Embattled Media

Democracy, Governance and Reform in Sri Lanka

Edited by

William Crawley • David Page • Kishali Pinto-Jayawarden

STOP Terrorism Against Media

An authoritative guide to the state of the news media in Sri Lanka, and the effects of insurgency and civil war on the media's role in a developing country

A book on the travails of the media in Sri Lanka that will be of interest to media academics, students and citizens outside the country.
Professor James Curran, Goldsmiths, University of London

This is a timely and important book about the difficulties of holding fast to the principles of free speech in a conflict zone.
Geoffrey Robertson QC, author of Robertson & Nicol on Media Law

This pioneering study considerably broadens the scope of media studies in South Asia.
Daya Thussu, Professor of International Communication, University of Westminster

In this book, Crawley and Page and their co-authors have produced a remarkable and authoritative analysis of media in the region.
James Deane, Director, Policy and Learning, BBC Media Action

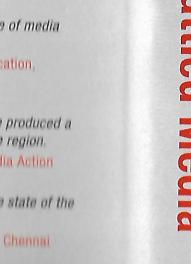*This book is both a reality check and an eye opener on the state of the news media in Sri Lanka.*
Sashi Kumar, Chairman, Asian College of Journalism, Chennai

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S. Raguram

As communication, in addition to food, clothing and shelter, has increasingly come to be seen as a basic need for the individual and society, the influence of the media and communications has grown in importance as a theme for research. Media education is vital in promoting an understanding of the media, reinforcing the utilisation of media as a means of meeting human needs, and encouraging a critical perspective on media usage. The practical issue is to consider what types of media education—formal or informal—should be pursued. Formal media education can be carried out within an institution, within a formal structure and with defined objectives. By contrast, media education for a wider public can be informal and use more flexible educational methods. In Sri Lanka, there are many informal educational approaches towards media at different levels. But formal institutional approaches to media education are comparatively weak.

At the initial stage, media education in the universities was introduced almost as a token subject and largely involved media appreciation. This proved a constraint in understanding the significance and potential of media education. A number of universities in Sri Lanka have a good record in considering the fundamentals of media education as part of their curricula. However, in the universities of the north and east, it is only recently that media education has become a major field of study.

There are many reasons for this. Colombo was considered as the hub of the mass media. Jaffna in northern Sri Lanka and Batticaloa in the eastern

province have a long record of journalism both in Tamil and in English at the regional level. But compared with universities in Colombo, the northern and eastern universities were not pioneers in media education. In the north and the east, the media were rich in literary, cultural and religious content, but they were not the subject of structured media education.

The long-standing war and its consequences played a major role in this. Media education was affected by a variety of factors, including continuous attacks on media outlets in Jaffna from the period of the Indian Peace Keeping Force, aerial bombardment and shelling during the 1980s and 1890s, and mass displacement and control over the local media by rebels. The economic embargo enforced by successive Sri Lankan governments on movements of goods and services to the north created additional obstacles to the development of the media during the war days. For all these reasons, media education could not (as in other parts of the island) reach the desired level. This was partly because education as a whole was disrupted, partly because for many Tamil inhabitants of these areas media education was not seen as a priority. During the war days, the Tamil media operated under considerable pressures. They were not generating large profits and journalism was a dangerous and poorly paid profession. In general, Tamil families encouraged their children to go into better paid professions and trades rather than taking the risks involved in entering the media field. The traditional mindset of Tamil families towards seeking government jobs also made them steer clear of a media education.

Universities, Affiliated Institutions and Working Journalists

The University of Jaffna (in the Northern Province) and the Eastern University of Sri Lanka and South Eastern University (in the Eastern Province) all come under the purview of the University Grants Commission, which in turn comes under the Ministry of Higher Education. Of these Universities, the University of Jaffna was established first and the other two came later. These regional higher educational institutions are highly valued by society in the Tamil community and Tamil speaking areas of Sri Lanka.

Any scholar doing research at the micro level about the history of the Tamils can easily identify the impact of these Universities on the Tamil

community, notably through their contribution to the struggle for the political rights of the Tamil people. This social value is an essential feature of media education as a sector of social science.

University of Jaffna

In Jaffna University, media education was introduced first in the Faculty of Arts, as a part of literature studies, and the purpose was to improve the creative writing of the students. However, it is noteworthy that leading figures in the University of Jaffna and some well-wishers from Jaffna society also contributed to media education from a critical sociological perspective. As a result, the university organised societies for film appreciation, with external support from those concerned to promote social development. Furthermore, the Extra Mural Studies Unit of the University conducted a Certificate Course in Journalism, one of the pioneering courses for media education in the Northern Province.

The Certificate Course in Journalism, when it was introduced, did not purely depend on the university teachers but got help from professional journalists and media personnel. All those connected to journalism—chief editors, news editors, reporters, photo journalists, printers and distributors—were invited to share their experiences as guest lecturers, paving the way for the acceptance and utilisation by academics of the resources of the professional media. The course helped to educate not only the students of the University of Jaffna, but also different categories of media personnel. The course focused on the process and making of the media. But there was a lack of a critical approach to the media's role in society. Moreover, there was flexibility in recruiting the participants. This created concern among the academics and it led to the courses losing university recognition.

The same trend existed several years later when the Media Resources and Training Centre (MRTC) was set up in Jaffna with the assistance of the Danish Government and UNESCO. The selection of students was not carried out under university procedures and the teaching format was not in accordance with the norms of the university. So the centre's courses failed to get recognition as a 'university course of study'. It is also a matter of concern that so many students have been trained in the field of journalism in a region like Jaffna where the demand for journalists is limited and there is no assurance of employment. According to the information available, 33 full-time students and 32 part-time students

have passed out since 2003. A further 31 full-time students and 12 part-time students completed their courses in 2012–2013 academic year.[1] The courses are conducted in the Tamil medium.[2]

The MRTC comes under the administration of the University of Jaffna but no effective action has been taken to recognise it as a unit or department within the university system. The centre is located away from the main campus and is physically and functionally isolated from the university environment. The visiting lecturers of the MRTC are paid below the amount approved for the normal visiting lecturers of universities. This was justified by the university administration on the grounds that the visiting lecturers of MRTC typically have a diploma qualification rather than a degree. The distinction has proved an obstacle to recruiting appropriate visiting lecturers to the MRTC and a barrier to the courses reaching the university standard. At the same time, the university administration, using only two Temporary Assistant Lecturers and without any permanent academic staff, has managed to offer a degree programme in Media Studies in the Faculty of Arts.[3,4] This experience of the MRTC illustrates the difficulty of providing media courses that are not under the auspices of the university.

Eastern University

The Department of Languages and Communication Studies on the Trincomalee Campus of the Eastern University has offered a degree programme in Communication Studies for the last 10 years. While the Department of Fine Arts on the main campus of the Eastern University handles subjects related to drama and theatre, and the Swami Vipulananda Institute of Aesthetic Studies (SVIAS) conducts programmes on Performing Arts, the Trincomalee Campus covers the larger area of Communication Studies. This includes an introduction to communication and interpersonal communication, communication and conflict management, advertising, film and television, print media, development communication, folk media, documentaries and short films, script writing and instructional media.[5]

Up to now, 200 students have passed out from the campus having followed this course of studies and it should be noted that among them a notable number of students are special degree holders. Another important point is that the Trincomalee Campus of the Eastern University of Sri Lanka is the only campus in Sri Lanka that admits students to study media education through the English medium. The students come from varied

ethnic, religious and geographical backgrounds. The available facilities, which include a sound studio, editing suite, theatre and libraries with thousands of books on media education, are some of the special features of the Trincomalee campus, which distinguish it from its counterparts.

South Eastern University

Compared with the universities in the north and east, the South Eastern University in Amparai district has a very short history in media education. It provides diploma programmes for external students and subjects related to media for internal students.[6]

During 2007 and 2008, two batches of students passed out from the one-year diploma in journalism programme. The programme was subsequently discontinued because of a lack of academics with a background in media education. But the cooperation of local working journalists made a valuable and innovative contribution to the programme.

Despite a lack of lecturers in media studies, the Department of Languages and the Faculty of Arabic Language provide 'Tamil Journalism' either as a core or an optional subject for a number of students. A further programme with the title 'Diploma in Professional Journalism' has also been started by the university career guidance unit for students from all streams, with the aim of encouraging students to enter the media profession.

Challenges in Media Education

Media education in Sri Lanka is needed to prepare people to approach the media critically, to produce professional journalists, to protect democracy and good governance and to promote the practice of journalism in accordance with media ethics. In a country scarred by years of civil war and the polarisation of ethnic communities, the role of journalism is paramount. The media should point out the duties of the state—and its failures—and provide guidance to students, journalists and in particular to civil society. In achieving this aim, media education has an important role to play. As the media expands and is shaped and constructed by new influences, media education can help to create an understanding of what they mean. In the meantime, there is a practical requirement to train a younger generation of journalists for the job market. With so many

alternative media, education is also needed to help ensure new media skills and technologies are available to a wider public. In the context of Sri Lanka this is an uphill task.

Media Education in Schools

In 2006, the new subject of 'Communication and Media Studies' was introduced in the school curriculum for the General Certificate in Education (GCE), ordinary level and advanced level, which is the entry point of university education in Sri Lanka.[7] But though 'Communication and Media Studies' has been introduced as a subject nationally, according to the available statistics[8] only a few schools in the north and east have the facilities to teach this subject. In Tamil districts such as Mullaithivu and Killinochi in the north, and Trincomalee, Batticaloa and Amparai in the east, no schools came forward to teach this subject. In the north, out of 144 schools, only five schools at the ordinary level (3.4 per cent) and two schools out of 84 schools at advanced level (2.3 per cent) provide the opportunity to learn this subject.[9] Many reasons for this disparity are put forward by the administrations of the schools in the north and east. The most important reasons include the lack of sufficient teachers with the background in media education to teach this subject, the non-availability of teachers' guides and a lack of reading materials.[10,11,12]

Even though there are some teachers willing to teach the subject, there are no in-service courses (educating the educators) for them. In the light of this, the Trincomalee Campus and the MRTC of the University of Jaffna began to conduct workshops for the teachers of media education.[13] However, many of the education officers from the school education system in the north and east think this subject will be an additional burden and have shown little interest in teaching it.

Media Education at University: Curriculum and Syllabus

In this section, we examine the different curricula and syllabi of the three major universities in the north and east of Sri Lanka: the University of Jaffna (including the MRTC), the Eastern University (Trincomalee Campus) and the South Eastern University in Oluvil, Amparai.[14,15,16]

The diploma in journalism, which is being conducted by the MRTC, under the patronage of the University of Jaffna and specially designed for a target group working in the media field, or working journalists,[17,18] can be seen as a role model. But to be sustainable, the course should reach university students and the general public as well as working journalists and should incorporate other areas of media education, along with the existing major area of 'print journalism'.

The MRTC was established with foreign funds and it has depended on assistance from outside for a long time. If the dependency on foreign funds changes and the MRTC becomes a part of the University of Jaffna, the courses conducted by the MRTC will get university recognition, which at present is restricted. Moreover, if through the MRTC it is possible to establish a department of media and a venue for research, this will pave the way for an innovative and creative course of studies in media education.

The Trincomalee Campus offers a degree in communication studies with a broad syllabus, via the Department of Languages and Communication Studies.[19] Its main feature is the opportunity given to the students to familiarise themselves with the components of a wider range of media education. In the first two years, students have the chance to study the basic theoretical subjects essential to an understanding of communication, such as Communication and Persuasion, Interpersonal Communication, Organisational Communication, Mass Communication and Society, Communication Theories and Media Literacy, Instructional Media, Development Communication and Communication, Gender and Society. In the third and fourth years, students are given an opportunity to apply what they have learnt. Subjects include Writing for Media, Communication and Conflict Management, Film and Television, Folk Media, Print Media, Video Production and Advertising are offered to the students.

Further, in the field of research methodology, subjects such as Critical Media Theory, Media Ethics and Semiotics are also in the curricula and they lead the students to become involved more effectively in media research.

Of the universities in the north and east, Trincomalee is the only one to offer a three- or four-year degree programme in communication studies, with specialisation through the English medium. The Faculty of Arts of Jaffna University provides a degree programme in media studies through the Tamil medium. Its first batch completed the course in 2013.[20] The longer degree course gives time to the student to comprehend the subject and learn the appropriate skills.

Most of the available textbooks for the Trincomalee course are in English, which makes it possible for the students to update their knowledge according to global trends. Because of their skills in communication in English, degree holders of the Trincomalee campus are more easily employable than other students. But the Trincomalee Campus also needs to prepare its graduates for further education by offering more specialisation at undergraduate level, as well as postgraduate MA programmes, and the chance to do research in a relevant field.

The next challenge in designing curricula and syllabi is to get professionals in different fields, related to the print media, the electronic media, traditional media and new media to engage with the teaching in the universities. Another gap in the present curricula is a lack of attention to issues relating to media policy and media freedoms and the legal and constitutional protection for media activities. There is apparently only limited space at the present time to accommodate these subjects, or media ethics, in the university curricula.

Teachers: Educational Background and Professional Experience

In Trincomalee Campus, three PhD holders are working in media studies: one as a senior lecturer and the other two as visiting lecturers. The campus has also recruited four lecturers from among their own graduates. These academics cover the range of subjects on offer and are in a position to provide the media education satisfactorily. However, the University of Jaffna lacks these resources. It has no senior lecturers to expand its media education syllabus. The Department of Tamil in the South Eastern University has a senior lecturer with a doctorate in print media studies but it lacks lecturers to teach media education as a full-fledged subject.[21]

With regard to media education, however, theoretical knowledge is not sufficient. Academics should also have had working experience in the field of journalism to be able to develop a capacity for constructive criticism in their pupils and to impart media education more usefully and realistically. Currently, the academics of the north and eastern universities do not consider professional experience as a necessary requirement. A kind of 'university mentality' has grown up in which practical experience is not regarded as educational.

Though the MRTC in Jaffna was established to cater to working journalists, the irony is that most directors of the MRTC have had

no professional experience.[22] This has been a major constraint on understanding the needs of the students, who are mostly working journalists, and utilising the centre to meet its goals. A theoretical knowledge of media education alone will not contribute to the betterment of society or the media. Like medical practitioners, teachers of media studies should also have internships with practice and experience throughout their teaching life to be able to achieve the desired results.

With regard to the universities in the north and east, especially the University of Jaffna and the Eastern University at Trincomalee, there are veterans of media without degrees who are willing to serve from the local regions but there are administrative obstacles to obtaining their services. Among the barriers to the recruitment of personnel from the professional media field, as has been noted, is an inadequate pay structure.[23] The universities cannot justify this disparity between those with degrees and those with practical experience.

Medium of Learning

The medium of media education in the north and east is Tamil and English. In the University of Jaffna, courses are taught in Tamil, the medium of the Faculty of Arts. Outside the campus, the MRTC also teaches courses in Tamil. The same situation prevails in the South Eastern University. Students of both universities are from Tamil speaking communities.

Trincomalee Campus caters to both Sinhala and Tamil speaking students and it uses English as a lingua franca to teach media education. The Trincomalee Campus considers the ability of students to learn and create in their mother tongue and gives them the opportunity to submit their assignments for the subjects of 'script writing' and 'short film making' using their mother tongue and English. Education is language-oriented, and if the language of instruction hinders media education, we must adjust the environment of the learning group in a practical way. The majority of Sri Lankan students, having completed their degrees in media education, prefer to work in their mother tongue. The medium of learning should not be a hindrance to media education and teaching.

A constraint from a language point of view in teaching media education at ordinary and advanced levels is the lack of textbooks on the subject in Sinhala and Tamil.[24] It is the same problem in the universities. Textbooks on media education are more widely available in Sinhala than in Tamil. The state of Tamil Nadu in India is close to Sri Lanka and its official

language is Tamil, but even in Tamil Nadu there are fewer textbooks in Tamil than in English. Although Tamil textbooks have been translated, they are often not comprehensible. This type of translation forces students to go back to the original versions because the translated materials are often difficult to understand.

We should not ignore the fact that the new and growing trends in media education are available to Sri Lankans only in English. But if we want to create a curriculum to represent the traditions and experience of Sri Lanka, there must be space for our own ideas, which should be channelled through the texts. Without ignoring English, we should use our mother tongue as much as possible to teach media education by creating new texts and research.[25] It is the need of the time.

Internships and the Job Market

Without opportunities to apply it, media education would be of little use to students. But in the universities in Sri Lanka, it is difficult to get opportunities to acquire the professional practical knowledge or to arrange internships. The students and institutions have difficulty in getting training from media outlets based in Colombo.

Media outlets are very sensitive. Their policy is to keep to themselves and when students are sent by the universities to these outlets they are treated as strangers. The same attitude prevails both in the private and public sectors.

Although some institutions do take trainees, the length of internship is generally not adequate to familiarise them with the trade. It is unfortunate that some students who cannot get access to recognised media outlets become apprentices at institutions not related to their field. The universities should aim to bridge the gap between themselves and the media entrepreneurs, and make greater efforts to get the cooperation of professionals in the field.

Another solution to this would be for the universities to provide training for students on their campuses by establishing their own infrastructure instead of sending students for internships outside. Trincomalee Campus has established laboratories for media education such as a Sound Studio, Editing Suite and Theatre, and has a plan to set up a Television Studio and Community Radio Centre. The MRTC at the University of Jaffna has also set up some facilities related to the electronic media with funding from the Danish Government.

The students of Trincomalee Campus can benefit from training in two ways. One is through practical sessions on the campus related to their respective subject areas with the guidance of the lecturers and the support of technical persons such as audio-visual and sound studio technicians. This is mandatory for the completion of their degree programme. The second way is for internships to be provided. Trincomalee Campus has an arrangement with the State Television 'Rupavahini', and every year it sends students for internship for three consecutive months.

Research

There are difficulties in maintaining a culture of research in the universities for the following reasons: inadequate remuneration, the practice of going on strike to meet the teachers' basic needs, the lack of freedom of expression and above all the influence of politics on the higher education system. There are few if any research reports from Sri Lanka which are up to international standards. Although some academics have made serious efforts in the research field, they have not received much international exposure.

Apart from using media education as a qualification for jobs, there should be a mechanism to encourage a research culture in universities and to provide staff and students with the opportunity to analyse the functions of the media critically. At present, very limited research is being done on issues related to media freedom, media ethics, and the role and responsibility of the state, parliament and the judiciary in the development of media laws and regulation.

Threats, Influences and Restrictions

The influence of party politics in the universities—and the consequent interruption of studies—has had a notable and unnecessary impact. It has paved the way for politicians to involve themselves in education and try to sabotage the system without knowing what it is trying to achieve. There are many hidden pressures and restrictions from external forces on the public discussion of problematic areas in media education, such as media freedoms, human rights, the reporting of elections, conflict-sensitive journalism, communication and conflict management and media ethics.

To ensure a healthy and constructive atmosphere for media education, attempts should be permitted to examine the present condition of media freedom. It is vital to accept these activities as motivated not by opposition to the authorities but for the well-being of the public. If we do not advocate a genuinely free and fair media environment in the country, we cannot make students reflect on these issues of media education on our campuses. At the same time, we can only protect media freedoms if we produce a generation of energetic young professionals and academics through an effective media education programme.

Proposals and Suggestions to Improve Media Education at University Level

The following proposals and suggestions, based on the shared opinions and ideas analysed in this article, could provide solutions to the challenge of media education in the universities.

(1) As part of the effort to advance and promote media education in universities, the talents and knowledge of media professionals should be incorporated in the teaching programme.

(2) Media education should be provided at different levels, according to the needs, expectations and goals of the target audience.

(3) The curriculum and syllabus should be reviewed from time to time according to the requirements of the job market.

(4) There must be increased opportunities to study the different aspects of media education.

(5) An appropriate mechanism should be arranged by university academics to cater to the educational needs of schools. Teachers and students should be encouraged to engage in the 'Communication and Media Studies' subject at GCE. ordinary and advanced levels.

(6) Research efforts should be increased to find a system of media education suitable for Sri Lanka. Texts for media education in local languages should be provided where required.

(7) Master's degrees and research programmes should be started in universities and lecturers appointed at a senior level.

(8) Arrangements should be made with professional media outlets to provide work experience for academics if they do not have such background.

(9) The selection of the language of learning should be flexible and students should be allowed to deal with creative sections of media education through their mother tongue as they choose.

(10) Journalists, who are working in the professional field, but without the academic qualifications expected by the university system, should be allowed to share their experiences and to take part in discussions and other informal teaching sessions, and their services should be properly recognised.

(11) There should be a good rapport with professional media outlets, to ensure that internships and training for students become mandatory.

(12) To avoid complete dependency on professional media outlets for internship opportunities for the students, universities should have basic facilities and infrastructure to provide media training at least to a certain level.

(13) Interest in media research should be encouraged in the academic and the professional field.

(14) Media freedoms and activities designed to protect freedom of expression should be supported.

Notes

1. Mr K. Pathytharan, Media Analyst, Former Trainer, MRTC, Jaffna (interviewed on 28 December 2012) and Mr K. Rushangan, Director/Media Trainer, Sikaram Media House, Jaffna (interviewed on 17 October 2012).
2. Report 'About MRTC' (2012).
3. Ms Kiruthiga Tharumarajah, Assistant Lecturer, Unit of Media Studies, Faculty of Arts, University of Jaffna (interviewed on 20 January 2013).
4. The Handbook of Faculty of Arts, Eastern University, Sri Lanka, 2012.
5. The Handbook of Faculty of Communication and Business Studies, Trincomalee Campus, Eastern University, Sri Lanka, 2012.
6. Dr M.A. Mohamed Rameez, Senior Lecturer, Department of Tamil, South Eastern University (interviewed on 10 January 2013 and 18 January 2013).
7. Harischandra, S. and Rupasinghe, W. (2012).
8. Abeygunasekara, G. (2012).
9. *Ibid.*
10. Mr V. Senthan, Teacher in 'Communication and Media Studies', Union College, Jaffna (interviewed on 18 December 2012).
11. Ms Sutha Rushangan, Teacher in 'Communication and Media Studies', Uduvil Ladies College, Jaffna (interviewed on 20 December 2012 and 20 January 2013).
12. Mr K. Pathytharan, Media Analyst, Former Trainer, MRTC, Jaffna (interviewed on 28 December 2012).

13. Mr T. Thevananth, Director, Media Resources and Training Centre (MRTC), University of Jaffna (interviewed on 11 January 2013).

14. The Handbook of Faculty of Communication and Business Studies, Trincomalee Campus, Eastern University, Sri Lanka, 2012.

15. Dr M.A. Mohamed Rameez, Senior Lecturer, Department of Tamil, South Eastern University (interviewed on 10 January 2013 and 18 January 2013).

16. The syllabus of Diploma in Journalism (Part time Programme), Media Resources and Training Centre (MRTC), University of Jaffna, 2012.

17. The syllabus of Diploma in Journalism (Full time Programme—two years), Media Resources and Training Centre (MRTC), University of Jaffna, 2012.

18. Report on 'MRTC Action Plan' (2012).

19. The Handbook of Faculty of Communication and Business Studies, Trincomalee Campus, Eastern University, Sri Lanka, 2012.

20. Ms Kiruthiga Tharumarajah, Assistant Lecturer, Unit of Media Studies, Faculty of Arts, University of Jaffna (interviewed on 20 January 2013).

21. Dr M.A. Mohamed Rameez, Senior Lecturer, Department of Tamil, South Eastern University (interviewed on 10 January 2013 and 18 January 2013).

22. Report on 'MRTC Action Plan' (2012).

23. The Report of the National Media Summit (2010).

24. Raguram (2012).

25. Kelaniya Declaration on Mass Media, Communication Study, and Media Industry in Sri Lanka, National Media Summit (2010), 9–10 November 2010.

26. Mr Wijayananda Rupasinghe, Senior Lecturer in Media Studies, Department of Mass Communication, University of Kelaniya (interviewed on 12 November 2012).

The Challenges of Transition. He is a trustee of Afghanaid, a British charity working with rural communities in Northern Afghanistan.

Kishali Pinto-Jayawardena works on law and policy reforms in the area of civil liberties in Sri Lanka and is the Colombo-based consultant to the Media South Asia Project. Her several publications include *Rule of Law in Decline* (Copenhagen, 2009) and *Still Seeking Justice in Sri Lanka* (Geneva, 2010). The *Sunday Times* parliamentary lobby correspondent, during her undergraduate days, she writes a regular law-based column 'Focus on Rights' as the paper's editorial (legal) consultant. Involved in drafting a Contempt of Court Law (2004/2006) and a Right to Information Bill (2005), she has litigated domestically on free expression rights and has challenged the Sri Lankan State on infringements of international law before the Geneva-based United Nations Human Rights Committee. A 2000 Salzburg Fellow and a 2003 WISCOMP (New Delhi) Scholar of Peace Fellow, she was nominated Sri Lanka's Woman of Courage in 2007 by the US Department of State and awarded a Distinguished Visitor Fellowship in 2013 by the Research School of Asia and the Pacific, Australian National University (ANU), Canberra.

Contributors

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Nalaka Gunawardene has been associated with media, communication and development for 25 years in a multitude of roles including reporter, feature writer, TV host, journalist trainer and communication consultant. He has written widely on the social and cultural impact of information and communications technologies (ICTs). From 2003 to 2009, he was a Sri Lanka contributing editor for *Digital Review of Asia Pacific*, www.digital-review.org. He was also a researcher and co-writer of *Sri Lanka Human Development Report on ICTs*, published by UNDP in 2004. He now writes weekly columns on science, development and information society issues for two Sunday newspapers in Sri Lanka (*Ravaya* and *Ceylon Today*), and contributes op-ed essays to other print and online media outlets at regional and global levels. He hosts a TV show on innovation on national TV, and blogs at http://nalakagunawardene.com.

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a visiting lecturer in Middle Eastern politics at the Defence Services Staff College, Batalanda, Sri Lanka.

Tilak Jayaratne was a veteran broadcaster and Sri Lanka's community radio pioneer, spearheading the Uva Community Radio initiative which was supported by UNESCO. He founded the Educational Service of the Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation and was instrumental in taking radio to the people through innovative programmes and content which marked a turning point in Sri Lanka's broadcast media. He was the first director of the College of Journalism, Sri Lanka. His tenure with the country's state broadcaster, Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation (SLBC) and consequent dismissal from the Non-Formal Education Programme (NFEP) of the SLBC resulted in the seminal Supreme Court judgment, *Wimal Fernando v. Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation* ([1996] 1 Sri LR 157), which even today remains a standard setter for independent governance of the airwaves. Ably representing a generation of honourable broadcasters serving Sri Lanka with integrity and commitment, he passed away on 7 September 2012. The Media Lanka Reform Initiative recalls his valuable contribution to the work despite his illness, with much gratitude.

Amal Jayasinghe is the Bureau Chief, Agence France-Presse (AFP), Sri Lanka/Maldives. He joined the agency in August 1987 after working for over five years as a reporter for Sri Lanka's main English-language newspaper, the *Daily News*. He has been on special reporting assignments for AFP in war-torn areas of the world, including Afghanistan and Iraq. His reporting on Sri Lanka's drawn-out Tamil separatist conflict earned him accusations of bias by both sides of the ethnic divide and a medal and title, Chevalier, Order National du Merite (Knight of the National Order of Higher Merit), from the Government of France in 2005.

Sarath Kellapotha is a senior broadcaster, researcher and writer, with more than 30 years of experience in Sri Lanka's broadcasting regime. He worked for more than 20 years at the SLBC and alongside Tilak Jayaratne as a senior trainer at numerous community radio stations. After leaving the SLBC, he and Tilak Jayaratne engaged in a review of the regulatory aspects of Sri Lanka's community radio at the request of the World Bank in 2004.

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Sinha Ratnatunga is Editor-in-Chief of the *Sunday Times* and Executive Director at Wijeya Newspapers Ltd. A former president of The Editors' Guild of Sri Lanka (TEGOSL), he is a founder director of the Sri Lanka Press Institute (SLPI) and a director of the Press Complaints Commission of Sri Lanka (PCCSL). His conviction on criminal defamation charges, which was later set aside by the Supreme Court, was largely instrumental in spearheading a media campaign to abolish the law of criminal defamation which culminated in the repeal of the law in 2002. These events provided the impetus for the creation of a wider platform for media law reform conceived around the Colombo Declaration on Media Freedom and Social Responsibility which was signed in April 1998 by the Editors' Guild, the Newspaper Society of Sri Lanka and the Free Media Movement, and revised in October 2008. This document remains the road map for media freedom in Sri Lanka. He serves on the Board of the World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers (WAN-IFRA). His book, *Politics of Terrorism: The Sri Lanka Experience* published by the International Fellowship for Social and Economic Development, Canberra, in 1988 remains essential reading for those wishing to understand the complex roots of Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict.

Namini Wijedasa is Assistant Editor at the *Sunday Times.* She also writes for the *Economist* and works for NHK Japan TV. She began her career in 1994 as a junior reporter on the *Island* newspaper, the English-language daily run by Upali Newspapers. She also freelanced as a news reporter and presenter with Capital Radio, a private broadcaster. In 1998 she joined