

Annual Report – 2012



Sri Lanka Development Journalists Forum (SDJF)

Media is not just for dictating what is happening around elites, but also for safeguarding democracy, facilitating reconciliation, inclusive transformation and addressing voice poverty around the disadvantaged.

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CONTENTS

1. About Sri Lanka Development Journalist Forum (SDJF)
2. Promoting Pluralistic values through Radio drama
3. Radio to promote Good Governance and Citizen Participation
4. Promoting cultural sensitivity and diversity amongst youth, through Digital storytelling
5. Radio as a Tool for Social Advocacy - Training programme
6. Development Dialogues - An intervention to challenge the voice poverty of the civil society
7. Training Programme on Promoting Gender Sensitive Active Non-Violence

Message from Chairperson



Prof. WADP Wanigasundera



Prof. Ajantha Hapuarachchi

The year 2012 has been yet another successful year for Sri Lanka Development Journalist Forum (SDJF) especially in terms of the service we could do for the betterment of the whole society. The projects that were organized by SDJF not only enhanced the capacities of the journalists, but also created wider space for the civil society who was marginalized from the mainstream media.

In fact, one of the biggest achievements of SDJF in 2012 was introducing the concepts such as radio drama for reconciliation, media for pluralism, Gender Sensitive Active Non-violence approach to the media and youth, media and inclusion. More than 60 people were trained on these disciplines.

Another significant achievement of SDJF was the promoting of citizen participation through the radio so that democracy would be established in the country. It is a known fact that many citizens in Sri Lanka have to struggle with human rights violations and various other problems due to the injustice existing especially under the post war atmosphere of Sri Lanka. Until SDJF came up with using radio as a powerful weapon to protect good governance and democracy of the country, the capacity of radio was underestimated and it was used only as a mere mode of entertainment.

However, with the programmes organized by SDJF, the public received an opportunity to voice out their common problems and to find solutions for those problems by directing them towards the responsible authorities. Hence, it is already proved that the attempts of SDJF in empowering the community, establishing democratic media have become successful in the year 2012.

The comments and feedback received not only from the public but also from various scholars, and media encouraged SDJF to organize more programmes for the betterment of the whole Sri Lankan society. Thus, it is with this strength that SDJF would step into year 2013 to work more for the country in general, and for different communities in particular by promoting and encouraging the concept of community radio in Sri Lanka.

Prof. WADP Wanigasundera

Chairperson, Sri Lanka Development Journalist Forum (SDJF)

Prof. Ajantha Hapuarachchi

Co-Sri Chairperson, Sri Lanka Development Journalist Forum (SDJF)

Sri Lanka Development Journalist Forum (SDJF)

Sri Lanka Development Journalist Forum (SDJF) is the national platform and the representative body for journalists who believe that community empowerment and positive social changes can be achieved through the strategic use of media; both at the community and mainstream levels. SDJF believes that media is a great tool which has the potential in uplifting the living standards of the disadvantaged, safeguarding democracy, keeping the civil society informed, maintaining the diversity of community in connection and providing opportunities to the civil community to participate in the democratic process. SDJF deeply concentrates on the gap between media and community. Broadcasting for development, empowering community media, conducting media research for development as well as training and capacity building are the core programme components which SDJF has structured to attain its goals.

Vision

To create a media culture that could lead towards active citizenry, positive social change and a well-informed civil society, providing a wider platform to have their voices heard.

Mission

Strengthening community media in Sri Lanka, facilitating the role of media and communication in civil society development, advocating democratic media policy, use broadcasting for social development, undertaking media research and training.

Organizational Objectives

1. To use media at mainstream and community levels to foster the values of diversity, democracy, equality, humanity and sustainable peace.
2. To establish and strengthen community media networks and facilitate the role of community broadcasting for transformation and inclusion.
3. Build the capacity of female media workers and promote the role of media in addressing the issues affecting women and promote gender justice and equality.
4. To encourage the use of digital and modern technology to create a comprehensive macro environment for Citizen Media and thereby to strengthen governance and have citizen voices heard.
5. To provide room for research on the role of media and communication in social development.

Actions

1. Be the collective voice of all community media activists in Sri Lanka.
2. Training and capacity building.
3. Constantly engage in need assessment and produce innovative media programmes.
4. Conduct Research, consultancy, monitoring and evaluation.
5. Innovative Advocacy and Networking.



Governance

SDJF is governed by an independent pool of experts – Board of Directors that is comprised with two senior academicians with extensive experience in media and transformation, a public service officer – expert in gender and administration and its founder member who is the director/CEO. The chairperson and co-chairpersons are the supreme authorities of the organizations. The policies and decisions taken by board of directors are implemented by executive director while he is fully answerable to BOD. Board has established a unique gender policy that is any project or activity compromised with gender equality and justice and eliminating women representation can be banned by female board members.

Board members

1. Professor: WADP Wanigasundera, University of Peradeniya, Chairperson
2. Professor: Ajantha Hapuarachchi, University of Colombo, Board member
3. Ms. Ruzniya Abdeen, Assistant Secretary, Public service commission, Board member
4. M C Rasmin, Board member and Executive Director

Projects

1. Radio programme (8 magazine programmes) promoting sense of ethnic harmony, diversity and peace, funded by national Peace council – 2007.
2. Trainings for Community radio activists in Sri Lanka on community broadcasting and public participation - 2008, funded by Asian media and information centre (AMIC) through UNESCO communication fund.
3. Dedicated Radio drama series, aiming at internally displaced people (IDPs) 2009
4. Radio documentaries on peace building and rural democracy - 2009. 35 audio documentaries were produced. Funded by Asia foundation through Viluthu.
5. Radio campaign in addressing the impact of gender based violence in the Muslim community. funded by Women defining peace (WDP)
6. Series of advanced workshops for journalists on Pluralism and diversity, SDJF played a facilitative role and the project was funded by CIDA through national peace council (NPC).
7. Radio campaign on domestic violence - Action and advocacy towards domestic violence, using radio as a mitigation tool, funded by Women Defining peace (WDP).
8. Strengthening the good governance using radio, Taiwan democracy fund - Implemented with Pirai FM
9. Promoting pluralistic values through Radio drama, series of trainings and join productions. Funded by Neelan Thiruchelvan Trust.
10. Promoting cultural sensitivity and diversity amongst youth through Digital storytelling, Funded by Neelan Thiruchelvan Trust (NTT)
11. Radio as a Tool for Social Advocacy – Training programme, Funded by USAID, through secretariat for Muslims (SFM)

Promoting Pluralistic values through Radio

Introduction

Within the post war atmosphere in Sri Lanka, making the younger generation of the country aware of pluralism, ethnic harmony and peace have become a timely concern. In fact, it is crucial for the younger generation to understand core pluralistic values such as understanding differences, active interfaith communication, strong cultural communication, respecting human rights including the rights of children, youths and women, maintaining democracy and engaging energetically with diversity i.e., accepting, learning, respecting and engaging with diversity as well as letting the diversity in all aspects of the human life, in order to prevent further ethnic conflicts in the future.

Hence, SDJF succeeded in empowering youth as a powerful group to come up with the values of pluralism and thereby to promote such values to their communities through the usage of interactive radio dramas as a result of its Four-month extensive training on Radio for pluralism and diversity which was conducted in Jaffna.

The prime idea behind this initiative was to use the creative skills of youth for artistic performances in order to strengthen the process of ethnic reconciliation through Radio Drama. The initiative had two important messages to be communicated to the younger generation of Northern Sri Lanka.

Firstly, to improve the familiarity of the youth with pluralistic values – making them to understand the potential of pluralistic values in promoting peace and reconciliation towards a united Sri Lanka. Second message was to translate their understanding and perceptions on pluralistic values into radio dramas which is an effective medium of reaching the hearts and minds of the masses.

The program not only helped the youth in war affected areas to gain sound knowledge about concepts such as pluralism, but it also paved the way for them to improve their creativity and use their talents for the betterment of the society as well as to enhance their communication abilities specially with relation to interacting with other groups peacefully.



Why Radio drama?

Radio drama acts as a catalyst for attitudinal change and contributes to mobilize communities towards strong reconciliation in many countries which undergo conflicts. SDJF identifies radio drama as a powerful tool to promote pluralistic values in order to empower the students' adaptability towards critical circumstances which challenge the law and order, the system of justice and recognized norms of multi-ethnicity.

Enabling Context

The current education system of Sri Lanka is yet to fully begin to create sufficient space for students to sharpen their knowledge and understanding on the core pluralistic values. Within this space it's very much essential to create an enabling environment for constant dialogues among the students on pluralism and allow them to become the prime contributors to peace and reconciliation. Especially, in the journey of establishing sustainable peace in the country along with pluralistic values, the abilities of youth such as innovative thinking, ability to produce new forms of art, ability to deal with other ethnic groups were utilized to lay the foundation for a better society.

19 youngsters belonging to Hindu, Christian and Islamic religious groups from Jaffna peninsula participated in this initiative. Surprisingly, the initial evaluation showed that more than 92% of the students were not aware of the terms such as pluralism and diversity. 30 years of ethnic war in Sri Lanka has concealed the potential energy of the youngsters in making a united Sri Lanka. The students were stimulated to define Peace and Peaceful Life in their own words.

30 years of war has also etched long term wounds in the younger generation and in order to heal their wounds, a powerful medium like radio drama was introduced, so that they could release their grievances and fill their minds with new aspirations, hopes and trust towards an integrated Sri Lanka with the support of the trainers.

Students were divided into heterogeneous groups to mingle them with their brethren from different religious groups. Gradually, they were trained to decipher on cross-cultural understanding. Once, the students realized the values of pluralism, they engaged in the activities energetically while interacting with other students enjoying the multi ethnic background.

Hence, youth were able to prove their interest on this topic through their demonstrations. After going through their observations, it was also evident that the training session has achieved the outcomes of the project successfully. In addition, towards the end of the project, the students were able to identify different pluralistic values and their comments clearly emphasized the fact that they have started to believe in energetic engagement with diversity.

Since, writing a radio drama script is a scientific process, the students were gradually trained to identify a concept that deals with pluralistic values and later on, they were given an opportunity to visualize a profound dramatic atmosphere and a plot. They were also trained to develop intense characters entangled with an inner conflict or needs and self-realization regarding pluralistic values. Thus, they were encouraged to develop any theme that is close to their experiences. After they were taught how to develop conflicting ideas between human characters, they finally developed their own concepts highlighting pluralistic values.





Students edited their scripts ensuring that they have incorporated pluralistic values which are the end products of the project. Furthermore, they made sure that the characters realize the importance of fostering pluralistic values and respecting diversities amongst human beings. Students created 10 radio dramas dealing with 10 different pluralistic values such as Energetic engagement with diversity, Understanding differences, Religious tolerance, Maintenance of democracy, Respecting Human rights including the rights of children and women, respecting rule of law, Importance of negotiation, interfaith communication, Gender sensitivity and actively engaging in non-violence towards women, and Cross- cultural Understanding.

Radio dramas were an alienated process from the common masses. It was a job allocated for Veteran radio artistes who lived in the vicinities in Colombo. Taking the project to the masses in Jaffna was a great achievement made in the radio drama history. It was for the first time that the radio equipments were carried to a locality and the local communities were trained, rehearsed on producing radio dramas. This initiative was successful in bringing out the talents of youth while creating more opportunities to discover the talents of a community that was separated from the mainstream for a long time.

Most importantly, students did not hesitate to retain pluralistic values they developed in the scripts into their real lives too. Veteran Radio drama artistes of SLBC and elsewhere were surprised to see the voicing performances of the students which were never displayed in mainstream media. The project ended with a positive note gaining much recognition from the reputed media for its innovative approach. The students praised the initiative for giving them a refreshing experience and for helping them to expose their hidden talents. The project also proved the importance of radio in reaching to the local communities. The comparisons made between pre and post questionnaires proved the transition occurred in the lives of the participants in terms of respecting diversities which will pass from generation to generation.

The process in Students making pluralistic dramas

1. Creating dramatic world featuring diversity
2. Developing intense main and sub characters demonstrating key pluralistic values positively or negatively
3. Identifying the conflicts between human characters
4. Lining up the stories on selected pluralistic values
5. Developing scenes aiming at the emotional changes of characters
6. Translating the scenes into scripts
7. Editing as teams, making sure that pluralistic values have been incorporated
8. Re-editing the scripts and looking at the CHANGE once again
9. Finalizing the scripts

Achievements

1. The students who participated in this training programme, have never experienced such a training before. Hence, creating radio dramas with our team was their first live experience.
2. Most of the participants were not aware of the concepts such as pluralistic values prior to the programme. In addition, while the program was conducted, the participants were formed into separate groups despite their ethnicity. Thus, the knowledge they gained as well building of healthy communication among and between different participants from different ethnic backgrounds led to positive attitudinal change of the participants.
3. This was the first time that a radio programme reached a rural community like Jaffna and it was a new experience for the public and hence their feedback and response towards the program was positive.
4. The programme helped to identify youth with extra ordinary talents and thereby the students who participated for the programme ended up being artists and producers.
5. The programme did not only get positive responses from the public and but also was highly appreciated by media with high level coverage.
6. It was evident that this programme was listened by around 10,000 people and around 600 SMS were received only from Jaffna appreciating the programme. Furthermore, due to the awareness made by the programme, cross cultural understanding and positive attitudes towards different ethnic groups were developed.
7. Students started using these radio dramas for their own needs and especially positive responses were received by the school principals appreciating the effort of SDJF.

Feedbacks

Noilin Raj

This is the first time I worked with Muslim girls. I didn't know anything about Muslims and their culture. Now I feel all human beings are equal.

Mithusha Justin
Rajakopala

I think diversity grants beauty to the world. This workshop changed my perception towards others. Earlier I used to laugh at black people. Later I learnt that we should accept diversity and respect people. Earlier I did not like writing scripts. But now I can write scripts on anything.

Pousteena

I learnt that dialogue is the best way to resolve conflicts. We should also tolerate religious diversities.

Mery
Anterneeta

I clearly understand about pluralism and diversity. I understand how to deal with multicultural societies and diversity. I used to go away from people because of their differences but now I learnt how to live closely with them.

Jaksion

Initially I did not really respect Muslims and always tend to fight with them. Now only I realized that all the human beings are equal.

2

Radio to promote Good Governance and Citizen Participation

SDJF being concerned about the democracy of the country also initiated a special programme in order to make the community as well as the journalists aware about the idea of good governance. In fact, currently, most of the radio programmes produced are aimed merely at entertaining the public but not making them aware of the significant concepts like good governance and citizen participation that should be present in a democratic society. But, through this programme, SDJF allowed the public to raise their voices on the issues that matter them the most and bring those issues to the light of responsible authorities.

This programme also had a timely value since it was initiated in a time where most of the citizens were suffering due to human rights violations and not being able to voice out their issues to the responsible authorities. Therefore, creating radio programmes, allowing and promoting citizen participation and good governance were appreciated by the public for a greater extent.

Current media trend

At present, it is evident that media tries mainly to safeguard the survival of the government. But, the role of media in promoting governance and safeguarding citizen democracy is not paid adequate attention.

What SDJF Proposes?

SDJF believes that good governance is the sign of having free, independent and vigorous informative media, and free and independent media is a sign of having strengthened good governance. At this juncture, SDJF strongly believes that upgrading the skills of the journalists on the role of media in promoting good governance and then, producing sustainable radio programmes linking them from various parts of Sri Lanka will strengthen the process of governance and safe guard the democracy at the grass root level.

Well strategized radio programmes can play the role of a watch dog to ensure that process of local governance is active, efficient, transparent, and citizen centric. Most significantly, the radio programme designed to ensure this purpose created a wider platform for public participation in the process of good governance and also bridged the gap between the public and government officials and made people understand about the local political climate that can affect the democratic rights of the public.

Why this intervention is needed?

- To hold the local governance organizations accountable, transparent, efficient and citizen centric
- To keep the citizens informed about the issues affecting them and support them to get the attention of the government.
- To create a platform for citizens to voice their own concerns, share opinions, engage in dialogues and participate in governance.

Activities carried out

- Two days-training workshop on good governance for 10 radio journalists. This workshop is mainly focused on the concept of good governance and how to report matters related to good governance via radio. This includes mapping the issues, identifying the stakeholders, developing youth capacities in reporting them via radio, field interview methods, etc.
- Discussion with Pirai FM radio station and production team- SDJF staff involved in the project discussed with the Pirai FM on how to link the studio with people and authorities. SDJF has named this program as "Citizen's Voice". The programme content is based on propagating the selected principles of good governance such as citizen participation, access to information, accountability and transparency.

- Media outreach programmes- SDJF produced a radio trailer to get attention of the audience. Pirai FM (FM 102) in the Eastern region broadcasted 30-seconds trailers about the radio programme, from 1st of February to 30th June 2012.

- Produced 20 radio programmes to promote good governance and citizen participation. Each programme focused aspects such as citizen participation, access to information, accountability and transparency.

- This programme was a 15 minutes programme, which started from 18th March and ended in 30th June 2012. The program was broadcasted every Saturday 10 am to 10.15 am. Program details are given below.

Issues addressed

A. addressing effective citizen services

1. Insufficient service to fishing community: fishery is one of the main livelihoods in the Eastern province of Sri Lanka. In the Karaithevu Pradeshiya Sabha (Smallest local council) region, there was no proper fish yard for fishing boats. After revealing this issue through the radio programme, Karaithevu PS Chairman agreed to build a new fish yard by next year. A few weeks after the programme, fishermen from Karaithevu, directly contacted the radio programme to raise their concerns. Karaithevu PS chairman and officers of fishery department visited the place and spoke with fishermen regarding the fish yard.

2. Inactive government stakeholders on Tsunami rehabilitation: Eastern province was seriously affected by Tsunami disaster in 2004. Maruthamunai village which is in the Kalmunai Municipal Council (MC) area was drastically affected by Tsunami. Government and NGOs have worked on Tsunami rehabilitation in the Eastern region. However the housing project for Tsunami victims had not covered this particular region. This subject is under the control of District secretary and Divisional secretary who are the main district level central government officers. General public and stakeholders talked on this issue via the radio programme. The Mayor of Kalmunai MC was interviewed in this regard and he promised that he will talk about this matter with central government and give solutions within two months.

3. Road Development: There are so many roads which are not in a good condition for transportation in Akkaraipaththu Municipal Council (MC) and Karaithevu Pradeshiya Sabha (PS) areas. The local government authorities are very inactive on road development. The radio programme pointed out the issues regarding the

poor maintenance of the roads. Then, MC and PS members requested the people to support to develop the roads through the radio programmes. Then people volunteered to develop roads. The two main roads were thus developed as a result of citizen voice programme.

4. Improper maintenance of the drainage system: Ninathavur village which comes under the Karaithevu PS has been suffering for a long time without a proper drainage system. Even though citizens complained about this issue, relevant steps had not been taken to solve this problem. Therefore people took this radio programme to emphasize their problems. Following the programme, deputy mayor of Kalmunai MC talked to the radio programme and assured that he will resolve this problem before the end of the year.

5. Issues of garbage dumping within the Kalmunai MC area: There had been many environmental issues in Malihaikadu village of Kalmunai MC. The radio programme pointed out the environmental issues and its repercussions on health and human lives. During the following programme Malihaikadu people contacted Pirai FM and extended their gratitude to the radio programme for addressing the issue. They assured that Kalmunai MC gave solutions to their problem.

B. Educating citizens regarding good governance

1. Educating citizens on local authority administration: People are not aware of local government administration. Therefore, local authority officers used this programme for educating citizens on local government administration. Eastern province Poverty Alleviation Officer (Samurdi officer), joined the radio programme to explain the method of applying for Samurdhi ration. The officer of price control authority in Ampara district explained the official procedure of raising a complaint against high price rates of essential goods and taking legal actions against those who increase the price rate beyond the price controlling rate.

2. Transparency in school management: Akkaraipaththu and Sammanthurai School Development meetings were announced by the radio programme. Furthermore, the meeting results were announced by the secretaries of School Development Societies through the radio program. Parents and people had not so far been very efficiently invited for the school development meetings. As a result of the involvement of the radio, a larger number of people could attend the meetings and evaluate the year plans and budgets.

3. Informing the citizens about public service: Ministry of Economic Development has introduced a rural development programme in collaboration with the local authority.



ties in the Eastern province. However people were not much aware of the development project. The ministry had called applications on developing issues and had invited people to engage in the development projects in the Eastern province. This was a great opportunity for people who live in Eastern province to participate in their rural development.

4. Creating Access to information about local government: The radio programme raised awareness on the right to information within local government. The local authorities need to create access for information on their activities, planning and budgeting. This creates a background for accountability in state democratization process.

C. Creating space for the public to participate in the governance

1. Citizen group participation: the local governance ordinance says, citizens also should involve in the annual plan and annual budgeting in local councils. But this has not been practiced in the local government bodies such as Akkaraipattu, Kalmunai MC, and Karaithevu PS. So the radio program emphasized the importance of citizen participation. As a result, Akkaraipattu MC and Karaithevu PS invited citizens for the annual planning and budgeting meeting.

2. Addressing local taxation issues: The radio program pointed out the taxation issues in Ninthavur which is

under Karaithevu PS. There is no proper system to collect tax from houses in Ninthavur. Therefore people had to face several problems on this.

Achievements

- First programme was about the issues such as taxation, solid waste management and stray dogs and cats that affect people within Kalmunai Municipal council (MC). When the grievances of people were aired through the programme Mayor of Kalmunai Municipal Council contacted the radio station and gave live responses to the issues of the people. After a few weeks of the programme, taxation issue was solved by the MC and they started a solid waste management programme as well.

- Kalmunai MC and Akkaraipattu MC Members and citizens got a platform to interact with each other through the radio program. Stakeholders were keenly engaged in the programme and provided solutions to the issues such as road development and dumping garbage
- SDJF got an average of 200 calls and 50 letters per week during the radio programme.
- Citizens got information from the stakeholders about the development project such as road development, Local government budgetary and annual planning through the radio programmes. This was a great opportunity for the citizens to actively participate in village development activities.

2

Promoting cultural sensitivity and diversity amongst youth, through Digital storytelling



Introduction

Cultural sensitivity and diversity - intercultural dialogues, innovative and open interaction amongst people from different cultural backgrounds, understating the origin of each others' differences, energetic engagement in cultural diversity, cultural tolerance, cross- cultural communication, respecting cultures, and interfaith dialogue, is one of the important pluralistic values needed to be communicated amongst the youth in order to overcome boundaries that separate communities, particularly in the Uva province of Sri Lanka where the ethnic, cultural and religious tension is rapidly becoming high and the culture is treated as a dividing tool not as a connecting tool.

Therefore, it was essential to create an environment for youth to become prime contributors to build cultural sensitivity and diversity through which peace and reconciliation could be reestablished. But, nobody so far identified the abilities and capacity of youth which could be used for this purpose. Hence, SDJF organized a programme to bring out the innovative ideas and creativity of youth to make a positive change for the society, especially under the post war setting of Sri Lanka.

Sri Lanka Development Journalist forum believes in the strategic use of media as a tool for social development and transformation has successfully concluded its first phase on 'Promoting cultural sensitivity and diversity amongst youth, through Digital storytelling'. The primary idea was to create innovative ideas on cultural sensitivity and diversity in order to empower youth participation in peace and reconciliation. SDJF believes that culture can be the most effective tool that can bridge the gap between the communities. SDJF brought 18 students from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds from Uva province (Badulla District) and engaged in capacitating them for cultural sensitivity and respecting cultural diversity and its various aspects.

Engaging in making digital storytelling



The training of students involved two parts. First part was dedicated to improve the familiarity of the students on cultural sensitivity and diversity and developing stories based on that, whereas the second part focused on the technical aspects of producing digital stories. Then students wrote 10 different short stories in both Sinhala and Tamil, reflecting key values of cultural sensitivity and diversity such as ethnicity, religion, caste, disability, poverty, social status, gender, eating and dressing system, rural and urban gaps.

Students were also trained on using technical methods such as selecting locations, drawing pictures, taking photography and video, voice recording and editing. Then, students were taught of computer software that could be used for editing and making video documents.

Achievements

- Ten digital stories that reflect cultural sensitivity and diversity were produced by the students.
- This is the first time a young radio digital story-tellers team was trained on all aspects of digital stories, cultural sensitivity and diversity with live exposure.
- Students were given opportunities to display their ability in demonstrating the substance of cultural sensitivity and diversity.
- Made attitudinal changes among students on accepting different cultures and diversity.
- Positive response from school principals, teachers and parents on student talents of making digital stories based on cultural sensitivity. They believe these types of initiatives will bring peace amongst different cultures.

• Tiennaya from Badulla Central College: “actually I did not know about cultural sensitivity, diversity and digital storytelling before this workshop. This is the first time I learned about cultural sensitivity, diversity and digital storytelling”.



Participants comments

• Malsha from Badulla Central College, “From the beginning, the notion about cultural diversity did not interest us much because you know we tend to have this idea that Sinhalese are the best as a race. I guess it is the same reason why we ended up being only two out of the six participants from my school.”



• Rifka from Al-Adhan Muslim Maha Vidyalaya, “We were not much aware about Digital Storytelling before. I think this is a good tool for changing the attitude of people who live in Badulla where there is tension going amongst Sinhalese and Muslims. I’ll produce a DST for social transformation.”



• Kovoor from Sarasvathy Maha Vidyalaya, “We did not have a chance to work with Sinhalese and Muslims. This was a great opportunity for us to understand their cultures and religion. I think we can live to peacefully without any kind of misunderstanding.”



• Vinoth from Power Foundation: “I am very interested at the computer field; but this is the first time I learnt how to write stories reflecting culture and diversity. I think, practicing different cultures are the beauty of the world”



• Shamali from Sarasvathy Tamil Mahavidyalaya: “I have never known cultural sensitivity and diversity before. I can play a mediator role in the future on bridging different cultures and ethnicities”



4

Radio as a tool for Social Advocacy Training programme

WHY CO-EXISTENCE AND INTERFAITH RECONCILIATION HAS BECOME THE MAIN EMPHASIS?



If people decided to live together, understand each other, and respect each other's diversity and rights we may not need law and policies to govern ourselves. The potential of people's willingness to live together with mutual respect and co-existence could make the world full of peace and joy. So, this prime message with other several key messages were passed to the participants at the end of the Training programme on Radio for social advocacy.

Sri Lanka Development Journalists Forum (SDJF) trained 25 Muslim youth including 11 girls, from various institutional backgrounds – Media, academia, CSO, independent media workers, freelance writers and producers on radio drama and social advocacy to improve their innovative and creative skills in communicating key Muslim and minority concerns such as the co-existence, issues around IDPs, Land, mother migration, co-existence, slums and education through Radio drama. This was a dedicated and professional three-month training programme which was fully supported by USAID through secretariat For Muslim national body, to work actively for Muslims and minority concerns in Sri Lanka.

This programme became a great space to the Muslim youth, for the first time, in their career to gain the capacity to use innovative and creative strategies around radio plays and storytelling to address and advocate the Minority concerns specially to bridge the emotional gaps between ethnic minorities and to inspire the entire community to be united through commonality.

Methodology

9 Days of a residential training workshop on Radio for social advocacy was conducted in three different stages. In the initial phase, an extensive training was given on identifying issues, mapping them with root causes, understanding behavioural and attitudinal factors, and exploring potential solutions. Youth came up with 15 key issues under 5 distinctive categories such as IDPs, Land rights, mother migration, co-existence and slums and education. Three Eminent resource people were facilitated these trainings.

In the second phase, participants were capacitated to translate their issues in to Radio dramas effectively and efficiently. Consequently, participants were trained in developing real world characters dealing with conflict, story lining, developing potential solutions, scene development, script writing, developing Practical and feasible solutions and editing the scripts. For the first time in their lives, many youth had an opportunity not only to learn the skills but also to reflect their understanding on the issues affecting minorities. The timely and relevant concepts such as diversity, democracy, human rights, justice, equality pluralism and conflict transformation were also trained as a part of this programme.

In the final phase, participants were encouraged to analyse their script and deeply discuss about the effectiveness of the solution. 15 scripts were finalized with full of team work.

WHY CO-EXISTENCE AND INTERFAITH RECONCILIATION HAS BECOME THE MAIN EMPHASIS?

More than 60% of the participants developed their stories and developed their characters around co-existence and interfaith reconciliation which is a great reflection of the time. Attitudinal concerns around respecting others' identity, religious rights, uniting for a common cause, inclusion, and participation, social integration were deeply discussed in the story lines. Understanding the potential of the civil society, finding a common ground, understanding commonalities, promoting constant dialogues, understanding diversities energetically engaging in diversity were some of the key paths constructed by the participants in their scripts.

Climax of the drama was superb!

Ramu, don't worry, now I understand that nothing is worth than humanity. I did not treat you as a Tamil-Hindu, but a human like me and my family. Of cause Law says that this land legally belongs to me and now I am saying this is our land, we both can live together with our lively families. Tell me which piece of land do you want? You are my friend. Now only I realize law and policy appear in our life because of the absence of the humanity. If we people live together with full of respect to each other's differences, no law can divide us. We will not need an extra force to govern us.

Ashrofsihabdeen, senior writer and commentator in his FB write up and blog feature.

The most important point of the story Panamum orunal Pinamahum is the anti-ethnic and religious feeling that implicitly exists in our society. We always tend to give priority to people who belong to our identity which means every one of us keep on killing humanity and the value of diversity. A Muslim water caretaker ignores giving the key to a Tamil person and says that it's harmful to open the water at this point of time; he gives the key to another person who is a Muslim. He also says that I take an extra risk for you, because you belong to my religion. Ultimately, a mistake done by the Muslim fellow leads to an extreme water flow in the paddy field of the Muslims. The lesson learnt is that, any human action that compromises humanity regardless of differences would lead to destruction. The turning point created an Echo in me. I was really influenced by this drama.

AL Jaffer, Senior broadcaster and Radio drama director, in his write up to the Engal Thesam Weekly.

It is the same concept dealt by Rashith and Himaya in the drama 'Inippudida', yet in a different view. It involves a dispute between a Tamil family and a Muslim family over the cleaning of a common drainage system. The government releases a notice to keep the surroundings clean and in case of failure they would be fined. The Tamil family expresses the suggestion to clean the system together despite the unwritten rule that Tamils should do the drainage cleaning as they belong to a particular caste. Yet the suggestion is rejected by the Muslims vehemently and the Muslim father behaves irrationally. A journalist arriving at the point arouses him further and he starts on building a separate drainage system. On a rainy day the kid of the Muslim family falls in the drain and at the doctor's he is thoroughly advised to make it up with the Tamil family. It actually brings the two families together. The role of the journalist in the story is quite interesting. Such characters of journalists are common in the society, who are benefit driven and relying on petty news.

Silmiya Hady, Senior Radio artist in her interview with production Team.

Looking at the core idea of these dramas, the effort of bringing the attitude of reconciliation among ethnicities should be highly appreciated. Specially the unity, understanding, co-existence among the Tamil speaking community in the Northern Province are brought up. Being a voice for the minority community, these dramas make way to their expectations and challenges at the same time. In a situation that these people's right for property is violated, the value of these dramas is inexpressible. I am certain that these dramas will make a behavioral change among people and it is a great effort taken by a young crowd.

AL Jafeer, Senior Drama Director, SLBC

I have been in the field of Radio Drama for the last 50 years, Not once in all those years I have been this happy about radio dramas, than this particular instance. Key reason for that is the core idea, the techniques, and the dialogues which trigger social change. Each script talks about the issues of the present society and give solutions for them. Especially the issues faced by Muslim and Tamil young crowds in Colombo slums: the fate and long term effects of the slum inhabitants who have been displaced are well portrayed subtly in these stories.

Moreover are the flaws in the relationship between the Tamils and Muslims in the Northern Province. The dramas insist that if the community intends to live in peace with their neighbours, it can never be changed. Considering how much we felt with them when we performed the dramas, these are sure to make a stir in the communities.

K Chandrasekaran, Senior Artiste



These dramas expose not only the issues of Muslim communities, yet the issues faced by pluralistic Tamil speaking community as a whole. The importance of ethnic reconciliation, the understanding among communities; the fact that we are a minority in a pluralistic society; all have been well understood by these youth. These dramas subtly talk about the issues that have never been addressed by the politicians and other responsible parties before. These facets interested and attracted me very much.

Ashraf Shihabdeen, Senior Writer and Commentator

If all the participants of this workshop start writing scripts we can telecast radio dramas each week for sure. The workshop has produced such a lot of talented individuals. This is a great victory in the field. They have been using techniques so well that it is hard to say the writers are new to the field. The issues faced by the Muslims in the country and how to solve them positively are all inclusive in these dramas.

Further, the concept that women writers are less, is disproved by the number of women participants in this workshop. More importantly, the dramas portray the necessity of understanding each other in a pluralistic society. Specially, the coexistence of minority groups with the rest of the people is brought out in the dramas well. Earlier, we did not have freedom to write these kinds of dramas.

We had been fearful of being beaten, accused in the mosques for that kind of expressions, yet these youth have been fearless in expressing themselves with regard to their issues. I highly appreciate this and it certainly is a great victory achieved.

Furkahn b. Ifthikar, Senior Broadcaster, SLBC

More than 20 % of the dramas focussed about IDPs and Resettlement related issues such as conflicts between the host community and IDPs, lack of livelihood opportunities, income, land issues, etc. Same amount of dramas also focussed on Mother Migration and family issues. Two scripts creatively showed the pathetic situation of mother migration in terms of family losing its cohesiveness, unity and stability.

This programme became a great space to the Muslim youth, for the first time, in their career to gain the capacity to use innovative and creative strategies around radio plays and storytelling to address and advocate the Minority concerns specially to bridge the emotional gaps between ethnic minorities and to inspire the entire community to be united through commonality.

Two dramas written also highlighted how minority groups suffer due to land issues. In addition, the youth shared their views on the potential energy that they gained in order to use the radio for social advocacy. The veteran artistes confirmed that youth have proved their professional standard and well-developed maturity in their scripts. Few said this is a great break-through and some also mentioned that this is a milestone in the history of Sri Lanka where youth were given the opportunity to address the minority concerns in a novel manner.

ACHIEVEMENTS



- Before the conclusion, participants formed a network amongst them to be united in promoting the use of Radio in advocating Muslim concerns and everyone became a part of it. Furthermore, they voluntarily developed a blog for that - <http://radiodramawriters.blogspot.com/>

- A Facebook Page was developed by participants in order to create a platform for all of them to share their involvement in advocating Muslim concerns. <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Radio-Drama-Writers-Forum-Srilanka/295739397203215>

- Regional wise participant clubs were formed by the participants – Five participants who live around Colombo organized a meeting in Colombo to form a regional network to work closely with each other in developing new ideas for advocacy and radio drama.

- More than 7 participants were able to prove themselves writing similar dramas to other mainstream radio and Regional Radio stations addressing minority concerns and four participants were also given the chance to voice various Radio programmes of Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation.

- 15 Strong radio plays addressing minority concerns were written and produced by the youth who attended the workshop and as a result of that, more than 8 newspaper features with positive comments were published in media.

From the article written by Waseem Akram

Engal Thesam, Fortnightly, 2012 December 30

In Sri Lanka, radio drama thrived as a classical form of arts and was a milestone in the radio history. Only a handful of people have the ability to wake the dead phoenix of radio drama in Sri Lanka. This particular workshop

which can be considered as a corner stone of the history of Sri Lanka, supported individuals to take this art for a broader arena of people from the limits of mere dialogue writing. It changed our idea that radio drama is not just a fictional art but a look into reality and also a scientific art. These dramas particularly identify the issues faced by Muslim communities and these are a classic example of how to bring about the social expectations in a radio drama. Usually, radio drama training is limited to media training. Yet it needs to go beyond these boundaries and explore new dimensions of storytelling as a tool to improve the livelihoods of the under-privileged communities living in our society.

Yousuf Azeera, A participant written this comments to www.radiodramawriters.blogspot.com

I believe in change. I think that it is not just a philosophy but a realistic truth. I took part in the workshop as I was keenly interested in arts. Yet, I knew nothing about social empowerment even though I had an interest in social issues during the school time and in university time as well. Earlier, I also did not have courage to stand against injustice, but, now I feel I have a new passion to be a voice against it. This workshop opened my eyes to many things that I never knew or had heard of. Until then, I thought that drama is just a simple art. Thus, I soon realized that this is the best tool to voice out the social issues. Now, I can use radio drama to make a change in the society.

2 essays were written by two different participants on the power of the radio drama in addressing social issues.

I think, this workshop is a cornerstone in the history of Sri Lankan radio drama. It is in another way, an answer to the issue of lack of youth participation in the art of radio drama.

- After 13 years gap, government Radio started broadcasting Radio dramas as a result of SFM Training. In 2002, Radio drama with more than 65 of years of history stopped due to lack of contribution. In the new phase, First drama was written by a SFM/SDJF member.

- Senior artists with more than 50 years of radio experience accepted that this was a remarkable achievement and breakthrough in the history of radio drama as well as advocacy.

- Mobilization amongst the youth group - This training programme increased the willingness of the participants to commit for the betterment of the Muslim community. This is shown through the post project communication amongst the participants.

- Scripts written by two participants – Sakeer and Basheer are selected for a TV production by SLRC.

5

Development Dialogues

An intervention to challenge the voice poverty of the civil society



SDJF developed yet another successful initiative to create space for the civil society, especially in war affected areas –Vauniya and Mannar so that the civil society could express their opinions and needs regarding the post war development process. Understanding civil society concerns around livelihood, education and infra-structure through community based dialogues and directing those issues to the responsible authorities in terms of attaining a solution for the betterment of civil society were the main goals of this program. Radio was used as a connecting tool between the civil society and stakeholders through which solutions for the civil society concerns were facilitated. The project catered 6 different locations

in both districts. People those who were marginalized from the mainstream, had an independent space to voice their own concerns. Space was also given to the community people to perform their folk arts, songs, and cultural events in the form of community gatherings. Several issues around education, livelihood and infra-structure were resolved as a result of the project. SDJF played a key role in the project specially in producing 15 radio programmes visiting target communities in the field. This is OTI/USAID funded project and it was implemented by Search for Common Ground in partnership with SDJF and Survivors associates.

6

Training programme on Promoting Gender Sensitive Active Non - Violence



Sri Lankan Development Journalist Forum (SDJF) in collaboration with Women Peace Makers (WPP), hosted a training programme on Promoting Active Non-Violence through Radio Drama. The programme covered two major aspects such as gaining knowledge on Gender sensitive active non-violence (GSANV) and translating them into Radio plays.

The religious intolerance and violence against the marginalized regardless of ethnicity has increasingly become an issue in Sri Lanka. Though there is no more armed war in Sri Lanka, the social climate in the post conflict era is very much likely towards high risk of violence. The instant fix of war has enabled a variety of possibilities for 'violence' to flourish in different shapes. The intention behind this project was to mobilize youth in understanding violent, risky climate and promoting gender sensitive active non – violence (GSANV) as a potential solution. 25 youth from various parts of Sri Lanka attended this programme.

Training focussed both theoretical and practical aspects of gender sensitivity, active non-violence (GSANV) including its strategies in connection with power, masculinity, violence and gender equality. Furthermore, deep attention is paid on character development, story lining, scripting, editing, voicing, acting and scene development as well. At the end of the training, 5 scripts were developed focussing GSANV.

6

After 15 years of wide gap 25 fully fledged artists came out



From 1980s Sri Lankan Radio was slowly losing the essence of public Service Broadcasting and Community Radio. One of the major programme models used in advocating civil society concerns was storytelling and radio play. Major issues such as violence against women, issues around education, good governance, democracy, ethnic harmony, interfaith –reconciliation, and co-existence were addressed through these models. Unfortunately, the story telling and radio play were given up after 1985, as there were no younger generation to continue the

momentum brought traditionally by the forefathers. Recently, SDJF with the assistance of Just Media Foundation facilitated full length residential training programme on voicing for radio tales and plays. 25 youngsters including 10 women trained. They were also trained about hosting forum theatre and focus group dialogues around radio stories on social concerns. The producer of SLBC radio plays A L Jaffer said this is going to be a fresh and energetic triggering after 15 years and the contemporary civil society concerns can be addressed with new voices.

Finance Report -2011/12

SriLanka Development Journalist Forum
No- 8/ 5, Liyanage Mawatha , Nawala Road , Rajagiriya.
STATEMENT OF ASSETS AND LIABILITIES AS AT 28TH FEBRUARY 2012

<u>ASSETS</u>	<u>28.02.2012</u>
	<u>Rs</u>
PROPERTY, PLANT & EQUIPMENTS	1,186,185.48
<u>CURRENT ASSETS</u>	
RENT ADVANCE	287,500.00
CASH IN BANK	1,071.84
CASH IN HAND	37,500.00
	<u>326071.84</u>
TOTAL ASSETS	<u>1,512,257.32</u>
<u>EQUITY & LIABILITY</u>	
ACCUMILATED FUND	1,197,846.32
EXCESS OF RECIEPTS	314,411.00
	<u>1,512,257.32</u>
TOTAL LIABILITIES EQUITY & RESERVES	<u>1,512,257.32</u>

SriLanka Development Journalist Forum
No- 8/ 5, Liyanage Mawatha , Nawala Road , Rajagiriya.
STATEMENT OF INCOME AND EXPENDITURE FOR THE YEAR ENDED 28TH FEBRUARY 201

<u>INCOME</u>	<u>28.02.2012</u>
	<u>Rs</u>
<u>GRANT RECEIVED FOR PROJECT</u>	
FUND RECEIVED	10,105,838.84
LESS : EXPENSES	
PROJECT RELATED EXPENSES	7,504,551.84
ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSES	2,286,876.00
BALANCE	<u>314,411.00</u>

AUDITORS : DEEN & CO ,
Chartered Accountant
"Abdulla Centre "
20/14 , Office No - 04 ,
Symonds Road ,
Colombo 10 . SriLanka

In the News



SDJF thanks the following organizations for their support.



ORGANIZATIONAL VALUES



Diversity

We believe that diversity is the universal truth and it feeds strength to human life. Diversity will enrich our programs which in return will enrich the people's lives. Without believing and practicing the diversity, media cannot be a part of people and their development. Diversity in a media and media in diversity give us the best in the world.



Empowerment

It's our belief that media has to mold the perception of mankind and show them their potential and power. Media should tell the people that nothing is impossible for them. We are committed to facilitate Sri Lankans to be well-informed and make them trust in themselves. Our media programme would energize them with knowledge to overcome voice poverty.



Dialogue and exploring commonalities

We would make our media programs to be the forum for dialogue around any social conflict and believe that our program should facilitate strong debates towards a common good. We will feed the peace and harvest the connectivity. We are capable of transforming any social conflict with media in our hand.



Engendering

We trust that media cannot be a real tool to foster the positive changes in Sri Lankan society until it adopt gender sensitive approach and constantly engage with the issues that affect women. We believe in equality, justice and gender Sensitive Active-Non Violence (GSANV) too.



Learning

Learning will make us unique while making our programs trustworthy. Furthermore, learning will make us to believe in the future and it will show us the changing dynamics of society as well as its needs of development.



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