

SDJF Newsletter

World Development Information Day: Let's Mobilize Public Opinion

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To device processes and systems to mobilize information is one of the key components in socio-economic and political development. With United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the world is moving forward eradicating poverty and alleviating people's dignity to live a life of freedom. The UN SDGs are fundamental and very centric to today's development. The information and the public opinion about SDGs in both developing and developed countries ensure the sustained objectives of 2030 Agenda of UN. Considering the crucial role that information play in development and the importance of synergy between development objectives and nature of cooperation for development, in 1972, the General Assembly of UN established World Development Information Day to draw the attention of the world to development problems and the need to strengthen international cooperation to solve them.

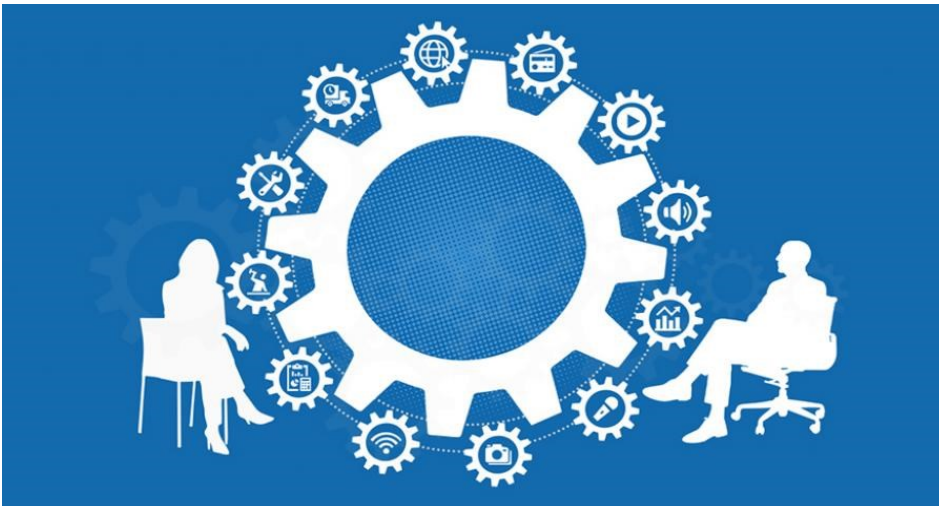


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The fundamental idea behind SDGs is to mobilize both international and national institutions and individuals to thrive towards development. Sustaining public opinion on advancing developing countries towards sustained growth should be encouraged by the national bodies within an international support framework such as SDGs. The education curricula can be strengthened to mobilize public opinion on SDGs and its sustainability, while increasing the frequency of sharing opinions and ideas about development in the existing systems and within structures at national, regional and international levels.

In these efforts the target population of development information should be the Youth in any part of the world. The contribution of the Youth in development, scientific research and enhancing of technology determines the velocity and centrality of development in any country. The developing countries like Sri Lanka are sustaining their growth in an intergenerational approach while providing the platform of sustained growth for their Youth. The information systems, technology and channels of information are made to flow through the youth enabling them the access to these development information processes, systems and structures in place. UN itself is a key international and intergovernmental body that is instrumental in dissemination of information on development issues, and overall functionalities of development in its entirety.

Sri Lanka has benefited from UN and is dependent of international agencies as UN on development information. Numerous organizations working with the youth in Sri Lanka i.e. universities are considering the awareness about SDGs among the undergraduate youth and convene numerous activities to share information about development which is a positive trend.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

The advancement of communication and technology is one of the key components of disseminating information and mobilizing public opinion on development. The Incubator Space for Promoting Information Right and Freedom of Expression (InSPIRE) project which is funded by the European Union and implemented by Sri Lanka Development Journalist Forum (SDJF) together with Helvetas Sri Lanka is one of a kind project that facilitates Youth in Sri Lanka to mobilize opinion and share information about development issues and make an effort to find solutions to local problems not only through local mechanisms but also incorporating the international community in the process. InSPIRE project is making an effort to bridge the digital divide in the local community and persuade the government of Sri Lanka to work towards reducing the digital divide in the urban and the rural communities.

The World Development Information Day, therefore is dedicated to those who are disseminating information on development issues, the processes and systems in place and those who facilitate to mobilize public opinion to gather international cooperation to advance the developing societies like Sri Lanka.

Harvesting Creativity and Innovation among Undergraduates: Turning the Incubator Space into an Integrated Classroom

Considering the contribution of youth in the development of the society in Sri Lanka, Incubator Space for Promoting Information Right and Freedom of Expression (InSPIRE) project tapped on the youth capacity building by promoting creative spaces for learning and expression and training the youth in much needed digital media. At the recently held Orientations on Incubator Spaces for youth undergraduates in University of Sri Jayewardenepura (USJP) and University of Jaffna (UoJ), InSPIRE advocated for creative and innovative usage of these Spaces converting them into integrated classrooms.

On the 3rd of October, more than 40 undergraduates of USJP gathered at the newly established Incubator Space to witness the handing over of the equipment to the university under the InSPIRE project and participate in an Orientation session which was organized exclusively for the undergraduate students of Mass Communication at USJP. The Session was very interactive as the opportunity was given to the students to clarify and ask questions on how to use the Space. Helvetas Sri Lanka and Sri Lanka Development Journalist Forum (SDJF) reiterated on the fact that the undergraduates can utilize the Space creatively and innovatively, respecting the basics of maintaining such an environment.

The occasion was graced by Senior Professor Sudantha Liyanage, the Vice Chancellor of University of Sri Jayawardenapura; Professor Shirantha Heenkenda, the Dean of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences; Professor. Kusumalatha Lankamulla, Head of Department of Sinhala and Mass Communication; Dr. Senani Harischandra, Coordinator – Mass Communication & Senior Lecturer Department of Sinhala and Mass Communication; Dr. Senesh Dissanaik, Senior Lecturer, Department of Sinhala and Mass Communication; Ms. Imesha Dharmasena, Senior Lecturer, Department of Sinhala and Mass Communication; Prof. G. Weerasinghe, Department of Economics; Ms. Subhashi Dissanayake – Country Director, HELVETAS; Ms. Chandula Kumbukage – Project Manager, HELVETAS; Mr. Mohamad Azad – Programme Director, SDJF; Ms. Ramona Stephen – Project Officer, HELVETAS; Mr. Selvaraj Selvamanikkam – Finance Officer, HELVETAS and Ms. Ayodhya Krishani – Communications Officer, SDJF and Mass Communications undergraduate students.





Another orientation session on the InSPIRE Incubator Spaces was conducted by Helvetas for Media Studies undergraduates from the University of Jaffna (UOJ) on the 14th of October in partnership with SDJF at the newly established Incubator Space.

During the session the students were given the opportunity to clarify how the Space can be used and they were educated on what norms to be followed. The undergraduates were given an overview of the objectives of the Incubator Space and how the it could be used to practice and promote the fundamental rights of Freedom of Expression and Right to Information in a responsible manner.

This Orientation was complimented by a Core Group meeting which was conducted on the 13th of October in Jaffna. The meeting convened project team members from Helvetas Sri Lanka and SDJF, student members of the UOJ Core Group, as well as senior lecturers and focal points of the university.

During this meeting, the progress made under the InSPIRE Project in the university during this year, key lessons learned, and upcoming activities under the project was discussed. The agenda also included the briefing of roles and responsibilities of the Core group including its key function of sustaining the Incubator Space. The Core Group meeting was an opportunity for students to share their experiences as network members of the InSPIRE Project, as well as discuss the progress made as media students being a part of the Project and related trainings.



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