Mobile Story Production Guidelines
for
MediaCorps fellows
to
Report on COVID 19 in Sri Lanka

March 22, 2020

Prepared By
Sri Lanka Development Journalist Forum (SDJF)
and
Center for Media and Information Literacy (CMIL)
INTRODUCTION
This guideline is developed to help and guide MediaCorps fellows to produce multimedia stories using their smartphone during the proposed reporting period on COVID 19 outbreak in Sri Lanka. The guideline is giving basic information about the reporting project and set up Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) under the crisis situation through FAQ’s.

MediaCorps Fellowship Program
SDJF implements the MediaCorps Fellowship program under the IREX Media Empowerment for a Democratic Sri Lanka (MEND) program, funded by USAID.

MediaCorps (MC) is a pioneering approach designed to engage young journalists who represent different faiths, ethnicities, and linguistic backgrounds by experiencing life in a community different than their own. During the program, participants will work in pairs; live in each other’s settings; deepen their understanding about issues affecting each other’s communities; and build relationships between people from different communities. The program also provides space for young journalists focused on peace and reconciliation to reflect on their cultural barriers and to produce collaborative multimedia stories.

In the last two years SDJF has trained more than 112 young journalists and produced more than 100 multimedia stories across the Island. They are trained in conflict-sensitive and gender-sensitive reporting techniques and MoJo story production.

Context
COVID-19 is becoming a global health threat and World Health Organization declared it a pandemic. As of 22nd March, 82 Corona confirmed cases were reported in Sri Lanka. The government of Sri Lanka has taken measures to control and mitigate the situation through various activities. (i) Set up quarantine centers at Kandakadu, Thiyathalawa and Punanai to screen the passengers coming from Europe and South Korea; (ii) Cancel all the flights from overseas (iii) Imposed an Island-wide curfew from 19th – 23rd March (iv) Declared special holiday for government and private sectors from 16th – 19th March to minimize the spread and utilise the time for dis-infection activities at public places using the armed forces; (v) Requested returnees from Italy, UK and South Korea during 1st -15th March to report to the police using the emergency number 119 and retain at home for self-quarantine; (vi) Set up a special treatment unit at IDH Angoda to treat infected persons and prepared the Mullariayawa hospital treat more people.

The current situation has not only created fear in communities, it has also affected the socio-economic status of the country. While direct negative effects are visible on the tourism and hospitality industries, healthcare, etc. the entire population is being severely affected due to actions by civilians such as stockpiling due to the fear of an even bigger fallout that would prevail nationwide. As such, leading supermarkets in many parts of the country have run out of day-to-day items, worsening the situation.

While both public and private sectors are making so many changes across the country to minimize the prevalence of COVID-19, the media in general has given attention only to
providing basic details including preventive measures and government announcements. Information of contemporary relevance particularly for civilians such as situation analysis from the ground, addressing different community needs in the event of crisis, connecting citizens with government bodies for additional services, have been neglected.

In the meantime, key fact-checking services such as AFP, Fact-check Crescendo, and the Watchdog teams have found emerging trends of false information and misinformation spreading across communities through different forms of media. The Sri Lanka Police have also issued a media statement warning the public not to spread false rumors on social media concerning the prevalence of COVID-19 in Sri Lanka. Furthermore, the police have identified approximately 40 individuals who have spread false information on social media sites, while the AFP has identified a post regarding preventive measures of COVID-19 (without being confirmed by any health experts) which has been shared thousands of times by many Sri Lankan Facebook users. The prevalence of such false information along with the pandemic can only worsen the situation, making it difficult for the authorities to guide the citizens of Sri Lanka to take correct initiatives in the moment of a crisis.

**Guidelines for the MC fellows**

**What is the story?**
Under this special reporting period SDJF/CMIL will consider the following as the stories that the MC fellows are expected to produce:

1. **Situation report:** What is the current status in your village/Division/District, how people are reacting to control the spread of COVID-19, what are their coping mechanisms, how shop owners are acting, is there any shortage of essential services, how is the life of day laborers/day-to-day working force, how are the hotels and tea boutiques affected, how many positive cases, how many quarantined in the centers and how many self-quarantined, any other new development on a day to day basis
2. **Preparation for emergency:** What are steps taken by the health authorities in your area to face any emergency, are the hospitals ready with special wards to treat COVID-19, what is the plan of MOH PHI in your area, what are the key messages they want to disseminate to public? What are the plan for distribution of essential foods, medical supplies, transport, distribution of petrol/diesel/kerosene
3. **Myths and Fact about COVID-19:** What do people believe about COVID-19, what are the precautions they are taking to control it (In India, people drink urine of cow to prevent from COVID-19; In Sri Lanka people use “Perungkayam” to prevent from diseases.). Today health authorities officially informed to use Chloroquine, HydroChloroquine tablets to treat infected patients.
4. **Any other human interest stories:** A story from recovered COVID-19 patients, a story from a person completed quarantine period, story of Health staff, any social work done by anyone in your village like water supply, online order and delivery of food items, essential services, any innovative projects, etc
5. **Stories of hope and inspiration**: Are people helping each other? Communities coming together? Is there any good news from this crisis?

**What is the format?**
It should be in video or multimedia format (Video, Audio, text, Data and photo). The tool should be a smartphone.

**What is the duration of a story?**
Minimum 1 minute and maximum 3 minutes

**How to submit the story?**
Once the fellows produce the story they should submit it to the editorial board setup by SDJF/CMIL for this purpose. The submission can be done via WhatsApp, Google drive, email, cloud, etc

**What is the role of the editorial board (EB)?**
The EB will review the story based on the story value, facts, authentication and story-telling elements. Any clarification needed, the EB will contact MC fellows, otherwise approve the story to be disseminated. Then MC fellow can disseminate their story wherever they want.

**Can MC fellow submit the same story for other news agency?**
The purpose of the exercise to disseminate factual information to public. SDJF did not see any reason to prevent it.

**Can fellows receive any mentorship support for this purpose?**
Yes, SDJF will assign 3 mentors to support fellows to produce their story. The fellow can contact Hasarel, the Senior Project Officer at SDJF to assign a mentor.

**What is the compensation?**
SDJF is planning to compensate MC fellows Rs. 10,000 per story to cover the story production fee, travel, communication and other expenses.

**How many stories can be submitted by a fellow?**
At the beginning, SDJF expect a fellow to submit minimum of 4 stories in a month. (one story per week)

**How are our stories disseminated?**
The stories will be disseminated based on the SDJF dissemination plan. However, the fellows are encouraged to disseminate in their own social media platform and known media sites after the approval of EB.

**What is the duration of the project?**
23rd March - 22nd April 2020
How MC fellows identified them as Journalist? Or fellow member?

SDJF encourage all the fellow members to wear branded T-shirt all the time when go for outdoor shooting. In the meantime, SDJF is working on issue an Identity card for all the fellows via iVoice.lk. Considering the current situation in the country, SDJF will print the ID card and send via Courier service.

Do’s and Don’ts

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<th>Do’s</th>
<th>Don’t</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. Always wear mask, glove and keep one meter distance.</td>
<td>1. Use clip on mic to capture the voices.</td>
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<td>2. Keep your equipment free from infection.</td>
<td>2. Take any risk to your health. Your health condition is 1000 times better than a story.</td>
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<td>3. Always do the Fact checking and verification</td>
<td>3. Be a story for others. Always act as professional.</td>
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<td>4. Always get authentic information. (get it from official sources)</td>
<td>4. Do not enter in crowded area. Always keep at least one meter distance</td>
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<td>5. Be neutral when reporting (get the views from both end)</td>
<td>5. Do not cover any crisis situation that endanger to you.</td>
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<td>6. Follow the ethics of journalism when use the pictures, videos, names in your story</td>
<td>6. Use un authentic information in your story.</td>
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<td>7. Do research and deep investigation/data collection.</td>
<td>7. Use the picture of children, victims, in your story directly.</td>
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<td>8. Be safe and take necessary precaution when you are reporting.</td>
<td>8. Violate any laws in the country. Always act according to the laws.</td>
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<td>9. Wear face mask all the time. Use glove when you use your equipment.</td>
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<td>10. Always keep a sanitizer with you.</td>
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<td>11. Keep your official identity card all the time.</td>
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<td>12. Keep free space in your smartphone or keep extra memory card.</td>
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<td>13. Keep your phone 100% charge when you are in the field. Or use power banks</td>
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<td>14. Preferably use a separate phone to make calls.</td>
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<td>15. Always use external microphone or hands free when taking interviews.</td>
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<tr>
<td>16. Wear ID card all the time with branded T-shirt.</td>
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In case of emergency, how to contact SDJF or CMIL?

Please contact immediately

SDJF - Hasarel Gallege –Project Officer - 071 631 5474

CMIL - Nirasha Piyawadani –Program Officer - 077 734 0038