

SDJF Newsletter

InSPIRE Students Forum discuss about Breaking the Gender Bias in Sri Lanka

Celebrating International Women's Day 2022, 8th March, InSPIRE (Incubator Spaces for Promoting Information Rights and Freedom of Expression) project organized a students' forum on 14th March at 11 AM at Hotel Janakie, Colombo. The students representing four universities, University of Jaffna, University of Peradeniya, University of Sri Jayawardeneperura and Southeastern University were the panelists for the forum. The panelists included Ishara Wadduwage, Mohammed Milhan, Diroshani Dharamaraja, Anupama Ramanayake, Anbalagan Dhevayani, and Shanmugam Thanurshan, while the moderator was Akeedha Banu. Under this year's campaign theme #BreaktheBias, the InSPIRE students discussed about breaking the stereotypes on women, gender and women's rights.

They discussed about various stereotypes and biases on women in Sri Lanka and in general. The fact that low representation of women in the parliament was seen as a hindrance to correctly represent women's issues in Sri Lanka. This point of low representation was brought up by Diroshani Dharamaraja. There were discussions about respecting women in different platforms including in social media. The fact that women are harassed in public places and



now in social media calls for new laws and regulations said the panelists. Further, having women prevented from being counterparts in harassment was seen as a requirement as it can impact how both women and men contribute to preventing harassment.

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In the discussion of role of media in breaking the stereotypes of women, Ishara Wadduwage highlighted that there needs to be concern and respect for women journalists in the media industry. Further he added, “There needs to be a mechanism in the media industry that works for all. Certain rules and regulations need to be in place. It is paramount to portray the right information in rightful manner.” “The media objectifies



women. There is a relationship between sexualizing women and spreading news about women. The women and men have to make it a point to share good posts about women that promotes a better image of women,” said Mohmed Milhan from University of Jaffna.

Further, they said it is important to treat every one in the same manner. So, women should be treated equally and given the opportunity to become equal players in the industry. It was also highlighted how important it is to have laws that treat everyone equally.

In terms of respect and protection and connecting it to respect in social media discussion, Fahama, a student from the University of Sri Jayewardenepura from the audience said, “Privacy of women in social media needs to be protected. Women need to be respected and



that is a must. It is paramount to stop harm inflicted on women through social media.” Commenting on the same, the panel added that the respect should start from home and women need to be respected first at home and then the society will follow the lead.

This student forum was a very successful event as the students from the audience engaged with the panelists to further add to the discussion.

InSPIRE Social Media Campaign on International Women’s Day 2022 #BreakTheBias

“Every woman’s success should be an inspiration to another. We are strongest when we cheer each other on” Serena Williams, world renowned Tennis Player has all the reasons to emphasize this. This is why on this International Women’s Day, Sri Lanka Development Journalist Forum (SDJF) focused on giving voice to women in a novel way, breaking the barriers for their voicelessness. SDJF under its InSPIRE project reflected on key areas of women empowerment and addressed main areas of concern in the present day world when it comes to women and their needs. The issues addressed in the InSPIRE social media campaign on International Women’s Day include women in extreme poverty, women in decision-making and governance, women in urban slums and COVID-19, and gender-based violence and domestic violence. Through InSPIRE project, SDJF does many interventions to make socially responsible ethical journalists. The module-based training, gender sensitive training, practical and systemic ways of bringing knowledge on gender and media, and providing platform for women journalists to voice their issues are some of the key determinants of how media and journalism is promoted to provide women and men to be gender sensitive in their reporting while encouraging to pick issues that matter to women.



Slum residents are at an elevated risk of COVID-19 infection and fatality rates.



In many countries, women are overrepresented in urban slums.*

*Based on data for women aged 15 to 49, living in urban and middle income countries. SOURCE: UN Women (2021) Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: The gender equality story.

11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES 




Though bringing in regional stories through practical and module based trainings, we equip aspiring young journalists to bring to light social issues prevailing in their respective regions.

As Malala Yousafzai says, “Raise up my voice- not so that I can shout, but so that those without a voice can be heard. We cannot all succeed when half of us are held back.” This is what is being promoted in SDJF agenda too. It will give a voice to the women to raise their voice in such a way that they will be heard loud and clear and that will create a ripple effect encouraging more women to raise their voice for their rights.




Women’s unequal decision-making power undermines development at every level. Women chair only




18%

of government committees on foreign affairs, defence, finance and human rights.

SOURCE: UN Women (2021) Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: The gender equality story.

16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS 



The InSPIRE Project has a strong emphasis on gender mainstreaming; our training programmes and consultations have provided the opportunity for young women journalists to voice out issues and engage in participatory decision making.