



# MEDIA EMPOWERMENT FOR A DEMOCRATIC SRI LANKA SRI LANKA

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) works in partnership with the people of Sri Lanka to increase prosperity and stability using a variety of approaches, projects, and partners.

USAID's Media Empowerment for a Democratic Sri Lanka (MEND) project strengthens the ability of the media sector to improve citizens' access to balanced, reliable, and objective news. It works to improve media organizations' internal management and operations; strengthen journalists' capacity to provide informed, impartial, and ethical reporting on key policy issues; and help the media to serve as a forum for national dialogue.

This project is one component of the longstanding partnership between the American and Sri Lankan people to support self-reliance, strengthen stability, and promote economic growth. USAID's program in Sri Lanka, totaling more than \$2 billion since 1961, promotes a healthy, educated, and employed population.

Implementing Partner: International Research and Exchanges Board, Inc.; Total Estimated Cost: \$7.9 million; Performance Period: August 2017 – April 2023

## OBJECTIVES

USAID's MEND project aims to improve citizens' access to balanced, reliable, and objective news by:

PHOTO: IREX, MEDIA TRAINING.

- Improving media governance and cultivating an environment conducive to ensuring free and fair media.
- Strengthening journalists' capacity to provide balanced, informed, impartial, and ethical reporting on key policy and public interest issues.
- Empowering the media to facilitate important national dialogues.

## AREAS OF FOCUS

- **CAPACITY BUILDING:** Provide technical assistance to enhance the capacity of media institutions to provide balanced, informed, unbiased, and ethical reporting; advance media ethics; and improve multimedia content on a range of priority themes.
- **MEDIA ACCESS AND OUTREACH:** Support new income generation models for independent media by increasing digital reach, providing commercial development training, and institutionalizing stronger management systems. Enable a safer working environment for female journalists. Foster cross-language collaboration among journalists.
- **FAIR AND ACCESSIBLE REPORTING:** Facilitate inclusive dialogues around public policy and good governance in the media.
- **DIGITAL LITERACY:** Improve media literacy among youth and other community groups.

## RESULTS

- Assisted 17 media entities to transition from print to digital by improving their online presence and increasing their capacity to develop relevant, high-quality digital content.
- Developed and launched the Media Gender Charter, which outlines a set of principles to be implemented by media outlets to ensure a safe workplace for women journalists and gender-sensitive reporting in the industry.
- Amplified diverse voices and perspectives by providing training and support for mobile journalism.
- Improved networking and collaboration between print, tv, and online media professionals.
- Reached over 24,000 citizens through media literacy activities, including the *Learn to Discern* webinars, a series of videos on social media, and virtual training programs.