



Sri Lanka Development Journalist Forum

NEWSLETTER

September, 2020

EDITORIAL COLUMN

The 20th Amendment to the constitution was published in the Government Gazette on September 02, 2020, creating a controversial debate not only in the political arena of the country but among the general public too. As the 20th Amendment bill was brought before the Parliament on September 22, it has now been challenged at the Supreme Court. The consequences that the country will have to experience would be quite eminent once the bill is passed and its impact made to be felt on Sri Lanka's constitutional democracy.

According to many critics the reformations brought in to the amendment are most likely to threaten the pillars of democracy such as justice, equity, freedom and representation. Among the many changes proposed, the stark and the most appealing have been, reinstating the all-powerful executive powers of the president, immunity to replace the Constitutional Council with a Parliamentary Council, superior authority over the appointment of Independent Commission members including the Election Commission, the Human Rights Commission, Public Services Commission, National Police Commission, etc.

Source: <https://tinyurl.com/y3h9ldbv>

Draft Amendment: <https://tinyurl.com/y4mjijto>

The citizens should have direct involvement and active participation in the decision-making process. If not, what could be expected out of such a constitution is none other than a tyrannical and autocratic system of government. Thus, it is mandatory that at least the quintessential aspects of the autonomy of the people; freedom of speech, expression and the right to information are upheld and remained untouched. In fact, Sri Lanka Development Journalist Forum (SDJF) is committed in its efforts towards fostering a vibrant democracy by advocating for pluralistic values, such as diversity, sensitivity to conflict, gender equality and learning and this is very much apparent in the below mentioned initiatives that are implemented.

“Democracy [is] not majority rule; democracy [is] diffusion of power, representation of interests, recognition of minorities.”

John Calhoun

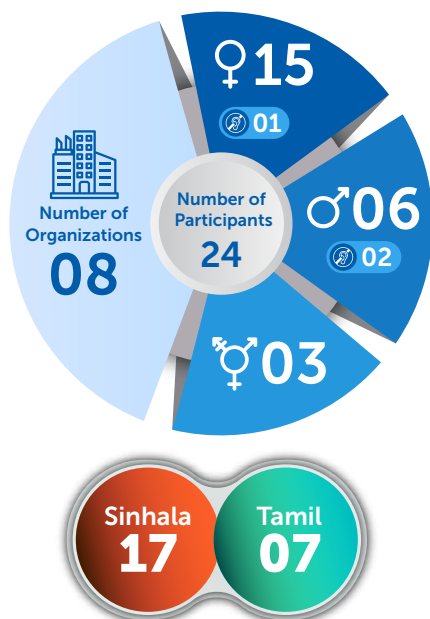
BRIEF UPDATE OF OUR CURRENT PROJECTS

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 (VV)

Based on individual assessments and due diligence visits to shortlisted organisations, SDJF after much forethought, selected 24 participants from 8 promising organizations from across the country representing diverse marginalised communities such as LGBT+, differently abled persons, deaf community, women, etc., for its vibrant voices training program 2020/2021, which was held from September 26-30 in Trincomalee.



The training program commenced with an inauguration ceremony with the participation of representatives in attendance from IREX and SDJF. At the end of the inauguration ceremony each participant was given a Mojo Toolkit including a smartphone and other essential tools. The aim of providing the toolkit was to ensure sustainable story production of participants. All the Mojo sessions were conducted by experienced Mojo trainers while the conceptual sessions were assisted by experienced resource persons. The five conceptual sessions were based on understanding of Marginalization, to help perceiving the power of Social Media and Digital Advocacy, Script Writing Techniques, Story Value and "Your Toolkit for Advocacy."

Later, the participants made several field visits to complete 24 Mojo stories. Having returned from the field, the participants edited their Mojos with guidance from their respective field mentors.

24 Mojo stories; <https://tinyurl.com/y6fh2su6>



MEDIA GENDER CHARTER (MGC) FOR SRI LANKA

The Media Gender Charter has been gradually reaching a crucial phase! After a long process of consultations and one-to-one meetings dating back to 2018, SDJF has finalized the charter now.



Prior to the commencement of functions at the Media Gender Charter Secretariat, a body established to enhance the maintenance of gender sensitive reporting, support creating safe working environments and identify gaps that hinder female journalists reaching decision making levels within media institutions, SDJF has started seeking endorsements for MGC from different media institutions, which were involved in the process of drafting the charter.

With the motive of promoting gender equality and justice in Sri Lankan media, SDJF successfully concluded its second live discussion on September **20, 2020** from 6.00pm to 7.00pm via Zoom and Facebook, live. **27** participants representing different disciplines of academia, gender and media joined via Zoom with a marked **237** viewers on Facebook live during the hour. The speaker for the discussion was Nalini Ratnaraja, Senior Program Manager-Women Leadership Search for Common Ground while Abhilesha Segar, Program Manager, from Everystory Sri Lanka was the moderator. This time the discussion was held in Tamil. One of the primary focuses of this discussion was to get the Tamil speaking population involved, to discuss the challenges in the media industry with regard to practising inclusivity of gender in media, lack of inclusivity in expert discussions related to politics, sports, etc., and how gender equality in the media can be achieved. The discussion was exposed to a wider audience through Facebook Watch Parties. **11** Watch Parties were held during the discussion. As a result, SDJF received **2200** views, **111** likes, and **47** comments through Facebook. In addition, more insightful questions related to unequal inclusion of women and LGBTIQ concerns in media were raised via Zoom.



Facebook live discussion;

<https://www.facebook.com/LDJF.org/videos/1550516051796092>

MEDIACORPS FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM

September has been a very busy month for the MediaCorps Team. The month started with four webinars from September 5-8 on four different topics; Diversity and Pluralism, Conflict Sensitive Journalism, Gender Sensitive Journalism and Social Media for Journalism. Webinars proved to be a great platform for the MediaCorps Fellows to get to know each other before the in-person training began. A few days later, 25 Fellows came from all over the country to attend the in-person training held in Hotel Ramada Seeduwa. For five long days they learnt about story hunting, identifying the news value of a story, data journalism,

script writing as well as technicalities of creating Mojo stories of journalistic value. On day 4 they also had a field visit to the Negombo coastal stretch where they put into practice what they have just learnt. All 25 Fellows completed their first Mojo by the end of the day. They also received certificates recognizing the successful completion of their first Mojo story!!! Three stories were selected as the most outstanding of all, which were awarded special trophies of recognition.



MediaCorps Training Program is the first phase of the MediaCorps Fellowship, aims at empowering young journalists from diverse ethno-linguistic backgrounds in collaborative peace journalism and storytelling. The program covers a range of diverse sessions both conceptual and technical, to facilitate their future story productions, to reframe their perspectives about diverse cultures while in the meantime encouraging them to foster peace and coexistence.



MEDIACORPS FOR UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

The MediaCorps Fellowship Program for Undergraduates is just around the corner! Since its first intake in 2019/20, we have been impatient to welcome the next batch of undergraduates for this exciting learning experience. In the previous intake the Fellowship trained an enthusiastic group of 25 undergrads from three state universities; University of Sri Jayawardenapura, University of Jaffna and Trincomalee Campus of Eastern University studying media and communication studies. This year the Fellowship is open to undergraduates of all disciplines of both state and private universities, thus anticipating an even more vibrant group of youth who will have diverse stories to share.

Stay tuned with SDJF social media platforms to know more on how to apply!



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

In view of positioning universities as progressive places and providing students with unconventional learning environments, the InSPIRE Project aims at establishing 3 Incubator Spaces in the universities of Sri Jayawardenepura, Peradeniya and Jaffna. As an initial move, SDJF conducted online Zoom interviews on September 09 and 14 to select three Liaison Officers, one each from the selected universities, to facilitate the tasks at field level. They will be assigned a crucial role in fulfilling administrative duties of the Incubator Space and be the communication links between the Project and the Universities.

Having closely observed the need for multidisciplinary learning opportunities and the necessity in identifying the strengths and gaps in the existing courses and curricula with respect to the subject of Media and Communication

in the aforementioned Universities, a “Needs Assessment” was carried out by the Consultant, Ms Pavithra Jayawardena, with the focal point of Universities. A physical meeting was arranged with the University of Sri Jayewardenepura on September 07, while online Zoom meetings were organised with the Universities of Peradeniya on both 4th & 5th and Jaffna on the 8th.

In order to analyse and ensure the requirements of the university students prior to the development of training modules, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were conducted with the Media and Communication students from different batches on 22nd and 23rd. This was mainly to trigger a discussion on the existing skills they possess, future expectations in the field of journalism & media and expected skills and the knowledge they look forward to acquire.



WOMEN LEAD

Critical media skills and communication skills are highly important for the women local government members to perform their duties effectively within the councils and outside of them. SDJF in partnership with Neelan Tiruchelvam Trust initiated to assess the critical media consumption skills and communication skills of 50 selected women local government members from the Northern Province. Based on this assessment, SDJF will develop a training module to train the selected members in the coming months.



PARLIAMENT STAFF RECEIVED TRAINING FROM SDJF ON VISUAL STORYTELLING

Sri Lanka Development Journalist Forum (SDJF) concluded a two days' workshop on visual storytelling and editing for the staff of the Communication Department at Sri Lanka Parliament. The program was held from September 17-18 at committee room 8 of the Sri Lanka Parliament, Sri Jayawardenapura Kotte with the participation of 35 staff.

The training was officially inaugurated by Mr. Shan Wijethunge, Director, Communication Department, Parliament of Sri Lanka with the participation of Mr. Mohamed Azad, Program Director, SDJF, Messrs. Ruwan Bogamuwa, Aswer Muhammadu and Kapila Ramanayake - Mojo experts from SDJF.

“We are delighted to be partnering with Parliament of Sri Lanka to provide training for its newly established Communication Department staff to promote the right to information to encourage civic participation in the democratic process” said Mr. Mohamed Azad, addressing the inauguration ceremony.

The training focused primarily on camera handling, basic shots, camera angles and movement, producing multi camera interviews, editing video using Adobe Premiere and story dissemination. The staff had an opportunity to experiment their classroom learning in the field with the support of trainers through various practical exercises.

The training program was conducted by the Sri Lanka Development Journalist Forum on a written request from the Director of Communication Department of the Parliament of Sri Lanka. The trained staff will produce a series of video documentaries in future.





MediaCorps Fellows have so many stories to tell, beyond the bounds of the Fellowship. In order to create them a space to publish their interesting stories, SDJF together with the Center for Media and Information Literacy (CMiL) created a sustainable platform for the MediaCorps Fellows to continue reporting stories called the MediaCorps Watch News Magazine. MediaCorps Watch came into being during one of the most distressing times of Sri Lanka, the COVID 19 pandemic period. During this period MC Watch completed 50 magazines with over 200 interesting stories on how the pandemic has affected the local communities.

Its second phase focused on the General Election from the point of view of the general public. Currently the program is progressing in its third phase presenting an interesting assortment of Mojo stories from all corners of the country that reflect the realities and struggles of communities that hardly come to the attention of the mainstream media.



To watch the magazines please connect to MediaCorps Watch facebook Page;
<https://www.facebook.com/MediaCorpsWatch>

MEDIACORPS FELLOW OF THE MONTH

Not everybody can tell a story so appealingly and in a way that it leaves a long-lasting impression. Meet the three MediaCorps Achievers of the month, who just proved their exceptional skill in storytelling by producing three stories crisp with human touch. MediaCorps Fellows Kosala Gunawardena, David Arulanathan and Nagulaswaran Puvikaran were awarded the trophies for the Most Outstanding Mojo stories they produced based on the stories they found during the field visit of the MediaCorps Training.



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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:



Sri Lanka Development Journalist Forum

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