

SDJF Newsletter

InSPIRE organizes Idea Markets: A novel way to mentor upcoming media professionals

With the participation of 75 students from University of Jaffna (55 – F 20 – M), an Idea Market was held in Jaffna on the 2nd of April 2022. Representing four media categories Dr. M.C. Rasmin (Multimedia Articles and Blogs), Ms. Ruwanthi Samarasinghe (Cartoon and Doodle Animation), Mr. Mohamad Aswer (Mobile photography), and Mr. Lahiru Wani-gasuriya (DSLR photography) became the mentors and media trainers of the program.

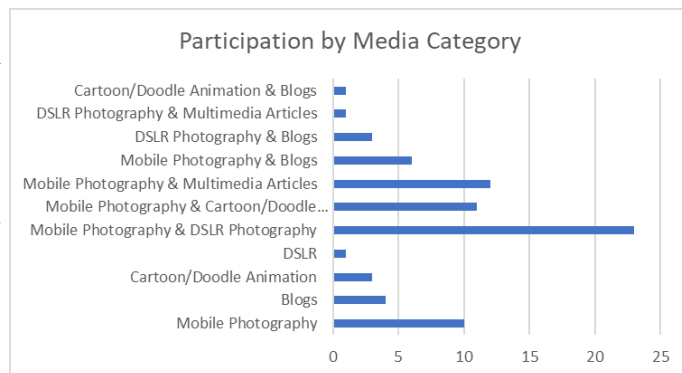
Idea market is an innovative activity comes

under the Outcome 2 of the InSPIRE (Incubator Spaces for Promotion of Information Rights and Freedom of Expression) project. The purpose of the event is to mentor and guide media students to choose an idea for their media production and present to the expert or mentors and then get directions or corrections on their ideas of their stories. The objectives of this event was to: (i) Make a link with media professionals and experts to reshape their careers (ii) increase the skill of story pitching and (iii) Create a network of future media professionals per media category among the 4 state universities.

The event started with an inauguration with the participation of Dr. S. Raguram, Head of the Department, Media Studies, University of Jaffna, Mr. Azad Mustafa, Program Director of SDJF, Dr. M.C. Rasmin, Lead trainer, mentors, co-group members and the liaison officer.



The participants and invitees were formally welcomed by Azad Mustafa. He said that the students are very fortunate to have gotten this opportunity. He explained how SDJF provided conceptual training, practical training, and inter district exchange promoting networking and solidarity among InSPIRE students. Idea Market was flagged as an opportunity to interact with mentors to pitch their stories. He further provided information about the Inter-university competition and explained that the students are provided with a stipend in the process of developing their media products and during the competition those who will win in each category will be awarded prizes and rewarded. Dr. Raguram highlighted the importance of branding University of Jaffna as the best university in terms of Media Studies. He further added that he wanted the students from their university to perform well in the competition and become the best university for media studies in Sri Lanka. He thanked SDJF for providing training for the students and organizing this kind of useful events.



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The students developed their story ideas individually in their media category group and later on pitched them to the mentors to get the approval. It was a beautiful process as the students were putting their ideas together on paper and as they pitched their stories, the energy in the room was so powerful and winning.

In the Multimedia articles and Blogs category, the reality of suffering communities from ongoing crisis was prevalent in their stories. In addition, there were other social issues and problems that the students discussed and developed as story pitches. Some of them are: i). Gender Based Violence; ii). Land rights; iii). Personal safety; iv). Cyber violence; v). Unemployment; vi). Economic conditions; vii). Issues in the fishing community.



Gabriel Madona, one of the participants of the Cartoon and Doodle Animation group said, “During 1983, the country was better than today, and we had everything but it was divided. Today, we have nothing, but people are united. United we are asking for freedom.” This is an example of the thoughts developing in the students’ minds. In the Cartoon and Doodle Animation media category the issues and problems identified by the students included: i). Gender equality; ii). Freedom of Expression; iii). Current political and economic crisis; iv). Respecting elders; v). Right to education; vi). Disability people’s rights; vii). Eco-friendly organic farming; viii). Saving water; ix). Soil erosion; x). Deforestation; xi) Sex education. SDJF introduced doodle animation as a means of advocating for new media tools. During the idea market the students benefited from this novel idea and expressed their creative ability as much as possible.



xii). Drinking water issue. They had good ideas which needed to be developed further and redirected.

The students from other groups joined the group after they pitched their idea in the other group. Some of the issues and problems that the students brought forth during the Mobile photography session are: i). Child Rights/Child abuse; ii). Right to Education; iii). Gender equality; iv). Energy consumption and power crisis; v). Current economic crisis; vi). Post-war issues; vii). Problems in the Coastal areas; viii). Social, economic and political issues in the Up-country; ix). Health issues in the Up-country; x). Issues on Estate workers’ income; xi). Environmental issues;

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The problems the students discussed during the DSLR Photography session are many. Among them the following are the key issues discussed as story pitches: i) Water issue; ii). Economic crisis; iii). Livelihood related issues; iv). Power crisis; v). Lack of supply of gas and oil; vi). Women empowerment; vii). Gender equality; viii). Transgender issues.

One of the main concerns of the project is in bringing the quality of media products to a certain standard to be able to tally them with the global and regional standard. The mentors made sure this target was achieved by mentoring students to meet realistic targets, and develop quality products based on guided story ideas.



Through this process, the students were mentored to hone their skills on right-based activism and they were encouraged to demonstrate it in their media products. Expert training and mentoring provided for students to become responsible and ethical journalists in the future. The mentors provided the required advice and guidance to shape students' outlook on life and choose issues in the community as per a right-based approach. The mentors made the students ideas worth capturing and practical while promoted the diversity of ideas and opinions.



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