“Through Asian Eyes”

Down a quiet side street in metropolitan Colombo, an ambitious experiment is being at tempted which is expected to change the course of television all over the world. Young Asia Television (YATV) is a project set up by Worldview Global Television, and it aims to produce television of a type that is rarely seen anywhere. The key to the whole project is the phrase “value-based television”. It represents the philosophy that there is more to Asia than exotic beaches, picturesque rituals and tourist opportunities, and that there is more to television than “Baywatch”, “Entertainment Tonight” and “The X-Files”.

YATV, as it is called for short, is an organization composed primarily of young adults (the average age is around 22) who are all busy producing intelligent television that deals with every day life in Asia. They are involved in all aspects of the company; from production, shooting and editing to presenting, marketing and public relations. They are of all Asian nationalities and background- Bangladeshi, Nepalese, Japanese and Sri Lankan. At YATV’s bustling studios, they produce a variety of shows on themes ranging from the environment, development and socio-cultural issues to fashion, music and art. For a generation tired by the overload of Western media, YATV provides a refreshing change of perspective.

YATV is not just an NGO project but aims to be a self-supporting company in the next couple of years. The programmes are currently being aired on Sri Lankan and Indian TV and are due to be broadcast on terrestrial networks in Indonesia and Malaysia, as well as on satellite networks across Asia. While the programmes are broadcast in English, they also have the capacity to be dubbed in the language of the country they are broadcast. “We are not interested in just producing more television”, says Hilmy Ahamed, Drector of YATV. “In a world where 500 specialised TV channels are expected in the next decade, we intend to stake our claim with a brand of television that is acceptable on an international level without falling prey to the same Western themes that are flooding the Asian market.”

Sharmini Boyle, Chief Producer at the station agrees. “YATV is a unique opportunity for young people to take control of the tools of television. It allows them to communicate their ideas and issues themselves by training them in every aspect of production from scripting and presenting to graphics and editing, we are training a new generation of TV professionals in Asia”. The fruits of this project are highly

visible in the upbeat presentation and youthful style, which at the same time tackles in-depth subjects like child labour, environmental problems and others without flinching.