

# Changing the world through broadcasting

Initiated in 1995, Young Asia Television (YA\*TV), based in Sri Lanka, is a pioneering venture to actively involve young people in discussing issues related to sustainable development, the environment, human rights and peaceful coexistence. While engaging the youth audience through its programming, it sensitises and provides training to its young production staff in using television to raise awareness on topics of social interest. It makes use of an international network of country offices and broadcast professionals from whom the YA\*TV obtains a range of programming material. It, in turn, distributes and broadcasts its own programmes through regional and international networks.

## Commitments of YA\*TV

Young Asia Television started making a serious commitment to ethnic reconciliation in Sri Lanka back in 1997. This commitment has included the production of several programme series, which for the last eight years have promoted the reconciliation of all ethnic communities in Sri Lanka and highlighted the dividends of a negotiated peaceful settlement to the island's ethnic conflict. The vision and mandate of YA\*TV incorporates concepts of culture and multiculturalism, identity and diversity, tradition and modernity. YA\*TV works with partner organisations in developing media interventions that are of specific concern to the development activities.

YA\*TV is committed to local, regional and international representation and relevance in its programming. It creates a youthful and lively forum to showcase the ideas and aspirations of Asian youth, representing the future leaders of a region, rich in human potential. In the programme series 'Space to Let', issues covered range from the sex industry, abortion and arranged

marriages to education, employment and healthcare. 'Nature Calls' programme takes a closer look at environmental issues around Asia, highlighting efforts made at conserving and actively making a change in the environment. 'YA Tribe' is a place where one can witness dance forms from every corner of Asia. 'Young Outlook' is a series dedicated to young people of the world who are working to make a difference within their communities. 'Ya Café' is the magazine



programme of YA\*TV that takes a look at the lighter side of youth in Asia.

## Broad perspective for broad motto

YA\*TV initially consisted of solely regional programming in the English language, the need for local language programming was soon identified. Over the years, much has been produced and broadcast for specifically Sri Lankan audiences. These programme series have ranged from local language versions of its international programming to those dealing with specifically Sri Lanka centric issues. The 'Mihisara' programme series (presented in the Sinhala language) focuses on areas of environmental concern from a Sri Lankan perspective. 'Sivuseeta' is a Sinhala language magazine programme that explores art and culture around the world. Its features include music, dance, arts, culture, customs and lifestyles ranging from the traditional to the contemporary.

Back in 1997, Young Asia Television started making a serious commitment to ethnic reconciliation in Sri Lanka. Initially the commitment of YA\*TV to 'Peacecasting' took the form of two weekly television programmes, which have been acknowledged as being both groundbreaking

and influential. 'Sathi' (meaning awareness) and 'Vilippu' (meaning awakening) look at the need for peace and initiatives taken to achieve peace and reconciliation. In February 2003, with the aid of the Swiss Development Corporation, the programme 'No War Zone' was launched.

YA\*TV with the partnership of UNDP, UNICEF and the Sri Lankan government saw the need to create public awareness about the issue of landmines to make the people understand the need to adapt safe behaviour patterns. The series 'Your safety, Mine Action, Our Future' series consisted of thirteen short documentaries and six public service announcements, aimed to explain the different aspects of humanitarian mine action activities that the public should be aware of. Drawing attention to the issue of HIV/AIDS is one of the highest priorities of Young Asia Television. Through stories of people living with HIV/AIDS to the community initiatives to combat the epidemic, YA\*TV has made it clear that AIDS is neither a western problem nor one that limited to certain sections of society. 'Right Now' series, launched on Human Rights Day (10<sup>th</sup> December) in 2002, produced by the Institute of Human Rights and YA\*TV with financial support from the Governance and Institutional Strengthening Project (CIDA) is another innovative initiative aimed at educating the general public on issues of human rights and their violations.

Young Asia Television has been described as 'bold experiment as public service broadcasting'. It has already specialised in reinventing the usefulness of the power of television to inform, educate and advocate social change with regard to issues that are critical to the realisation of human rights and sustainable development for all. ■

Reference: [www.yatv.net](http://www.yatv.net)