

Journalism Training and Research in Sri Lanka

**A Report on how Sida can Support
Improvement of Media Quality**

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**The findings and conclusions of the report are the views of the consultants
and not necessary the views of Sida.**

Summary

In this report the results of a mapping of the situation concerning the training of journalists in Sri Lanka will be presented. The mapping took place in the end of February and beginning of March 2002. The report also gives recommendations in relation to the existing opportunities for Sida (and other development agencies) to support the professionalisation of the country's journalists. The data was gathered during a two-week visit to Colombo and is based primarily on interviews.

Our overall conclusion is that there are favourable prerequisites for a co-ordinated effort in which Sida together with local partners can contribute to the creation of a new national journalist training programme. Our view is that it is of utmost importance that local players, i.e. media companies, journalist associations, government authorities, universities and relevant non-profit organisations, present not only a plan for how their collaboration on the project will be modelled, but also a solution in principle as to how the training should be organised, including the connections to the various stake-holders. A common policy document of this kind can be expected as a result of the continuous talks which, on the prime minister's initiative, are now taking place between the parties. The government has also appointed a smaller committee composed of representatives of the respective parties, with the objective of reviewing the issues surrounding, among other things, the future design of the journalist training programme. A co-ordinated proposal can be expected within 10-12 months. Our recommendation is for Sida to observe this work closely and stand by for tangible efforts when a locally supported draft is at hand.

Our view is that Sida, while awaiting the drawing up of a policy document by the local players, to a greater extent can initiate more concrete, selective measures. These could on the one hand involve a more detailed mapping of the media situation and the need for training in Sri Lanka, and on the other hand the initiation of a program for media development in the north eastern parts of the country, which have been greatly affected by the civil war over the last twenty years. In this area, especially new information and communications technology could be tried out as a resource for quality-improvement of and increased professionalisation within journalism. In reference to the latter project however, a stocktaking of prerequisites and opportunities is required. Co-ordination with other initiatives, e.g. the NORAD financed Centre for Counter-Conflict Journalism; the University of Colombo's journalism courses within the Centre for Gender Studies and extramural course modules involving practical journalist experience in the rural parts of the country; as well as the workshop program of The Sri Lanka Foundations Institute, should be considered carefully.

Introduction

This report presents an overview of the media situation in Sri Lanka with regard to media organisations, journalism standards and available education and training programmes for journalists. It also contends the authors' conclusion and recommendations as to how Sida (and possibly other international partners) could support the development of professionalism in the media as a contribution towards democratisation, an improvement of the human rights situation and the strengthening of the peace process. The concrete reason for conducting this study has been two proposals about journalism training and research that have been addressed to Sida in the last year.

After this introduction the next chapter will briefly present the background to the report, i.e. why and how the issue of journalism standards has appeared also on the political agenda in S.L. In fact this concern is not new in the Sri Lankan context. Over the last few years several proposals about media reforms and training of journalists have been made. However, the present situation looks very promising for a comprehensive and serious initiative that may eventually create momentum. The third chapter describes our assignment and how we have approached it. The fourth chapter brings up the present media landscape in Sri Lanka and identifies the current trends of relevance for our study. In the fifth chapter we present some of the proposals for improvement of journalism standards that have been on the agenda in Sri Lanka over the last years. In addition to the two proposals addressed to Sida this chapter also relates them to other suggestions for media reforms as well as updates them to present status. The sixth chapter contends our conclusions and recommendations.

The Assignment

In the contract with Sida our assignment includes the following objectives (free quotations from the ToR of 2001-07-13):

1. Assessment of the role of the media in Sri Lanka.
2. Assessment of the overall strengths and areas of concern in relation to the media in S.L. and the limitations that the conflict sets on co-operation in the media sector.
3. Assessment of the proposed support to a media and research institute and identification of possibilities and risks with such support as well as its relevance to S.L.
4. Assessment of possibilities for co-operation between Sweden and Norway in support to the media.
5. Assessment of the role of the public service media and the current practice in this area.
6. Assessment and identification of a Swedish resource base for support to the media in S.L.

It is further said in the ToR that we are expected to give *recommendations* on the following:

7. Ways and means in which Sida in a long-term perspective can support the capacity development of journalists and media in Sri Lanka.
8. Ways and means for possible support to public service.

The report shall also have a gender and child rights perspective. In analysing the media we are supposed to represent the views of various ethnic groups as well as of different socio-economic strata.

We have made the following operational interpretations of these objectives. Concerning the role of the media we have concentrated on two things. First, the problems with the ways media have reported the civil war in the north-east part of the country. Second, we have described the actual situation, since the progress in the peace process after the new government implies a radically new political atmosphere in the country. Rather than assessing the limitations on the media caused by the internal conflict, and which hopefully belongs to the past, we have focused on the remaining problems in journalistic practices in S.L., but also several positive aspects of the media situation have been addressed below. With regard to public service media it can be questioned whether that is a correct term for the state controlled media in the country (c.f. Page & Crawley, 2001:12). We will, however, comment also on these media and their role within the present situation and along a progression into the future.

Our recommendations will rather have a mid-term perspective than a long-term one. In the present situation it is difficult to assess the development even within a few years time frame. But in a short-term perspective it will be possible to outline a potential reformation process where Sida and perhaps other international partners/donors can make important contributions in co-operation with national partners.

In terms of gender and child rights it is difficult to prescribe in this report how journalism and legislation should be improved in details. Our recommendations are more about how a process could be organised in order to have such an outcome, than the concrete actions to be taken. But we certainly underline all through this report how important it is that the women's movement is represented in the process to come.

Background: Sri Lanka during the Last Two Decades

1. General Political Development

During the last two decades, the Sri Lankan society has been influenced by two major processes. The first has been on the economic front. Since 1977 Sri Lanka has adopted a set of economic policies that has emphasised opening up the economy to international markets, looking towards the private sector as the engine of economic growth, downsizing the state sector and emphasising the market as the principal mechanism for resource allocation.

At present these policies underpinning the liberalised phase of capitalist development, to differentiate it from the earlier state dominated period of capitalism, have the backing of the two major political parties. In addition Sri Lanka is now firmly entrenched within global capitalism, and it is difficult to break these links without serious social costs. Due to these factors one can safely assume that the Sri Lankan economy will develop broadly within this framework in the near future.

The second process that has characterised the Sri Lankan reality is the search for an answer to the question of ethnic relations. Sri Lanka is a multiethnic society, where Sinhalese, Sri Lankan Tamils, Muslims, Indian Tamils and Burghers form the major ethnic groups. However the highly centralised state structure inherited from the British colonial period has not been conducive to maintaining harmonious relations between ethnic groups. The ruling elite making use of the powers within this centralised state has carried out a series of measures that have alienated minorities to such an extent that Sri Lanka has been torn apart by a civil war during the last two decades.

Both the process of economic reform and the situation of deteriorating ethnic relations have been conflict-ridden. The conflict associated with the ethnic issue is the one that has been discussed widely. It has deteriorated to the condition of a civil war. The most intense battles of this conflict have been fought in the North East Province between the Sri Lankan Armed Forces and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). Occasionally the other areas of the country have also been under attack. Colombo has been a special target for the LTTE. The social and economic costs of the conflict have been enormous and widespread. In the North East economic and social infrastructure have been destroyed. Thousands are internally displaced. A large proportion of Tamils have sought asylum in other countries. There is a whole generation of young people in Sri Lanka who has seen nothing but war.

It is for these reasons that many people in Sri Lanka would welcome the ceasefire agreement concluded between the government and the LTTE in February 2002. This would be the fourth major attempt at finding a negotiated solution to the Sri Lanka conflict. The first was with Indian mediation which ended up with the Indo-Lanka Accord and the setting up of the presently existing provincial council system of regional autonomy. The second round of negotiations was in the 1990/91 period and the third in 1994/95.

The major difference during this round of negotiations arises from two factors. On the one hand both armed actors, i.e. the Sri Lankan state and the LTTE, seem to be facing

political as well as socio-economic compulsions for negotiations. At present the Sri Lankan economy is in a dire state. War has been a major factor in this. The Sri Lankan state is under pressure from donors to go for a negotiated settlement. There is a new government in power that has just won an election on a platform that they would negotiate with LTTE. In the aftermath of the 11th of September 2001, the LTTE is also under international pressure to get away from pure military means to achieve their goals. They have been banned as a terrorist organisation in USA, UK, Australia and Canada. They are also coming under pressure from the people living in the areas they control because of the difficult socio-economic conditions under which they have to live as a result of the war. Secondly, in this round of negotiations there is an international mediator, Norway, integrally involved in the negotiation process. Hence there is a great degree of hope placed in this political moment. Any progress in the resolution of this conflict will not only improve ethnic relations but will go a long way in the larger democratisation process as well.

The process of economic reforms has also not been a smooth process. The new economic model brought along changes in the political structure and some political turmoil. Economic reforms have themselves created a more unequal society challenging some of the existing social relations. The war has also added new factors like the proliferation of small arms and army deserters who have become major actors in political violence of the 'South'. As a result of these factors Sri Lanka has witnessed a continuous process of political violence in the South. The high point of this violence was 1989/90 when an insurgency led by Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) was crushed by the government. Both parties used violence on a massive scale. Since then political violence has continued in the 'South' becoming prominent at times like elections where contestation for power becomes acute.

2. Media in a Conflict-ridden Society

In a society like Sri Lanka it is extremely difficult to understand the media only as some sort of an 'independent or objective' transmitter of news. On the one hand the media is a product of the social and political processes in society and is embedded in it. Therefore, due to the structural position of the various media institutions in society, they represent various interest groups that compete for power in society. On the other hand media is in its own right an active participant in the socio-political processes. It is a powerful actor which constructs ideologies and discourses that play a dominant role in socio-political struggles.

In the case of Sri Lanka this activist role of the media is seen in both types of conflicts that we have mentioned above. If we begin with the conflict associated with ethnic relations, there is clear evidence to show that the media on both sides of the ethnic divide has been a promoter of the nationalist ideologies that have kept the conflict alive. This role goes back to the colonial period. The revival of nationalist sentiments was a fundamental motivation for setting up newspapers and various types of publications during the colonial period. This was especially true in the case of publications printed in Sinhala and Tamil. A major motivation was countering the activities of Christian missionaries who used the print media in their proselytization activities. Colonialism was also associated with various types of negative impact on local cultures and society. Hence, right from the beginning especially newspapers published in local languages were associated

with a political agenda of protecting national identities from foreign and other negative influences and of promoting ethnic nationalisms of the two (Sinhala and Tamil) communities. In a period of globalisation, paradoxically enough, this role is bound to increase simultaneously with tendencies of transnational integration (cf. Hettige, 2000).

However the real problem for Sri Lanka in modern times has been the promotion of an ideology of exclusive ethnic nationalism by the media. During the post-independent period the media has continued with its role as a powerful actor in promoting exclusive nationalisms. For example, in the mid-fifties the media played a prominent role in setting up governments which promoted an ideology of Sinhala Buddhist hegemony, the identity of the largest community in the country. It is the governments of this period that made Sinhala the only official language in the country, and later on made Buddhism almost the state religion by entering special clauses in the constitution. These policies played a major role in deteriorating ethnic relations.

This ethnically partisan role of the media, which was earlier seen much more prominently in the Sinhala press, has spread through most of the media catering to the majority Sinhala community irrespective of the language in which the media operates. It has taken a much more pernicious form in the context of the ongoing war. Today many analysts would argue that the media has become a problem in attaining a negotiated sustainable settlement to the conflict. Similarly on the Tamil side, over the years the media has come to reflect the more extremist Tamil nationalism promoted by the LTTE. The space for more moderate opinion advocating democratic answers to the conflict and questioning the ideology of Tamil exclusivism has shrunk.

Media has also not been an independent observer in the sometimes violent, partisan political struggles among the political parties vying for power in the 'Southern' polity. The politics of nationalising Associated Newspapers Limited, popularly known as 'Lake House', was linked to this partisan politics. Since this incident had a major impact on the development of the media in later years, it is necessary to give a few details of this history.

The Lake House group of newspapers, controlled by an influential political family, emerged as a powerful media institution in the post-independent period. In the years immediately after independence it established itself as a powerful voice of the establishment and status quo. Politically this meant becoming a strong supporter of the UNP which inherited power from the colonial administration. The newspaper group was against any form of left-oriented political activity and other political forces opposed to the UNP.

The 1956 election was a major turning point of Sri Lankan politics. It led to the defeat of UNP and the establishment of a centre-left government led by the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP). From then onwards these two parties have ruled the country with various coalition partners. In the 1956 elections the Lake House played a highly partisan political role in supporting the UNP. It continued to do so even after the elections. It was in 1960 after the establishment of the second SLFP led government that the idea of nationalising Lake House was first mooted in the government's policy statement. In 1963 a Commission was appointed to look into the status of the media and for an appointment of a Press Council. In 1964 a bill was passed establishing a Press Council.

However when the government's policy statement of 1964, which at that time was called the Throne Speech, was put to the vote the government was defeated by a single vote and

had to resign and call for a fresh election. This defeat took place because a section of the ruling party crossed over to the opposition at the time of voting in the parliament. In the 1965 election the UNP came back to power and the nationalisation of Lake House was temporarily off the political agenda. The Lake House played a prominent part in this entire process of engineering the defeat of the SLFP government and the victory of the UNP in the 1965 elections. The significant influence that it had over the media and the financial power that this group wielded was used in these partisan political struggles. Because of this the threat of nationalisation had not disappeared completely. It only had to await the return of the SLFP government to power. This happened in 1970 and Lake House was taken over by the government.

This episode in the media politics of Sri Lanka had a long term effect on the media in general from which the media in Sri Lanka is still trying to come out. First, it contributed to the establishment of a highly politically partisan media culture in the country. This is still a major characteristic of the media in the country today. This partisan character and loyalty to specific political parties sometimes becomes blatant in critical moments of politics, such as during the time of elections. In this way media often becomes a tool in elite politics. Second, the nationalisation of Lake House gave a powerful weapon to whatever party came to rule the country. Thus in addition to the state controlled radio and TV, the ruling party has access to the most well developed institution in the print media. Every party that has come to power after the nationalisation of Lake House has used it for partisan political purposes, especially during election times.

This goes for the UNP as well. Although the UNP campaigned against the nationalisation of Lake House, it never thought of giving up state control of Lake House after they came to power in 1977. On the contrary, this UNP regime immediately established state control over two other media institutions, The Times of Ceylon group of newspapers and the Independent Television Network (ITN). The apparent reason for taking over Times Group was commercial collapse. Why UNP took over ITN is still to be investigated. In addition to all these another privately owned newspaper group – The Independent Group of newspapers, collapsed due to mismanagement. With these developments, the UNP regime elected in 1977 had virtual monopoly over the entire media. This was broken recently with the establishment of private media. UNP regimes since 1977 have also used the state owned media in the same partisan manner as SLFP led regimes. All these developments have in turn added to the development of a highly politicized media culture in Sri Lanka.

In recent times these drawbacks of the media have received greater attention in public debates. The negative effects of conflicts and the role that media has played in it, criticism of the partisan nature of the media, and opposition to the blatant abuse of the state media by the ruling parties have all contributed to the public concern. In addition, the expansion of the private sector media during the post-1977 period of liberalisation has generated challenges to entrenched media practices.

The Present Situation

1. The Sri Lanka Media Landscape

What follows is a very preliminary overview of the media landscape in Sri Lanka. The information was gathered in the course of the mission. But as the mission progressed it became clear that there is more to be studied in addition to the description given below.

In discussing the media landscape of Sri Lanka it is important to keep in mind that we are talking of a country that has been affected by an ongoing internal conflict for almost two decades. This has obviously affected the spread and the influence of the media. The access of the war-torn parts of the country to the mainstream media has been affected. The conflict itself has generated new media products. There are hardly any publications that have explored these issues systematically. Therefore this survey does not cover media in the conflict areas of the country.

Several other topics like the legal and institutional framework of media and the use of new modes of communication like the Internet have not been dealt with either. If Sida is interested in this sector in the long run there is a case for taking a more detailed look in the future.

Media Audiences

Audience studies are rare in Sri Lanka and the ones available were conducted some years ago. The most recent one found during this mission was a national sample survey in 1995/96 pursued by the International Centre for Ethnic Studies (ICES) (Samarasinghe, 1997). A representative sample of 1,371 adults was questioned about their media consumption, content preferences, etc. The main results in terms of audiences for press, radio and TV were: one third said they were regular newspaper readers; more than two thirds had radio receivers in their homes; and 45% of the households had TV sets (Ibid.). More specific information from the study with respect to different media types will be presented below.

Print media

In Sri Lanka the first English newspapers were registered in 1834 (The Observer and Commercial Adventurer, which later became The Ceylon Observer), the first Sinhala newspaper in 1862 (Lakmini Pahana) and the first Tamil publications devoted to current economic and political news in 1864 (Illangai Navalar and Illangai Padukavalan).

At present mainstream newspapers are published in Sri Lanka by one state owned company (Associated Newspapers of Ceylon Limited – ANCL) and seven privately owned companies. (Upali Newspapers Limited – Upali group, Wijeya Newspapers (Pvt) Limited – Wijeya group, Express Newspapers (Ceylon) Limited – Express, Sumathi Newspapers (Pvt) Limited – Sumathi, The Leader Publications (Pvt) Limited – Leader, Ravaya Publications, United Newspapers (Pvt) Ltd.). Of these the first three, ANCL, Upali group and Wijeya Publications are the biggest. This will be shown by the circulation figures presented below. These institutions publish daily newspapers in more than one language. The state owned ANCL publishes in all three languages (Sinhala, Tamil and English) and

the other two publish in Sinhala and English. It is interesting to note that it is only in the state owned ANCL that newspapers are published in all three languages.

Mainstream Newspapers, their Circulation and Ownership by Language of the Publications

<i>Sinhala Dailies</i>	<i>Circulation (1992/5)</i>	<i>Owners</i>
Dinamina	92,141	ANCL
Lankadeepa	160,000	Wijeya group
Divayina	133,994	Upali group
Lakbima	n.a.	Sumathi
<i>Sinhala Weeklies</i>		
Silumina	285,000	ANCL
Sri Lankadeepa	275,500	Wijeya group
Irida Divayina	252,144	Upali group
Lakbima	136,000	Sumathi
Ravaya	35,000*	
<i>Tamil Dailies</i>		
Virakesari	42,000	Express
Tinakaran	20,024	ANCL
Mithran	n.a.	
Thinakkural	n.a.	United Newspapers
<i>Tamil Weeklies</i>		
Virakesari	84,500	Express
Tinakaran	45,024	ANCL
Sunday Thinakkural	n.a.	United Newspapers
<i>English Dailies</i>		
Daily News	80,034	ANCL
Times of Ceylon	125,000	Wijeya group
Daily Mirror	n.a.	Wijeya group
Island	43,969	Uplai group
<i>English Weeklies</i>		
Sunday Observer	118,000	ANCL
Sunday Times	125,000	Wijeya group
Sunday Island	79,443	Upali group
Sunday Leader	75,000	Leader

Source: Updated from G.H.Peiris, Media in Sri Lanka: Recent Trends of Change, in *Studies on the Press in Sri Lanka* (ed.: G.H.Peiris), Colombo: International Centre for Ethnic Studies, 1997.

* Personal communication

n.a.- Not Available. This means that the mission could not get an accurate figure for these circulation figures.

It is extremely difficult to arrive at reliable circulation figures for newspapers. The Audit Bureau of Circulation of Newspapers that carried out this task in the past seemed to have folded up in the sixties. The basis for the above figures is the study carried out by the International Centre for Ethnic Studies (ICES) which was published in 1997. We updated with information that we were able to gather during the course of the mission.

As indicated by the authors of the ICES study these estimates are valid only if one can accept that there has been an approximately 50% increase in the newspaper sales between mid-eighties and mid-nineties. According to them this is a proposition that is difficult to believe. These estimates also give a daily average of about 700,000 newspapers sold. This is much higher than the 504,773 estimate given by the Consumer Finance Survey of the Central Bank for 1986/87.

However we can use this data to get a rough average of the press circulation figures for different languages. Below we give the range in circulation figures provided by the above data.

Sinhala Dailies	92,141 – 160,000*
Sinhala Weeklies	136,000 – 285,000
English Dailies	43,969 – 125,000*
English Weeklies	75,000 – 125,000*
Tamil Dailies	20,024 – 42,000
Tamil Weeklies	45,024 – 84,500

The figures marked *, providing the maximum circulation figures for Sinhala dailies, English dailies and English weeklies, are all from the Wijeya group. There seems to be an exaggeration in these figures. For example the circulation figures for both English dailies and weeklies from the Wijeya group are the same. This is unusual. The usual pattern is for the weeklies to have a higher circulation than the dailies. Therefore this figure should probably be much lower.

It is hardly surprising that circulation figures are sensitive to the prices. The ICES study found that four out of ten respondents could not afford a newspaper. The sample results further showed a considerable gender-gap. Whereas almost half of the male adults described themselves as regular newspaper readers, only one fifth of the women gave the same answer. As expected newspaper reading correlated positively with education and wealth. Less expected, though, was that urban-rural differences were not found, which the author explained with reference to the equal levels of literacy nation-wide (Samarasinghe, 1997).

Radio

Radio broadcasting was introduced in Sri Lanka in 1925. It was an incidental activity of the Post and Telegraph Department. In 1949, i.e. one year after independence, the Department of Broadcasting was established and in 1967 it was converted to Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation (SLBC). Until very recently this state owned body was the only institution that had monopoly over radio broadcasting. In 1984 the state monopoly in radio broadcasting was broken and permission was granted to establish private radio stations. The following table provides some basic data of the stations operating at present.

Radio Stations Operating at Present

<i>Station</i>	<i>Ownership</i>	<i>Language</i>
Sri Lanka Broadcasting (1 national service, 4 regional services, 4 community services)	State owned	Sinhala, Tamil and English
Yes FM	Maharajah Broadcasting (Pvt) Ltd.	English
Sirasa	- do -	Sinhala
Shakthi FM	- do -	Tamil
E FM	EAP Group	English
Sri FM	- do -	Sinhala
Swarna oli	- do -	Tamil
TNL Radio	Teleshan Network (Pvt) Ltd.	English
Isira	- do -	Sinhala
Hiru FM	Asian Broadcasting Corporation	Sinhala
Sha FM	- do -	Sinhala
Gold FM	- do -	English
Sun FM	- do -	English
Soorian FM	- do -	Tamil

The state owned SLBC has the widest coverage in radio. It operates one national service, four regional services and four community services. Each of these services broadcast through one or more channels. It broadcasts in all three languages. In addition SLBC has special channels aimed at specific audiences. For example there is an education channel aimed at students and a channel aimed at Sri Lankans living in the Middle East. In 1998, when Sri Lanka was celebrating fifty years of independence, the national channels broadcast approximately 707 hours per week, while three regional channels and five community channels broadcast 201 and 244 air hours per week respectively. The seven overseas channels broadcast 217 air hours per week. SLBC is able to provide FM stereo services throughout the island in all three languages.

Currently there are thirteen private stations owned by four companies. Entertainment and news occupy a large proportion of air-time in these stations. However private stations should be credited with introducing much more innovative programmes, giving greater choice to the listener and introducing an element of competition. Given the general political-economic trends in the country the private sector in radio is bound to increase and its influence expand. It is necessary to keep this factor in mind in any course on journalism planned for the future.

In Sri Lanka radio seems to be the most widespread media. In the 1986/87 Survey of Consumer Finances conducted by the Central Bank estimated that 67% of the nation's households owned a radio. This should be even higher now. According to Central Bank sources its Sinhala Commercial Service, which is the most popular channel, captured about 84 per cent of the Sinhala audience. But what is notable is the low popularity of the Tamil service. Only 15 per cent of the Tamil listeners are captured by this state owned channel.

Television

Television is the newest addition to the media landscape of Sri Lanka. The first TV-station was established in 1979 by a private company. This was the Independent Television Network (ITN). However, the new UNP government that came to power in 1977 took over this TV network despite its commitment to the development of the private sector. The politics of this take-over is yet to be investigated. But it is clear that up until now, from whatever camp the politicians come from, they are wary of letting go of the grip over mass media.

In 1982 the government established the much bigger government owned station, Rupavahini, with Japanese assistance. At present this is the station with the largest coverage. It covers about 87 per cent of the land area and 84 per cent of the population. Recently the state television Rupavahini launched their second channel called the Channel Eye. Therefore currently there are three state-owned channels (Rupavahini, Channel Eye and ITN). As an indication of the powerful position of the state-owned TV channel, it can be mentioned that it handles the national registration of anyone who wants to produce and sell television programmes within the country, and it is also in charge of supervising foreign television crews and others producing programmes for export (Richards & Mahendra, 2000:315).

The state monopoly of TV was broken in 1992 by granting permission for the establishment of private TV stations. At the beginning there were restrictions on their programmes. For example they were not allowed to have news programmes. Continuous agitation for media freedom has removed some of these restrictions.

TV Stations Operating at Present

<i>Station</i>	<i>Ownership</i>	<i>Language</i>
Rupavahini	State owned	Sinhala, English and Tamil
Channel Eye	- do -	Sinhala, English
ITN	- do -	Sinhala, English
MTV/Shakthi	Maharajah Broadcasting (Pvt) Ltd.	English, Tamil
Sirasa TV	- do -	Sinhala
TNL	Teleshan Network (Pvt) Ltd.	Sinhala/English
Swarnavahini	EAP Group	Sinhala
ETV	- do -	English
Dynavision		English

As shown in the table, at present there are six private channels owned by four companies. With the two state-owned stations there is a total of nine TV channels in Sri Lanka. The state-owned Rupavahini and MTV owned by the Maharajah Organisations – a Tamil business house, have programmes in Tamil. Once again, as in the case of the print media, the attention to Tamil is given by state owned stations and stations owned by Tamil businesses. Of all these stations it is only the state owned Rupavahini and ITN that have island wide coverage.

In addition to all these terrestrial channels there is a spread of satellite dishes that are able to capture international programmes. There are three companies involved in cable services. (Ruhunu 2001 Multivision (Pvt) Ltd., Channel 9 (Pvt) Ltd., Cable TV Network (Pvt) Ltd.) These are of course confined to urban areas, Colombo being the main focus. These and the linkages that Sri Lankan TV stations have with stations such as CNN and BBC World are avenues through which globalised mass media is having an impact on the Sri Lankan society.

Rupavahini, for which data is available for 1996, allocated their air time in the following manner. News, current affairs and documentaries 25.5%, Educational programmes 10.9%, Children's programmes 27.0%, Sports and Entertainment 26.0% and other 26.0%. In the private stations the category of Sports and Entertainment will certainly score higher. However their attention to news and current affairs is also considerable given the highly politicised character of the Sri Lankan society.

TV viewing has expanded rapidly in Sri Lanka. According to the data provided by the Central Bank in 1998, the number of TVs licensed in 1979, when TV was first introduced, was 2,810. This increased to 37,525 in the following year. By the end of 1996 there were 821,000 TV licenses in the country. Given the fact that not all TVs are licensed the actual number was estimated to be around 1,600,000. Which means there is a TV set per 11 persons or about one per two families. There are urban-rural differences in this TV ownership. A sample survey carried out by ICES in 1995/1996 found that two thirds of the households in urban areas owned a TV, while it was one third in rural areas (Samarasinghe, 1997).

2. Journalism Education and Research

The journalist profession in Sri Lanka approximately numbers 3,000 individuals, whereof one thousand are employed by national media and two thousand by regional media. Many employees in the electronic media are not even considered as journalists, although their work includes traditional journalistic assignments. There are thousands of graduates from university programmes with journalism courses that do not get employed by the industry.

In Sri Lanka study programmes on journalism are found in universities, semi-government institutions and privately run institutions. There is as yet no national institute for journalism education in the country. There seems to be a variety of privately run programmes of varying quality, but it has been difficult to form an idea about them during the time that was available to the team. Apart from these, a certain amount of on the job training takes place, although it seems to be of a rudimentary nature. The team was able to get a brief look at the programmes in the University of Kelaniya, University of Colombo, Sri Lanka Foundation Institute (SLFI) and Sri Lanka Television Training Institute. Apart from these

we were informed that there are provisions at the University of Peradeniya, University of Sri Jayawardenapura and the Open University to study journalism.

Out of the programmes the team visited, the Department of Mass Communication of the University of Kelaniya is the oldest. It was established in 1972 and it provides training at undergraduate and post-graduate level. At the University of Colombo journalism does not have the status of a Department. It is called a Unit. The Unit was established in 1986. At present, there are efforts underway to elevate this Unit to a Department. This Unit conducts a one-year diploma course in journalism. In addition it is also possible for students to take journalism as a subject in the general arts degree.

In both universities quite a large number of students (at Kelaniya we were given the figure of 300–400 students) seem to be taking journalism as a subject for their general arts degree. The number who specialise is much smaller. A maximum of 25 students per batch are doing the special degree at Kelaniya. At Colombo the one-year diploma course attracts around 70 students. In both places there seems to be a large demand for the external degree. Both university programmes that we saw were available only in Sinhala. There seem to be very few opportunities for courses in journalism in the Tamil language within the university system.

Apart from the regular programmes of study these universities conducted ad-hoc special courses that very often try to attract practising journalists. For example, at the Journalism Unit of the University of Colombo we were told about a special programme on Women and Media that was conducted recently with the support of CIDA. These are one-off efforts that arise from the concerns reflected in the donor programmes. However, there is a long way to go before these are incorporated as part of the mainstream courses.

Most of the university programmes seem to have very little opportunity for practical training. Even when they are available they are of short duration. Universities are heavily underfunded and therefore do not have enough facilities and equipment to provide hands-on courses. Universities try to make use of existing media establishments for this purpose. As a result of this lack of resources the majority in the industry do not seem to think highly of the university courses.

There could also be certain fundamental differences in the way that universities and the industry think of the approach to the subject. For example, sometimes one gets the feeling that the primary motivation within the universities is with the impact of media on society rather than the objective of training journalists for the industry. In other words the fundamental motivation arises from the problems of society and then there is often a critical look at the mass media with these concerns.

These differences between academia and industry can also be seen as a part of a universal phenomenon seen in many other fields. For example, in many other fields of development assistance it is not uncommon to see fundamentally different approaches among researchers and practitioners. Researchers can for example articulate critique of the journalistic practices and products which is not always welcomed by the profession, although it may be important for the democratic debate. Nevertheless it is important to try and bridge these differences if any new training facilities are to be set up.

The two other programmes that the team saw were conducted by the Sri Lanka Foundation Institute (SLFI) and the Sri Lanka Television Training Institute (SLTTI). Until very

recently both these were projects of the Sri Lanka Foundation (SLF). SLF is a body incorporated under an act of parliament. It is run by a board of directors appointed by the president. Its structure allows the board a fair degree of autonomy. Last year the SLTTI was transferred to the Ministry of Information.

The SLFI carry out training for journalists through three different strategies. The most important one is the one year diploma course. Practising journalists as well as newcomers follow this course. It caters to about 30 students and is held in the English medium. Plans are underway to make this course available in Sinhala and Tamil. The second strategy is to have special programmes for journalists on specific topics. For example workshops/courses on human rights aimed at journalists. These are of shorter duration. Thirdly journalists take part in some general programmes aimed at public education. The SLFI's one year diploma is a firmly established programme. But even in this there is room to expand the practical training aspects of the course.

SLTTI, established in 1984, focuses on training in television and radio. It has standard courses which are repeated every year. These are camerawork in TV (2 weeks), editing in TV (2wks), computer graphics (2 wks), script writing for documentaries/TV drama (2 wks), news reading (2 wks) and acting for TV (2 wks). On average these courses would have about 10 people. SLTTI also offers specially funded courses. Normally in this strategy there is donor funding and SLTTI provides facilities and co-ordination. SLTTI is a well equipped institution according to Sri Lankan standards. In the same way as the entire Sri Lankan Foundation, there was strong support from the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) in the beginning. However at present the institute seems to be having funding difficulties.

Compared to many other areas of research media studies is a relatively new subject. The team managed to get a very preliminary glimpse into what is happening. Research in this area could be discussed under the following points:

1. The bulk of the serious writings on various forms of mass communication has been motivated by the desire to look at ideologies reflected in various forms of communication. Some of the earliest in this tradition has been the study of nationalisms reflected in early twentieth century literature. In recent times there has been a great degree of interest among researchers on the analysis of discursive aspects of different media. The ideological debates fuelled by nationalism and feminism have been the main motivation that has prompted the researchers to take a critical look at media, literature, novels, etc. An example of a study from an older generation of researchers is, Sarath Amungama, *Ideology and Class Interest in one of Piyadasa Sirisena's Novels: The New Image of the Sinhala-Buddhist nationalist*. Neloufer de Mel's *Women & the Nation's Narrative* is an example of a study by the new generation of scholars.
2. An overview of the media landscape, its organisations, economic conditions and regulations, is usually one of the first priorities when media studies have been established in a country. Sri Lanka is no exception and as we have indicated above there is at least one handbook edited by G.H.Peiris (1997) which contributes with important data and other information about the Sri Lankan media.
3. There have been few audience and readership surveys. But these are very few and far between. No systematic and regular audience or readership survey study is available in Sri Lanka.

4. Writings by advocacy groups. These are usually short pieces that look at media critically. Together with academic media studies these publications submit important insights to the problems of Sri Lankan journalism.

Several Proposals for Mass Media Training and Research

In this chapter we are mainly dealing with one project idea, which can be described as an outline to a project proposal for a national mass media Institute in Sri Lanka. Sida/Deso has also received another proposal from Kelyania University. This proposal relates to the role of mass media in the struggle for democracy and in the ethnic conflicts. We have also identified some other initiatives of relevance for this study.

1. A Mass Media Institute

As mentioned above Sri Lanka has never had a national media training institute. Most of the training is in-door, with the exception of television courses. During the last decade there have been several proposals aiming at creating a national media training programme. Representatives of the government, the media owners, the editors' guild as well as non-governmental organisations have made several efforts in this direction.

2. The Thomson Report (2000)

In 2000, the Thomson Foundation compiled a comprehensive proposal on behalf of the Sri Lanka Newspaper Society. The report proposed the set-up of a journalism training school in Colombo with a full-time course for newcomers, a part-time improvement programme for practising journalists as well as mid-career and specialist training courses. It was suggested that funding should be provided at first hand by the Newspaper Society. Based on interviews the Thomson report also identified possible donors, such as the British Council and British High Commission, the United Nations, the Canadian Governance and Institutional Strengthening Project, the Norwegian Institute of Journalism and The World Bank. The Institute of Printing and Graphics was pointed out as a possible facilitator of rooms and computers for a new training centre. A training scheme was also proposed, but no clues of how to form a board or how to set up the staff or training team.

Mainly due to financial problems the Newspaper Society never went through with the Thomson proposal.

3. The Governmental Proposal (2001)

In recent times the discussions to set up a media-training institute began in 1993. At a workshop held with the participation of the present Prime Minister a committee headed by Dr Gamini Corea was set up to develop guidelines for the setting up of a media

training institute. This committee submitted its report in 1994. Subsequently with the change of government in 1994, another committee headed by a senior journalist, Victor Gunawardena was established for the same purpose in 1995. This report was finalised the same year.

Another proposal to start a Sri Lankan Media Training Institute was presented to Sida/Deso in October 2001. The proposal was the result of a committee consisting of representatives from the former government, the media industry and non-governmental organisations. Some suggestions in the document were not supported by all participants in the committee. The media representatives and the NGO delegates from the Free Media Movement (FMM) were opposed to the idea of governmental control as indicated in the outline.

After the snap elections in December 2001 the opposition formed a new government. After this change of the political situation consensus seems to have emerged among the key actors about the necessity of a broad-based body for the training of journalists in Sri Lanka and also that the government should not interfere in the undertakings of a possible new institute.

4. The Ongoing Process (2002)

These efforts at setting up a media-training institute have accelerated by the interest taken by the Prime Minister. From the beginning of this year (2002) representatives of the editor's guild, newspaper society and FMM have been holding monthly meetings with the Prime Minister in order to lobby on a number of issues related to media. The setting up of a training institute is regularly discussed at these meetings. Although this work is in the initial phase there seems to be a common ground for future cooperation:

- (a) The Institute should be created as the result of a joint effort of the government, the media industry, the universities and non-governmental organisations.
- (b) The Institute should be free from government involvement in its operations.
- (c) The training should be in and on journalism. Production-skills as well as a thorough understanding of the role of mass media in a democratic society should be provided.
- (d) The training should guarantee jobs. Provided that the Institute's programme manages to get high credibility in different societal sectors, not least the media industry, the students will have confidence in their chances to get employment.

5. Other Proposals

Besides the proposal for a media institute complementary initiatives to strengthen mass media's and journalists' ethics and role in a democratic perspective have been taken by several actors. One is the Mass Communication Department at the Kelaniya University. This proposal was addressed to Sida in July 2001. Another initiative comes from the Sri Lanka Foundation Institute (SLFI) in collaboration with the Swedish journalist training institute for mid-career education, Fojo. In addition there are several NGOs active in promoting courses for journalists in war and conflict reporting. With respect to the latter we will only briefly mention two such initiatives.

Mass media ethics and human rights: the Mass Communication Department at Kelaniya University

The Mass Communication Department at Kelaniya University wants support for training of mass communication students and journalists with the emphasis on media and human rights education and research. The Department has been giving courses since the beginning of the 70's as part of the BA programme. The staff numbers eleven scholars, including one professor, four senior Ph.D. lecturers and six ordinary lecturers. Around 300–400 students pass the programme every year. Only a minor part of the programme is devoted to journalism training. Except for a couple of weeks training at the Department in writing skills, the training is located at the mass media companies, in broadcasting as well as in printed media. It is often difficult to get mentors for such training. And for the few who are lucky to get access to volunteer training, this is described as an ad hoc-business, where the students are more or less learning by doing, taking part in the day-to-day work.

The Department of Mass Communication at Kelaniya has set up a small Centre for the Study of Media and Human Rights (CSMGR). The purpose is to strengthen the code of conduct amongst journalists and mass media when it comes to the reporting on issues concerning human rights. The core of the Kelaniya University proposal is that the Centre should expand to facilitate three different but interconnected types of activities concerning the reporting on human rights and peace-building: research, education and information activities:

- Mass media research
- An audio-visual training centre for reporting techniques
- Weekend courses for journalists and public lectures for journalists
- Seminars and workshops for other target groups in Sri Lanka
- Mass Media Information campaigns directed at the media public

A small part of these activities have already taken part.

During our visit the Department also revealed that they intend to start a web-page in collaboration with the multi-media centre at the university. The object of the web page is to offer information and exchange concerning the mass media and human rights.

The Department is looking for funding for an extension of its activities. For the moment the Centre has some facilities at the Department, for instance a lecture hall and a seminar room. A few computers are also available.

The Institute for Further Education of Journalists (Fojo)

The Institute for Further Education of Journalists, Fojo, is Sweden's only mid-career training centre for professional journalists, providing further training for some 1,500 Swedish journalists each year. The Institute was founded in 1972, and is, since, 1978, associated to Kalmar University, with a special commission from the Swedish government to provide further training for journalists, nationally and internationally. Courses and seminars that are offered cover a wide range of subjects, e.g. editing, journalistic writing, investigative reporting and special fields like economics, crime, environment, consumer politics, editorial management, layout, etc.

Since 1990, Fojo also provides further training for journalists from developing countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America as well as training programmes focusing specifically on journalists in Eastern and Central Europe. Fojo runs a number of special three-week long

programmes every year in Sweden, open to journalists from different parts of the world. These programs deal with subjects like “Environmental Journalism”, “Women in Journalism” and “Journalism and Democracy”. In addition to this Fojo has ongoing bilateral cooperation in Vietnam, Palestine, Turkey, southern Africa, in Russia, the Baltic States, the Balkans, in the Ukraine, Belarus, Central Asia and the Caucasus. They have also done a considerable amount of TV training, especially in Palestine and Vietnam.

The long-term objectives of the bilateral cooperation are to support free democratic media through the establishment of journalism training centres in the countries involved. To this end, Fojo has also been developing training curricula and a special “training of trainers” programme.

Fojo has a permanent staff of 20 persons, including six project managers, all with journalistic backgrounds. Fojo also employs some 10–15 journalists on a project-basis mainly for managing international training activities of different kinds.

The Swedish Embassy in Colombo contacted Fojo in 1999, a contact that led to a course on Journalism and Democracy especially designed for Sri Lankan conditions. The course consisted of two weeks in Sweden, November 2000, and one week in Sri Lanka, February 2001, and welcomed 20 participants. The course has been evaluated during the spring 2002.

A new course project is suggested jointly by SLFI and Fojo which includes:

1. Two two-week courses on the theme Journalism and Democracy for Sri Lankan reporters in October-November 2002 and January 2003 respectively. In total 40 participants.
2. A three-week course for news editors with a focus on Media management in relation to the general Journalism and Democracy theme in March and June 2003. In total 16 participants.
3. Two two-week courses for reporters on Investigative Journalism in three blocks during the period from September to December 2003. In total 40 participants.

The first two two-week courses for reporters will take place in Sri Lanka and have a follow-up course in Sweden for two weeks. Twenty of the 40 participants will be selected for this one. The first two weeks of the Media Management course will be in Sweden with the third week in Sri Lanka. The courses in Investigative Journalism are located to Sri Lanka for the first two weeks and a one-week follow-up course in India for twenty selected participants from the first two courses.

The Centre for Counter Conflict Journalism (CCC)

Funded by NORAD, this centre has recently started to counteract tendencies of nationalism and ethnical conflicts within journalism. Courses for journalists from the two dominant linguistic communities have been pursued with a particular focus on the war struck regions. So far (February 2002) the financial support from NORAD has been modest (approximately 60.000 NOK), but the Norwegian development agency is searching for ways to increase this kind of small-scale peace initiatives. The journalist programme at the Regional College in Fredrikstad has provided the human resources for education and training in Norway. For future expansion of the course programme at the CCC it would be possible to also integrate the leading journalist programme in Oslo. With its international and peace and conflict profile this faculty would add new competence dimensions to the already available resource base in Norway.

Conclusions

1. Journalism and Conflict

According to our sources the general perception is that lack of professionalism within Sri Lankan journalism has amplified the ethnical and political conflicts in the country. Especially visual depiction of violence, mutilated bodies and wounded individuals being casualties of terrorism and civil warfare are regarded detrimental and a factor that has increased enmity and hatred. This is a fairly common opinion even amongst journalists that we have interviewed. Several case studies of news journalism in Sri Lanka confirm this critique of the media, both with respect to the ethnic conflict and biased political reporting (Kandiah, 2001; Sivaram, 1999; here from Richard & Mahendra, 2000:318; cf. Säfström et al., 2001:27-30, 41; IMS, 2002:10; see also *Media Monitor*, Vol.2, Issue 1, March 2000, and Vol. 3, Issue 1, April 2001).

As have been indicated above journalist education programmes in Sri Lanka are not sufficient. At the moment there are a few programmes and courses – some offered by universities, some by media companies and some are sponsored and run by foreign agents. But very few of the journalists in the business have participated and the courses are either lacking training of skills or they are very short and do not supply the full professional competence needed. In particular education and training in ethics is missing today. In addition there is no code of ethics established for journalists in general; only for the press media does such a code exist, but it goes back several decades and is not regarded as fully relevant nowadays.

Although the accusation of journalism being responsible for escalation of the internal conflicts, and even war, may seem plausible at face value, it should not be accepted without reservations. This idea is far too common and we have already from the antique Greek city states heard stories about how the messenger of bad news was killed as a scapegoat. One should not immediately exclude the possibility that this is a long living myth, which may have some empirical support but nevertheless could exaggerate the importance of the media far too much. Certainly there are other and perhaps more important factors behind this tragic history – journalistic practices are hardly the origin of the violence. As in many other cases when the role of the media is discussed, it is usually more constructive to explain the conflict in terms of a complex of factors, where media reporting is one of the conditions that sometimes contribute to escalation and sometimes to resolution of the conflict. If so, lack of journalistic professionalism is not more than part of the problem. However, even so one cannot deny that one of perhaps several measures towards conflict de-escalation might be improved ethical consciousness among journalists. For a positive peace-building process to develop it is important that the media report on the ceasefire and its implementation in a professional and objective way (cf. IMS, 2002:10).

2. Professionalism as Remedy?

These reflections imply that there is no easy solution to Sri Lanka's problems. And furthermore, there are reasons to doubt whether the expectations of far-reaching outcomes of reforms within the media sector are realistic. Even with an effective ethical

conscious-raising programme within journalism there is no automatic impact on journalism as practice. Also other actions would have to be taken, for example changes in the management styles of the media companies and more freedom from political interventions than in the past. At least that seems to be the conclusion considering all failed attempts in the past (see above) of improving journalist standards. They also point to the fact that without joint engagement of all key actors within the media hardly any substantial results will come about.

However, there is a certain truth in the argument, that in “..the long run, education of media workers is the most efficient tool for strengthening democracy via the media” (Kivikuru, 2000:95). Professionalisation as a way to raise the standards of journalism in S.L. means that structures for self-evaluations and for discussions and reflections on quality should be invented and/or strengthen. Standards for what is good journalism must be established and implemented. Included in such standards should be the essential principles for what is expected from journalists in a democratic society: e.g. accuracy, relevance, fairness, critical scrutiny of political and other power structures, balance in coverage of internal conflicts and professional integrity. Supervision of media conduct should be divided between judicial and ethical bodies. In democracies the former belongs to the courts under the constitution, while the latter is the responsibility of independent commissions and professional boards. In this report the focus is not on these aspects, but rather on prerequisites for a development of professional education within journalism to take off in Sri Lanka. However, it should be underlined that in order for professionalisation to come about, it is crucial that ethical rules are voluntarily supervised by the profession itself and not by state administration.

3. The of Role of the International Community

Our understanding of the assignment we have accepted is that our report shall include a dual perspective with respect to both the process and the structure that could lead towards the wanted changes in media and journalism. As mentioned above we believe it is very important that a process is initiated and supported by all key actors in the media. This is mandatory if the process shall be viable and sustainable. Provided that this is accomplished in the national settings, the international community can give considerable assistance to the process, for example with expertise in organisation and methods of journalism training as well as how to link education and research in constructive ways. Of course this does not exclude development agencies from simultaneously selecting specific initiatives in the media sector, e.g. journalist networks, seminars and courses beneficial to the upgrading of journalism, for encouragement and support.

Regarding the process it is important to underline some of the positive factors, which probably make the present situation the right moment to promote an initiative. First, there is a common understanding of current problems within Sri Lankan journalism among our sources. Literally everyone we have met confirmed the lack of education as well as failing ethical consciousness in the news media. Interviewees frequently mentioned this in connection with the civil wars. On both sides of the conflict the media have been so biased that they have probably contributed to polarisation and conflict escalation in the period before the cease-fire on 24th of December 2001. This common understanding of the problem is crucial for why launching a professionalisation programme in the field of journalism can be viable and successful.

It is also encouraging that everyone we have interviewed has been concerned about all relevant parties becoming involved in the process. Thus it has been emphasised that journalists, media owners, researchers – both at the universities and those engaged by NGOs – and journalist educators must participate. Furthermore, all parties acknowledge that both the state media and the private media have to be involved on equal terms if the process is to be successful.

Due to these encouraging circumstances there seems to be no need for starting the process with establishing a common ground, a shared image of the problems in SL journalism. It is already there, which is probably quite a unique situation and a reason why it is the right time to move immediately from idea to action. It should be possible to move directly to the construction of a shared policy for how journalism standards can be raised. How this work should be pursued is, however, not quite as clear and jointly agreed upon as the shared understanding of the problem. As soon as the process goes into the stage of concrete actions it may be expected that some political and other interests might threaten the momentum. But in our view, this does not make progress impossible, but rather the opposite because of the particular political conditions in the present situation. The present administration, which came to power after the general election on 5th of December 2001, seems to be working successfully towards a policy of mutual understanding in various directions. For the moment it has a strong public support, due to the progress of the peace process. Preliminary opinion polls estimate that 75% of the population strongly support the peace process. Furthermore the outcome of the local elections in March has strengthened the political base for the government (IMS, 2002:5). It is also inclined to further liberalise the media sector. This gives a lot of credits among journalists, editors and media proprietors. The present government has even decided to follow up on the initiative from the previous government about a new media institute for journalism training and research (see above). The proposed guiding principle is that a new institute should be independent in relation to state administration. The Prime minister has started a dialogue with the key actors in the media, i.e. the proprietors, editors' guild and NGOs, about the media situation. He has also appointed a committee with the task of proposing reforms, for example changes of press laws and possibly the establishment of a new media institute.

Another advantage in the present situation is the fact that several propositions have been elaborated during the last four to five years, for legal and other reforms of the media sectors. The previous and the present governments' initiatives for a new media institute have already been mentioned. In addition a number of proposals from media owners, the Free Media Movement and other NGOs, and university departments can be noted. They are all based on concerns about the standards of journalism in the country. These proposals have for example included a Press Complaints Commission, an Independent Broadcasting Authority and new laws with respect to freedom of information, protection of sources, emergency rules, etc. A remarkable step forward was taken in April 1998, when all key parties agreed on a declaration of media reforms, the so-called "Colombo Declaration of Media Freedom and Social Responsibility". But because of the emergency situation in the country the declaration did not have any practical consequences until now. After the cease-fire the government has taken steps towards liberalisation, for example by approving legislation to remove the criminal defamation laws that have been criticised for being draconian and a threat to freedom of expression (IMS, 2002:9).

Arguments for not being too optimistic about the present situation and the outcome of the renewed interest in the media situation can be raised – in fact these doubts have been mentioned by some of our interviewees. Some can not exclude the possibility that the civil war might start again. Critique against the procedures and organisation for implementation of the cease-fire has been strong in some media and raised concerns about the delicate political situation. It has also been questioned why media reforms have not been more successful in the past. The ideas about reforms are not particularly new. This could imply that some actors hardly pay much more than lip service to the need for more professional journalists. In addition to the obvious problems connected with the civil wars since 1983, another possible obstacle in the past may have been factional interests between different sectors, for example between state-owned and private media as well as between government and journalists regarding the respect and integrity of the media.

However, if the positive atmosphere of the present situation survives and the revival of the demands for an improvement of journalism standards prevail, the international community can support and encourage local initiatives, for example advise in establishing a working model for the process carried on by local actors. Thus, we have understood from our frequent discussions with key local actors that it would be valuable if foreign partners can share with them experiences from other media systems where professionalism and ethical codes have already been established and where journalistic independence has been combined with responsibility based on professional ethics. International partners can contribute by sharing with their local counterparts experiences of institutionalised practices such as institutes for journalism training and research, regular programmes for practising journalists, annual journalist awards, ethical boards both within the media companies and the trade union, funds for journalism research and also experiences of how to integrate the training of journalists with research. This has been rare in Sri Lanka until recently. However, contacts with researchers are frequent among the NGOs involved in the media discussion in the country.

4. The Main Choice: Building on Existing Institutions or Setting-Up a New Institute?

In the present stage the process towards improved journalism education and training in Sri Lanka has not yet found a common strategy. Provided that the current situation with fragmented and under-funded university programmes and ad-hoc courses offered by various agents is not sufficient, a new foundation must be built. There are two possible main roads to a national media institute in Sri Lanka:

- (1) building upon *one of the existing institutions*
- (2) forming *a new institution*.

The main argument for the first alternative is that it would be plausible to strengthen the infrastructures already in place at universities, institutes, or the industry.

The main argument against the first alternative is that the existing activities and competencies at any of the present institutions lack the necessary credibility and institutional sustainability that would make it the obvious carrier of the wanted reformation of journalism in Sri Lanka. Without such legitimacy, progress will be hard to achieve.

That leaves us with only the second option, because it seems that a combined effort in which competencies from different sources – universities, NGOs and the media – take a joint responsibility would have the necessary credibility and capacity to create a basis for a new development. This alternative seems also to be supported by media proprietors, newsroom managers, journalists and government representatives. It is also strongly emphasised by non-governmental organisations involved in the struggle for a free media sphere in Sri Lanka. It should be underlined that this conclusion is not built upon any rejection of the quality of the activities in the present programmes and courses – it is simply founded on the assessment that any of these can only offer a part of what the journalist profession and media need.

5. Potential Scandinavian Partners

A programme for professionalisation of journalists in Sri Lanka should in an educational perspective be based on four pillars. The first is basic course programmes, first and foremost for the education of newcomers to the journalist profession. The second is mid-career education and training of both reporters and news editors. The third is a journalist research programme linked to the courses. The fourth is a programme for standard-raising in the field of war and conflict journalism.

Our recommendation is that a new national journalist training programme in Sri Lanka is established in co-operation with the public authorities, the media owners, Editors' Guild, trade unions and relevant NGOs. This programme should have the responsibility for education and training of newcomers. Its courses should include both theoretical and practical components and courses, preferably based on adequate media research. Assistance from international partners could be linked to the institute's programme in the form of mentors and teachers. Our interviews indicate that such assistance should be sought in the neighbouring region. In a recent report a Worldview initiative to start a "Media University" for 50 students from the SAARC countries already in September 2002 is mentioned (IMS, 2002:7). It seems important that this and other valuable efforts to encourage professionalisation of journalism both within Sri Lanka and in the South-East Asian region are co-ordinated to achieve optimal results. In that context also Scandinavian resource bases could be mentioned such as Fojo in Sweden, the journalist programme at the University College in Norway and the Danish NGO as well as the International Media Support (IMS).

With respect to mid-career education and training it has to be managed mainly by international assistance in the short-term perspective. It is also important in courses for experienced journalists that international experiences are added to their already achieved competencies. Therefore we suggest that resource bases specialised in this field, for example in India and – if relevant from a practical and geographical point of view – counterparts in Scandinavia, e.g. Fojo, are approached for continuous co-operation.

A relevant research base is important if education and training is to be up-dated and relevant. We want to emphasise the need in Sri Lanka for a national journalism and media studies programme. It is important that applied research is developed to facilitate courses with actual experiences from the professionals in the industry and also for the benefit of the public debate about journalism and media in the country. An international network of journalist researchers should be established as a resource base. If wanted several research institutes in the Scandinavian countries could be mobilised for scientific

assistance of this kind. In Sweden the media studies programmes at the Stockholm and Örebro Universities are characterised by a special international profile, which could be of particular value in this context.

Co-operation both with researchers involved in peace and conflict studies in the field of journalism and with NGOs offering practical support to journalists and media for conflict containment and resolution is essential in a programme for democratisation, improvement of the human rights situation and strengthening of peace in Sri Lanka. Several of the mentioned university programmes in Scandinavia have some staff members experienced in research on war journalism, as well as in collaboration with various NGOs, and are interested in developing co-operation for mutual benefit. For example, the media studies programme in Örebro and the journalism programme in Oslo have jointly been involved in international research projects about the Persian Gulf war 1990-91 and the Kosovo conflict 1999 (Nohrstedt & Ottosen, 2000; Nohrstedt, Höijer & Ottosen, forthcoming). With respect to co-operation in peace promoting projects in particular the journalism programme in Oslo has valuable experiences and also a history of close relations with the Peace Research Institute in Oslo (PRIO) as well with Transcend, a NGO active in promoting “peace journalism” (see <http://www.transcend.org>). Transcend offers intensive courses for journalists with theoretical and practical parts as well as workshops aiming at training in how to find ways to avoid being promoters of war propaganda in connection with conflict reporting.

6. A more Comprehensive Study of the Media Situation in Sri Lanka

In addition to the measures that have already been mentioned, several vital studies are needed to provide a broader understanding of the media situation in Sri Lanka. In particular the situation of radio broadcasting has been neglected in this report. This is regrettable since community radio is probably the most important media in terms of public access (Samarasinghe, 1997). It is well known from experiences made in connection to development projects over the years, dating as far back as to the 50s and 60s, that radio is broadly used in rural areas (Melkote, 1991). Together with other popular media, such as street theatres and folk musicals it is one of the most important means in development communication projects.

We therefore propose that Sida initiates a more thorough research project about the media landscape of Sri Lanka. Development of ownership, audience shares, pluralism of media channels as well as news production in various types of media are examples of media research that can make important contributions to the knowledge about the media in Sri Lanka. Another important aspect to focus on in future in-depth studies should be the media discourses on the gender situation and the rights of women and children. Furthermore, newsroom studies should explore the female journalists’ experiences and position in the news production processes. Considering the relations between women’s liberation and the nationalist movements both in the North East and the South the challenge of developing a lateral cosmopolitanism that is free from inter-ethnic antagonism is not an easy one. But there are some examples of local progress linked to women’s organisation like Women’s Development Foundation and the Uva Welassa Govi Kantha Sanvidanaya of Buttala (de Mel, 2001:10-12, 233 f.). The way journalists – of both sexes – conceive and cover these issues in relation to a counter-conflict journalism perspective seems important to address for media researchers.

Studies of such orientation should be co-operative projects in which senior researchers and students from Sri Lanka and Sweden (and possibly other countries) together plan and conduct data collection and field studies. Various methods can be used and one important purpose would be the mutual benefits for the partners in terms of scientific training and increased understanding of the media situation in a country like Sri Lanka.

7. A Media Development Project in the North-East Part of Sri Lanka

The peace negotiations between the government in Colombo and the LTTE which controlled the north-east part of the country have not included any agreements concerning the media. It is therefore an open question what shall happen with the media and journalists in the region. There are three regional Tamil language publications in the north: Uthayan, Thinakkural (Jaffna Edition) and Valapuri, the latter associated with the Tamil political party EPDP, and one in the east: Thinkathir. In addition LTTE has a radio station, a newspaper and a website (IMS, 2002:11). Here it seems that the international community can play a vital role in promoting independent and ethical, responsible journalism. We suggest that Sida looks into these matters and in particular the possibilities of using new information and communication technologies for improving journalist skills and professional competence. First, because the LTTE already has established its presence on the Internet. There are a number of websites by Tamil groups. The most famous one is www.Tamilnet. Second, because experiences from other places, for example African countries, indicate that IT literacy among journalists can effectively help them develop as professionals and raise the quality of their products.

A project with this orientation must be prepared very thoroughly due to the specific and sensitive questions it would have to tackle. Probably this kind of project should be run jointly with NORAD. Another important precondition is that the international community is prepared to offer both hardware equipment, e.g. computers, cables, etc., software and human resources for installations and training. We believe that a project in this part of the country can facilitate the reconciliation process and democratisation as well as strengthen the position of human rights in the area. However, it is certain that more work need to be invested before any well-founded conclusions can be drawn.

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Appendix 1

Interviews

Dr. Ariyaratne Athugala, Prof. Sunanda Mahendra, Dr. Rajapakse C., Dr. Senanayake –
Dept. of Mass Communications, University of Kelaniya

Mr. Kumar Abeysinghe, Secretary, Ministry of Mass Communications

Mr. Lucien Rajakarunanayake, former Chairman of Associated Newspapers Company
Limited

Ms. Emanthi Marambe, Journalist, Divayina, Upali Group of Newspapers

Mr. Saddhamangala Sooriyabandara, Producer, Rupavahini Corporation (TV)

Mr. Waruna Karunatilake, Journalist, Member of Free Media Movement

Mr. Victor Ivan, Editor Ravaya newspaper, Member of Free Media Movement

Dr. Neloufer de Mel, Senior Lecturer, Department of English, University of Colombo.

Dr. Wijaya Jayatilaka, Director, Sri Lanka Foundation Institute

Ms. Nirupama Subramaniam, Journalist, Hindu Newspaper

Dr. P. Saravanamuttu, Executive Director, Centre for Policy Alternatives

Mr. Kamal Waleboda, Senior Lecturer, Journalism Unit, University of Colombo

Mr. Tomas Stangeland, Second Secretary, Royal Norwegian Embassy

Mr. Brdaman Weerakoon, Secretary, Prime Minister

Ms. Stina Karlun, Second Secretary, Development Corporation, Embassy of Sweden

Mr. M.D.Mahindapala, Sri Lanka Television Training Institute

Ms. Shani Jayawardena, TV producer/researcher

Ms. Thushani Bulumulla, Sri Lanka Television Training Institute

Mr. Ranjith Wijeyawardena, Chairman, Wijeya Group of Newspapers

Mr. A. Sivanesaselvan, Editor in Chief, Thinakkural Daily/Sunday Thinakkural,
United Newspapers (Pvt) Ltd.

Appendix 2

Terms of Reference

Outline to a Study on Possible Support to the Development of Media Institutions in Sri Lanka

1. Background

Sida has received a project concept paper with a request for support to a Media Training Institute that will conduct courses for journalists. The request is for advice on the curriculum and for infrastructure developments as well as support for the methodology of training and the planning of courses. The project concept paper is attached. Sida has also received a request for support to training of journalists in Kelaniya University in Human Rights. A request is attached.

Sida has supported the training of 20 journalists from eter-media and newspapers for a short in-service practical course in Media and Democracy. Fojo has been the implementing agency. Two additional courses for new groups of journalists are planned for 2002/2003 and will be supported by Sida.

The strategy for support by Sweden to Sri Lanka identifies support to peace, democracy and economic development as the priority. Media is mentioned as one area of support.

Sida could be willing to support development of capacities for the training of journalists and the certification of journalists. It is however felt that before any such decision can be made there is need to analyse the role of media in Sri Lanka and its problems and strengths, the various efforts for training of journalists that are going on and present various possibilities of support by Sweden to Sri Lanka.

2. The Purpose and Scope of the Work

The purpose of the study is to assess:

- 1) the role of media in Sri Lanka
- 2) the overall strengths and areas of concern in relation to media in Sri Lanka and the possible limitation that the conflict sets on co-operation in the area of media,
- 3) the proposed support to a media and research institute and to identify possibilities and risks with such support as well as discuss the relevance to Sri Lanka
- 4) identify possibilities for co-operation between Sweden and Norway in support to media
- 5) discuss the role of Public service and the current practice in this area,
- 6) identify a Swedish resource base for support to media in Sri Lanka

Recommendations will need to be made about;

- 1) Ways and means that Sida in a long-term perspective could support the capacity development of journalists and media in Sri Lanka.
- 2) Ways and means on possible support to Public service.

The study will have a gender and a child rights perspective. The analysis of the media will attempt to represent the views and concerns of various ethnic groups as well as groups with various socio – economic status.

3. Methodology

One Swedish consultant and a staff member of Sida will visit Sri Lanka for 2 weeks in February 2001 and a follow up visit will be made within 2 months for 1 1/2 week to present the findings for the Ministry of Media in Sri Lanka.

A local consult will be involved for 3 weeks and in writing for 1 week.

Interviews will be made with main actors in the field of media, relevant researchers, local and international NGOs, relevant UN-agencies, other donors and young journalists.

The consultants will gather information and analyse the information together with relevant counterparts. If necessary, an interpreter will be provided.

It is important to meet both men and women from the various ethnic groups, and various age groups representing various socio-economic status.

4. Time-schedule

1. Consultancy in February 2002
2. Reporting back in Sri Lanka within 2 months
3. A draft report presented to Sida within 1 month after the second visit.

5. Reporting

The report will be written in English. It will be maximum 30 pages with other relevant information attached as appendices. The report will be presented in Word 98 not later than 30 April 2001.

6. Budget (SEK)

The budget for the fee and for reimbursable costs will be discussed.

Local consultant: fee:- 4 weeks

Swedish consultant: fee:- 8 weeks

Staff member at Sida :- 4 weeks (inkl 2 weeks preparation and report writing)



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