluvil promoted learning and story pitching for 19 (F-13 M-6) InSPIRE students from the South Eastern University.



During the Idea Market, the students pitched many stories expecting them to be featured as media products at the Competition. Following are some of the socio-economic and political issues they have been focusing on: Fishermen facing current economic crisis, women in Tea Estates, clean water and economic crisis, economic crisis and environment, children's rights, discrimination of LGBTQ community, Children who became victims of technology

and their tragic stories, , unequal distribution of opportunities for students of minority communities, tragic fate faced by women in the public transport, psychological impact of the que culture, drinking water scarcity, urbanization and deforestation, digital rights (not having access to internet as rural citizens), water issue in a village in Trincomalee district (people face health issues and other problems due to water issue), poverty in School children and their situation when they face child abuse, child rights (Child abuse), water issue in Kandy district, fishery issues (in Women headed household), fuel crisis, drug Addiction, online education, higher studies and migration of students from rural areas to urban areas after A/Ls. These topics reflect the width and length of the students' capacity to understand the problems in this country and the enthusiasm and inspiration they have in finding solutions to current socio-economic and political problems.



The Idea Markets in Kandy celebrated a special occasion, as the sessions were concluded at the Incubator Space at the University of Peradeniya. The Students from the University of Peradeniya participated in the closing session of the two Idea Markets with great things in mind. They were excited to see the Incubator Space and found it a space for creative idea sharing. The incubator space is a place where students can use to create their innovative ideas for their social problems and get trained on media skills within the model studio inside the space.

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