Gender & Media

Reflecting on Candid Voices:

A Gender Sensitive Video Storytelling Program for Promoting Economic Equality



Sri Lanka Development Journalists' Forum

Gender & Media

Reflecting on Candid Voices:

A Gender Sensitive Video Storytelling Program for Promoting Economic Equality and Justice

Sri Lanka Development Journalists' Forum

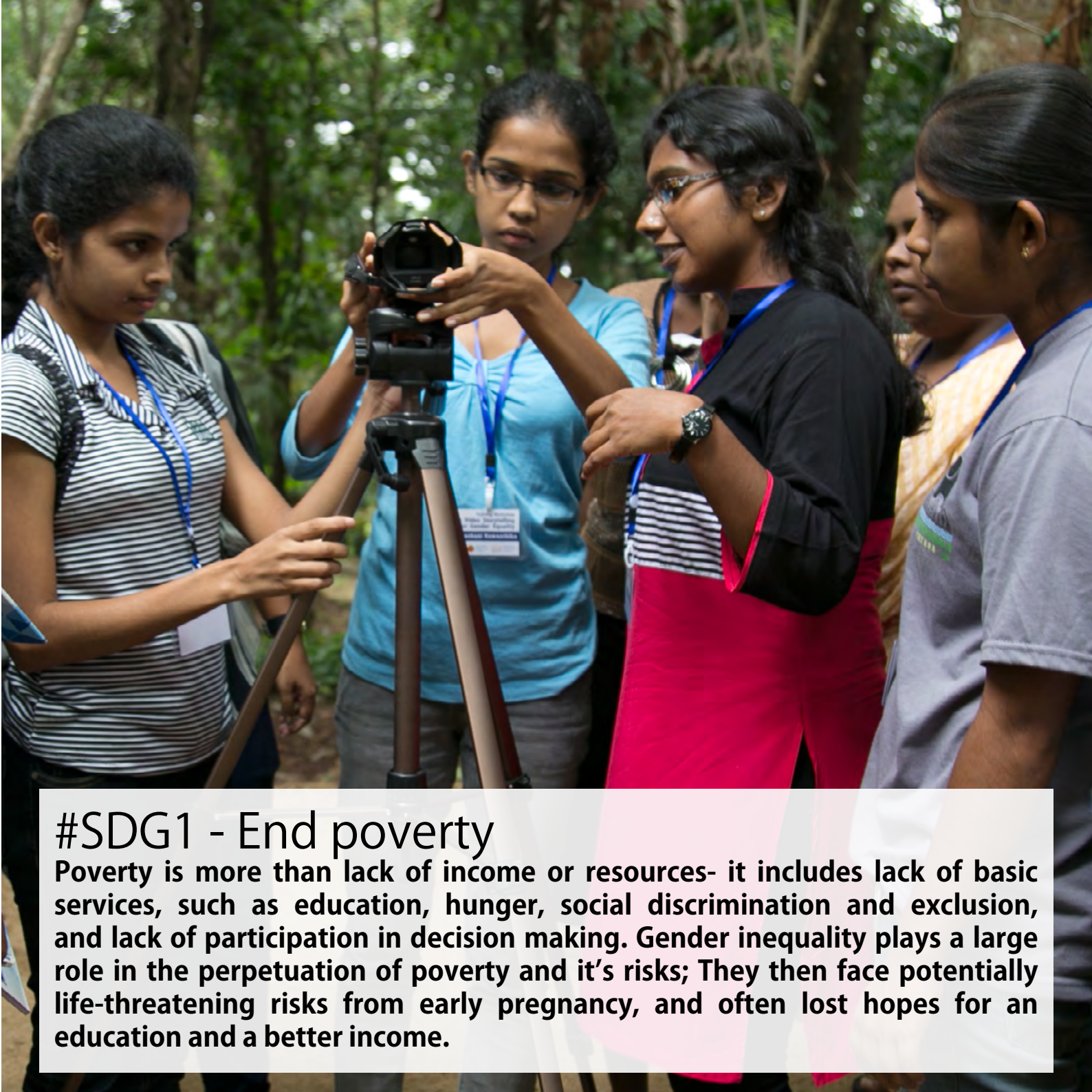
First Edition: 2017

ISBN 978-955-7765-03-7

© **Sri Lankan Development Journalists' Forum (SDJF)**

Sri Lanka Development Journalists' Forum

Sri Lankan Development Journalists' Forum (SDJF) is a well established national level organization, with more than 7 years of extensive experience in promoting the role of media in democratization and transformation. We work closely with local media organizations, International media development agencies, civil society organizations, youth and women development movements and organizations that promote democracy and pluralism towards better transformation. Media for Transformation, Community Media for Inclusive Development and Training and Capacity Building are the major programme areas of Sri Lanka Development Journalist Forum. The Democracy, Equality, Social Justice and Inclusiveness are the cross-cutting themes of SDJF.



#SDG1 - End poverty

Poverty is more than lack of income or resources- it includes lack of basic services, such as education, hunger, social discrimination and exclusion, and lack of participation in decision making. Gender inequality plays a large role in the perpetuation of poverty and it's risks; They then face potentially life-threatening risks from early pregnancy, and often lost hopes for an education and a better income.

PRODUCTION IS IMPORTANT, DISSEMINATION IS MOST IMPORTANT



When every single element of the Video Storytelling is scientifically and logically connected and estalished through an emotional journey of a character, it becomes a powerful story. Thus, it has an enormous potential in leading behavioral change. This has been a proven tool used globally to promote gender equality, justice, democracy, freedom of expression and inclusive peace. At the same time, it also gives space for citizens to involve in the making of media while encouraging them to narrate their own problems.

When it comes to Candid Voices program, I think it has two significant features. One involving females as potential storytellers and the second is making a desperate effort to recognize the economic contribution of rural women not merely for their families, but for the nation as well. Candid Voices challenges the conventional portrayal of women. It has taken initiatives to illustrate how powerful women are and their economic potential. Further, candid Voices project helped us sharpening youth perspectives about the potential of gender sensitive video storytelling in advocating Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) too.

The most challenging part is producing stories. However, the most significant component of the video storytelling process is taking those Candid Voices Videos to the appropriate target audience to facilitate active dialogue on recognizing women's economic role.

While addressing economic inequalities, I am certain that Candid Voices stories will be disseminated in social media, thereby facilitating locally made solutions of issues faced by rural women with their entrepreneurships.

I wish all the very best for participants.

Dr. S. Raguram
Author / Member of Board of Directors
Sri Lanka Development Journalists' Forum



SHARPENING PERSPECTIVES

The experience of watching Candid Voices video gave me great sense of happiness on partnering with Sri Lanka Development Journalist Forum and offering strategic direction, expertise and learning resources for the Candid Voices Program. This partnership gave us an opportunity to fulfil our academic mandate - providing scientific directions to the inclusive development of the country. Candid Voices program amplifies the voices of women whose real voices are not often heard and economic contributions are yet to be recognized by mainstream media. I am also extremely happy to notice how young girls and boys are capacitated under the candid voices program to challenge conventional ender roles given to both men and women. The videos highlight women's economic potential to support beyond the family, no doubt, these video stories change the stereotypical images of women.

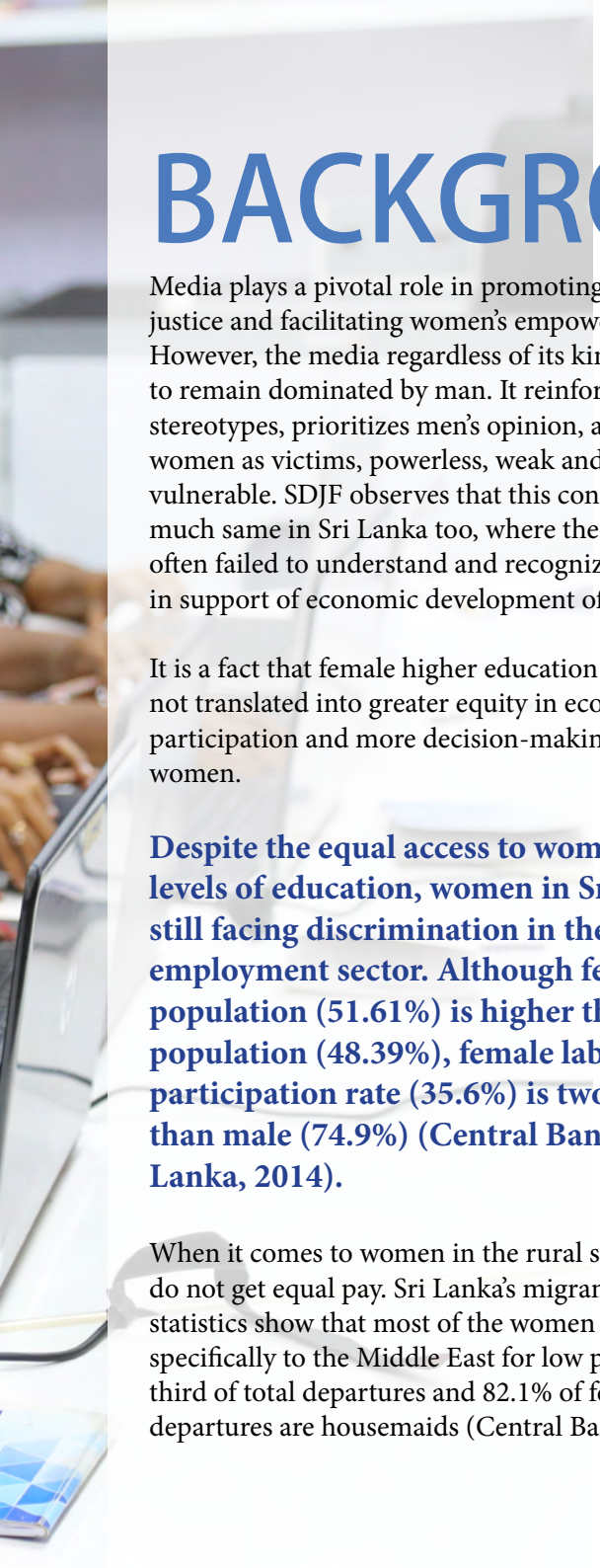
At present, PGIA offers postgraduate programmes in 31 disciplines and the emphasis is to train and provide most updated knowledge while facilitating research programs. The programs of study comprise of course work only, course work and research, and research only. Provisions are available for the research work to be undertaken either in the University System or at a relevant Research Institution in Sri Lanka.

M.Sc. Program in Development Communication and Extension offered at PGIA is very well incorporated with the objective of the Candid Voices. This degree is designed in a manner that postgraduate students gain more scientific approach to inclusive and gender sensitive development. It includes various subjects such as Principles of Communication, Adult psychology, Developmental sociology, Community Development, Gender and development, Developmental Journalism, Marketing Communication, Development Economics and Participatory Methods for development etc.,

While I congratulate all the participants who atended Candid Voices Programs, I would also like to emphasize the fact that we all have an additional commitment to our country - to become active stakeholders in making it prosperous for all.
I encourage all of you to use the knowledge for the betterment of all in the country.

Prof. S. Samita
Director,
Postgraduate Institute of Agriculture,
University of Peradeniya





BACKGROUND

Media plays a pivotal role in promoting equality, justice and facilitating women's empowerment. However, the media regardless of its kind, continues to remain dominated by man. It reinforces gender stereotypes, prioritizes men's opinion, and portrays women as victims, powerless, weak and economically vulnerable. SDJF observes that this condition is very much same in Sri Lanka too, where the Media has often failed to understand and recognize its strength in support of economic development of the Nation.

It is a fact that female higher education levels have not translated into greater equity in economic participation and more decision-making power for women.

Despite the equal access to women at all levels of education, women in Sri Lanka are still facing discrimination in the employment sector. Although female population (51.61%) is higher than male population (48.39%), female labour force participation rate (35.6%) is two times less than male (74.9%) (Central Bank of Sri Lanka, 2014).

When it comes to women in the rural setting, they do not get equal pay. Sri Lanka's migrant labour force statistics show that most of the women go abroad specifically to the Middle East for low paid jobs. One third of total departures and 82.1% of female departures are housemaids (Central Bank Annual Report, 2013). Most of the Sri Lankan women serve as employees while men serve as employers. According to Department of Census and Statistics, (2013), only 10.3% of female workers serve as employers, while 89.7% of male workers serve as employers. The employment rate among females who are contributing family workers is 78.5% while the corresponding rate for male is considerably lower at 21.5%.

Limited job opportunities for women, issues related to transport, social attitudes, personal safety and housing, gender wage gap, and high work related costs are some key reasons for this. Economic inequality makes women powerless against all forms of violence against women including domestic violence. It keeps them under dependency within the family environment.

Due to lack of economic empowerment, many women are unable to make decisions on their own matters and choices. Despite an unequal system, many women are employed in plantation, free trade zones, stereotype jobs, foreign employment etc. several others are thriving in small scale entrepreneurship. Some are succeeding in self-employment. Their contribution to the development of the economy is very significant. However, the labour of women is not taken into account considerably. Therefore, women are often seen as an economically inactive segment.

CANDID VOICES

CANDID Voices, is a project developed by Sri Lanka Development Journalist Forum (SDJF) with the strategic support from University of Peradeniya Postgraduate Institute of Agriculture (PGIA).
To advocate economic equality by using gender sensitive video storytelling as a powerful medi-um. Candid voices aimed at featuring the struggle of rural women who have been thriving in self-employment and small scale entrepreneurship schemes thus proving their economic poten-tial to contribute to not just to her family, but for the nation too. It is also expected to visually narrating the impact of economic inequality on rural women - single mothers, widows, war vic-tims, GBV victim survivors, and women who are economically challenged. Candid Voices will challenge conventional gender roles and norms. Candid Voices - voices ignored by mainstream media.

Why Gender Sensitive Video Storytelling?

Gender Sensitive Video storytelling is one of the most powerful tools that has transformative potential. Stories with visual effects and gender sensitive elements produced in the context of discriminations and injustice could transform people's knowledge, attitude, and behavior con-cerned if strategically disseminated. An emotionally powerful story always has the ability to lead action. Not only filming, but telling a story itself is empowering. Video stories put effective lens to mirror own self, and the society.

Methodology

Selection: SDJF launched call for application, through media, women organizations and media educational institutes and selected 25 female young girls (19-26) based on their knowledge, passion and interest to promote economic equality through video storytelling. Eventually they were offered 12 days of professional training on gender sensitive video storytelling for econom-ic equality.

Training: In the first phase of the training, participants learned basic video journalism skills - conducting needs assessment, developing story, concept of filming, principles of video editing, storytelling techniques, and gender sensitive video production. In the meantime, SDJF engaged women's organizations, CSOs, Governments Agents, and development agencies to identify role model women who have been thriving in small scale entrepreneurship in the rural setting.

In the second phase, young girls were divided into four groups and taken for 4 days of field visit to meet identified women, understand their stories, learn the settings and film their stories. They visited seven districts namely; Matara, Anuradhapura, Batticaloa, Vavuniya, Jaffna, Man-nar, and Badulla. Towards the end of their field visit, the girls ended up producing nearly 30 video stories that reveal the potential and strength of women in contributing to rural economy. During the third phase of the training, participants edited the stories they filmed. SDJF invited two

professional trainers and 3 volunteers (male) who performed well in the past trainings to assist the girls with additional help needed in both filming and editing.

Public Screening: In the near future, SDJF will involve at least 10 active civil society organiza-tions (CSOs) to bring 10 selected CANDID Stories to minimum 10 selected villages and screen them to a wider audience including civil society members, women, youth and government or-ganizations to create dialogue/discussion/debate on issues of economic inequality and facilitate solutions for issues focused on the stories.

Screening for advocates: SDJF will also organize one Colombo based Screening targeting women's rights activists, journalists, development agencies, UN organizations and government authorities, etc., aiming at promoting evidence based dialogues on women's economic empow-erment.

Social media activism: SDJF will finally invite 10 webcasting sites who are active in social me-dia to join us to use their respective social media platforms - Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, etc., to disseminate CANDID stories amongst target audience and beyond. In addition, SDJF will in-volve likeminded media organizations to carry this stories amongst the wider audience too.

Types of Stories Filmed

Amongst the stories filmed, majority are about how women in rural setting are engaged in small scale entrepreneurship either managed by themselves or private owners, skills based employment and self-employment. Some women were doing jobs that are traditionally known for men - driving in public transportation, fishing in the sea and marketing, agriculture, working as mechanical supervisors, bricks producing, making congregate designs, and working as advi-sors for service stations. Several others are heading their own self-employment such as food preparing, jewellery making, producing Palmyrah products, coir products, maintaining live-stock, home gardening, food processing, family farming, weaving, sweets production, candle making, etc.

Outcome

25 young girls who gained skills and knowledge on Video Storytelling Skills (VSS) under Candid Voices project, are capable of advocating gender equality and justice.

Outputs

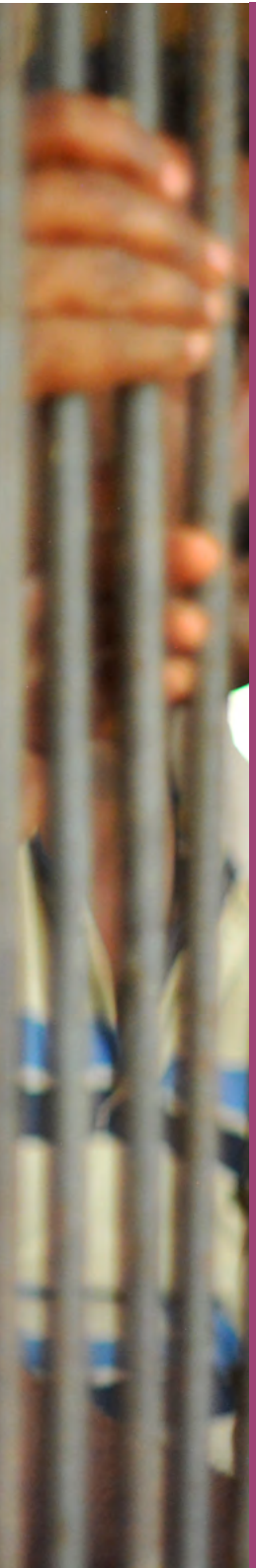
25 girls learned gender sensitive video storytelling skills, and produced 25 stories addressing economic inequalities.





#SDG5 - Achieve gender equality

Providing women and girls with equal access to education, health care, decent work, and representation in political and economic decision-making processes will fuel sustainable economies and benefit societies and humanity at large.



10 Effective Ways of Telling Stories

01. Be precise with your objective
02. Decide who you're trying to reach
03. Know what you want them to do
04. Focus arriving at one message
05. Keep your story short and powerful
06. Create aspiration throughout
07. Keep it personal for audience
08. Make it authentic
09. Take your viewers on a journey
10. Remember, video is a language and it has its own grammar
11. Show things to the viewer in a manner they have not seen before
12. Keep changing what the viewer is seeing
13. Tie a single string from the beginning to the end



#SDG10 - Reduce Inequalities

Social inequality is found in almost every society. Social inequality is shaped by a range of structural factors, such as geographical location or citizenship status, and are often underpinned by cultural discourses and identities defining, for example, whether the poor are 'deserving' or 'undeserving'.

WHAT WE OBSERVED DURING THE FILMING EXERCISE?

Arulya Gunawardane & Dishla Sahujath
University of Visual And Performing Arts

It is true that we all have failed to acknowledge the potential of women and their contribution to development as a nation. Our economy is mostly controlled by men and women need their mutual support to entertain the benefits they entertain. What is very much oppressing is that how our social system produces inequality and discrimination against women based on their gender.

All what I could contemplate is that why not our schools and universities help both young boys and girls to understand how gender roles are socially constructed and let them un-derstand the fact that it is our system which keeps them powerless and weak and not their physical nature.

Majority of the interpretations about women in the media makes them weak, complex, bodily attractive, problematic, innocent, controlled by men, dependent, weak in management etc., this was the image given to us too. Though we couldn't agree on this, we didn't realize how en-ergetic women are in the rural setting. All what we can say is that media does not represent the real nature of women as equitable human beings.





Tips for Filming Stories in the Field

01. One story per day, not more
02. Know your setting and the character before filming
03. If you like natural shots, know the daily timeline of your character
04. Try to understand the process of every action you film
05. Know what /who is your objective in every frame
06. Make sure the character is fully prepared to go for action
07. Should support the person you film, don't influence
08. Don't go advise the character
09. Have an interpreter if needed
10. Be silent during the filming
11. Don't let the character to perform any artificial action
12. When you film the story do the filming in a sequential order
13. Don't start filming, if you don't understand the story
14. Leave additional seconds in before you pause your shots



#Cut In 02

The argument has always been that women are not a minority, and therefore strategies appropriate to empower minority groups are not the way forward for women.



HOW CAN THEY BE PORTRAYED AS POWERLESS?

Probodhi Abeyshika
University for Visual and Performing Arts

In conclusion of Candid Voices, I am transforming myself as an independent and courageous woman. The moment I became a storyteller I am able to see a different world and the life of women with deep insights.

In my first visit to Jaffna, I met highly courageous women who I have never seen before. A woman who has been left alone by her husband is making greeting cards for livelihood, she lives in a small shelter with only one room. She can't walk with her wounded legs. Her daughter is also deserted by a man. Yet another woman in a similar condition produces candles and is in an extreme struggle to live her daily life. Just to earn Rs. 30, she needs to produce thousand candles. She has kept her missing husband's name for the company, to avoid her two kids for-getting the memory of their missing father. Yet, another one who received three goats from a livelihood development agency is maintaining 25. She is a single women and looking after an orphan girl.

Yet another working in a factory and looking after her husband who is a heart pa-tient and her children. When a women says I can't even remember when I ate from my hus-band's earnings, isn't she an empowered and powerful women? Another one was managing a restaurant on A9 road, just next to Omanthai, run by a women's association with forty war af-fected women, then how can one say women can't manage things?

How can they be portrayed as powerless?
How can they be seen as fearful and weaker?
Aren't they energetic than myself?

Field Observations:

01. Women are paid low wage:
This is a common problem noted in the rural setting. Rurally established companies run by urban owners, and local businessmen tend to pay low wage for women compared to men. For example, women receive just Rs. 30 after making 1000 candles.

02. Women health issues:
This is not seen as concern by several rural business entities. Work-ing environment for women in many places are not safe for their health.

03. Flexible working hours:
Some companies run by women have flexible working hours com-pare to that of men and special facilities arranged for women with children.

04. Lack of marketing plans:
Majority of the women entrepreneurs and small business owners are extremely good at producing household products. However, they lack knowledge as to how to market them affectively.

05. Legal protection and welfare of women:
Several individual/single women involved in in-novative self-employment. They don't just earn for themselves alone, but for the family, and for the society, and country too. Their contribution should be legally recognized. Their legal write as employees should be fulfilled.





06. Highest positions but less salary:
though some companies in the rural areas wanted to benefit by keeping the women in key positions but they are highly controlled by men. By do-ing so companies are benefitting, but such benefits are not received by women.

07. It is the circumstance not right:
Most of the women who are thriving in small scale entre-preneurship, small business and rural employment are either widows, divorces, people who are deserted, women whose husbands are earning less income etc. It means the circum-stance that pushes women and brings their skills, multitasking abilities into reality. But their right to work has not been widely respected.

08. Access to social life:
hundreds of rural women stay long hours working for companies ei-ther being at home or at companies - their social life is very much disturbed.

09. Multi-tasking:
Several women of whom we met in the field are doing multitasking. A wom-an from Batticalao is maintaining five different businesses simultaneously - collecting cow's milk, managing a shop, heading a women's association, supporting rural banks with rural investments and growing grace for livelihood. It is unfortunate that their contribution goes unrecognized.


Nikon

IT'S THEIR ENTITLEMENT

Anudharshi Linganathan
Trincomalee Campus

The art of video storytelling allows us to liberate our thoughts, voice against injustice, discrimination and understand the pain of fellow women in their daily life in accessing economic resources.

Regardless of circumstance, women should be economically empowered from the very young age.

Many women whom we met in the field think that involving in rural entrepreneurship, doing job, engaging in self-employment, discovering their skills to earn money for their own development has become very timely. It will be an additional strength to their husband too. What is really missing here is all these are their entitlements, and rights. Regardless of circumstance, women should be economically empowered from the very young age.

#Cut In 03

Stereotype is an oversimplified generalization about a person or group of people without regard for individual differences. Even seemingly positive stereotypes that link a person or group to a specific positive trait can have negative consequences.

Media Stereotypes About Women

01. Women and girls are weak
02. Women and girls are emotional
03. They are helpless and they need sympathy
04. They are not good at fixing things
05. Don’t have skills on TECH, maths and science
06. They have limited role in the society
07. Women are house wives
08. Women and girls are primarily concerned with relationships
09. They are dependent
10. Women are sex symbols







#Cut In 04

A gender role is the collective standards and expectations that guide the behavior of men and women in society. In simple terms, gender roles are society's way of telling us what is and isn't acceptable for men and women.

I HAVE NEVER SEEN MEDIA REPRESENTING PERSON LIKE HER

Hasara Nuwangi
University of Peradeniya

First of all, meeting fellow girls from different faith groups gave me a unique experience in my life. Each one of them are differently facing their life. Whatever their life, I realize each one has a struggle. Each one has a story to tell. Each one has thoughts to express. Each one has experience of facing inequality being girls. However, one thing is very common in every one that is all have a dream.

I always wanted to express how I perceive women's economic life. In my everyday life, I used to see a woman - someone closer my heart, proved that women are born with energy to face any kind of hardship in life and strength to succeed. I have seen how she supported her children, and faced the society being a single woman. She is none other than my own loving mother. But, I have never seen media representing person like her. I can now address issued faced by women due to economic inequalities.

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW IN MAKING A WOMEN STRONG

01. She is an independent human being

02. Access to economy is her entitlements

03. Every act of women has social values

04. Minimum respect for a woman is acknowledge her multi-tasking

05. Look at how power imbalance causes poverty

10 Common Video Mistakes

01. You develop into stories and don't learn the setting
02. You don't explain the purpose of filming to the person
03. You look at only one side of the story
04. You put too much information in every frame
05. Your under-estimate importance of sounds
06. You often forget that you filming a story not an incident
07. You don't use a tripod
08. You don't shoot in sequences
09. You try to copy television which you are familiar with
10. Your try tells everything you know of a person
11. You don't understand storytelling principles
12. You tell and don't show - video should speak for itself
13. You don't be silent during filming in the field
14. You don't ask the person to look at the camera





#Cut In 05

Gender stereotypes tend to disproportionately affect women and girls, but that doesn't mean that men and boys aren't affected. Media sets higher standards for men.

EVERY JOURNALIST CAN PRODUCE STORY ABOUT WOMEN,

BUT VERY FEW CAN TELL US HOW STRONG SHE IS

Sawmiya Sriskantharajah
University of Jaffna

Though I am a media student and a journalist with three years of experience I only show the sorrows of women who have often been portrayed as victims in my surrounding. Until, I attended Candid Voices field visit, I couldn't understand what it means for women in my town to go to sea for fishing, driving trishaw, preparing concrete and cement products. I thought gender role are defined by god. When seeing men and women are facing economic challenges absolutely with different experience I realized video story can definitely be a great tool to get people understand their hardship and how the system discriminate women.

I have realized how powerful the patriarchal system is just by looking at my own journey. During my career at the media institution, I have never taken a camera, went to field, covered a story, talk to people in field ground with media equipment's despite I was asked to do so.

I thought those jobs are assigned for me, and if I do them I will be seen negatively. Every journalist can produce story about women, but very few can tell us how strong he is.

#Cut In 06

There is no use of producing highly powerful video if it isn't widely circulated amongst the target audience. Sharing such video in our home page, social media, and YouTube channel may generate views, not solution. Sharing video is an activism.

THEIR EYES GOT SPECIAL LENS

Isbahan Shafdeen

What an experience it is- learning video storytelling by both the genders is a different experience for both. My involvement in Candid Voices program, as a volunteer, I had great opportunity to support girls with similar age. It's a learned fact that the society has inherently blessed me as boy.

When I helped them to remove the fear during the filming, they even went to the roof-top of a house to take deep shots convincing the house owner. So, the fear they experienced was systemically installed in them. They show extra commitment in understanding what causes inequality in the economic life of women. Their dedication was remarkable. At some point, I realize their eyes got special lens that could capture women' issues very deeply.

Mohamed Ashfaque

I was one of the male volunteers supported filming and editing components of the Candid Voices project. Throughout the program I noticed extraordinary commitments from the girls. I still remember, three girls from Vauniya - one of the war affected districts travelled nearly 30 Km in their motor-bikes alone. Sometime, they draw more than three hours looking at women who has been thriving in self employment. They look for the rationale of every single aspect of the stories they filmed.

Alex- Kamilesh

I was also one of the volunteers participated in the Candid Voices program, and was asked to assist three girls from my own town - Jaffna in filming and editing.

I was so lucky to understand how patriarchal system doesn't get men to understand struggle of women's life in accessing livelihood. I understand that every single act of women in any social domain has monitory value. Insensitive tools can't measure her contributions to the family, society, and to the country.

Finally, I want candid voice to focus the welfare and rights of those contributing women.



9 789557 765037

Strategic Partner:

POSTGRADUATE INSTITUTE OF AGRICULTURE

Implemented by:

SDJF COMMUNICATION 4D | iVoice

SRI LANKA DEVELOPMENT JOURNALISTS' FORUM

SRI LANKA DEVELOPMENT
JOURNALIST FORUM
623/4, (6A), Rajagiriya Garden,
Nawala Road, Rajagiriya, Sri Lanka
Office: +94117209511/2877007
E-mail: info@ldjf.org/Web: www.ldjf.org