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

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Prepared By
Sri Lanka Development Journalist Forum (SDJF)
and
Center for Media and Information Literacy (CMIL)

Reflections on Post COVID-19 Realities and the Upcoming Elections: MediaCorps Watch Phase 02

INTRODUCTION

This guideline is developed to help and guide MediaCorps Fellows to produce multimedia stories using their smartphone during the proposed reporting period on post COVID 19 and the election period in Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka is getting accustomed to the new normal after facing the pandemic, and a crisis of this magnitude is not going to be reversed quickly. In the post COVID-19 there are both positive and negative impacts in many sectors in Sri Lanka; education sector, international relations, import and export sectors, local market and industries and basically life of citizens. The parliamentary elections will also be held on August 5th, amidst the post COVID-19 situation in the country. Meanwhile, the guideline gives basic information about the reporting project and setting up Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) under the post crisis and election 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 from 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.

MediaCorps Watch news magazine program

MediaCorps watch which attracted 3.5 million reaches on social media was a joint effort of the Sri Lanka Development Journalist Forum (SDJF) and the Center for Media and Information Literacy (CMIL). The main focus of this program was the situational update of the COVID-19 pandemic from all the regions of Sri Lanka. It produced 50 daily news magazine programs on COVID-19 in both local languages. The motive of the "MediaCorps Watch" news magazine was to present vital and verified news and stories related to the period of COVID-19 pandemic from all parts of the country. This was carried out using smartphone technology while focusing on marginalized groups.

The content mainly included (i) Daily updates (ii) Coping mechanisms at the village level (iii) Human interest stories and, (iv) Stories of hope and success in managing the Coronavirus. However, for the MediaCorps Watch, 59 Fellows from 19 districts contributed to around 265 video contents, 100% using their smartphone. This program was disseminated through more than 33 platforms and successfully attracted around 3.5 M audience.

There are several impacts that were driven though this program. It should be noted that 40% of the journalists were females and this program created job opportunities for the young reporters. Importantly, MediaCorps Watch could cover news and stories across the country, which mainstream media couldn't report during the pandemic. In addition, there are instances reported that marginalized communities received assistance from the public as a result of this program.

Context

As of 25th June, two thousand and one (2001) COVID-19 positive cases have been reported in Sri Lanka, out of which 1562 patients have completely recovered and 11 deaths reported. In total, 99983 Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) tests have been held according to the Health Promotion Bureau.

Since the end of April, the government took steps to bring lives back to normal in the post COVID period. According to health authorities, since April 30, no new COVID-19 cases from the community have been detected. As a result, from April 20th onwards public transportation resumed for public service. Eventually, the government ordered partial opening of offices and businesses in mid-May. From early June, the restrictions were further relaxed with public transport being permitted. However, the government has ordered it compulsory for everyone to follow health guidelines which have been issued by the government.

Consequently, the schools will be reopened for students only from 7 July 2020 and according to Sri Lanka's Tourism Ministry, travelers will be able to visit the country from August 1, yet they are informed to carry a COVID-19 free certificate issued not earlier than 72 hours before boarding. As a result, the country's major airports, Bandaranaike International Airport, Colombo Ratmalana Airport and Mattala Rajapaksa Hambantota Airport, will resume operations for tourist arrivals. Moreover, Sri Lanka's state and government offices commenced their work on May 11, though partial curfews were continuing. In addition, with limitations hotels and restaurants were allowed to reopen from May 25th onwards and the Ministry of Cultural Affairs has announced that all cinema halls will reopen to the public from 27th of June. While everything appears to be reverting back gradually to its normalcy, the Sri Lankan National Election Commission announced that the Parliamentary Elections will be held on August 5.

However, as usual with the upcoming elections, there is a high tendency of mis-information and dis-information to be widely spread via different forms of media. As a nation, in the coming few months Sri Lanka will face numerous challenges both politically and economically. The probability is such that people might be misled with fabricated news and stories which comes mainly through social media and

mainstream media. Hence this program will help general citizens to make informed decisions and receive vital and verified news from all around the country, so citizens will be able to make correct decisions and devise proper initiatives for a better future. Furthermore, this will set an example as to how responsible journalists should report.

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. **Rebuild the Economy**: According to the present circumstances in the country as the post COVID period, what are the steps, initiatives and strategies the government has taken to help people to overcome the deep economic contraction in the country. Especially small and medium sized enterprises, entertainment industry, agriculture, tourism, fisheries, industrial level and unemployment issues. Also, how citizens in the country and the above-mentioned industries working to overcome the economic depression that they are facing as a result of the pandemic.
2. **Myths and Fact about post COIVD-19**: What do people believe about COVID 19 in the post COVID settings, what are the myths about the second wave, myths about COVID-19 patients and any difficulties when they face the society? Address the confusions people have in between dengue and COVID-19. Economic depression, misinformation which are spreading widely among people about government reliefs.
3. **Any other human-interest stories:** A story from recovered COVID-19 patients and their experience with the society in post COVID-19 settings, entrepreneurs and small business owners struggling to returning back to normal, story of health staff who spends time with their families or relax time in the post COVID-19 situation, community coming together in village level to recover and to help other community members to recover from the situation, the condition of online order and delivery of food items, essential services, any innovative projects, people who face health issues due to lack of drugs in the health industry due to COVID-19 effects etc

4. **Stories of hope, returning to normalcy, inspiration and rebuilding:** Are people helping each other to overcome post COVID-19 effects? What are the new trends which you can see as a result of COVID-19? Is there any good news such as innovations, new initiatives in the society as a whole? Any steps government has taken to rebuild government and private sectors? What are the new updates and stories related to opening up and giving permission for institutions and all other sectors in the country? Are people being more environmental friendly? Any health sector initiatives?

5.

What are the themes for the story?

Phase 2 of the MediaCorps Watch Program will focus on the post-COVID19 reporting with each program highlighting one specific theme. Few of the identified themes include economic implications, SME development, agriculture, education, issues faced by women and other gender groups, market prices of goods, import and export industries, banking and finance, environment and healthcare sector in the post-pandemic period.

What is the format?

It should be a video story only. The tool should be a smartphone. All stories should be recorded horizontally. Vertically recorded videos will be rejected in the editorial review. Video stories should also be up to the standard to publish. All videos are edited in KineMaster should be exported in at least 720 Mega Pixel and 25 PAL format.

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 Google Drive or a file transferring platform, ideally WeTransfer. When submitting the story, a brief synopsis should also be sent along with it including any further details regarding the story. All stories should be submitted to: mediacorpwatch@gmail.com

When should we submit the story?

Stories should be submitted everyday by 3.00 PM. Only the stories that meet this deadline will be reviewed by the Editorial Board on that day. Any stories sent after 3.00 PM will be carried forward for the next day's Editorial Review.

Do we need to submit an edited story? Or raw footage?

Fellows should send edited stories. In an exceptional case allowed by the Editorial Board, raw footages will be accepted. If raw footage is sent, the complete and coherent synopsis of the story should be sent.

Can I use music, subtitles and name tag in my story?

When editing stories Fellows may add a background narration. However due to possible copyright issues that may arise Fellows should not add any background music to their stories. Fellows also should not add any name tags of any interviewees. Names and designations of any interviewees coming in the story should be sent separately in the order of appearance.

How will my story be evaluated?

All stories will be evaluated using the story evaluation tool that was used in the Phase 1. All stories will be evaluated for their story content as well as technical quality. In order to ensure a balanced, fair and accurate evaluation, each story will be evaluated based on 20 parameters under three categories with a total of 100 marks allocated;

I. **Conformity to basic guidelines**: importance of the event, completeness of the story, logical flow, coordination with mentors, originality and fact checking
II. **Journalistic standards**: timeliness, objectivity, relevance, unusualness, human touch
III. **MoJo video story standards**: Visual quality, framing, audio, message treatment, investigation and research and lasting impression and punch.

What is the role of the editorial board (EB)?

The EB will review the story based on the story value, facts, authentication and storytelling elements. For any clarification needed, the EB will contact MC fellows, otherwise approve the story. Only the stories approved by the EB will be published in the program.

Can MC fellow submit the same story for another news agency? The purpose of the exercise is to disseminate factual information to the public. SDJF did not see any reason to prevent it. However, the fellow needs to wait until it is disseminated in the MC watch program first.

Can fellows receive any mentorship support for this purpose?

Yes, SDJF will assign 3 mentors to support fellows to produce their story. Fellows should contact the mentor before shooting a story and during the process of editing the story. Mentorship provided by a mentor will be a deciding factor for a story to be approved by the EB.

When should a Fellow contact a story mentor for mentorship?

Mentors will be available for mentorship from 10.00 AM to 2.00 PM every day.

What would happen, if I did not communicate with my mentor and produce a story?

Guidance by a mentor will be a significant factor in making your MoJo stories of good quality and content. The more you coordinate with your mentor about your story, the more refined it would be and therefore, more chance for your story to be approved by the EB. if you do not communicate with your mentor you will not be able to improve your MoJo story according to the standards expected by the program.

What is the compensation?

SDJF is planning to compensate MC fellows up to Rs. 10,000 per story to cover the story production fee, travel, communication and other expenses. However, the rate per story will be determined based on the quality assessment.

How many stories can be submitted by a fellow?

At the beginning, SDJF expects a fellow to submit a 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?

26th June - 10th August 2020

How MC fellows identified them as Journalists or fellow members?

SDJF encourages all the fellow members to wear branded MediaCorps T-shirts whenever they are going for outdoor shooting. Fellows should also have the official MediaCorps Watch ID card with them while they are in the field shooting stories, which authorizes their presence as a journalist in the field.

Do's and Don'ts

Do's	Don't
1. Always wear a mask, glove and keep one meter distance. 2. Keep your equipment free from infection. 3. Always do the Fact check and verification 4. Always get authentic information. (get it from official sources) 5. Be neutral when reporting (get the views from both end) 6. Follow the ethics of journalism when use the pictures, videos, names in your story 7. Do research and deep investigation/data collection. 8. Be safe and take necessary precaution when you are reporting.	1. Use a clip-on mic to capture the voices. 2. Do not take any risk to your health. Your health condition is 1000 times better than a story. 3. Do not be a story for others. Always act as a professional. 4. Do not enter crowded areas. Always keep at least one-meter distance 5. Do not cover any crisis situation that endanger you. 6. Do not use un authentic information in your story. 7. Do not use the picture of children, victims, in your story directly.

9. Wear a face mask all the time. Use gloves when you use your equipment. 10. Always keep a sanitizer with you. 11. Keep your official identity card at all times. 12. Keep free space in your smartphone or keep an extra memory card. 13. Keep your phone 100% charge when you are in the field. Or use power banks. 14. Preferably use a separate phone to make calls. 15. Always use an external microphone or hands free when taking interviews. 16. Wear an ID card at all times with a branded T-shirt.	8. Do not violate any laws in the country. Always act according to the laws.

In case of emergency, how to contact SDJF or CMIL?

Please contact immediately

SDJF - Hasarel Gallage –Project Officer - 071 631 5474

CMIL - Nirasha Piyawadani –Program Officer - 077 734 0038