

Enhancing Independent Media in Cambodia

An Ethics Perspective

Media and Ethics



European
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Enhancing Independent Media in Cambodia: An Ethics Perspective

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Introduction: Journalism Ethics

To strengthen journalists' practice of professional ethics in Cambodia, the Cambodian Center for Independent Media (CCIM) is initiating a project in 2009 titled "Enhancing Independent Media in Cambodia," with generous funding from the European Union.

This report comprises the first phase of that project. It aims to identify, analyze, and offer solutions to the ethical dilemmas facing Cambodian journalists.

Those ethical problems include:

1. Strengthening the legal framework for free media activities, particularly broadcast radio through policy and legislation.
2. Raising the awareness of Cambodian journalists on responsible and professional journalism practices.
3. Establishing a standardized code of ethics for Cambodian journalists reflecting professionalism, independence in reporting, and respect for the rights of journalists.

By identifying and targeting those problems, CCIM can better cater its programs to fill the gaps hindering Cambodia's media environment.

Methodology

CCIM's researchers conducted 33 field interviews for three months with journalists, editors, media businesspeople, government officials, academics, and media trainers. The researchers did not conduct their own paper-based surveys, since many organizations have already published surveys on the media.

Field interviews add depth to already-available quantitative surveys, adding more color and complexity because respondents can speak more about how they feel. Similarly, when conducting surveys on sensitive topics like corruption and media ethics, problems arise as to the reliability of those results. Respondents can come under pressure from editors and colleagues when answering questions. Therefore, relying on statistics alone can give researchers a skewed picture of a situation.

The interviews in this report only supplement the data gathered by other organizations in recent years. They do not replace that data. All interviews were conducted in private areas. The chosen respondents were experienced, established reporters less likely to come under pressure from colleagues, or researchers or trainers who maintain some distance from but regularly observe the local media environment.

Those factors alleviate the possibility of responses being skewed due to the pressures of the media environment, so they can better supplement the quantitative data that has already been gathered. After examining the interviews, the researchers were able to locate recurring statements, concerns, and experiences of Cambodian journalists. They have been published in this report as excerpts rather than as full transcripts.

Some problems arose. Interviewees were sometimes reluctant to answer questions about politics or corruption, to be expected with

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Some problems arose. Interviewees were sometimes reluctant to answer questions about politics or corruption, to be expected with

any sensitive research project. Respondents less affiliated with local newspapers, TV stations, and radio stations were more likely to tackle political questions in depth.

Additionally, when journalists were asked about their professional standards, all claimed to hold high standards but blamed other reporters as degrading the profession. The tendency away from self-incrimination is to be expected in any interview-based research project.

Findings: A Democratic Media?

Of the 33 people interviewed and 5 quantitative surveys consulted from other organizations, most cited improvement in press freedoms in Cambodia in the past 10 years, as the number of journalists murdered and intimidated has declined and Cambodia has maintained a liberal press law on paper. Four journalists were killed between 1992 and 1997. In 1997, the year of the coup, 4 more journalists were killed, compared to 1 in 2003 and 1 in 2008.¹

At the same time, business and political elites in Cambodia have increasingly turned to the Press Law of 1995 and UNTAC criminal code to sue or intimidate journalists, rather than brute force. Under the press law, misinformation is a criminal offense.

A man buying newspaper at a news stand in Phnom Penh looking for news and information



Among the mediums of newspaper, magazines, radio, television and the Internet, most respondents considered radio to be the most free, with stations such as Radio Free Asia, Voice of Democracy, and Voice of America regularly broadcasting material critical of the government.



Tuktuk drivers in Phnom Penh listening to the radio for news and information

Newspapers face higher levels of censorship, according to most interviewees. This is because newspapers are read by literate Cambodians often with greater interests in politics, making newspapers more likely to contain

¹ Licadho, *Reading between the Lines: How Politics, Money, and Fear Control Cambodia's Media*. 2008.

controversial political information. TV and radio, for these reasons, focus more on entertainment news.

At the time of this research in early 2009, the Internet has become the center of discussion after the Ministry of Information issued a ban on websites perceived to be pornographic, starting with reahu.net, a website that depicts paintings of nude apsara dancers. Though Internet media in Cambodia remains small, limited mostly to English- and French-language newspapers, and free to publish sensitive information, CCIM is concerned that government regulation of pornographic content will spill into political content.

Access to information

With no ministries employing media relations officers, and few NGOs offering training courses for public relations professionals, access to government information remains limited for journalists in Cambodia, said several interviewees.

Officials rarely hold press conferences, preferring to keep goings-on in the government secret. When press conferences are held by businesses, journalists receive money to attend.

As such, government officials must make arbitrary decisions as to the information they release to journalists, rather than relying on laws that classify government information. CCIM encourages ministries to codify a procedure for speaking with journalists and to hire press officers.

Low wages, poverty, and bribery

Bribes remain commonplace in Cambodia despite improvement in other aspects of the media. With most journalists earning extremely low salaries – reportedly as low as \$6 per story for

freelancers – reporters regularly blackmail, coerce, or request favors for positive coverage or take payments to attend press conferences.

Several interviewees also noted that journalists receive little respect in Cambodia, with many Cambodians ranking journalism low on the hierarchy of professions. CCIM encourages media outlets to raise journalists' salaries to establish the field as a respected, middle-class profession like in developed countries.

Underdeveloped, but progressing, market

The media market in Cambodia remains small and underdeveloped, a symptom of poverty in the country. With 35% of Cambodians earning under \$1 a day in 2008, according to government statistics, local buyers cannot afford newspapers, meaning advertisers see little point to buying advertising space. Political sponsorship, therefore, is one of few options for newspapers to survive.

However, advertising in Cambodia has developed in recent years. From 2006 to 2007, the total number of TV and print advertisements aired grew 18%, followed by 6% growth in 2008.² The trend towards advertising rather than political affiliation may free up the media to speak on political issues, though at the same time, media outlets could feel obliged to report favorably on their advertisers.

Radio and TV are the medium of choice for most Cambodians. Of 2,000 respondents surveyed by the International Republican Institute in 2008, 51% claimed radio was their primary source of information, and 37% said TV. Only 1% reported reading

² Laurent Notin, "The Media Situation in Cambodia, 2008" (lecture, Royal University of Phnom Penh, Cambodia, October 10, 2008).



A very common news footage shown on TV news programs is the distribution of “gifts” to the villagers by government officials.

newspapers and 0.2% reported the Internet as their primary information sources, with both mediums restricted to wealthier urban Cambodians.³

The rapid growth of advertising in print would suggest the newspapers and magazines are expanding, but print media actually remain sidelined

and continue to embrace clear-cut political affiliations to secure funding. In 2007, spending on TV advertising spots totaled 415,464 worth \$70.5 million, compared with only 24,931 print spots worth \$6.2 million.⁴

Threats and Intimidation

Most interviews suggest Cambodia, on paper, has a moderately democratic media with somewhat liberal press laws compared to other countries in Southeast Asia. However, threats and intimidation -- in the form of physical threats, killings, threats against jobs or livelihoods, and the manipulation of stories through money and political connections – hamper the development of Cambodia’s media into a truly free and fair press. CCIM is particularly concerned at the unsolved murder of opposition journalist Khim Sambo leading up to the July 2008 election. Sambo, who wrote about land evictions and corruption for opposition newspaper Moneaseka Khmer, was gunned down in broad daylight on a crowded street near Phnom Penh’s Olympic Stadium along with his son. It is likely deceased police chief Hok Lundy ordered the killing as retribution to Sambo’s

³ International Republican Institute. “Survey of Cambodian Public Opinion,” February 2008.

⁴ Laurent Notin, “The Media Situation in Cambodia, 2008” (lecture, Royal University of Phnom Penh, Cambodia, October 10, 2008).

coverage of police intimidation towards border casinos.⁵

As of May 2009, no one has been charged despite help from the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Such impunity has been a pattern in Cambodia. Of 12 journalists killed in Cambodia since 1992, none of the killers have been brought to justice.

Professionalism or nationalism?

The border dispute between Cambodia and Thailand in Preah Vihear, which began in July 2008, shed light on the tendencies of reporters in times of crisis. TV, print, newspaper, and even Internet sources all published news overwhelmingly favorable to the Cambodian government and the CPP. Whether these outlets were government- or opposition-affiliated had little relevance.

Cambodian reporters reporting for foreign media sources, however, overwhelmingly published content more neutral in tone and more analytical than their local counterparts.

Many journalists interviewed argued that nationalism is an honorable quality, and that professional ethics can be set aside during times of national crisis.

CCIM is concerned of the tendency of many journalists to run stories with biased, nationalistic content during events like the Preah Vihear crisis. CCIM urges media trainers and editors to emphasize factual, nonbiased information in all circumstances, whether or not they feel national sovereignty is at stake.

⁵ 4. Vincent MacIsaac, "In cold blood," *South China Morning Post*, October 1, 2008.

Internet censorship

In 2009, at the time of writing this report, Cambodia has become the last domino to fall in a continent-wide censorship crackdown around Asia. This is partially due to the rapid proliferation of the Internet around Asia since 2000, which has shown to be a tool for anti-government dissidents and protestors to instantly disseminate information in China, Burma, Thailand, Vietnam and Malaysia.⁶

One of the internet shops in Phnom Penh with regular customers



CCIM is especially concerned after the Ministry of Information issued a ban on reahu.net, a website depicting nude and semi-nude apsara dancers. This ban comes despite Cambodia's low Internet penetration rate of only 0.48 percent, or 70,000 users out of a population of 14 million, meaning the photos not reaching a wide audience. Cambodia's Internet penetration rate is the lowest in Asia.

The ban on pornographic websites undoubtedly has potential to spill into political speech.

As Cambodia establishes closer relations with China, a country known for its draconian control of the Internet through its "Great Firewall of China," there is no doubt that the countries will work together on IT and Internet-related issues. Burma, which

⁶ Dietz, Bob and Shawn W. Crispin. *Media Freedoms Stall as China Sets the Course* (from *Attacks on the Press*, 2008). Committee to Protect Journalists (<http://cpj.org/2009/02/media-freedom-china.php>), 2008.

maintains a strong relationship with China, has sent officials to China for IT training and has used China's expertise to launch denial-of-service attacks against anti-government websites in Norway. Vietnam has also taken on China's censorship expertise, setting up its own firewall to filter information critical of the government.⁷

⁷ Cain, Geoffrey. "The Cyber-Empire Strikes Back," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, March 2009.

Recommendations

CCIM recommends the following reforms for the Cambodian media.

For media practitioners

1. Hold regular trainings for journalists, actively checking their knowledge and application of professional ethics when reporting.
2. Raise journalists' pay to livable standards so they are less likely to resort to taking kickbacks for favorable reportage.
3. Work closely with journalism associations, training centers, and academic departments to check on the quality and accuracy of reporting.
4. Establish an independent umbrella institution to aid newspapers, magazines, and broadcasting stations with marketing, typically a shortfall among media outlets.

For the government

1. Repeal the 2009 ban on pornographic websites, including the controversial reahu.net, to protect free online media, and to foster the expansion of Khmer-language media to the Internet.
2. Pass a freedom of information law – a basic law characteristic of any democracy – that sets guidelines for government officials disclosing documents not deemed confidential by the state.
3. Government officials should demonstrate the willingness and obligation—characteristic of any functioning democracy—to speak with reporters and release information not deemed state secrets under Cambodian law.

4. Repeal the defamation and disinformation law in Cambodia's criminal code, amending the civil Press Law for defamation and libel.
5. Abolish Article 12 of the Press Law, which is often misused by the government. Article 12 refers to threats to national security and political stability, and are vaguely termed.
6. Establish a neutral, transparent process for licensing radio and television in accordance with international standards.
7. Dedicate more resources to investigating the murders of journalists in Cambodia, all of which remain unsolved.
8. Every government ministry should set aside resources to hire an official spokesman or media relations director whose full-time job is speaking to the press.

For NGOs and donors

1. Actively promote press freedom as integral to democracy, regardless of the focus of NGOs.
2. Hold the government accountable to ensuring press freedoms, investigating murders and threats against reporters, and maintaining liberal press laws as a stipulation to donor aid.
3. Seek out collaboration and communication with groups advocating freedom of the press, checking on their concerns and programs regularly.
4. Urge the government to repeal short-sighted laws and amendments mentioned in the previous section.
5. Spearhead the formation of an umbrella association to protect and promote media freedoms in Cambodia.

Background Literature

This report is only a summary and analysis of the current media environment in Cambodia, best supplemented with other literature. For the intensive media researcher, CCIM recommends the following:

Books

Gan, Steven, and James Gomez, et al, eds. *Asian Cyberactivism: Freedom of Expression and Media Censorship*. Bangkok: Friedrich Naumann Foundation, 2004.

With 18 essays spanning cyber-censorship issues around Asia, the writers paint a portrait of a continent increasingly turning to the Internet for democratic struggle. While only one essay discusses Cambodia, this compilation offers a fresh regional context for where Cambodia sits and where it's headed with regard to Internet censorship.

Balgos, Cecil, ed. *Across the Border: Southeast Asian Chronicles*. Bangkok: Southeast Asian Press Alliance, 2005.

These essays were written by various journalism fellows at SEAPA between 2002 and 2004, with an excellent piece on the far-reaching power of radio in Cambodia.

Mehta, Harish C. *Cambodia Silenced: The Press under Six Regimes*. Bangkok: White Lotus Press, 1997.

Mehta, a biographer of Hun Sen and Norodom Ranarridh, has written the most in-depth (and only) book about the history of the Cambodian media. Despite his reported personal ties with Sen and Ranarridh, this book is neutral and conveys the repeated curtailing of press freedoms since French colonial times. Having been published in 1997, however, his writings are somewhat

dated.

Mendel, Toby. *Freedom of Information: A Comparative Legal Survey*. New Delhi: UNESCO, 2003.

This book examines freedom of information laws from around the world, and although Cambodia is not included, it lays detailed groundwork for freedom of information laws in the future. CCIM advocates the establishment of such a law that would require government officials to disclose information to the media.

Puy, Kea. *Radio Profile in Cambodia*, Reahoo Publishing, 2007. With support from the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, this is the most detailed record of radio stations and broadcasting laws in Cambodia.

Reports

Southeast Asian Press Alliance. *Reporting Free Expression Violations in Southeast Asia: A Manual*, 2005.

This handbook details the safest steps of reporting violations against media freedoms. It also contains press laws from every country in Southeast Asia, analyzing their shortfalls and effectiveness in various countries.

Journalism and Media Studies Centre at The University of Hong Kong, et al. *Southeast Asia Media Defence Litigation Conference*, 2007.

The University of Hong Kong compiled this handbook from its media law conference in 2007. Its Cambodia Country Report, written by Michael Fowler, contains a highly detailed history of press laws in Cambodia, especially after UNTAC.

LICADHO. *Reading Between the Lines: How Politics, Money, and Fear Control Cambodia's Media*, 2008.

LICADHO's report focuses on human rights abuses against journalists, documenting every journalist killed since 1994. It also provides succinct summaries of the press law and history, making it a worthwhile primer to anyone researching the Cambodian media.

Dietz, Bob and Shawn W. Crispin. *Media Freedoms Stall as China Sets the Course* (from *Attacks on the Press*, 2008). Committee to Protect Journalists (<http://cpj.org/2009/02/media-freedom-china.php>), 2008.

The Committee to Protect Journalists puts Cambodia's press situation into a regional context, arguing that China is pushing Southeast Asia away from democracy and initiating a media clampdown. Critical, but fair, it rarely mentions Cambodia but offers a convincing policy analysis of the press.

Chhay, Sohal and Steven Pak. *Safe Sex and the Media in Southeast Asia: Sex Without Substance*, 2004, AIDS Society of the Philippines.

This report examines the media's approach to sex, arguing that journalists rarely report effectively on safe sex issues. It explains HIV and sex in a regional context.

Jarvis, Helen, and Peter Arfanis, et al. *Publishing in Cambodia*. Center for Khmer Studies, 2006.

Jarvis and Arfanis paint a detailed history of publishing in Cambodia, then explain the process by which publishing is regulated. Cambodia sports a small publishing community, meaning the media remains underdeveloped and access to Khmer-language sources is somewhat rare.

History: A Troubled Media

Throughout Cambodian history, the media have rarely been independent, but have rather served as propaganda tools for successive regimes. Media laws, at least before the 1995 Press Law was passed, have historically been draconian and media outlets have typically been owned by government figures.

Abuses of media freedoms stretch to colonial times under France, but reached heights under King-Father Norodom Sihanouk's Sangkum Reastr Niyum regime in the 1960s, Lon Nol's military regime between 1969 and 1975, the Maoist Khmer Rouge regime between 1975 and 1979, and the Vietnam-backed government from 1980 to 1991.

When comparing current media freedoms to those of the past, CCIM recognizes the progress and reforms made since 1993, but urges media practitioners to continue liberalizing press laws and to uphold higher professional standards.

1920-1953: Colonialism Fosters the Arts, Literature

The press under French rule was marked by flourishing literary, cultural, and arts reporting, but few freedoms in the political arena. *Kampuchea Soriya*, published by the Buddhist Institute, spearheaded Cambodia's 1920s cultural renaissance and was allowed by French authorities to continue being published unscathed.

After the first Khmer-language newspaper, *Nagara Vatta*, reached widespread popularity with a print run of 5,000 copies in the 1940s, the paper became nationalistic and critical of the French government. It was also anti-Vietnamese in several articles. French authorities closed the paper down after the editors led an anti-French demonstration in 1942.

Meanwhile, French authorities maintained a tight grip on the radio, including the government-run Radio Diffusion Nationale Khmer (RNK). Electronic media generally were not nationalistic or anti-French during this period, though print media were targeted by authorities.

Son Ngoc Thanh, a former editor of *Nagara Vatta* and later the first prime minister of Cambodia, returned from exile in Japan in 1942 to start the *Khmer Krok* newspaper. After successive Japanese and French occupation, Cambodia gained partial independence in 1953 and full independence in 1954.

1953 – 1970: Sihanouk’s Personality Cult

The period directly after independence saw a burgeoning media market, with at least 13 daily newspapers and 2 monthly magazines.

Yet the press throughout the 1950s and 1960s, despite flourishing in numbers, was subjected to wide-reaching crackdowns and censorship against politically controversial material. According to several scholars, the tight media environment came as Prince Norodom Sihanouk used the media to build a personality cult during his Sangkum Reastyum regime.

The media, in response, self-censored its material after the jailing of several journalists. Those included Saloth Chhay and Khieu Samphan, two reporters with connections to the Khmer Rouge regime.

As Prince Sihanouk delved into a foreign policy of isolation during the 1960s – fearing Cambodia would be pulled into the war between the U.S. and Vietnam – foreign journalists faced harassment. In 1965, he banned all Western journalists and accused Bernard Krisher of *Newsweek* of insulting the Queen,

though the ban was not fully enforced.

In 1966, Cambodian television began broadcasting under strict government control.

1970-1975: Lon Nol's military regime

Lon Nol's military *coup d'état* against Prince Sihanouk in 1970 signaled even more vicious curtailings of the press as more journalists were jailed.

Koh Santepheap, *Nokor Thom*, and *Khmer Ekareach* all withheld statements on the coup for a day to observe the outcome, after which they endorsed editorial policies that favored Lon Nol.

Yet despite a press backing Lon Nol, the Ministry of Information still began censoring the press in 1970. Several newspapers, including *Koh Santepheap*, Cambodia's largest daily newspaper, protested by printing blank spaces, though the protests were short-lived under authoritarian rule.

Cambodia's new press law in 1972 forbade damaging the "honor of a person" and therefore silenced stories on corruption. According to scholars, Lon Nol's regime was rife with corruption and some newspapers openly exposed it.

Radio and TV media remained under strict government control, with several stations owned directly by the Ministry of Information. In 1972, National Radio of Cambodia only replayed old broadcasts of musicals and dramas, stopping new material under fears of breaking the press law.

1975-1979: The Khmer Rouge

With nearly all journalists executed under the communist Khmer

Rouge regime, the media quickly became a propaganda tool. Magazines like *Yuvachun Nung Yuvunarie Padewat* (Boys and Girls of the Revolution) and *Tung Padewat* (Revolutionary Flag) published revolutionary poetry and communist policies for younger audiences.

Foreign journalists were banned with few exceptions. One foreign photographer was allegedly executed under orders of Pol Pot, though the circumstances of his death remain murky, according to some reports.

The Khmer Rouge took advantage of the wide-reaching nature of radio when much of the population couldn't read print media. RNK broadcasted communist policies and memorable farmers' songs that inundated the countryside with revolutionary material. Yet with the genocide killing off literate people knowledgeable in reporting, propaganda, and broadcasting equipment, radio broadcasting became difficult and were regularly interrupted.

1979-1992: Vietnamese Influence

The Vietnamese army took Phnom Penh from the Khmer Rouge in 1979, and radio and TV broadcasting quickly came under control of the new communist government. The government started its own state news agency, Sarpordamean Kampuchea (SPK).

The government's propaganda newspaper, *Kampuchea*, saw a monthly print run of 50,000 and was distributed for free. That magazine signified the revival of print media in Cambodia after the Khmer Rouge destroyed the profession.

Cambodia remained closed to the outside world under communist rule and foreign press were generally prohibited, with most foreign reporters relying on wire reports from Bangkok and Hong

Kong. The government also banned advertising because it was a form of capitalism, though Hun Sen repealed this ban in 1987.

1992-1998: UNTAC Loosens the Media Grip

Radio UNTAC brought new media freedoms to Cambodia after it began broadcasting in 1992. In an effort to reach all of Cambodia with reportage on the elections and human rights, the UN gave away nearly 400,000 radios.

Print media, however, remained under tight government control, with newspapers often reporting favorably on the ruling party. The Khmer Journalists Association (KJA) was established in 1993 after UNTAC left Cambodia. The organization was the first in Phnom Penh to advocate freedom of the press and decry harassment of journalists. Given it criticized the CPP, pro-ruling party newspapers distanced themselves from the group and it eventually closed.

In 1995, the Press Law was passed despite concerns from international donors about its criminal provisions for libel. Several journalists were killed during this period. 1994 was Cambodia's bloodiest year, with three journalists killed. In 1996 and 1997, five more journalists were killed, four during a grenade attack at a 1997 political rally.

Since 1992, 23 journalists have been killed and all deaths remain unsolved.

TV and radio stations have also faced regular harassment and political in-fighting during this period. During the 1997 coup d'état, CPP forces seized all Funcinpec-affiliated broadcast stations. Several other opposition-affiliated stations have been subject to threats or closure over politically controversial material.

Cambodia's Press Laws: Liberal on Paper, Authoritarian in Practice

The Press Law of 1995 was passed under international donor pressure to replace the 1980s socialist press law under the State of Cambodia.

While the law is relatively liberal compared to other laws in Southeast Asia, in practice government officials regularly ignore its provisions or use its vague terminology to intimidate dissidents.

CCIM is particularly concerned about article 12 of the press law, which states “the press shall not publish or reproduce any information which may affect national security or political stability.” Both “national security” and “political stability” are not defined.

The Press Law also has several vague provisions, such as forbidding the publications of false information that “humiliates ... national institutions” and anything that “affects the good customs of society” such as “curse words.”

Journalists can also face criminal charges for defamation and misinformation under article 63 of the 1992 UNTAC Criminal Code. Before 2006, this could include prison time, but this article was amended to only be punishable with fines. CCIM urges the government to remove this article completely, allowing the civil Press Law to govern defamation-related disputes.

CCIM is also concerned that no law exists to cover the licensing of broadcasting media, and licensing often following arbitrary decision of the Ministry of Information. The result is that, with Cambodia's low literacy rate meaning much of the population relies on radio and TV, the ruling party has maintained a tight grip

on broadcasted media. Yet since 1995, the government has promised it would pass a law on broadcast licensing.

CCIM praises the law, however, for guaranteeing journalists access to government information, though this provision is routinely ignored in practice. Access to government information is highly controlled, with reporters not allowed to enter the National Assembly without permission, and with government officials not being allowed to talk about corruption.

Media Profiles: Journalists

Khut Sokhoeurn, Women's Media Centre

After studying English at Build Bright University, Khut Sokhoeurn volunteered as a reporter at the Women's Media Centre, 102 FM, where a journalism training course introduced him to the field. In 2006, when finished with the training, he became a full-time reporter at Radio Station 102.

Sokhoeurn specializes in reporting on politics. He first became known for reporting on the controversial dismissals of Funcinpec members from government posts in 2006.

Now he is producer of *The Truth*, a popular radio show on the Khmer Rouge tribunal. *The Truth* has been aired since 2006 and has covered ECCC court procedures and the history of the Khmer Rouge regime.

In 2007, he was trained on Khmer Rouge trial reporting at Club of Cambodian Journalists and later was ranked third in the Khmer Rouge writing competition hosted by the same group.

He then toured Munich, Nuremberg, and Berlin in Germany for further training, after which he spent 3 months at the Royal University of Judicial Professionals in Phnom Penh. He was lately selected by the Women's Media Centre to join a climate change meeting organized by the United Nations for 15 days to Poznan, Poland.

Select Commentary: The ethical journalist

“Reporters are people who write what they see, but they must also be under the control of law in the country.”

“I don't know if my stories take high risks, so I try to balance it by interviewing sources from all sides. If it's subjective, it'll be a risk to you as a reporter.”

“What devalues reporters is extorting money from others, which makes other journalists lose face. They should have professionalism and must not take bribes from other people.”

“Journalists have to report with balance and the truth but not incitement.”

“When I go reporting in provinces, I don't have the same difficulties as other reporters do. I have my way to talk to the people. I tell them that I am really a messenger- so whatever they say will reach the ears of millions.”

Men Kimseng, Voice of America

From 1997 to 1998, Men Kimseng studied journalism, international relations and communications in Paris. Upon returning to Phnom Penh, he worked for the Rasmei Kampuchea newspaper from 1998 to 1999, and then Agence France-Presse (AFP) until 2002.

Then, he spent 4 years working as a communication officer at United Nations of Development Programme (UNDP) until he accepted a job in Washington, DC as reporter for the English-language Voice of America (VOA).

Select Commentary: Intimidation and silence in the Media

Which media outlets in Cambodia do you feel are freer than others?

It depends. Although Cambodia's press is free [compared to the

rest of] Southeast Asia, however, there is less freedom in TV due to much censorship. But in general, print media has its freedom too, yet it has a limit since some powerful people can't be criticized in newspapers and journalists can be given legal retribution.

Some radio stations have freedom but only for VOA, RFA, RFI, who have complete freedom. Some radio stations must get a green light from the government who might give or might not give the license depending on if the radio will serve the government.

Through your observations, how has the Cambodian media situation developed from the past until now?

The evolution is moving forward, but the way it goes is slow, not as quickly as we want ... it sometimes even takes a few steps back. After 1993, there have been threats and killings, but now people who have problems with the media use the court to punish journalists for what they write. However, it's much better than killing the journalists. That's why, as I see it, it's not complete freedom.

If we favor any party, and take the advantage of attacking another party, it's not professionalism.

Does today's salary make most of the journalists independent from bias?

If we talk about the market, Rasmei Kampuchea, Koh Santepheap, Kampuchea Thmey provide salaries good enough for journalists to make ends meet. Of course, as we know, journalists can't be rich.

If we take the salary factor as the measure of the independence or dependence, I do not agree completely because some journalists

who work for small newspapers think no matter how much they are given, they are used to extorting other peoples' money.

Is it easy for journalists to get jobs here? Why?

For journalists, to get a job, don't look at reporting, communication or public relations. There are many organizations that need but mostly or generally, they look for two to three jobs to do.

When you were a reporter, did you have only one job? And what area did you usually report on?

When I had one job, I did one job. I covered politics, NGOs, international organizations. And when I worked for AFP, I covered everything that had an international angle.

During your reporting, have you experienced threats or intimidations?

No. I followed professionalism so I stayed safe and sound.

What tips do you have for the Cambodian journalists who might get threats or intimidations from their reporting?

Usually, people who threaten us are afraid of us—it shows their cowardly action by having journalists killed since they dare not use the formal court system to punish us for what we talk about them in newspapers.

Dr. Judith Clarke, Hong Kong Baptist University

Clarke started her journalism career as a news reporter with the local government station Radio Hong Kong in 1980 after having finished her master's degree in Asian studies. Because she wanted

to work more broadly across Asia, in 1981 she became a researcher with *AsiaWeek*, a Hong Kong-based magazine that covered the entire region.

Clarke was soon promoted to copy editor and then general editor. She wanted to be a reporter at the point, and after doing well on a two-week reporting trip to Sri Lanka in 1984, she was posted to Bangkok in 1985 to cover Indochina.

At that time, it was very difficult for non-Soviet-bloc nationals to get into Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos, and the only Khmers she had direct access to were the resistance groups, who lived in Bangkok, and the hundreds of thousands of refugees who lived in Thai border camps. She had to wait until early 1986 before getting her first visa to Phnom Penh. She was invited to go along with a large group of western journalists, to cover the Indochinese foreign ministers' meeting there.

After reporting in Phnom Penh a few more years, she became chief correspondent for *AsiaWeek* and later senior editor in charge of China and Indochina coverage. She left in 1990 to become a journalism lecturer at Hong Kong Baptist University, where she has stayed ever since.

Clarke has returned to Cambodia several times on research projects to observe the development of the media, the longest trips being in 1994 and 2005.

Commentary: The evolution of print media

“Cambodians had never experienced a free press before 1991 -- except those who lived abroad -- but they took to it enthusiastically around the time of the first election in 1993.” I visited many newspapers and broadcasters in 1994, and their staff came from all sorts of backgrounds -- 1960s Sihanouk

media, 1970s Khmer Republic media, 1980s Soviet-style media and of course returnees from other countries. They were joined also by many who had had jobs with UNTAC.

“These journalists were very serious and very capable, and many joined training courses offered by UNESCO and others. However, rambunctious press freedom always risks upsetting people, and the career became a dangerous one because of the bitter politics of the time.”

“Another big problem for the emerging media was the lack of a market in Cambodia. Most Khmers were too poor to buy newspapers and advertisers saw no point in buying media space, so political sponsorship was often the only way to survive financially. However, as politics has become less polarized and the market has improved, a number of professional publications have become established, and they have been able to attract advertising to support themselves.”

“It's heartening to see that opposition voices are still heard in the media, both in the two opposition papers that remain and in several radio stations which are more critical of the government.”

“The weakest point in the Cambodian media must be the television news, which conforms to what we call "protocol" news in academia, that is, it only covers the daily doings of the leaders. This is boring and uninformative, and it's time the government loosened up on news content.”

“One apparent drawback for Cambodian journalists is that the country lags the rest of Asia badly in technology, but this may in fact be an advantage in a way because the traditional media are not suffering from the competition of the Internet as they are in richer countries.”

Khiev Kola, founder, *Deum Ampil*

He first started to be a reporter in 1986 at “Kampuchea,” a government-affiliated propaganda magazine. The magazine covered everything about the activities of the government and diplomatic relationships with other communist countries. From 1991 to 1993, he was a translator for UNTAC. After 1993, he became a reporter for SKP, now known as Agence Kampuchea-Press (AKP). His reporting specializes in social matters, culture, and politics.

In 1995, he was allegedly ordered to close his English class because he used a controversial Phnom Penh Post news article to teach his students English. The article was titled “The government destroyed forests.”

From 1995 to 1997, he wrote about 20 editorials in Rasmei Kampuchea newspaper. Those were about social matters, politics and his outspoken comments on the state of Cambodia at that time.

In 1995, he worked as a translator and reporter for Popular Magazine founded by Brach Sim, a former AKP reporter. He reported only on film stars' lifestyles for the magazine. From late 1997-2002, he reported for South China Morning Post and the English-language Voice of America.

In 2005, Charles Ray, former US ambassador to Cambodia, invited him to visit the US for 30 days, where he underwent a training course in investigative journalism. From 2002 to 2008, he worked for Deutsche Presse Agentur (DPA), the German press agency.

On December 19, 2006, he founded *Deum Ampil*, a small newspaper, writing political commentaries.

Commentary: The challenges of reporting in Cambodia

“What journalists like me wanted before was just to interview an important person. If they allow, it’s a blessing.”

“But some journalists are not good. They call someone whom they write about to extort money.”

“I’ve received countless threats and intimidation from groups of people who only thought about their own benefits rather than the development of the country. We need real reform, not just spoken reform.”

“There are some difficulties local Cambodian journalists face now: first, low salaries and second, low consideration [being treated respectfully as a journalist]. These have prevented them from being independent. The weak point is that they often use alcohol before writing... it's easy for them to become hostile with each other. The other weak point is that our local newspapers are dominated by different parties.”

“Most are nationalists. I really praise them for their nationalism or even patriotism, because the different newspapers dominated by different political parties publish the same [nationalistic] content on the same day!”

Pen Samithy (pen name “Pen Pheing”), *Rasmei Kampuchea*

In 1981, Samithy reported for *Phnom Penh*, the first weekly newspaper established after the Khmer Rouge regime ended. It was under control of the Kampuchean People’s Revolutionary Party (PRPK), now known as the CPP.

From 1986 to 1988, he studied political science in Vietnam. After returning to Cambodia in 1988, he was promoted to editor of *Phnom Penh*.

From 1993 to 2009, he was editor-in-chief under the pen name “Pen Pheing” in *Rasmei Kampuchea*. He said that in the past, Cambodian journalists had a habit of using their pen names in their articles because of fear of reprisals. He claimed he hoped to start using his real name, but “Pen Pheing” had already become a too familiar name for readers.

Commentary: Improvements in the media environment

“Now the media situation is much better than before—because we have better habits and people can use legal means to solve problems. The stereotype that to be a journalist means being jailed is fading away now.”

“Now, the social issues and corruption stories in my newspaper do sell out every day. And now many Cambodians have changed their perspective [to be more international]—they are interested in the US election and the global financial [crisis] as well.”

“In the past, journalists were professors or writers who loved writing about everything. They were trained in journalism like people now. If we use today’s standard to measure their professionalism, it’s clear they did not have it at all.”

“In order for journalists to avoid problems in life, first they've got to have courage. Secondly, if they write a story that might affect one’s power, they have to revise it and recorrect it, double-check and rewrite it.”

Brach Sim, editor-in-chief, *Brocheabrey*

Now editor-in-chief at one of the most popular magazines in Cambodia, *Brocheabrey*, Brach Sim began his career as a journalist for SPK, the government news agency now known as AKP (Agence Kampuchea-Presse). Until 1993, he left SKP and became a deputy editor-in-chief at *Rasmei Kampuchea* newspaper, now one of the leading Khmer newspapers in Cambodia.

When he started to work for *Rasmei Kampuchea*, he was sent to Thailand along with other 26 Cambodians, and was responsible for getting the newspaper published there for its better printing quality. Newspapers were sent to Cambodia by air from Thailand.

Around 1988, he was sent to attend a 3-month journalism course at an international institute at Budapest, Hungary. In 2002, he founded Club of Cambodian Journalists (CCJ) along with Pen Samithi, Reach Sambath, Ker Munthith and Soy Sopheap and has been Secretary General of CCJ since.

He said that his life is divided into two important phases: first, being a journalist under a communist regime and then as an editor with freedom and a larger media market.

Commentary: Media freedom in a regional perspective

“Usually at that time [in the past], journalists did not go to school to become journalists. With my experience and active participation in short training courses in seminars, workshops, I became a journalist.”

“I think, magazines in Cambodia have more freedom than other media outlets since we can say whatever we want to. This freedom of the media or expression is the fruit of democracy.”

“I read the report by Reporters Without Borders that ranks Cambodia 126 out of 173 countries in the world in the press freedom. We’re getting down but in Southeast Asia, we are third after Indonesia (first) and Thailand (second).”

“I notice that as a whole, the media in Cambodia has freedom, regardless of censorship or other controversial stories between the government and the media. But whatever it is, the freedom given is not enough. Most of TV stations are controlled and the TV stations themselves do not fulfill their responsibility to broadcast news. They are mostly entertainment-oriented.”

“The challenges the Cambodia media are facing are the limited access to the government information and the blocking of Cambodian authorities when journalists want to report on particular issues. CCJ is demanding a detailed explanation as to how much access journalists can have to information from the government. And all reporters do understand what national security is.”

“The strong points of the media today are that ... journalists are more professional by having balanced sources, quotes, features, comparisons. And more short training courses are provided to journalists every year. Besides, freedom of the media or expression is changed by the politics inside the country. The government, in a good way, has reformed a lot of things.”

“However, the weak points are the economic status of reporters. The news market is also a bit narrow. Low wages cause journalists to take bribes to support their families’ stomachs first. And inflation does make journalists’ life as hard as others or even worse than others. Furthermore, it seems that the voices from the opposition newspapers are weaker and weaker, not as strong as the periods from 1994 to 1997.”

Mam Sonando, Beehive Radio

After living in France for 30 years as a DJ, Mam Sonando came to Cambodia and later established in 1996 Beehive radio station, which he claims is one of the most popular radio stations in Cambodia with 1,000 listeners at peak hours.

Calling his own radio ‘nationalist radio channel’, Mam Sonando is both controversial and popular. In 1998, his radio station almost collapsed but following donations from alleged listeners, the radio broadcasted again.

He has been jailed twice. Firstly, he was accused of a sedative speech or an alleged incitement of anti-Thai riots in Phnom Penh in 2003 when the Thai embassy was destroyed and looted by the Cambodian demonstrators. In 2005, he was jailed for misinformation, broadcasting an interview with an activist who was critical of a new border treaty with Vietnam.

His radio station has sold airtime to many non-profit organizations to broadcast their own work and to two US-government funded broadcasters, Radio Free Asia and Voice of America.

Commentary: The media as watchdog or mad dog?

“The freedom of the media depends on the individual who wants to give value to the media itself. If you want to hear more in-depth of anything, you need the media to tell you.”

“Of course, now the (media) situation is much better than before, but right here in Cambodia, if we run stories that touch on a powerful person’s weak point, they have the right to imprison us.”

“I support Prime Minister Hun Sen nowadays because he has pushed improvements within the country but the society is deteriorating. He might have to work harder at controlling social issues within the country as well.”

“I’m happy to see radio competitions. The more come, the better it is. And, I think that the best way to encourage independence is to privatize radio stations.”

H.E. Buth Bovuth, Director General, General Department of Information and Broadcasting, Minister of Information

From 1980 to 1983, he was a reporter for SPK which is now AKP. He usually reported on politics and business in Cambodia. In 1985 he became a commentator of the domestic news for SPK. In 1987, the ruling government promoted him to be a deputy news chief for SPK.

In 1989, he became a deputy director at SPK which at that time published a magazine called *Kampuchea*, propaganda for the then-ruling government (Cambodian People’s Party) and published in three languages: English, French and Khmer.

Now his responsibility as a Director General of General Department of Information and Broadcasting is to monitor the media for alleged accuracy in facts.

Commentary: Media regulations

“Our press law is better than others because it prevents news that affects the social stability of the country and prevents immoral content [from being published].”

“I think Internet regulations in Cambodia are better than our neighboring countries. About 100 Cable TVs broadcast in

Cambodia receive no censorship at all since we do not monitor them.”

“Our country needs stability and neat management, and especially the press laws are not made by simple people but experts from the government and NGOs.”

“Newspapers in Cambodia hardly make money—only a few of them do. They do not print regularly either. But, I think, they will have a competition with the Internet which is a new media for future generations.”

“The defamation law has been decriminalized but we still have criminalized misinformation, and journalists must be professional to avoid being charged.”

“My tips for journalists to protect themselves are for them to find out more about press law, and also professionalism because law in general is a trap which requires us to respect and understand it.”

Meas Kimsuon, director, Media Training Centre

Trained as a medical doctor, Meas Kimsuon had an interest in journalism. He has been a director of Media Training Centre at the Ministry of Information since 2006. He is responsible for designing curriculum about print, TV, radio and new media. His department has provided 4 trainings from 2006 to 2009 and he usually invites reporters from provinces. The trainings are sponsored by the UNESCO and the Asia-Pacific Institute of Broadcasting Development.

Commentary: Challenges in media training

“We do not have enough teachers to train and we are in bad need of media consultants now. We also have a plan to contact schools

of journalism abroad for cooperation.”

Moeurn Chhean Narridh, media trainer

First receiving journalism training from UNTAC, Narridh started his career in 1992 at the Phnom Penh Post. He has studied journalism in Thailand, Laos, Philippines, Sweden, and the US. After he left the Phnom Penh Post, Narridh worked as a media trainer for Internews, an international media training NGO that left Cambodia in 2008. He is especially known for reporting on health-care and social issues, like HIV/Aids.

Commentary: The past versus now

“At that time, it was difficult reporting because the internet was not widely available—just to find some small background information was tough when we needed to interview someone. And to ask for an interview was quite hard.”

“Even after the 1993 democratic election, Cambodia was still influenced by a high rate of bureaucracy, so some high-ranking officials were not easy to contact for interviews-- they did not think that it was their responsibility to talk to journalists—they thought it was an individual choice whether to talk or not.”

“We at that time had a press law that reporters could get a response from the government official in 30 days but the law did not issue punishment/had a loophole that the government could get a chance not to reply--- the other problem is culture of impunity -- perpetrators have not been arrested for killing the journalists—so it causes a concern for all Cambodian journalists due to the culture of impunity in Cambodia.”

“Now the media is much better than before--- because most of the officials have started to cooperate with us journalists --- and other

facilities like the internet have eased our lives and work.”

“The improvement I’ve noticed is that first the understanding of democracy and freedom of press among the Cambodian government officials has increased. And second, our cooperation with the officials is getting better because our sources start to trust—credibility—and also because journalists have performed much more professionally – write without bias, respect certain ethics.”

Commentary: Threats against reporters

“There are many journalists from different media outlets who have received threats. For example, a reporter from one radio program reported on an NGO report about illegal logging—in fact, as a journalist, we must not believe the report but verify it for facts.”

“We have to perform our career professionally and before we report on sensitive news that affects our safety, we must cooperate with human rights organizations by going to the scene along with them. Moreover, we must see whether the piece of news will take our lives or not.”

“If the story affects our safety, maybe we have to give it up or if it’s very important, we should turn it to the international press—give it to them. In the other way, if 5 newspapers publish the same story at the same time, it reduces risk toward the reporters.”

Ung Chan Sophea, *Cambodge Soir* and Radio France International

Ung reports for *Cambodge Soir*, a French-language newspaper in Cambodia, and as a reporter for Radio France International. Sophea studied French at the Royal University of Phnom Penh

and, after mastering the language, took a 2-year journalism training course at the university.

Her coverage report is usually on social and political news. In 2007, she was trained journalism in Thailand for a month through a journalism program at the Indochina Media Memorial Foundation. In 2008 she was awarded for her work in investigative journalism at a ceremony organized by the US embassy and the club of Cambodian journalist.

Commentary: Being female in a male-dominated profession

“I was discriminated against while reporting on politics by both male journalists and the authorities ... They said I should report entertainment or social news which are more suitable for women, but not political news.”

“Now I have seen an improvement of freedom of expression. Journalists can get some reaction or news from the government officials. They release some news and they dare answer our questions that they had never done before, especially in the last few years.”

“I see some journalists take it [bribes] because they need to support their families. Media institutions should give more suitable salaries to journalists so they can write balanced and neutral news.”

Soy Sopheap, Cambodian Television Network (CTN)

Soy Sopheap has been a TV reporter for CTN since 2004. Before that, he was a reporter for Kyodo, an English-language service in Japan. He is known for his outspoken views and many claim he gives favorable coverage to the government.

Most recently, Sopheap mediated between Prince Norodom Rannaridh and Prime Minister Hun Sen in 2008, which prompted debates among journalists about whether they should take part in political events.

Commentary: Nationalism in reporting

"To me, I don't care about others who say that I support the government, but I think about my country and I want to help as much as I can to make it better."

"In the Preah Vihear conflict, I do my best [reporting] and I am proud to be born as Khmer."

"If journalists take the money from the conference or meeting, they are not wrong. Journalists can take the money if those organizers volunteer to give to journalists. It's fine because those journalists do not threaten or extort someone for money."

"Whoever says whatever about these policies, only the prime minister can make Cambodia change. When I see a good leader, I praise the leader."

Sin Sophat, TV5

Sin Sophat had worked as a military reporter for radio from 1979 – 1993, and became known for his coverage of the war between the government and the Khmer Rouge.

He is now manager of TV5 and is known for offering favorable coverage to the military. At TV5, all controversial content is screened by him before broadcasting, he said, admitting that his priority coverage goes to the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces (RCAF).

Sophat has attended trainings in Singapore and Vietnam, at one point being taught by Khieu Kanharith, now the Minister of Information.

Commentary: Being in the field

“Some journalists are called 6-legged journalists because they do not go and report the news. In fact, they sit at a table and write the news. Journalists should go in deep to write the news and they should make friends with their sources, not enemies.”

“Journalism is now free because newspapers can criticize government. There is a huge broadcasting courage over the country. However, journalists should be held responsible for what they write or say.”

Ek Hong, FM102

After obtaining studying marketing at the National Institute of Management (now the National University of Management) and journalism at the Royal University of Phnom Penh, Hong volunteered as a reporter at the Women’s Media Centre.

In 2006, she became a producer, airing the show *Cheat Chea Sittrey* (“Being a Woman”), which focused on women reproductive health. Recently, she is working on two radio documentaries: *Getting to Know World Bank* and *Gender and Development*.

Commentary: Threats and responsibility in journalism

“There are not many stations that are balanced. Most stations are business-oriented and politically affiliated.”

“Most radio stations dare not air sensitive issues or negative information about the government.”

“If one wants to cover sensitive issue like corruption, they must be very accurate about what they are writing about. More than this, they must be balanced by trying to get information from both sides.”

“I have never received any threats from anyone because I’ve always tried to be accurate and balanced.”

“Threats are one of the biggest challenges makes journalists avoid reporting factual information.”

“If the government really has *chhanteak*, they should take those sensitive issues the journalists have covered into consideration and make changes to where it’s really inappropriate.”

“Self-censorship is not always bad. Sometimes, it’s also good to have self-censorship. Journalists should care both about their life and their country. They should balance the two well.”

“Government officials are the hardest sources to reach, especially for sensitive issues.”

Nguon Serath, Rasmei Kampuchea

Serath got his start as a translator for *Rasmei Kampuchea*, and after visiting Japan to see the media situation in the country in 1998, became a reporter for the same newspaper.

He is known for his reporting on elections, and was sent to Germany for a training course of the topic. He reported on the 2004 US election for *Rasmei Kampuchea*.

Serath obtained a master’s degree in Journalism from Ateneo de Manila University in the Philippines in 2009 and became an editor at *Rasmei Kampuchea*.

Commentary: Self-Censorship

“The media situation in Cambodia is better, though not much than before, as we see less threats and violence against the journalists. Reporting conditions have also improved as journalists can reach high ranking government officials and other politicians for interviews. However, journalists still find it difficult to get formal document from the government. And this lack of formal documents has a negative impact on the journalists’ investigative reporting as they can’t find appropriate data and enough evidence for their stories.”

“It’s generally said that by having self-censorship, journalists break ethical standards. But I think in Cambodia having self-censorship is not always wrong. We should instead think of individual situation. It should be stressed that when one has to balance between professionalism and life, a decision would be very hard to get rid of.”

“Self-censorship is not acceptable when it is made for one’s own benefits. In Cambodia, self-censorship usually happens to journalists who deal with soldiers and police officials.”

“Reporting of sensitive issues when it relates to all of society has improved a lot. However, most journalists are still afraid of reporting about individual’s misconduct because of three factors: first, journalists can’t get access to formal documents, second, journalists care about their lives, and third, journalists’ knowledge of their profession.”

“Journalists must respect their sources’ suggestion to not mention their identity. However, when journalists decide to not mention the sources’ identity, journalists can be lied to by the sources. Therefore, a journalist must double-check the information given

by the sources. By the way, not mentioning the sources' identity should be the last choice.”

“Compare with other Southeast Asian countries, Cambodia has better freedom of expression especially when the defamation law was withdrawn. Nonetheless, there is still another law which is about misinformation. In my opinion, all law regarding journalist imprisonment should be eliminated.”

“Journalists should not report something based on their feelings. Though they are angry with someone sometime, they shouldn't try to dig out even a small thing to worsen the person's reputation.”

“My comments to the next generation of journalists are: first, journalists must use the journalism power they have to do only good things. They must build credibility for their audience. Second, journalists should try to report more on usual issues and bring the voiceful to the voiceless and vice versa. Third, journalists should obtain more education. Fourth, they must try to adapt to different environments, and fifth they should be knowledgeable about the law, always double-check their news pieces and think about the impact of their stories.”

Media Education: Still Lacking, but Slowly Developing

Journalism education in Cambodia remains scarce since the 1990s, with few accredited universities offering courses in the subject. Though international donors have funded short-term training courses, more professional, baccalaureate-level training is still needed to strengthen journalism ethics.

CCIM advocates the establishment of an umbrella journalism association with a standardized code of ethics, a shortfall several interviewees expressed concern about.

Journalism education is slowly gaining ground in Cambodia, mostly with the help of international donors. The Department of Media and Communication at the Royal University of Phnom Penh (RUPP) is the only department that offers a four-year bachelor's degree in media in the country. Other NGOs and universities intend to reach the potential market for journalism training but still lack of funds and resources, as donors are focused on other issues like health-care, trafficking, and agriculture.

One newspaper, Cambodia News, has converted itself into a media training center which focused specifically on public relations officials. This is a much-needed contribution, regardless of the emphasis. The training of the public relation officers for the government and businesses would significantly strengthen the Cambodian media, since journalists regularly complain about a lack of access to government information.

However, interviewees from the government also claimed ministries provide training or attempt to provide training for media relations officials. The Media Training Center at the Ministry of Information is working on providing technical skills

for their staff in provincial radio and TV stations.

The economic crisis is prompting some donors to shorten or stop funding Cambodia's small media sector, according to several interviewees. Donors tend to focus on larger sectors such as agriculture when they must become more selective with their aid packages.

Other training centers have been forced to rely on their own bare-bone funds, hiring volunteers as donors focus on other issues. The Cambodia Institute for Media Studies was founded in 2008 after Internews, its predecessor, ended its projects in Cambodia. The Institute for Media Studies still does not have the main donor. The funding policy on journalism training tends to change its goal from funding the basic news writing training to specialized news reporting training.

Lacking funding, other training programs have instigated fees for their programs, often out of reach of most journalists who are paid \$6 a story, on average. The Club of Cambodian Journalists was reportedly the first to charge fees for its courses. The Department of Media and Communication at RUPP is also considering providing night classes for professional journalists.

Yet despite funding shortfalls, Cambodia's nascent journalism education scene is expanding. Cambodia News and the Institute for Media Studies are developing their training courses into a bachelor's degree format, while RUPP plans to offer a new bachelor's degree in public relations.

Cambodian journalists have still not unified into a single group. Today there are 18 journalism associations, more than most countries in Asia. The two largest are the Club of Cambodian Journalists (CCJ) and the Cambodian Association for Protection of Journalists (CAPJ) which are active in training and protecting

journalists. The sheer number of journalism associations lead to difficulties for Cambodian journalists looking to network on a nation-wide basis, said respondents.

Both associations have similar programs to protect journalists facing threats or lawsuits. In addition to both associations campaigning for journalists' rights, the Club of Cambodian Journalists has also provided legal negotiations for journalists in lawsuits.

Finding compromise in lawsuits rather than lambasting plaintiffs has proven an effective tool for journalists in duress. The Club of Cambodian Journalists effectively aided Dam Sith, the editor of opposition newspaper Moneaksekar Khmer, after he was arrested in 2008 for statements against foreign minister Hor Namhong. They also provided legal negotiations for a lawsuit between singer Vang Srey No against a group of journalists who allegedly tried to blackmail her with a pornographic video in 2007.

With only one photojournalists' association in the country, photographers have even fewer resources to turn to, and remain overlooked when they are subject to the same dangerous assignments as writers.

There is an even greater need for training reporters based in provinces, who are typically paid less than \$40 a month. Part of this can be accomplished by improving the living conditions and salaries of journalists and by improving training courses, said most respondents.

Club of Cambodian Journalists

The CCJ was established in August 2000 after a two-month long discussion between publishers, editors, and reporter from news companies and international associations seeking a politically

neutral association.

According to the president, CCJ reconciled the political influences between the Khmer Journalists Association and the League of Cambodian Journalists from before the 1997 coup d'etat.

Membership comes from various sources: pro-government and opposition newspapers, Khmer and foreign language newspapers, and newswire services. Members must have two years of experience and be employed by a news organization as a condition to membership.

The club has three programs: publishing press statements against violations of media rights, conducting training course to strengthen professionalism, and to hold gatherings between local journalists to promote cooperation.

However, CCJ has faced criticisms from other press associations, which argued that the association hogs media funding from international donors.

Pen Samitthy, an Editor-in-Chief of the daily local newspaper, became the head of the club since its inception in 2000.

Media Training Center

Founded in 2003, the Media Training Center trains journalists in reporting techniques and ethics, focusing on provincial journalists who lack access to media resources in cities, according to MTC director Meas Kimsoun.

MTC is run by the Ministry of Information Phnom Penh. After the Cambodia Communication Institute (CCI) moved to the Royal University of Phnom Penh in 2003 with help from the

Konrad Adenauer Foundation, the Ministry of Information replaced the CCI with the MTC.

Some workshops, focusing on journalism ethics and advertising strategies, have been sponsored by the UNESCO. According to Kimsoun, the workshop trains the journalists to survive by themselves without political support, though MTC's government affiliation could compromise this stance.

In 2006, the MCT also cooperate with the Asia Pacific Institute for Broadcasting Development (AIBD) to train producers in radio program production.

Department of Media and Communication, Royal University of Phnom Penh

The Department of Media and Communication (DMC) is the first undergraduate-level media school in country that provides a bachelor of arts in media management. The four-year courses at the DMC designed to train students for various professions within the media sector.

Located in the Royal University of Phnom Penh (RUPP), the DMC was established in 2001, after RUPP and the government recognized the lack of training schools for Cambodian journalists, according to the university's website.

Since its inception, nearly all yearly 20 graduates attain jobs in the media sector, with some furthering their studies abroad, said Caroline Schmidt-Gross, DMC co-director.

Yet DMC only has the resources to select 30 students through a yearly examination, not enough to tackle the ethics problems facing journalism.

However, the department brings much foreign attention to Cambodia's journalism profession, having support from the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, Ateneo de Manila University in the Philippines, and Ohio University in the US.

Profile: Cambodia News

Cambodia News (CN) was previously a weekly English and Khmer newspaper running since 2003, but in 2008 turned into a training center for public relations professionals.

The CN is a for-profit association, but offers free social advocacy courses to working journalists and public relations professionals. This is a due contribution to the Cambodian journalism market. Almost all government departments do not have the press officers, creating difficulties for journalists seeking basic information on government programs.

The group said it also includes basic journalism courses, claiming that if press officers don't understand journalism, they won't be effective in speaking with journalists.

Chhay Sophal, a former Reuters reporter, has co-directed the CN since it began as a newspaper in 2003.

Mr. Sophal has plans to turn CN into a graduate-level training course offering a master's degree, he said in an interview.

Commentary: Chhay Sophal, Cambodia News

“The freedom of press in Cambodia is separated into two parts: printing and broadcasting. The freedom of printing press is more than we expect. Since the beginning till today it's still the same. However, the law has limited the press freedom in Cambodia related to misinformation.

The second aspect is related to national security [related to the press law]. How far does the government define news related to national security?

The third aspect is the biased judiciary system in Cambodia. Sometimes journalists write about sensitive topics, so there are often lawsuits between powerful people and journalists. And whenever there have been lawsuits between journalists and powerful people, journalists have never won.

Talking about broadcasting, there is some freedom. If we talk about foreign broadcasting like VOA [Voice of America], there is freedom. However some radio stations themselves have self-censorship. They don't really produce the news items by themselves. They just sell the time for the other news organizations.

On the other hand, some TV station owners are just businessmen so they run TV stations for advertising their own products. They don't really care about the news items or whether they're biased or not. They have self-censorship for themselves.”

The Cambodian Photographers Association

The Cambodian Photographers Association (CPA) is an association of both professional and non-professional photographers who exhibit photographs during the national events.

Since its launching in August 2008, the association has conducted two exhibitions on Independence Day and Victory Day on January 7.

With its president, Mr. Yim Samel, as an official royal family photographer, CPA has secured thousands of historic photo

archives, said Mr. Khieu Kola, the CPA's secretary.

The CPA also plans to exhibit photos relating to Khmer New Year during April 14-16, 2009.

To raise the quality of photography in Cambodia, the group plans to hold photography workshops, according to Kola. However, he did not mention establishing or encouraging professional standards for photographers.

The group has 20 members, both professional photographers and non-professional photographers, Kola said.

Yet with its low membership and low reach, CPA faces low funds like many journalism associations, and has trouble popularizing photography, Kola added. To overcome the lack of funds and training for photographer, CPA is planning to open a photography institute.

Cambodian Association for Protection of Journalists

Claiming to have 60 total members from 30 news organizations, the Cambodian Association for Protection of Journalists (CAPJ) says it has the most journalists working for foreign media outlets in Cambodia, a testament to its far reach in the country.

The CAPJ is headed by Um Sarin, a reporter from Radio Free Asia (RFA), and a governing council of nine members. The group has membership in the Independent Foundation Journalism Foundation (IFJ) and the Southeast Asian Press Alliance (SEAPA).

Since its launch, the CAPJ has held gatherings on World Press Freedom Day and holds specialized training workshops for journalists. Last year, CAPJ held 10 courses in HIV/AIDS

reporting and other health-care fields.

CAPJ claims to offer membership only to journalists who agree to its ethics code, which decries false and misleading reporting.

Cambodia Institute for Media Studies

The Cambodia Institute for Media Studies (CIMS) is a local organization founded to replace Internews, an international journalism training NGO, after that group stopped its programs in Cambodia in 2008.

CIMS has three basic news writing courses that last for three weeks. They are led by Moeun Chhean Nariddh, a former Phnom Penh Post reporter and president of the organization.

Some courses focus on Internet media, a new development in Cambodia's nascent Internet media, helping journalists to use the Internet and e-mail. Unlike most other groups, CIMS also focuses on specialized topics like health-care and environmental reporting.

Nariddh claimed international donors have reduced funding from the economic crisis, making media NGOs the first to feel the pinch. Most of the donors are aiming to support its prioritized sectors like health-care and the environment, he added.

Profile: Independent Journalism Foundation

Founded by an editorial board member of the New York Times and the former vice president of Time Magazine in 1991, the Independent Journalism Foundation (IJF) does advocacy and training courses in Southeast Asia and East Europe.

From 2001 to 2004, IJF sponsored 13 three-month workshops in

English for 200 journalists from Cambodia, Laos Myanmar and Vietnam. After 2004, IJF claims to focus on journalists in Cambodia and Vietnam. It also holds specialized courses on HIV/Aids reporting, environmental reporting, and the Khmer Rouge tribunal.

IJF's biggest challenge in Cambodia is teaching journalists to comply with the Press Law and norms of ethics, while the government's biggest challenge is appointing trained spokespeople to every ministry, the group said.

(End)

