

# INVESTIGATIVE REPORTING



## *A HANDBOOK FOR CAMBODIAN JOURNALISTS*





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By Putsata Reang and Moeun Chhean Nariddh

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Design & Layout: MCD design | [design@mcdcambodia.com](mailto:design@mcdcambodia.com)



## Foreword

When Khmer journalists say why they chose their profession, they often suggest a motivation rooted in the universal, journalistic ethos of human rights. They will tell you: “I felt an injustice” or “I saw an injustice.”

There are injustices that happen every day in Cambodia, from the endemic problem of students forced to pay teachers to pass exams to millions of dollars in bribes and profits from illegal logging pocketed by government officials.

Around the world, journalists are motivated by the same desire of wanting to right wrongs, from Nellie Bly, who, in 1887, went undercover to expose widespread abuses at a mental institution in New York, to Ida Tarbell, whose 1902 document-based pursuit of a U.S. oil giant’s monopoly and its impact on consumers brought the phrase “muckrakers” into the journalism lexicon. Jerry Kammer and his colleague Marcus Stern won the 2006 Pulitzer Prize for uncovering the biggest bribe-taking scandal in the history of the U.S. Congress—a lawmaker who accepted more than \$2.5 million in bribes from defense contractors.

In a country that lacks rule of law, where the justice system is fractured, corrupt, and unreliable, journalists play a great role in serving as watchdogs over government.

Cambodia’s media reports the problems that plague society; the amount of money lost each year to corruption mirrors the international community’s annual contribution to Cambodia.

But where Khmer media often fall short is in answering the more critical questions: Why is this happening? How did it happen? And most importantly, who is responsible for fixing it?

This handbook aims to give journalists and journalism students in Cambodia useful guide-lines, ideas, and support in the international standards of investigative reporting.

We hope that this handbook will be valuable as you write and report the stories that are so important in Cambodia today.



## Chapter 1 | Media Major Events in Cambodia - Timeline

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**1863:** Cambodia became a French colony.

**1935:** A literature review called “Reatrei Thngay Sao (Saturday Night)” was published

**1939:** First known Khmer-language newspaper, Nokor Wat, was published in Cambodia by three Khmer nationalists: Pach Chheun, Sim Var and Son Ngoc Thanh.

**1942:** Nokor Wat was confiscated by the French who accused the newspaper of being ultra-nationalist Pach Chheun was arrested and Son Ngoc Thanh fled to Thailand, then to Japan.

**1945:** Son Ngoc Thanh returned to Cambodia and resumed the publication of Nokor Wat when Cambodia was under a short occupation by the Japanese army.

**1947:** First Cambodian Constitution was adopted; the press was freer and more newspapers were published.

**1951:** The Khmer News Agency was established and printed news bulletins in Khmer, French and English with around 2,000 subscribers.

**1952:** Son Ngoc Thanh published another newspaper called Khmer Kraok (Khmer Rise), but the paper was closed down a month later for its strong opinions on the reform of the Khmer political system.

**1953:** Cambodia became independent from France.

**3 March 1955:** King Norodom Sihanouk abdicated the throne and established the Sangkum Reastr Niyum Party three days later. Many pro-Sangkum Reastr Niyum newspapers and magazine were published.

**1 April 1955:** An underground newspaper called “Pracheachun (The People)” was published, disseminating communist propaganda.

**20 June 1955:** Pol Pot’s brother, Salot Chhay, published Samaki (Solidarity) newspaper.

**1 January 1959:** Sam Rainsy’s father, Sam Sary, published Reastra Thipatei (People’s Democracy) following his dispute with Head of State Norodom Sihanouk.

**22 September 1959:** Khieu Samphan published French-language newspaper L’Observateur that criticized conservative groups.

**11 October 1959:** Nob Bophan, editor of Pracheachun newspaper, was gunned down in Phnom Penh

**1965:** A monthly news bulletin of Samdech Norodom Sihanouk “Les paroles de S.P.N. Sihanouk” called B.M.D. (Bulletin Mensuel de Documentation) was published by the Cabinet of the Royal Palace.

**11 September 1966:** Samdech Sihanouk established a bilingual Khmer-French bulletin to criticize the government.

**1967:** Sim Var published Khmer Ekareach (Khmer Independence) newspaper, which was critical of Samdech Sihanouk.





**1967:** Nouth Chhoeum, Chief of Samdech Norodom Sihanouk's Cabinet, published Sochivathor (Morality) newspaper. With sales of 11,000 per issue, the paper was a best seller partly because of its pornographic stories.

**1969:** Sim Var's nephew, Soth Polin, published Nokor Thom (Big City) newspaper with a pro-republican editorial line.

**1970:** Koh Santepheap (Island of Peace) newspaper was published by Sou Sorn, Nouth Chhoeum and Chou Thany.

**18 March 1970:** Norodom Sihanouk was ousted by Lon Nol in a coup. About 30 newspapers were in circulation.

**29 December 1970:** Lon Nol Administration imposed pre-publication censorship on newspapers, ending freedom of the press. Many newspapers were shut down during this time.

**23 April 1973:** Martial law was declared, followed by threats and attacks on journalists. Soth Polin's car was exploded by a timed bomb, but he survived the attack.

**1975:** Cambodia fell to the Khmer Rouge. 1.7 million Cambodians died. No private newspapers were published except an Angkar-owned magazines and radio that broadcast communist slogans. The Khmer Rouge published three magazines, including Tung Padevath (The Revolutionary Flag), Tung Krahorm (The Red Flag), Yuvachun-Yuvaneary Padevath (Revolutionary Youth) and a picture magazine. These magazines were read by the Khmer Rouge cadre.

**2 December 1978:** The Vietnamese-backed Kampuchean National Liberation Front (KNLF) was established in Snuol district, Kratie province, on the border with Vietnam. KLNLF established the Khmer News Agency (SPK) and a radio station.

**7 January 1979:** The Khmer Rouge was overthrown by invading Vietnamese army. Cambodia became a communist country.

**25 January 1979:** Kampuchea, KNLFF's newspaper, published its first issue with a circulation of 5,000. The circulation rose to 500,000 - it was distributed among the communist cadre free of charge. Three other newspapers were published, including Kangtaop Padevath (Revolutionary Army) in December 1979, Phnom Penh in February 1981 and Pracheachun (People) in October 1985. Many newspapers were also published by the communist party.

**January 1992:** Buddhist Liberal Democratic Party published a weekly Khmer People's National Liberation Front bulletin, which was against the Cambodian People's Party and Vietnamese.

**1992:** UNTAC Penal Code established, making defamation a criminal violation punishable by jail sentence.

**October 1992:** The FUNCINPEC Party published Samleng Yuvachun Khmer (Voice of the Khmer Youth).

**Late 1992:** UNTAC established UNTAC radio and Free Choice newspaper. The radio station and the newspaper were shut down following the elections.

**July 1992:** The first independent English-language newspaper, Phnom Penh Post, was published fortnightly by an American couple. Another English newspaper, The Cambodia Times, was published by a Malaysian journalist the same year. The Times then published its Khmer edition, but both the English and Khmer versions were later closed down due to bankruptcy.

**1993:** Another independent English-language newspaper, The Cambodia Daily, was published also by a veteran American journalist.



**January 1993:** Koh Santepheap newspaper was republished by former reporter Thong Uy Pang after it was closed down nearly 20 years before, when the Khmer Rouge came to power.

**April 1993:** Reasmei Kampuchea (Light of Cambodia) newspaper was published. Reasmei is one of the largest, most popular newspapers in Cambodia. Many other newspapers were published around that time, but were later closed down for financial reasons.

**1993:** Constitution provides for freedom of the press and journalists, in theory, should be able to obtain information legally.

**1995:** Press Law passed with controversial Article 12, stating: “the employer, editor or author of the article may be subjected to a fine of 5,000,000 to 15,000,000 riels (\$1,282 to \$ 3,846), without taking into account possible punishment under the criminal law.” Article 13 directs that the press shall not publish or reproduce false information, which humiliates or is in contempt of national institutions. (The law is vague and leaves much room for government authorities to interpret it at their whim in order to silence journalists and news organizations).

**18 May 1996:** Thun Bun Ly, the editor of Uddom Gati Khmer, was shot dead near his home in Phnom Penh. His death was believed to be politically motivated.

**March 30, 1997:** Chet Duong Daravuth, a journalist for opposition Neak Proyuth (Fighter) newspaper, was killed in grenade attack.

**5 May 1997:** Pech Em, a journalist for a TV station in Sihanoukville, was killed and a B40 rocket was fired into the station for airing controversial news.

**July 1997:** Many opposition journalists went into hiding as factional fighting sweeps through nation. Opposition papers were not published for three months due to threats and intimidation. Foreign journalists were also threatened and two were banned from the country for writing stories critical of the government and writing about corruption in the government.

**8 June 1998:** Thong Uy Pang, the publisher and editor-in-chief of Koh Santepheap, was shot and wounded at a temple near Phnom Penh. Koh Santepheap accused “powerful politicians in the present government” of being behind the attack.

**18 October 2003:** Chuor Chetharith, a journalist for the pro-FUNCINPEC Ta Prohm Radio FM 90.5 was gunned down in front of his office in Phnom Penh. His murder followed the station’s broadcast of critical comments against the government.

**October 11, 2005:** Mam Sonando, 64, Director of Beehive Radio FM 105, was arrested for broadcasting an interview with a border expert criticizes the border treaty. He was accused of criticizing the government.

**December 2, 2005:** Journalist Hang Sokhan, editor of occasional newspaper Ponleu Samaki, was arrested over an article exposing corruption in a land dispute case where it was alleged that the state prosecutor Ven Yoeun of accepted bribes. Yoeun filed a criminal defamation suit against the newspaper.

**January 4, 2006:** Pa Nguon Teang, Radio Director of “Voice of Democracy” and deputy for Kem Sokha, was arrested at the Lao border after his boss and Yeng Virak, Executive Director of Community Legal Education Center were arrested as part of a government crackdown on dissent.

**2006:** Anti-corruption law in draft form and en route to being passed into law. The draft law includes some stipulations for access to information and public records.



## Chapter 2 | Media in Cambodia: The Current Situation

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Cambodia has had a free press since the Paris Peace talks of 1991, with scores of newspapers mushrooming, and the emergence of the first private radio and TV stations.

The media has had to catch up to publish fair, accurate, and balanced news stories of an international standard, as many journalists lack experience and training in writing and reporting. The Cambodian press has often been filled not by what one would generally consider “news” but more or less dominated by opinion pieces, novels, folktales, poems, educational material, and even pornography.

Cambodian reporters are extremely keen and committed to receiving training and improving their skill base. Editors have been supportive of courses and training that has been offered to their staff.

And there has been some training available. UNESCO began conducting short journalism courses in the early 1990s before it established the Cambodia Communication Institute in 1994. The CCI trains journalists in international standards, and it has been particularly helpful for reporters who are working without the benefit of a previous structured training. The Asia Foundation has funded journalism courses at the Royal University of Phnom Penh (RUPP) before the Independent Journalism Foundation stepped in to provide advanced training. As interest in journalism grew, the RUPP established the Department of Media and Communications to provide bachelor degree courses in journalism, still the only degree program in media that exists in the country. The DMC produces about 20 journalism graduates each year.

With the increase in trained journalists, the quality of the media has greatly improved. Radio and TV stations are competing for listeners and viewers, creating a healthy, competitive media environment with a premium on quality programming.

Gradually, the public has been able to read and listen to balanced and fair reporting. One sided reporting, opinion and propaganda is being challenged by solid factual based information providing. And, rather than news largely related to political parties and politicians, readers now can find stories about ordinary people—their daily struggles, conflicts, and successes—gracing the front pages of most newspapers.

With training skills and a politically stable environment within which to work, Cambodia’s media is reaching a new level of development with a focus towards investigative reporting.

Regardless of the quality of news and political affiliations, various Cambodian news organizations have done a tremendous job in fulfilling the three major roles to inform, educate and entertain the public.

With news now published from various parts of the country and stories from different corners of the world, the Khmer public is no longer isolated like “a frog in a pond.” Through media, Cambodians have become connected to the world, as they are able to read, listen, and view what is happening at home and beyond the nation’s borders.

Thanks to the media, Cambodians have increased their knowledge and awareness about different issues ranging from democracy and human rights to healthcare and HIV/AIDS to the environment and culture.

With the information and knowledge obtained from the media, people can make more informed decisions about their daily lives. One of the best examples of this is the right to vote. An informed public is more willing and empowered to vote for the best candidate who can represent their interests and address their needs and concerns.

At its most basic level, the media has been a voice of the voiceless, acting as a court of last resort for people to air their grievances. In Kompong Speu province in 2005, the media brought to light the issue of famine





by reporting the deaths of five villagers who died hungry. The story caused government to debate how to save rural residents while aid groups rushed to help.

However, it is within that role of serving as a watchdog that the media has met its toughest challenges and resistance. Many journalists have been attacked and targeted for doing their jobs of keeping the public informed of the country's affairs and exposing wrongdoing and abuses by the nation's powerful and political elite.

Since democracy and free press was introduced in Cambodia, many journalists have been murdered, injured, sued, arrested, or jailed for defamation. Their common crime was exposing such controversial issues as illegal logging, drug and human trafficking, border issues, murder cases, land grabbing and other human rights violations.

The most recent spate of arrests of journalists occurred at the end of 2005 and in the beginning days of 2006 when 5 human rights activists and journalists were arrested and charged with defamation for voicing criticism over Prime Minister Hun Sen's border treaty with Vietnam. Freedom of the press took a drastic slide backwards.

Although the arrests effectively muffled the media for several months afterwards, the ultimate impact on journalists was one of empowerment in which reporters regained their courage and confidence to cover sensitive stories, even at the risk of being arrested.



## Chapter 3 | What Has Shaped Cambodia's Recent Media?

To appreciate Cambodia's current media landscape, history must be understood.

Under French colonial rule since 1863, Cambodia's first documented newspapers were all foreign: the French-language *L'Echo du Cambodge* and *L'Impartial de Phnom Penh*, which began publishing in 1922 and 1923 respectively. The third foreign newspaper was published in 1929 - the Vietnamese-language *Cao-mien Huong-truyen*. These three newspapers were mainly read by the French and Vietnamese community, as well as Cambodian elite.

In 1935 a literature review bulletin called "*Reatrei Thngay Sao* (Saturday Night)" was published.

As the quest for independence grew, three Cambodian nationalists, Pach Chheun, Son Ngoc Thanh and Sim Var stepped onto the media scene, publishing the first Khmer-language newspaper called *Nokor Wat* (or *Nagara Vatta* in Pali) in December 1936. *Nokor Wat* came out biweekly with a circulation of 5,000. Most of the readers were monks at the Buddhist Institute and students at Sisowath High School.

As well as providing a voice for Khmers and a counterpoint to the three foreign newspapers, *Nokor Wat* criticized Vietnamese domination of the Cambodian civil service and the police force and the dominance in trade and business enterprises by the Chinese and Vietnamese communities.

In July 1942 copies of *Nokor Wat* were confiscated and the newspaper was shut down by the French, who accused the paper of being ultra-nationalist. Pach Chheun was arrested, Son Ngoc Thanh fled to Thailand and then to Japan.

After the Japanese took over Cambodia in 1945, Son Ngoc Thanh returned to Cambodia and resumed the publication of *Nokor Wat*.

On January 11, 1952, Son Ngoc Thanh published another newspaper "*Khmer Kroak* (Khmer Standing Up)," but the newspaper was shut down one month later for its editorials about reform of the Cambodian political system.

*Nokor Wat* and *Khmer Kroak* set the precedent for Cambodian newspapers as a forum for politics. The three pioneers of the Khmer media came under attack, each serving prison terms before they later rose to high positions within government.

In 1947, Cambodia had its first national elections and many political parties were established. Newspapers were published to support each political party.

After the adoption of the first constitution in 1947, more newspapers began publishing as the French provided more press freedoms to Cambodia. The number of Khmer newspapers numbered more than a dozen by the 1960s. The newspapers largely served as mouthpieces for local political parties, which were later merged into one party, the Sangkum Reastr Niyum Party of then Prince Norodom Sihanouk.

Under Sihanouk's rule, press freedom became more restricted, beginning with the Western press, which publicly criticized the Prince's reign and the monarchy. But the foreign media was not the only one targeted: at least one Khmer-language newspaper, *Khmer Ekareach*, was sued by the Prince, after the paper accused one of his close allies of corruption.

In 1970, General Lon Nol ousted Prince Sihanouk in a coup and established a U.S.-backed government known as the Khmer Republic. At the time, nearly 30 newspapers were in circulation. Lon Nol imposed martial law and ordered censorship of all local and foreign media. Many journalists were sent to jail and the General shut down four newspapers that had criticized his administration.



After the Khmer Rouge took over in 1975, press freedom was extinguished as all newspapers disappeared. Many journalists were among the nearly two million Cambodians who died during the three years, eight months and 20 days of the Khmer Rouge regime, also known as DK, or the Democratic Kampuchea period. The Cambodian public had only one way of staying “informed” – through Khmer Rouge propaganda. There was one radio station to which they could listen. The Khmer Rouge also published some magazines, including *Tung Padevath* (The Revolutionary Flag), *Tung Krahorm* (The Red Flag), *Yuvachun-Yuvaneary Padevath* (Revolutionary Youth), and a picture magazine.

In 1979, the Khmer Rouge was forced out of Cambodia by Vietnamese forces. Press freedom did not improve. During the early 1980s, all media was controlled by the communist government.

But over time, Cambodia's media began to rebuild itself.

Four newspapers, *Pracheachun* (People), *Kangtoap Padevath* (Revolutionary Army), *Kampuchea* and *Phnom Penh*, went into circulation in addition to the state-run news agency SPK, which would become A KP (L'Agence Khmer de Presse).

In 1986 there were about 200,000 radio receivers in the country. Radio and television was under the direction of the Kampuchean Radio and Television Commission. The Voice of the Kampuchean People (VOKP) radio programs were broadcast in Khmer, Vietnamese, French, English, Lao, and Thai<sup>1</sup>.

With Vietnamese assistance, television broadcasting was instituted on a trial basis in December 1983 becoming official in 1984. Two years later, Television Kampuchea (TVK) started operating two hours at night, four days a week. The broadcasts were limited to Phnom Penh, where an estimated 52,000 families own television sets. Provincial residents largely remained isolated from information.

Like the media in other communist countries in Indochina, the state-owned media mainly published and broadcast communist propaganda and positive reports on the activities of the communist leaders.

Following the Paris Peace Accord on Oct. 23, 1991, Cambodia began its rocky path towards democracy, with the first general elections organized by the United Nations. The 1993 elections was the most expensive election in the UN's history, costing \$2 billion. As two dozen political parties geared up for the elections, 12 private newspapers came into existence. Most were affiliated with the different political parties, and their news published advocated specific parties.

In the early 1990s, the country's first English-language newspapers also emerged; Phnom Penh Post and the Cambodia Daily, followed by other foreign papers like *Cambodge Soir* and *Cambodia Sin Chew Daily* in Chinese.

In 2006, there are eight daily newspapers, including some that are holdovers from the UNTAC period: *Reasmei Kampuchea* (Light of Cambodia), *Koh Santepheap* (Island of Peace), *Kampuchea Thmey* (New Cambodia), *Kampuchea Thngay Nih* (Cambodia Today), *Chakraval* (Universe), *Samleung Yuvachun Khmer* (Voice of the Khmer Youth), *Moneaksekar Khmer* (Khmer Conscience) and *Sralanh Khmer* (Love Khmer), as well as other weekly newspapers, including *Khmer Mekong*, *Samne Thmey* (New Writing), *Reasmei Angkor* (Light of Angkor), *Areyathor* (Civilization) and *Wat Phnom*.

In addition, some newspapers come out irregularly such as *Sahasavath Thmey* (New Millennium), *Sor ning Khmao* (White and Black) and *Nisith Khmer* (Khmer Students).

Currently, more than 200 newspapers are registered in Cambodia. Of them, roughly 20 are published regularly. Others are published weekly, or on special occasions such as the birthdays of the King and Prime Minister. These “newspapers,” which are often more like two-page flyers would fill their pages with well wishing advertisements from their sponsors. There are also papers that circulate just before an election advocating for political parties and cease publication right after.

<sup>1</sup> Source: U.S. Library of Congress



In addition to print media, in 2006, Cambodia has one national TV station and five privately owned TV stations, as well as more than a dozen radio stations.

Four broadcast media operate in a relatively independent manner, including radio FM 93.5 and Beehive Radio FM 105. Another moderate station is Cambodian Women's Media Center's Radio FM 102, which focuses on development and women's issues.

Unfortunately, as the media has grown, so, too, has the violence against journalists. Press freedom has come at a high cost. In the past decade, at least six journalists have been murdered in broad daylight. No perpetrators have ever been arrested for the killings, all of which are believed to be politically motivated. Among those cases are the following.

On Feb. 8, 1996, Ek Mongkul, a presenter at a FUNCINPEC party-owned FM 90 radio station, was shot by four assailants after airing a broadcast that called on the government to stop Vietnamese encroachment on Cambodian soil. He suffered critical injuries but recovered.

On Oct. 18, 2005, Chuor Chetharith, an editor and reporter with FUNCINPEC radio station Ta Prohm FM90.5 was shot and killed as he got out of his car in front of the radio station. The execution-style murder occurred a few days after the government publicly warned Ta Prohm radio station to stop airing critical programs.

Fearing for their safety, many journalists leave the country during politically unstable periods, such as 1997 during the coup when Prime Minister Hun Sen took the premiership from the winner of the 1996 elections, Prince Ranariddh. As the PM began targeting the opposition press, many journalists working for those newspapers slipped across the border into Thailand.

More recently, the attack on the Khmer press has shifted from physical to legal assaults. Under the 1995 Press Law and UNTAC penal code for defamation, journalists have been arrested and charged with defamation after criticizing government and court officials. The most notable case involved the arrests of Mam Sonando, Director of Radio FM 105, in December 2005 and Pa Nguon Teang, Director of the Cambodian Centre for Human Rights' Voice of Democracy Program, in January 2006. Both were jailed on charges of defamation after criticizing the PM's border treaty with Vietnam.

Several other journalists working for lesser-known newspapers have also been arrested and charged with defamation, including Kompong Speu-based journalist Hang Sokhan, who was charged with defaming a provincial court official in December 2005. In 2006, Hem Choun, a reporter with the Khmer-language newspaper Samrek Yutethor (The Cries of Justice) was arrested by military police while covering a controversial eviction of squatters from the Sombok Chab area in Phnom Penh. Choun was charged with destroying public property.

In a rare attack on Khmer journalists working for the foreign-language press, Cambodian Foreign Minister Hor Namhong sued the Cambodia Daily reporter Kay Kimsong. Kimsong was charged with writing a story quoting a late senator commented on the floor of the senate who accused the minister of sending Cambodian intellectuals to be killed in his name when he was head of a Khmer Rouge camp in Phnom Penh.

While Kimsong's case moved through the courts, Prime Minister Hun Sen made a surprising move by releasing Mam Sonando, Pa Nguon Teang, Hang Sokhan and Samrek Yutethor from jail. The Prime Minister also pushed for the decriminalization of defamation; however, he succeeded only in influencing the National Assembly's decision to abolish the prison sentence for criminal defamation.



## Chapter 4 | Major Challenges Journalists Face Doing Their Work:

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Like the concept of Cambodian democracy, freedom of the press is still limited and fragile. Cambodian journalists constantly face difficulties in their daily work.

Due to a culture of impunity in Cambodia, journalists are operating in a profession that poses many risks. Dangers range from verbal intimidation, threats, and harassment to physical attacks and killing.

Beyond the dangerous working environment, journalists have other struggles: access to information is greatly limited and approaching officials for an interview remains one of the hardest challenges.

Tath Lihok, Deputy General Director at the Khmer News Agency, says it is tough for journalists to gather information on the wrongdoing of officials, especially on corruption. He says officials usually will not talk to journalists.

Bun Khy, a reporter from Reasmei Kampuchea, says he was been sent from one official to another when he tried to get the veteran soldiers' budget, and an interview at the Ministry of Economy and Finance. Bun Khy finally decided to run his story without this extra information, which would have provided solid evidence to support the claims in his story.

Apart from access to individuals, Tath Lihok says Cambodian journalists also have difficulties in retrieving documents. Cambodia's poor record keeping is partly to blame for reporters' difficulties in accessing these vital parts of any investigative story.

According to a former director, the National Library in Phnom Penh had some 325,000 volumes of official records before 1975, but he said only 65,000 remained after the Khmer Rouge regime. Even now, few records are kept electronically.

But the larger problem remains that journalists are working within a culture of secrecy and lack of access to information.

Beside the working environment, Cambodian journalists are still struggling with the means to do their job, including the lack of adequate budget for transportation to the provinces, phone interviews, internet research, and other expenses.

All these challenges are compounded by the low salaries of journalists that prevent them from doing quality, professional work. Though some media organizations manage to pay a livable salary for their reporters of between \$150 and \$300 per month, most journalists receive only \$40-\$70 per month, which is about the same amount of money a garment factory worker can make a month.





# Chapter 5 | Investigative Reporting

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## 1. The role of the investigative reporter:

Despite such challenging working environments, Khmer journalists have managed to fulfill their role in keeping the public informed of major events and issues.

As Cambodia develops, so does its media and the need for a more sophisticated form of journalism to keep up with a changing society. Growth means more money, and more money means more opportunities for corruption. Lacking an internal checks-and-balances system, Cambodian society needs the media to play a critical role in watching government.

The concept of investigative journalism is still new among Khmer journalists. Some journalists may have written in-depth stories but those stories might lack significant elements of investigative reporting.

What distinguishes investigative reporting from regular news reporting is that the journalist must spend time revealing why things have happened rather than merely reporting the facts of what happened.

When the international community has poured around \$600 million dollars a year into Cambodia for over a decade, people want to know why the poverty rate is still the same as it was ten years ago. *Why is this the case?*

Similarly, despite massive amounts of international donor money being injected into the education system and the number of schools and teachers increasing, the quality of education in Cambodia is very poor. *Why is this the case?*

According to Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Index published by Centre for Social Development's news bulletin, Cambodia ranks 130th of the countries in the world. According to a US State Department report Cambodia has also lost around \$300-\$500 million a year to corruption. *Why is this the case?*

In a country that lacks transparency, it is important to have investigative journalists like "a crow flying over a cow with a wounded back" as a Khmer saying goes. The wounded cows, like corrupt officials, would pretend to be eating poor farmers' rice without being afraid of anything until they noticed crows flying over and whip their tails.

Investigative reporting has the ability to hold public officials accountable, and through this reporting, officials and those in positions of power might be less inclined to abuse their political power.

Apart from their role to expose corruption, wrong doing and injustice the investigative journalist can bring a lot of benefits to her/his newspaper, radio, or TV station. More investigative stories that touch on every day issues and affect ordinary citizens can help increase radio listeners and newspaper readers.

## 2. The definition of investigative reporting:

Every morning, newspapers are competing to catch the attention of readers who must choose which paper they will spend 700 riel to buy. What makes the reader choose one and not the other? The answer varies. It ranges from political leanings to the philosophy of the paper, the size and thickness and the color. However, most readers may not care about anything when they buy a newspaper except for news they want to read. What do readers want to know?



Depending on the financial capacity of each newspaper, the sort of news can be limited to the number of pages available. For the largest daily newspapers such as Reasmei Kampuchea, Koh Sand Kampuchea Thngay Nih, readers can find various types of stories on different pages and sections, including politics, economy, environment, agriculture, culture, health care, crime and international affairs. What is missing in most Cambodian newspapers is the in-depth, investigative type of stories. This absence is partly caused by the limited skills and financial resources of reporters and their newspapers.

While there is not a single definition of an investigative story, Cambodian journalists can understand more about this advanced, sophisticated reporting by looking into some of its main characteristics that constitute an investigative piece.

### 3. What is an investigative story?

There are several elements combined to make an investigative story different from a simple news story. To be considered an investigative story, a story must include the following elements and characteristics.<sup>2</sup>

An investigative story aims to uncover injustice or a wrongdoing. This can be corruption or abuse of power. A journalist must find the evidence to prove the allegations that she/he is making. An investigative story is thoroughly researched, and completely based on hard and provable evidence.

Unlike regular news stories that revolve around major events happening now, such as ceremonies, speeches by government officials, crime and natural disasters, investigative stories often deal with something happening secretly.

#### 3.1. An investigative story must include the journalist's personal investigation – i.e. not just publishing the result of an investigation done by somebody else.

This type of an investigative story involves a reporter doing her/his own investigation into a case rather than simply report on an active investigation. At times, this can involve undercover reporting, such as a the journalist who went undercover as a student to expose corruption in driving school examinations.

Because it was so difficult to get documents to prove this corruption existed, Soklim decided to see with his own eyes the endemic problem of students paying teachers for correct answers on the written and driving exam to pass their test.

However, the journalist must carefully weigh between the public right to know and the violation of the code of ethics. (readers can learn more under the chapter on the code of ethics).

#### 3.2. An investigative story must point out the problem of a management or working system, but not the problem of an individual.

An investigative story looks into the failure or breakdown of a system or policy within an institution. A good example of this type of investigative reporting is the government's Priority Action Program (PAP) within the education sector. It is meant to help poor students avoid paying money to their teachers to buy school supplies.

An investigation by journalist Sem Saroeun of the New Millennium newspaper revealed that the policy was failing because of corrupt teachers who demanded their students pay for school supplies.



### 3.3 An investigative story must explain a complicated social issue and uncover corruption, bad attitude, and abuse of power.

The Philippine Centre for Investigative Journalism's reporting team investigated the abuse of power by former President Joseph Estrada. They followed a "paper trail" of documents that showed that the President owned many properties and private holdings that were out of step with his salary as leader of the country.

### 3.4. The story must tell something that the audience is interested in, which affects them and their daily life<sup>2</sup>.

It goes without saying that all stories must be interesting to be newsworthy. It is even more so for an investigative story. An interesting story will have the greatest impact on people's daily lives and will explain details and facts about which readers care.

Chea Kimsan of Kampuchea Thmey newspaper and Om Layom from Reasmei Kampuchea have independently reported investigative stories about deforestation in the Virakchey National Park and razing of forest land in Cambodia. Like all kinds of environmental stories, people care because it affects everybody in Cambodia when floods and drought—a direct result of deforestation—causes destruction throughout the country. Sometimes a reporter has to explain the subtleties to a reader – so that they realize they do care!

### 3.5. It is important to uncover information that people want to hide.

In virtually all investigative stories, a reporter must dig out information that people do not want made public, particularly stories about corruption.

A good investigative journalists will use all available ethical techniques to reveal the information that is kept secret.

### 3.6. An investigative story intends to push for change, reform, or correction of any wrongdoing.

Investigative stories not only seek to expose the truth, but also to alert those responsible for solving problems to right the wrongs.

The government acted on a report by Sam Bunnath of Reasmei Kampuchea, on corruption by a provincial education official who cheated contract teachers in Battambang. The Prime Minister ordered the Ministry of Education to investigate the allegations and punish the perpetrator.

Bun Khy of Reasmei Kampuchea reported on the failure of the government to pay demobilized soldiers in Kompong Thom. The Finance Minister and the provincial Governor ordered the concerned departments to look into the plight of the veteran soldiers and pay them.

### 3.7. Investigative reporting requires many resources and is longer than a normal story.

An investigative story is much longer than a news piece. It always requires much more time, hard work and resources.

The story can take from a couple of days to several weeks, or months or maybe even years to complete,

<sup>2</sup> Excerpt from Investigative Reporters and Editors



depending on the type and complexity of the story. Over that period of research and investigations, a newspaper or broadcast station will have to spend a lot of money and time for their reporter/s to gather the information for their story.

### IN SUMMARY

#### WHAT IS INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM?

An investigative story aims to uncover injustice or wrongdoing, including corruption and abuse of power. A journalist must find the evidence to prove the allegations that s/he is making. An investigative story is thoroughly researched and completely based on hard and provable evidence.

An investigative story must include the journalist's personal investigation – i.e. not just publishing the result of an investigation done by somebody else.

An investigative story must point out the problem of a management or working system, but not the problem of an individual.

An investigative story must explain a complicated social issue and uncover corruption, bad attitude and abuse of power.

The story must tell something that the audience is interested, which affects them and their daily life.

It is very important to uncover information that people want to hide.

An investigative story intends to push for change, or correct of wrongdoing.

Usually, investigative reporting requires a lot of resources and is longer than a normal story.

## 4. How to identify and select an investigative story.

Issues worth investigating are everywhere, so long as you remain curious and motivated to find them! Topics include deforestation, secret land deals, non-bidding contracts, misuse of donor funds, human and drug trafficking, mistreatment of cross-border laborers, unsolved murder cases, bribery, extortion, blackmail, cronyism, contracting, unfair access to resources, relief distribution to flood or drought victims, a ministry's supply purchases, and kickbacks to anyone in a powerful position.

How do investigative reporters start?

Often, journalists are launched onto the path of an investigative story through tips from sources. Disgruntled people cannot keep silent for long and at some point are eager to reveal what they know of a situation. Often, they turn to journalists to air their complaints. An employee of a company that has failed to get a business contract might tell the press about the irregularities involving the bidding process. In a recent case, some government employees voiced complaints with the media when their bosses pocketed huge profits from the sale of their office.



Sometimes, journalists can find these investigative story ideas by reading newspapers, listening to radio or watching TV. Journalistic instinct can lead you to suspect that there's more to story or issue than is being reported. Journalists must have a discerning eye and unflagging curiosity to spot investigative stories.

A follow-up investigation into the government's claim of the decline of poverty rate in Phnom Penh reported in a news story may lead to the fact that the actual reason is because the poorest people who lived in squatters' areas have been moved out of town.

The best investigative stories are often the ones originated by the journalists themselves when they have experienced corruption, injustice or a problem first hand.

In Kompong Thom province, journalist Bun Khy of Reasmei Kampuchea noticed something wrong when he went to work every day: the roads he traveled on were due to have been repaired and restored years ago, yet they were still pot-holed and difficult to navigate. He decided to investigate why the road project was not yet finished and discovered a system of corruption and mismanagement. There was no competitive bid process for road construction projects. Government officials in charge of infrastructure could hand out lucrative contracts to friends and business partners who might have little incentive to complete the project.

Journalists can also do regular checks of how the government works. If citizens must navigate a bloated bureaucracy to get things done, it might be worth investigating why so many people are on the payroll and what do they all actually do?

Sometimes, you might start to investigate what seems to be a very good story and it turns out that it is not what you first thought it was. Maybe there is a straightforward explanation for what seemed like a suspicious situation. This is sometimes called the "chaos or conspiracy" situation. Chaos or confusion might be the reason why an unusual situation has occurred. Or it could be conspiracy or corruption. Make sure you do all your work so that you know what you think is a corrupt or illegal situation actually is.





## Chapter 6 | Writing a Work Plan

Unlike regular daily news stories, an investigative story requires a much bigger investment of time, effort and financial resources. It also requires significant planning.

A strong work plan is an essential navigational tool to help guide the investigative journalist through what can be a long and involved reporting process. It should provide focus and help the reporter avoid wrong turns and unnecessary delays. A work plan will also help editors understand the scope of the story proposal and plan for the time and resources needed to pursue and complete the project. It also helps editors decide how much space will be needed in the newspaper or journal, as many investigative stories are published as a package with photographs and graphics.

The main components of a work plan include:

- A story summary
- A story hypothesis
- Document sources
- People sources
- Internet sources
- A timeline
- A budget

### The story summary

The summary is a one or two paragraph overview of what the story is about. A good summary is specific, highlighting the winners and losers of the story, as well as its impact on society. A summary must include the 5Ws (Who, What, Where, When and Why) and H (How). If you can't write your summary in one or two short paragraphs, you have not yet found the focus for your story. Do more reporting and interviewing to help narrow your story idea.

#### Two examples of good story summaries

**RETIRE** – It was a peaceful place to live out their final years, and they invested their savings into what they thought would be a secure and stable home, even as they grew older and needed more care. Then one day in April, residents of a “continuing care” facility in the East San Jose foothills were called to a meeting and told the facility would close this summer. About 40 residents have been forced to choose between moving to a sister facility in Los Angeles or accepting a buyout offer that some of them say won't cover their needs. Plagued by worry, residents have had weeks of sleepless nights; three of the more fragile died just days after they were moved from the nursing wing. State regulators are now reviewing those deaths. And advocates for the elderly say it's a cautionary tale: While the continuing care industry is growing, it's also changing, as big corporations enter a field once dominated by smaller non-profits. Critics warn there aren't enough protections for residents if other facilities close in the future. 65 w/fotos and various grafix<sup>3</sup>.

**THE SEXUAL PREDATOR** – Sports are supposed to be a place for children to learn invaluable skills such as coping, overcoming adversity and working together. Sport is also supposed to promote a healthy lifestyle. But the increased popularity of girl's sports has brought another dimension to the surface: sexual abuse. Just this week, a male volleyball coach at all girls Notre Dame High School in San Jose has been arrested on suspicion of unlawfully having sex with a 16--year--old player on the school's team. While cases surface from time to time, many are kept quiet by school administrators fearing lawsuits and bad publicity. A thorough search of court records, newspaper archives and other research tools is needed to develop a data base so we can identify the seriousness of the problem. From that resource, a series of stories can emerge, including an interview with a predator, a victim and why administrators protect teachers who abuse<sup>4</sup>.

### The story hypothesis

<sup>3</sup>Hypothesis, Brandon Bailey, San Jose News

<sup>4</sup>Hypothesis, Elliott Almond, San Jose Mercury News



Every investigative story starts with a hypothesis – a statement of fact or an allegation of wrongdoing that you will attempt to prove in your story. To identify your hypothesis, you must ask yourself, “What am I trying to prove has happened?” Are you trying to show that a government policy is ineffective or skewed? Are you trying to highlight a social injustice such as school children being forced to pay bribes to get an education? Do you want to expose official corruption?

The hypothesis is the heart of your story, the very reason that you are investigating the issue. Often the hypothesis will appear in the story’s lead paragraph – the one or two lines that explain to the reader what your story is about and why they should care. Without a strong hypothesis, your story will lack focus. Without focus, the story may become too long, complicated and tedious, and will not hold the reader’s attention.

The following examples of hypotheses are clear and to the point

*“Mismanagement and corruption leads to a major illegal logging scandal in Virachey National Park.”*

In this story hypothesis, the journalist explained how a multi-million dollar World Bank-funded project to protect one of Cambodia’s most famous national parks did the exact opposite. The forest was greatly harmed, as government officials reaped millions of dollars from the biggest illegal logging scandal ever uncovered in Cambodian history. The story revealed how senior figures in the provincial government colluded in bribe-taking with top officials in several ministries. It also pointed to the mismanagement and lack of oversight by the World Bank.

*“Lack of regulation of private clinics in Kompong Cham province leads to exploitation and intimidation of patients by doctors at public hospitals.”*

The story examined how the lack of regulation of private medical clinics in Kompong Cham province left patients vulnerable to abuse by doctors, who steered them away from public hospitals to their own private clinics for more expensive treatment.

*“... despite the increase in enrolment, poverty and systemic corruption throughout the education system are causing a worrying number of children to drop out of school too early to benefit from instruction, education officials told the Post.”<sup>5</sup>*

In this paragraph, Phnom Penh Post journalists Cat Barton and Sam Rith outlined their investigation into how the obstacles of poverty and corruption were preventing children from remaining in school.

When you write your hypothesis, you are really defining what your story is about. Remember to focus your thought on the story that you want to tell. Ask yourself, ‘WHAT is this story about?’

Don’t be afraid to keep the focus of your story narrow. If you want to report a story on government corruption, it is impossible to go out and research an entire story on every aspect of government corruption. Find ONE example, research it and investigate it thoroughly and keep your focus narrow. A narrow, well told and factual story is far more interesting than an unwieldy mess that struggles to make a point.

### Document sources

Investigative news stories are document-driven. Documentation can help prove your hypothesis and should provide the backbone of your story. Which reports, statistics, legal documents, studies and other records will you need to back up your hypothesis? Make a list of all the supporting documents you must find and how you plan to get them. If you anticipate difficulties in getting hold of documents from government agencies, start requesting access to the documents as early as possible in the reporting process. You may need to make repeat requests, which could delay publication of your story.

### People sources

<sup>5</sup>“Corruption and poverty get school dropout blame” Cat Barton and Sam Rith, Phnom Penh Post, 28 July-10 August 2006



Documentary evidence is essential to the writing of a strong investigative piece, but you should also interview as many people as possible to corroborate and support your allegations. Make a list of all the people you need to interview.

- Major players: Identify who the story is about and who will be responsible for solving the issue you intend to highlight.
- Expert sources: These could be NGOs and international organizations, think tanks and others who can comment with expertise and without bias on the issue. These sources often help to provide context, explaining how the issue affects society as a whole.
- Villains and heroes: Who benefits from the activity, issue or action? Who is the victim? Who are the people trying to force change?
- Eye witnesses: Who saw what happened and what did they see?

### Internet Sources

As access to the Internet widens and becomes cheaper – and with an increasing number of Khmer-language websites coming online – this resource is becoming a useful tool for journalists in Cambodia. You can find many reports and news stories, source contact details, curriculum vitae and photographs online.

### Timeline

You and your editor need an approximate timeline indicating how long you expect to take to report and write your investigative story. It is intended as a guide, and is not set in stone. It will take into consideration travel time, as well as the time needed to interview sources and investigate documents – and it should anticipate the possibility of delays in securing both.

Reporting and writing an investigative story can take a matter of days, or can stretch on for years.

Eric Nalder, a journalist with the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, reported and wrote an investigative story that revealed a serious lack of lifeboats on Seattle ferries in three focused and well-planned days.<sup>6</sup>

Journalists Frederic Tulsy, Julie Patel and Michael Zapler meanwhile spent three years researching and writing about misconduct among prosecutors leading to wrongful or questionable convictions in one Northern California community.<sup>7</sup>

Cambodia Daily journalist Phann Ana spent two months, from the time he was tipped off by a close source to the time the story was published, investigating corruption in the Ministry of Interior in the purchase of police motorbikes. Ana said the story took so long because he was waiting for a reply to his written request to interview Police Commissioner Hok Lundy, which was ultimately denied.

When creating your timeline, be aware that you may be competing with other media organizations for the same story.

### Budget

Because investigative stories require a bigger investment of money to produce, you will need to create a budget that details how much money you will need in order to complete your story. Your budget should include travel and lodging (if your story requires field reporting in the provinces or you are based in the provinces you have interviews and research to conduct in Phnom Penh), as well as resources such as photocopying, phone cards, Internet use, and document fees. You may also require such services as paying a typist to transcribe your notes or type your story into a computer, money to do research on the Internet, purchase a flash drive to save your research, or photocopying and printing. Depending upon the ambitions

<sup>6</sup> "Most Ferries Short of Life Rafts" by Eric Nalder, *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, 11 January 1998

<sup>7</sup> "Tainted Trails, Stolen Justice" Frederic Tulsy, Julie Patel and Michael Zapler, *The Mercury News*, 28 January 2006



of your story and your newspaper, your project may require a lot of financial support or very little.

Journalists Federic Tulsy and Michael Zapler spent an estimated \$400,000 over the course of three years to investigate wrongdoing in the county prosecutor's office in Northern California, while Phann Ana spent a few dollars meeting sources for noodle soup and about \$10 in phone card calls to write his investigative story on a government ministry's shady procurement of motorbikes.

Give your editor the best estimate as to the average costs for goods and services, and make a complete list of your needs. Be realistic about your requirements.



## Chapter 7 | The Paper Trail: A Question of Proof

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Unlike regular daily news stories, investigative reporting relies heavily on documents – the backbone to every good investigative story. Official records support a story through a structure of facts and information and allow the story to stand strong on its own. Without documents or other evidence, your story will lack credibility, leaving it open to scrutiny and criticism. This chapter focuses on how to find the evidence to support your hypothesis and how documents are often a key source of proof.

Documents serve several key functions:

- Documents are used to prove the allegations in your story and solidify the points you raise.
- They lend your story credibility and demonstrate you are telling the story as truthfully and accurately as possible.
- They can lead you to other sources and resources. Check the bibliographies attached to reports and studies – they may introduce you to fresh resources, references and people sources.

### Primary and Secondary Sources

Primary and secondary sources form the foundation of the investigative story.

Primary sources are usually documents or statements providing officially recorded facts, while secondary sources – reported information – can illuminate the story with background.

Primary source documents include but are not limited to: unpublished reports and personal data such as national identity cards, employment cards, family books and records including birth, death and marriage certificates, contracts, budgets, passports, court documents, voter registers, business permits and licenses, regulations and legislation. These documents provide specific details about a person, organization or issue.

Secondary source documents are published works, such as newspapers, magazines, newsletters, journals, radio and television programs, NGO reports, annual reports, college or university theses. Secondary sources can be useful in helping you to understand the issue and can provide leads to help to steer or focus your reporting.

When you are using documents in your story, remember the information you take from them must always be verified. Assume that documents – especially secondary sources – may not always be accurate, so double check facts when possible.<sup>8</sup>

### Following a Paper Trail

The lives of people, businesses, organizations and government institutions are constantly documented. As investigative reporters, you should approach your work believing that no matter what story you are pursuing, there are documents to support your story.

#### **People:**

- At birth, the hospital produces a **birth certificate**.
- When you begin your education, you are **registered at school**, and during your school years other records are produced including **attendance and grade reports**.
- If you break a leg playing football and go to the hospital, you will have a **medical record**.
- If you are prosecuted for breaking the law, you will have a **court record** and, if convicted, a **criminal**

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<sup>8</sup> "You have to be prepared to read. To get to the bottom of the Dundee urban development scam, Ray Fitzwalter of ITV's *World in Action* read 18 years of council minutes twice." "Investigative Reporting, a Study in Technique," David Spark.





#### record.

- If you are involved in a civil law suit, **legal documents** may be filed in a court.
- When you get married, the courts will issue you a **marriage license**.
- If you buy a home, your **property record** will be filed with the Ministry of Land Management, and **documentation of taxes** paid will be kept by the Customs Department.
- If you buy a TV, you will be issued a **receipt** that documents the sale price, the name of the store, and the date of purchase.
- When you die, the coroner's office will issue your family with an **autopsy report** indicating how you died, and an official **death certificate**.

#### Businesses and Institutions

- A company must hold a **business license** issued by the Council for Development of Cambodia.
- When your company incorporates, you must follow **bylaws** and have **articles of incorporation**.
- You may list your employees in a **staff directory**, detailing their names, titles, and contact information.
- Your company will also produce **financial statements** to track income and expenditure.
- As your business grows, you may register for **membership** with organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce.
- If your company does business with the state, you likely will have **contracts**.
- If your company fails to complete its work, there may be **legal documents** detailing a lawsuit filed at a court.
- Your company might be subjected to an **audit** to ensure accounting is done properly.
- Meeting **agendas** and **minutes** might be kept.

#### Non-Governmental Organizations

- NGOs must **register** with the corresponding ministry, for example the Ministry of Information if your NGO works in the media, or the Ministry of Agriculture if it relates to rural development.
- **Registration** with the NGO Forum, which tracks all local and international NGOs in Cambodia.
- **Annual budgets**, which are generally a matter for public record, can help you track the NGO's spending and spot any abnormalities. Where does the NGO get its money? How does it spend its money?
- **Reports, surveys, statistics and studies** that the NGO produces to demonstrate to donors that it is doing what it has promised to do.
- NGOs often produce **press releases**.
- Newspaper and magazine may **news stories or feature articles** about or by the NGO.

#### Government Bodies and Institutions

- **Audits** by the National Audit Authority.
- **Budgets** are often published. How does this government body get and spend its money?
- Government bodies issue **staff directories** or employee lists, sometimes including the resumes of public figures.
- Annual or semi-annual **reports** that detail progress made on projects.
- **Contracts and procurements** are written.
- **Correspondence** between government agencies, such as letters of reprimand from national ministries to provincial level offices, maybe available.
- **Press releases** that provide information about events and developments or give the government's stance on certain issues.
- **Newspaper, magazine, and other periodicals** may feature a story on a government body.<sup>9</sup>

While it is often difficult to gain access to such documents in Cambodia, it is the investigative journalist's job to gather as much information as possible. These documents represent the building blocks of a person or institution's life, and it is critical to gather as many of those blocks as possible to build a complete picture of the person or organization you are investigating.

These documents can be used to help prove your case; if you suspect a company director of embezzling funds, an audit report indicates how monies have been lost and can help identify the culprits.

<sup>9</sup> Adapted from "Follow the Money: Blazing the Business Paper Trail," Ronald Campbell, *The Orange County Register*. Investigative Reporters and Editors, Regional Conference, 10 September, 2004.



The New York Times reporters Joseph Kahn and Jim Yardley spent a year in 2005 exposing China's unjust judicial system, relying almost exclusively on court records to produce their hard-hitting series.<sup>10</sup>

Whenever you fill out a form, you are creating a document, and thousands of these are completed every day. A journalist starting a new beat should seek out and learn about the forms relating to their new area of expertise. A good court reporter will learn about the paperwork relating to marriage licenses, divorce papers, and other legal issues.

After determining the focus of your story, make a list of the documents you think you need and how you plan to get them. Keep in mind all levels of government as you plan the paper trail, including sangkat, khan, village, commune, provincial and national government, and sources from outside Cambodia. For example, a story on illegal logging in Cambodia may benefit from information about foreign companies importing the timber.

### Lifestyle Checks

If you are investigating corruption, it can be useful to conduct a lifestyle check – an investigation into the quality of life of an individual.

This can include checking any number of issues including the value of someone's property, how much they spend on entertaining friends and family, what sort of a car they drive and where their clothes are made. Does the person you are investigating seem to spend more money or have a more luxurious lifestyle than their salary allows?

A team of journalists with the Philippines' Centre for Investigative Journalism looked into the administration of former President Joseph Estrada, investigating everything from Estrada's homes to where he liked to eat dinner and what kind of cigars he enjoyed smoking. Taken together this information built up a fuller picture of the man and his lavish spending habits on a civil servant's salary.

If you are investigating a school principal whom you suspect of corruption, and if you know he earns around \$100/month salary, your suspicions should be raised if he lives in a very luxurious villa and drives to work in a Lexus.

However, be careful not to jump to conclusions. You must take into account whether the person you are investigating has inherited wealth, or money earned from another career. that can explain a suspiciously healthy bank account. In Estrada's case, he was a popular movie star before becoming the leader of the Philippines.

During an investigation into former Phnom Penh municipal police chief Heng Pov, who earned \$339 a month, police discovered he had \$300,000 in cash and a cache of weapons and counterfeit U.S. currency. Law enforcement officials also froze a million dollar bank account in his name.<sup>11</sup>

The corruption of the director of a major Bulgarian heating company, who took home a salary of \$630 a month, was uncovered when he tried to raise heating rates by 12 percent to fund his lavish lifestyle. Valentin Dimitrov was living in a mansion worth half a million dollars. Investigations into his lifestyle revealed ostentatious spending on luxury goods including: \$47,960 on champagne and hors d'oeuvres; \$16,128 for snacks at gas stations; \$32,886 on a boat; and a jet ski worth \$10,962. He also held \$2 million dollars in an Austrian bank account. When Dimitrov was arrested for graft, his heating company was \$63 million in debt.<sup>12</sup>

American journalist Jerry Kammer spent four months in 2005 on the trail of a corrupt California lawmaker. Kammer and his colleague Marcus Stern discovered that Congressman Randy "Duke" Cunningham,

<sup>10</sup> "In Worker's Death, View of China's Harsh Justice", by Joseph Kahn and Jim Yardley, New York Times, 31 December 2005

<sup>11</sup> "Heng Pov's House Raided, Arrest Warrant Issued" by Saing Soenthrith and Phann Ana, *The Cambodia Daily*, 1 August 2004

<sup>12</sup> "In Bulgaria, a fleeced public is left in cold" by Matthew Brunwasser, *International Herald Tribune*, 38 July 2006, reprinted in *The Cambodia Daily*, 1 August, 2006.



a Republican lawmaker with significant influence over the direction and creation of the U.S.'s war policies, was using his political power to extract bribes from defense contractors. Through an online database of home sales, they uncovered a suspicious sale – the ‘buyer’ of Cunningham’s home was listed only as an address. Cunningham’s corruption was revealed piece by piece as Kammer and his colleague began to search through more public records that pointed to the lawmaker’s guilt in a massive bribery scandal. See Appendix I, The Money Trail, for Jerry Kammer’s explanation of how he investigated this story. See also Appendix II, “Do-It-Yourself Investigations,” excerpts taken from the Philippines Centre for Investigative Journalism book “Investigating Corruption, A Do-It-Yourself Guide (2002).”

### **Considering the source**

Once you have gathered your documents, you must consider whether they are accurate and truthful. Never take documents at face value; always cross check with other documents or testimony from human sources.

- **Try to work out if there is anything missing from the documents.** Are the pages in order, or are any pages missing? Has it been censored? Is anything blacked out or otherwise obscured?
- **Question the source.** Where did the report or information come from? Does the person who provided it to you have an agenda, or can s/he be considered a neutral source? If you are writing about politician X just before an election, you should be suspicious if politician Y leaks a report that questions X’s credibility as a candidate.
- **Is the data and information within the document accurate?** Do your own checks. Public records, such as budgets, can contain errors. Don’t just take the document at face value.
- **Is the information up to date?** Do your own checks. If possible, get another source to confirm the documents are accurate and timely.
- **Is the document genuine?** Make sure you are not dealing with fake or forged paper work.

### **What to do if you are denied documents**

Everyone is a potential source, not just high-ranking officials. When you visit offices, including those of ministries, NGOs, businesses or the National Assembly, try to establish a good relationship with secretaries and assistants. Even if they can’t give you the document you’re looking for, they may be able to tell you who can. It pays to take the time to meet regularly with key sources in government and the private sector that can help you find records or may be willing to leak them to you.

In a country where there is no freedom of information law, developing good sources that you trust and who trust you is key to getting the information you need. It is important to develop a good reputation for being fair, professional, honest and courteous. Sources will be more willing to help you if they trust you, whether by granting you interviews or giving you documents. Here are few tips on how to establish a good reputation.

- **Never under any circumstances offer money or accept money for information.** Do not ask for money before, during or after an interview, and do not accept money not to publish a story. Many government sources complain they don’t want to deal with journalists because they don’t have enough money for a bribe.
- When you promise **anonymity**, keep your promise. This is called “going off the record.” If you promise that something is off the record, keep your word.
- **Follow up.** On the day the story is published, or soon thereafter, contact your source to get his/her feedback.
- Be respectful, professional, honest and courteous. Thank your source for his/her time.
- Never make promises you cannot keep. People often think that journalists have a lot of power and can right wrongs for them. Do not promise that you will be able to sort out an issue for a person, get justice or get their money back. All you can do is to write the story.

In spite of all your efforts, you may still face obstacles in accessing public records. But just because a government agency or official does not give you the document you desire, it doesn’t mean you can’t access it in other ways. This is where it pays to be a resourceful.



- Start with the law. Appeal to the person's senses that this is public information and you are making every attempt to be thorough and accurate in your reporting. Refer to Article 5 of the 1995 Press Law which allows you access to most information so long as it does not:
  - ◆ Harm national security;
  - ◆ Harm relations with other countries;
  - ◆ Invade the privacy rights of individuals (including civil servants' personal files, medical files, and confidential official files and materials);
  - ◆ Expose trade secrets, confidential commercial and financial information obtained from individuals or legal entities and information related to the regulation and supervision of financial institutions;
  - ◆ Affect the right of a person to a fair trial.
  
- Put your request in writing. Write a letter to the agency holding the document and make a strong case that, as a journalist, you are entitled to the information.
- Ask if you can make photocopies if they will not give you an original. If the person is too busy, volunteer to make the photocopies yourself.
- Find someone else who may have the document and may be able and willing to give it to you. Is there an opponent of the person you are trying to get information on who can leak the document to you?
- Think laterally – who else may have access to the documents you need? For example, if you can't get a copy of the Labor Law from the Ministry of Labor, go to the International Labor Organization or the Royal University of Law and Economics. Alternatively, try National Assembly lawmakers or the Department of National Assembly Senate Relations and Inspection of Kandal Province.
- If a government body refuses to give you documents, approach an NGO that may be working in the same field.
- If all else fails and you can't get the information you need, or if the agency in question is deliberately delaying the release of the document, note this in your story.

Try to get into the habit of photocopying every document you plan to use along with your interview notes, and keep the copies separate from your originals. If you lose your original copies, you won't have to go through the process of tracking the documents down or transcribing interviews over again.

### **Who has what?**

Listed below is a sample of useful sources and organizations that can provide information.

### **Directories**

Don't overlook the basics. Start with phone books and directories.

- Especially if you are writing a story about an organization, staff directories are critical for providing employment information, contact details, and links within the organization. Determine who has left the organization; former employees are often good sources for information on an organization and the people within it.
- The directory of the Cooperation Committee for Cambodia, which lists international and Khmer NGOs, available from NGO Forum, 9-11, St. 476, Phnom Penh.
- Cambodia Yellow Pages, available from Interquest Enterprises, 62, St. 125, Phnom Penh.
- National Assembly directory, available from the Committee for Free and Fair Elections in Cambodia, 138, St. 122, Phnom Penh or online at <http://www.comfrel.org/khm/index.php>
- When you visit an NGO, pick up free literature which will often contain photos, names of staff and contact information.

### **Government offices**

- Ministries keep details of budgets. Build relationships with lawmakers who will pass you documents that may be difficult to get otherwise. The National Assembly may also help.



- The National Audit Authority, to find out if the organization or person you are investigating has been audited.
- The Council for the Development of Cambodia keeps all business contracts. Government Palace, Sisowath Quay, 023 981 154 or 012 909 367.
- Sangkats keep records of family books.
- Khans keep records of national IDs.
- National Archives keep records of government affairs.<sup>13</sup>
- The Tax Department: You can uncover information about government officials' residences through their property tax filings at the Tax Department. The department keeps records on who has paid their taxes – and who hasn't. It is possible to estimate an official's salary based on income tax paid.

### **Academic Institutions**

Mine colleges and universities for information – it is possible that an academic has studied the very area you are investigating. College theses can provide a wealth of information and you may find someone who is doing research on exactly your topic.

### **Private sector**

Some businesses can provide useful background. For example, if you're researching a story on land deals and rising prices, contact known and respected real estate agents such as Bona Realty.

### **Libraries and archives**

- The National Library, Daun Penh St. 92, 023 430 609/012 951 582/012 929 769
- NGO library collections, including at the Centre for Social Development, which offers a variety of issues. The Non-Timber Forest Product NGO in Ratanakiri province keeps its own library of reports on land disputes and illegal logging dating back to the 1980s.
- Pannasastra University hosts the U.S. Embassy's Freedom Corner, a library/resource area open to the public.
- Newspaper Archives – many newspapers have comprehensive archives.

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<sup>13</sup> American author Evan Gottsman wrote a book about U.S. involvement in the Cambodian Civil War based almost exclusively on dusty records he uncovered at the archives.



## Chapter 8 | The Internet: Blazing the Electronic Trail of Documents

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Documents live in a variety of places. They can be found in an organization's filing cabinets, on its bookshelves and in libraries or buried in dusty boxes in archives. Accessing these hard copy documents can be time-consuming and hard work, especially when you are working to a deadline.

As hard copy records are computerized and made available in electronic form, the Internet is increasingly becoming a useful research tool to help investigative journalists to access information quickly and easily. Often the information you find online will be used as background, but in some cases, you may find this information is the core of your story. For example, when Minister of Commerce Cham Prasidh boasted about earning a PhD from an obscure higher education institution, William Shaw of The Cambodia Daily used the Internet to learn more about the college and discovered that the degree could be obtained for a fee without stepping foot inside a classroom. When Sem Saroeun (published in the New Millennium) searched for information about the government's Priority Action Program, which provides funding for school materials, he was able to retrieve reports and up-to-date information online from sources including the World Bank – a program donor – to track how the funds were spent.

The Internet can also be used to verify information learned from a human or document source. Veteran journalist Phann Ana searched the internet after interviewing an official of the Ministry of Interior. A scandal had erupted over the ministry's purchase of 35 motorbikes for \$1.7 million, or roughly \$48,000 each. The official indicated the bikes were expensive models made in Japan, but Ana discovered online that the bikes were not. They were manufactured in the United States for a price range between \$14, 682 and \$16, 020.

Norbert Klein, who is responsible for bringing the first dial-up Internet connection to Cambodia in 1994, says the Internet is the best tool for reporters to quickly access information locally and around the globe.

This chapter focuses on how to use the Internet in your reporting, including simple tips and techniques and suggestions of Khmer language Websites. This section assumes you have a basic understanding of how to search online, as well as basic English-language skills. For more detailed guidance on using the Internet, contact Open Forum, an NGO that focuses on technology access issues, for information on classes.<sup>14</sup> You could also refer to "The Net for Journalists: A practical guide to the Internet for Journalists in Developing Countries," by Martin Huckerby, which is available at UNESCO. Nevertheless, there are numerous Khmer language Websites; it is possible to search for news, and information about the Cambodian government and local and international NGOs operating in the country. Many of these sites feature reports that journalists can read online, download or print to use as supporting documents in stories.

There is an endless array of documents available on the Internet, including articles, reports, surveys and maps, and any number of them could prove useful in your research. For example, if you are researching the government's record on collecting taxes, you can go to the Economic Institute of Cambodia's Website to collect reports and surveys with the latest data. You can learn how Cambodia ranks in terms of transparency compared with other nations, at the Centre for Social Development's Website. And the World Bank provides online reports covering everything from education to land issues.

Some countries provide information of public interest on the Internet as a matter of course, including property, voting, bankruptcy and criminal records. This is not yet the case in Cambodia, which has no freedom of information law and where record keeping can be unreliable. However, moves toward e-government are underway. In 2000, the government established the National Information and Communications Technology Development Authority (NIDA), with the goal of closing

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<sup>14</sup> Open Forum, [www.forum.com.kh](http://www.forum.com.kh)





the digital divide. NIDA, chaired by the prime minister, is responsible for formulating policies that promote information technology development, oversees implementation of those policies, and monitors all IT-related projects in the country.

The Royal Government of Cambodia, the Phnom Penh municipality and some lower-level government bodies and ministries have Websites that offer organizational charts and limited information on government programs, although the data available is sometimes outdated. The Phnom Penh municipality site<sup>15</sup> carries press releases and information on city projects. On Cambodia's e-government Website,<sup>16</sup> you can find information and news, as well as links to laws, health information, government ministries and more.

The Committee for Free and Fair Elections in Cambodia Website<sup>17</sup> provides data on all members of the National Assembly, including phone numbers, addresses and their official titles within the assembly. In many cases, NGO reports are available online.

### **Beginning your search**

Many journalists routinely begin their research by tracking their subjects online using a search engine – a database program that navigates the Web. To use a search engine you type in key words related to your research topic and it will roam the entire online universe and retrieve – in a matter of seconds – all the available information that matches your search criteria. The most commonly used search engines are Google, Yahoo and MSN,<sup>18</sup> and the results are largely the same whichever you use. In December 2006, Google launched its Khmer language website - <http://www.google.com.kh>

If you find your search returns too many results than you can possibly read – a common problem because of the glut of information available online – try to refine your search using more specific words or phrases. Use quotation marks around phrases that you want to match exactly. For example, if you use the key words illegal logging Cambodia, you may retrieve hundreds of thousands of hits, or links to online information containing those words. If you narrow that search to illegal logging Ratanakiri, the search engine will return you several hundred hits. If you use quotation marks to find the exact phrase and add a date, “illegal logging” Ratanakiri 2006, you narrow your search further and will retrieve fewer, but more relevant hits.

Invariably your search will throw up more results than you will ever have time to read. Sift through the listed results to find what you're looking for – much of what is returned will be irrelevant and you can easily waste hours if you check every link that that search engine provides. Remain focused in your research, however intoxicating the excess of information may be.

If you discover the opposite and you don't get as many results as you expected, check your spelling. It may be that you have mistyped a name or another component of your search.

Keep your journalism instincts alert when on the web – make sure that the site you are looking at is credible. Is the site well organized? Are there misspelled words and is there bad grammar? Ask yourself why the site or information exists – is it trying to sell you a point of view. Is it run by a pressure group, political party or even an NGO. Is the site really accurate?

Scrutinize and verify documents that you find on the Internet as you would any other. Double check your information with another source before using it in your story.

Whenever possible, print the information you have found or save it on a disc or memory stick, in case you can't find the data again because it has been moved or the Website closed. Try to avoid saving important information to a computer hard drive – if it crashes, all your research could be lost.

### **E-mail**

With more and more people using the Internet, your sources included, interviews by e-mail are becoming the norm. Learning how to e-mail also facilitates interviews with sources outside Cambodia.

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.phnompenh.gov.kh>

<sup>16</sup> [www.cambodia.gov.kh](http://www.cambodia.gov.kh)

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.comfrel.org>

<sup>18</sup> [www.google.com](http://www.google.com), [www.yahoo.com](http://www.yahoo.com), [www.msn.com](http://www.msn.com)

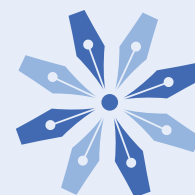


Some sources will only respond to questions via e-mail, to avoid being misquoted. E-mail serves to protect the investigative journalist too, providing an instant record of whom you contacted, when, and what they said.

Although the Internet is useful, it does not mean you need never leave the newsroom. You must maintain your sources; face-to-face contact is invaluable in winning their trust, and visiting an organization in person allows you to cultivate existing sources and meet new ones.



## Useful Internet websites



- <http://www.yellowpages-cambodia.com> > Cambodian Yellow Pages
- [www.worldbank.org](http://www.worldbank.org) > Website for World Bank in English language with useful reports and other information.
- <http://www.eicambodia.org> > Website for Economic Institute of Cambodia in English language with useful information on Cambodia's economy including latest reports and details.
- [www.cambodiapolitics.org](http://www.cambodiapolitics.org) > This Website offers headlines from several Khmer language and foreign newspapers as well as reports. In English with some Khmer.
- <http://www.state.gov> > U.S. State Department Website provides statistics and data about Cambodia.
- <http://www.comfrel.org> > A who's who list of Cambodian National Assembly members and election data. Khmer and English.
- <http://wwwhdr.undp.org> > UNDP Human Development Report. For statistics on everything from poverty to education to civil society. English.
- <http://www.phnomphenpost.com> > Contains searchable database for stories dating back to 1998 English only.
- <http://www.phnompenh.gov.kh> > Municipality of Phnom Penh homepage.
- <http://www.cambodia.gov.kh/> > Website for Cambodia government, including contact information for ministries, history, government structure, etc.
- <http://www.google.com> > Google search engine
- <http://www.google.com.kh> > Google Khmer search engine
- <http://www.yahoo.com> > Yahoo search engine
- <http://www.msn.com> > MSN search engine.
- <http://earth.google.com> > Google Earth, which allows you search for satellite images of various locales around the world down to a level of detail of small buildings and monuments. You need a fast Internet connection to browse the maps and satellite images.
- <http://images.google.com> > Google Images, which allows you to search for photographs, illustrations, and other images.



## Chapter 9 | The People Trail: Sources And The Art Of The Interview

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For an investigative journalist, reliable human sources are vital in building a credible and balanced story. An investigative story may be born of a journalist's strongly held belief that an issue needs to be brought to the public eye, but it cannot be built on the journalist's conviction alone. You need expert comment and first-person accounts to present a strong case to your readers and persuade them that your allegations are true and not purely a matter of your own opinion.<sup>19</sup> But extracting the information you need from a source is not easy; conducting a good interview is an art form. This chapter explores how to find and hold on to good sources, and how to conduct effective interviews.

### **Finding Useful Sources**

As with the documents journalists rely on to build their stories, there are two types of human sources, primary and secondary.

You should be largely interested in seeking interviews with primary sources: people who are directly involved in an event or issue, including eye witnesses, victims and the people who caused things to happen, or have benefited as a result.

Secondary sources are those who are not directly involved, for example other journalists reporting on the issue.

How do you build a list of sources? Start with the basics. Check telephone directories such as the Yellow Pages,<sup>20</sup> for possible contacts in government ministries, relevant industries, local and international NGOs and foreign embassies. Search through NGO and UN agency directories. Get onto the Internet and check Websites for contacts and other useful information, press releases, reports and studies. Ask friends and colleagues if they can recommend contacts.

When you meet a contact, he or she may be in a position to recommend other sources – don't be afraid to ask before you finish the interview – and always ask interviewees for business cards.

Other news stories that have explored the same subject may point you to suitable sources, so check newspaper archives and news Websites for inspiration. The stories themselves are secondary sources. A cautionary note: Beware the journalist as a source! A journalist who witnessed an event or has been directly affected can be considered a primary source, a suitable interviewee. A journalist who interviewed others involved and passes on that information to you is giving you second-hand information, and should be considered a secondary source.

### **Cultivating Sources**

"The source is the reporter's life blood," writes Melvin Mencher in the book, *News Reporting and Writing*. "Without access to information through the source, the reporter cannot function."<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> "Documents are like the bricks needed to build a wall while interviews are the mortar to hold the bricks together and keep the wall intact." William Gaines.

<sup>20</sup> Available online at <http://www.yellowpages-cambodia.com/>

<sup>21</sup> "News Reporting and Writing," Melvin Mencher, Columbia University Press, 2006



Your sources are critical to your story. Often your best sources will be those you have known for a long time, who trust and respect you and are willing to talk on the record and provide credible information for your story. What must you do to hold on to valuable sources?

Always be respectful and professional. Allow your sources to tell their full stories, be fair and accurate in how you report what they say, and whenever possible respect requests for anonymity. Understand that using the information your sources give you could land them in trouble with the authorities, their employers, or their community. Do not betray the trust of your source.

Ensure that the quotes you use are accurate and that any information you use is correct – do not twist what your source has said to suit your argument, and don't guess what a source is trying to say. If the meaning is not clear, ask your source to clarify.

As a precaution, hold on to all interview notes and tape recordings so you can prove that you have not misrepresented what your source said.<sup>22</sup> (Read more about these issues in the chapter on ethics.)

It takes time and effort to win the trust of your sources. Make the effort to learn about and show interest in their lives and families. Call them and meet them socially, even when you're not chasing them for information. Wish them well on birthdays and holidays. This seemingly simple habit will encourage sources to open up for future interviews.

If you plan to ask difficult, potentially embarrassing or offensive questions, save them for the end of your interview. Winning the trust of a source during the course of an interview should relax your source and make it easier to ask such questions. However, weigh the cost of asking such a question and possibly cutting yourself off from that source forever. How important is that question to your story?

### **Evaluating a Source**

Beware! Not all sources are trustworthy. Some are only too willing to tell you their side of the story to fulfill their agenda.

Here some questions that Peter Eng, a former Associated Press correspondent, suggests you ask yourself when evaluating sources:

1. **Has the source been accurate in the past?** Know the background of your source. Has he or she given accurate information in the past? Always try to verify information provided by a source.
2. **Can the source give you names of witnesses or direct you to documents that prove he or she is telling the truth?** Ask for evidence to back up allegations of corruption and wrongdoing.
3. **Was the source in the right place to know the information he is giving you?** Did he see or hear it himself?
4. **Does the source have the competency to talk about this subject?** The Minister of Economy and Finance is in a better position to comment on the state of the economy than a taxi driver.
5. **Can the source provide specific details that sound true?** If a source claims to have been tortured in prison, are there bruises on his body? Is there photographic evidence? Can he describe how it happened?
6. **Why is the source giving you this information?** Does he have any reason to give you information that is incomplete, biased or false? Does the source have a political agenda in giving you this information?
7. **Does the information the source is giving you fit with other information that you know?** Always verify claims with another source.

### **How to Get an Interview with a Reluctant Source.**

It will sometimes be difficult to persuade a source to talk, especially if you are investigating a story about corruption or wrongdoing. Sometimes persistence pays – repeated calls, a visit to the target source, faxes,



e-mails. But this approach may antagonize, so be careful not to frighten or anger the source.

British journalist Nic Dunlop broke a major story by securing a series of interviews with Comrade Duch, the former Khmer Rouge commander of Tuol Sleng Prison, S-21. Traveling with American journalist Nate Thayer – who had interviewed Pol Pot and other high-ranking KR officials – Dunlop made three trips to the former Khmer Rouge stronghold of Anlong Veng in 1999, each time meeting Duch. The chats were private, away from other former Khmer Rouge cadres, and eventually Duch trusted him enough to open up and admit his role at S-21, thanks to Dunlop’s gentle persistence.<sup>23</sup>

Sam Bunnath, a reporter with Reasmei Kampuchea in Battambang, was researching a story about an education official accused of corruption. Every time he tried to call her, she didn’t answer or her phone was turned off. Frustrated, he sent a letter to the Provincial Education Department and was finally granted an interview with her.

While there may be other techniques in getting the interview, here are some common guidelines on how to get an interview with a reluctant source:

- **Be persistent:** If you call to get an interview and you get a “no” answer, wait a few hours, or even a day or two, depending on your story and the significance of the source, then try calling again. If you get a second “no,” go to the source’s office. Try to meet them in person. If you get a third “no” in person, wait a week and try again. Try and try again. The day before your story is to be published, make one last attempt, making it clear that this is their last chance to tell their side of the story.
- **Try the stakeout:** Hang out at the person’s office. You are bound to bump into your target source as they arrive at or leave the office. You don’t need to ambush them – just let them know you would like to give them every chance possible to have their say. You can also use a public event as an opportunity to interview the subject.
- **Send a letter:** Sometimes people respond to more formal invitations for an interview. Try writing a letter, e-mail or fax explaining that you need to talk to that person for the story to be fair and balanced. You might consider including samples of one or two of your best stories to demonstrate you are professional and treat your sources fairly.
- **Infiltrate their network:** When sources do not want to talk, cast your net wider and solicit help from one of their friends, a neighbor or a family member. Try to build good relationships with secretaries and aides who may help you to secure and interview or tip you off on important stories.

### **Strategies for a successful interview**

You must develop strategies to conduct successful interviews, because the quality of information provided by a source is often determined by the interview itself. Some strategies to follow to ensure a successful interview.

**Be gracious:** Acknowledge your source’s busy schedule and thank him or her for making the time to talk to you. Don’t be late. Dress appropriately.<sup>24</sup>

**The warm-up:** Make the person feel at ease in your presence. If you are conducting the interview at the source’s home or office, be sure s/he knows that you are a guest. Do not be too familiar but note your surroundings and, if appropriate, chat about what you see – family photos, art etc. – to relax them.

<sup>23</sup> *“The Lost Executioner,”* Nic Dunlop, Bloomsbury, 2005.

<sup>24</sup> In December 2005, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs warned journalists not to wear “tourists’ clothes” to events attended by the Prime Minister and other high-ranking officials. A wire reporter wearing a checkered shirt was later barred from a signing ceremony at the ministry.





**Be prepared.** Research your source and issue, have questions ready, and ensure you have all the equipment you need for the interview.

**Explain why you're there:** Outline the importance of the meeting and how the interview fits into the broader story.

**Avoid asking personal questions that may offend.** Consider whether asking such a question is crucial to the story. If it is, be polite and try to ask the question in private.

**Be aware that items like cameras, tape recorders and computers may intimidate your source.** Do not conceal recording devices.

**Be clear whether the information you are getting is on the record.** Ask sources to confirm and back up sensitive statements.

**Listen to what your source says** and respond. Your source may take your investigation down a new, interesting route.

**Ask follow-up questions** to make sure you get the complete picture. Make sure the source has told you everything s/he can.

There are three important tips for better interviewing.

Listen!

Listen!

Listen!

### Preparing for the interview

**Preliminary research.** Research your interviewee and issue in advance. Bring documents as a backup.

**Prepare questions.** Plan the direction of your interview.

**Make sure you have everything you need,** e.g., bring an extra notebook, cassette tapes, pens and batteries.

### Troubleshooting tips

Some sources may refuse to comment on the record or provide certain information. Common sense will often prevail, but if you get stuck the following tips may help:

If the source refuses to answer a question, rephrase it or ask other questions and return to that issue later.

If the source still refuses to comment, explain that your readers may think that their inability to comment implies guilt or complicity. Explain that the interview is an opportunity for the source to defend himself or herself. If all you can get is “no comment,” note that in your story.



Try silence. A source might give a brief answer to a sensitive question. Wait a moment instead of launching straight into the next question. Your silence indicates you are waiting for further explanation. Sources often feel uncomfortable with silence and will continue talking.

Try subtle seduction. A frantically scribbling journalist can intimidate the source. If he or she is saying something sensitive, try not writing at that point. American journalist, novelist and screenwriter Dan Wakefield says, "I would wait until they said something kind of innocuous and that's when I would write down the awful thing they had said."

When the source returns a question. Some sources, particularly politicians, have learned how to deal with journalists by returning a question with a question. Tell the source politely but firmly that readers are not interested in a journalist's ideas or opinions, they want to know what has to say.

Do not ask yes or no questions. Ask questions that encourage expansive answers.

Save the hardest questions for last. Each question should be ratcheting up to the next level of the interview. Relax your source in the early stages of the interview with simple questions, and ask the sensitive questions when you think you have his or her confidence.

### On Using Tape Recorders

Use a tape recorder to record the interview as well as taking notes to ensure the quotes you use are accurate. A tape recording also allows you to review parts of the interview later. You can always go back to the tape if you are not sure about anything said in the interview.

The tape is also evidence that the source said what you say he or she said in the interview and is proof that you talked to the source in person.

Nevertheless, make notes too in case the sound quality is not good or you run out of batteries. Your written notes will include environmental information that the tape cannot capture including facial expression, gestures and interruptions.

Always ask for permission before recording the interview. It is unethical to use a tape recorder without the source's knowledge or permission. Tell the person when you are turning the tape recorder on – and when you are turning it off.

### **Post-interview**

To be sure that you have got the best from your interview and to be sure you can refer back to the same source in the future, the following tips may be useful:

Ask the source if there's anything you have missed. It is possible you did not ask enough or the right questions. You will be surprised how often you can get important information by asking, "Is there anything I should have asked you?" The information they voluntarily add may be important.

Ask your source if s/he has any questions for you, as a matter of courtesy. This approach can also introduce important information.

Ask if you can contact the source later, if you think of more questions or if your research takes you in a new direction.

Ask if s/he can recommend other people to talk to. Often they will know other people who know



about the issue you are investigating. Ask them if you can tell the other person that your interviewee referred you.

Ask for relevant recent press releases, reports, statements, studies or other documents.

Get a business card. It will help you get names, positions and other details accurate. It will help you re-connect with the person later.

Thank the source again for his/her time.

Make extra notes of the surroundings and the atmosphere of the interview. Descriptions of the source's office, home, family, circumstance, tone, mannerisms or mood may help paint a complete picture for your reader

Review your notes. After returning to the newsroom, you should review your notes and highlight compelling quotes you may want to use while the interview is still fresh in your mind. Note particular questions that the source avoided. Try to summarize the interview, noting the most important information it gave you.

Transcribe the interview as soon as possible while it is still fresh in your mind, noting gesture and tone, important quotes and key points.

Prepare follow-up questions. After reviewing your interview notes, make a list of questions you might ask in a follow-up interview.



## Chapter 10 | Telling the Story: From Outline to Publication

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Once you have gathered your documents and completed your interviews, you must pull all the pieces together to create your story.

### Focus

Keep clear in your mind what your story is about. You wrote a hypothesis to focus your research, but it is possible the story has shifted during your investigation. Now you have all the information you need at your fingertips, try summarizing the story into a single sentence again, to help you focus your writing. Re-visit the idea of writing out a sentence or two - “What is this story about” – it is simple but highly practical way of keeping yourself on track.

Alternatively, try the “market” test: if you run into a friend at a market, imagine you have only 30 seconds to tell your story before your friend must leave. What are the most important points of your story? What are you trying to prove? Who are the major players? Why is it important for you to tell this story now? What should be changed and how?

**Don't Be Afraid to Keep Your Focus Narrow.**

A well told, highly researched and focused story is ALWAYS better than an unwieldy essay that is not at all focused.

### Outline

Similar to a work plan in its function, an outline is a map that will guide you as you write, listing point-by-point the most important topics or issues in your story.

Once you have identified and ordered the main points, you can begin mining your notebooks and documents to fill in facts, figures, direct quotes and anecdotes to build your story. Take care to select only those points and facts that are relevant to your story. You should be prepared to discard information that does not support your hypothesis.

It might be useful to write a timeline of events. Your story won't necessarily follow a chronological order, but knowing the true order of events may give you a better sense of where to begin.



## TIMELINES

**When journalist Chea Kimsan tracked the illegal logging scandal in Virachey National Park, his timeline looked like this.**

2000 – The World Bank implements its forestry protection and management program, working with the Ministry of Forestry on and five million dollar in grant aid.

2001 – Forests are cleared and timber is felled illegally.

2003 – World Bank and government officials take a helicopter ride over Virachey National Park and discover huge swaths of forests have been cleared.

2004 – An investigation begins into allegations that Ratanakiri provincial and government officials are part of Cambodia’s largest illegal logging scandal.

2005 – The dragnet begins as low-level officials and park rangers are apprehended and charged with illegally cutting trees and selling them across the border to Vietnam.

2005 – Phay Sopha, an Environment Ministry official in charge of mapping, is found murdered; his body stuffed in the trunk of his car and left in the parking lot at Soriya Mall.

2006 – More low-level government officials are arrested and charged while the governor of Ratanakiri gets reassigned to another job.

2006, July/August – World Bank freezes funding to Cambodian government while it investigates corruption in its projects, including the Virachey National Park protection program.

## Story structures

Hard news stories commonly follow an inverted pyramid structure; the lead tells the reader the Who, What, Why, Where, When and How, followed by a paragraph explaining why that information is important, preferably followed by a quote to back it all up. Within three paragraphs, the reader knows exactly what is going on and why he or she should care.

But investigative news stories often follow a different form. They may be longer, more involved and more along the style of a feature than a straight news story.

Carole Rich, author of, “Writing and Reporting News: A Coaching Method,” outlines five structural models for investigative stories:<sup>25</sup>

- **The High Fives Formula**  
News (what happened or is happening)  
Context (the background for the story)  
Scope (is it local or part of a national trend?)  
Edge (where is the news leading, what happens next?)  
Impact (why should anyone care?)
- **Wall Street Journal formula**  
A “soft” lead introduces the main character of your story or sets the scene for the reader; followed by a summary paragraph (your hypothesis); followed by backup for those two elements; further explanation of the issue or event; and an ending that ties back to the lead, known as a “circle kicker” because it takes the story in full circle.
- **Pyramid structure**  
In this structure, you tell the story in a chronological order, giving the reader a summary lead and a foreshadowing – a hint of what the story is about – and a play-by-play

<sup>25</sup> “Writing and Reporting News: A Coaching Method,” Carole Rich, Wadsworth Publishing. 1997



description of events. You build your story towards a climax, saving the most important event or issue for the end. The suspense keeps the reader interested throughout.

- **Chronological**

Build your story around a sequence of events that led to a scandal, catastrophe, or other incidents.

### **Case Study: Lake View Hills Estates**

The phone woke Joe McLean shortly after 3 a.m. Sunday and outside he saw the red glow of flames in the hills surrounding his rural San Diego County home. He woke his daughter and wife, then alerted a few neighbors. Up and down the winding canyon roads, residents were waking to the smell of smoke and the noise of barking dogs and honking horns. With no help from fire crews and no instructions from authorities, families packed up cars, and others set out on foot. There was only one way out: Muth Valley Road.

Neighbors in this tight-knit community just south of the San Vicente Reservoir had only minutes to make choices. By dawn, four who lived on the street would be dead, and half the homes would be destroyed. On Monday, the survivors told their stories.

The McLeans had the best vantage point in the hilly neighborhood of 10 custom homes. They could see towering flames closing in and wasted no time collecting possessions. In three separate cars, the McLeans were the first through the neighborhood's security gate about 3:15 a.m.

Concerned the electricity would fail and the families would be trapped, Bob Daly, 75, had opened the gate when he got word of the fire from McLean. Then Daly headed back home.

Along the bending Muth Valley Road, fire rose as high as the neighborhood's towering pine trees. Joe McLean, 46, trailed his wife and daughter, raising his hand as he drove to shield his eyes from the heat. He worried that heat would melt the plastic windows in the ragtop Jeep drive by his 18-year-old daughter Jennifer.

Rodney Weichelt, 35, and his father, Bob, 59, were close behind. They could see McLean ahead. Embers pelted Rodney Weichelt's van, sounding to him like machinegun fire. He dripped with sweat.

At his home up the road, Stephen Shacklett, 55, corralled his four Irish wolfhounds, got them into his RV and drove toward the gate. His girlfriend, Cheryl Jennie, 59, was still at the house, planning to leave soon in her own car.

Natalie Corbett, 39, was in the neighborhood that night to housesit. She called 911, and the operator told her she was on her own. Corbett asked if she should leave. The operator said to go if she thought she could make it. Corbett loaded her dog into her Bronco and fled past the gate, driving through a curtain of fire. A fallen cable was stretched tight across the road and flipped her truck, sending it skidding. Surrounded by flames, the Bronco resting on its side, Corbett wrapped herself and the dog in a sunshade and prepared to die, sucking on a wetted washcloth she had brought with her.

Other families were still at home. The Hamiltons -- Steve, his pregnant wife, Jodi, and their toddler son -- had decided to take two cars. At first they could smell smoke but couldn't see even a glow. Hurrying but not frantic, they began packing collectibles and photo albums. Steve Hamilton, 43, took their 2-year old son Alexander in his car. Jodi Hamilton, 38, put their boxer, Libby, in hers.

Larry Redden, 64, had awakened at 12:30 a.m. to the smell of smoke. Redden, who retired last year after three decades with the San Diego Fire Department, walked out on his deck to check on the fire, then went back to bed. He and his wife, Laureen, 44, woke again when McLean called. The Reddens roused her parents, who lived with them, and got ready to leave.

The Shohara family -- James, Solange and their grown son Randy -- were the newest family in the neighborhood. At their home near the gated entry, they too prepared to flee.

About the same time, Bob Daly and his wife, Barbara, 67, pulled out of their driveway.





By 3:30 a.m. the Hamiltons, Reddens, Shoharas, Dalys and Cheryl Jennie formed a six-car caravan through the entry gate. With Redden leading, they were stopped by wall of fire. The families turned around and headed home, wondering what to do next.<sup>26</sup>

**Sections technique:** This involves dividing your story into sections – topics, a lead, body and kicker – that you string together to make a whole. Adopting this method means you can write as you report, rather than waiting until the end of the reporting process.

For example, once you have conducted an interview with a key source, begin writing a section of your story based on that interview.

Consider each section a story in itself with a lead, a body, and an ending. Once you have the key sections of your story written, you can begin to glue together the rest of your story narrative with transitions.

For example, in a story about the mismanagement of private health clinics in Kompong Cham province, Reasmei Kampuchea journalist Mean Rameth divided his story into the following areas:

1. The issue
2. The victims
3. The rules and regulations
4. The rule breakers (the perpetrators)
5. The end

After Rameth interviewed the victims – patients exploited by doctors at private clinics – he wrote individual sections detailing their experiences and explaining the ways their rights were being violated. He also gathered documents to support his hypothesis, including rules and regulations, the code of ethics for doctors, and lawsuits by patients who had been mistreated. Once he understood the policies and procedures, he was able to write another portion of the story on Ministry of Health policy.

Rameth then interviewed the doctors in question and wrote a section explaining their legal and ethical transgressions.

## **Elements of good story writing**

**“Everybody’s got time for a story that makes a difference to them.”**

– Richard Ben Cramer, Pulitzer-prize winning reporter

Write in a clear, concise, and compelling way. Even though you are writing a factual piece that is highly serious in intent, tell a good story. Write an interesting, thoughtfully crafted lead that catches the reader’s attention. Develop strong characters, vivid description of settings, a dramatic flow, and dialogue. Make sure your story flows with good quotes and transitions.

Look closely for details. Describing the way a person dresses, the tone of their voice, the colours in a room, all can add to the development of a “character” in an investigative story. Such writing will not detract from your main hypothesis – but it will definitely make a lot more readers want to continue reading.

### **1. Leads**

There are two types of news leads –hard leads, and soft leads.

Hard leads are used for hard news stories. They attempt to answer the 5Ws and H, and should be short and to the point.

<sup>26</sup> “Life or Death Choices on Staying or Fleeing” by Scott Glover, Jack Leonard and Megan Garvey, *Los Angeles Times*, 28 October 2003



“Prime Minister Hun Sen on Thursday called for a controversial ‘freedom park’ to be established in all provinces for political parties to hold gatherings, stating that this would help bolster Cambodian democracy.”<sup>27</sup>

“Survivors of the Khmer Rouge regime might eventually receive free legal assistance allowing them to participate in the upcoming trials of the regime’s former leaders, if a Paris-based legal organization’s recommendations are heeded.”<sup>28</sup>

Some hard leads summarize an event, issue or problem, and answer some but not all of the 5Ws and H, providing a broad picture of what is going on. They are also known as summary leads.

A crescent of fire continued to rage through Southern California on Sunday, destroying hundreds of homes, claiming at least 11 more lives and throwing the entire region into an eerie, smoky half-light.

A searing Santa Ana wind blew flames over mountain slopes like an incandescent hurricane, burning more than 500 home and bringing the fires’ two-day toll to more than 700 buildings. The combined fires stretched over 250,000 acres – about half the size of Rhode Island – in an arc from Ventura County to the Mexican border.<sup>29</sup>

Investigative news journalists often opt for soft leads to lure the reader in. This type of lead sets the scene for the reader, telling a victim’s story before expanding on the larger issue. A well written soft lead ensures that the reader cares what becomes of the victim and continues reading to the end.

In this example, Luke Reynolds gives the reader a glimpse at who are the perpetrators and victims of an illegal logging scandal. He later expands on the greater environmental impact of the issue.

Phnom Penh — On a far-flung riverbank in southwest Cambodia last spring, Buth Ran peered out of her wooden stilt home to see a sagging barge unload a half-dozen logging trucks.

“What are they doing here?” she later recalled thinking. Deep inside Botum Sakor National Park, no roads ran through the forest of mangrove and melaleuca. Buth Ran and the peninsula’s few other isolated inhabitants, cut off from any major arteries by rivers and mountains, survived by fishing the Khlang Ye river and farming small plots of vegetables.

No lights burned; no machinery rumbled.

Yet the trucks came in waves, led by contractors carrying documents stamped by Prime Minister Hun Sen’s government that authorized their presence and immediate plans to clear the surrounding forest. The trees were to be cut, chipped and shipped by sea to paper mills in China.<sup>30</sup>

Investigative reporters can also use anecdotal leads. In a series of Pulitzer Prize winning stories, Joseph Kahn highlighted the injustice of China’s legal system. He began one story with a wrongly accused detainee.

Anyang, China—For three days and three nights, the police wrenched Qin Yanhong’s arms high above his back, jammed his knees into a sharp metal frame, and kicked his gut whenever he fell asleep. The pain was so intense that he watched sweat pour off his face and form puddles on the floor. On the fourth day, he broke down.

“What color were her pants?” they demanded.

“Black,” he gasped, and felt a whack on the back of his head.

<sup>27</sup> “PM Calls for ‘Freedom Parks’ in All Provinces,” by Yun Samean, *The Cambodia Daily*, 5 May 2006

<sup>28</sup> “French Legal Group Aims To Aid KR Victims,” by Douglas Gillison, *The Cambodia Daily*, 5 May 2006

<sup>29</sup> “Rampage of Firestorms” by Louis Sahagun, Joel Rubin and Mitchell Landsberg, *The Los Angeles Times*, 27 October, 2003

<sup>30</sup> “Pulping Cambodia,” by Luke Reynolds, *Multinational Monitor*, March-April 2005



“Red,” he cried, and got another punch.  
“Blue,” he ventured.  
The beating stopped.

This is how Mr. Qin, a 35-year-old steel mill worker in Henan Province in central China, recalled groping in the darkness of an interrogation room to deduce the “correct” details of a rape and murder, end his torture and give the police the confession they required to close a nettlesome case.<sup>31</sup>

In the following example, Kahn and Jim Yardley explore the widening gap between the rich and poor in rural China.

His dying debt was \$80. Had he been among China’s urban elite, Zheng Qingming would have spent more on a trendy cell phone. But he was one of the hundreds of millions of peasants far removed from the country’s new wealth. His public high school tuition alone consumed most of his family’s income for a year.

He wanted to attend college. But to do so meant taking the annual college entrance examination. On the humid morning of June 4, three days before the exam, Qingming’s teacher repeated a common refrain: he had to pay his last \$80 in fees or he would not be allowed to take the test. Qingming stood before his classmates, his shame overtaken by anger.

“I do not have the money,” he said slowly, according to several teachers who described the events that morning. But his teacher -- and the system -- would not budge.

A few hours later, Qingming, 18 years old, stepped in front of an approaching locomotive. The train, like China’s roaring economy, was an express.

If his gruesome death was shocking, the life of this peasant boy in the rolling hills of northern Sichuan Province is repeated a million fold across the Chinese countryside. Peasants like Qingming were once the core constituency of the Communist Party. Now, they are being left behind in the money-Centered, cutthroat society that has replaced socialist China.<sup>32</sup>

Bun Khy of Reasmei Kampuchea wrote an investigative piece as part of a project during Internews training. The story, about corruption in road construction, starts with one of the victims, a student who cannot get to school because the roads are in a constant state of disrepair.

The sky became dark with gathering clouds to hide the sunlight. The villagers were walking home hurriedly. The wind began to blow the clouds from the west to the east. Clear drops of diamond-like rain started falling to the earth. Frogs, tadpoles, Hing (a type of burrowing toad) and toads cried noisily and joyfully and hopped here and there in search of food, which was quite contrary to the people living in the villages of Kompong Roteh, Prek Sbov and O’Kunthor in Stung Sen district, who got depressed as they could not go to their offices, schools and markets due to a more than 1,000m-long dirt road that would become muddy.

Rath Malin, an 11<sup>th</sup>-grade student of the Hun Sen-Balaing High School who was living in Kompong Roteh village, Kompong Roteh commune, Stung Sen district, said: “I almost cry when it rains.” He often failed to go to school for a morning after having dressed nicely, left home for a moment and then slipped and fell, dirtying his clothes. His friends often blamed him for playing truant, but in fact, the difficult part of road from his home to school was only more than 1,000 m. and there was no other roundabout way or short cut.<sup>33</sup>

It’s not always easy to find your lead. It is often said that it takes as long to write the lead as it does to write the rest of the story. Leads have to be good; they have to make the reader want to keep reading. For some

<sup>31</sup> “Deep Flaws, and Little Justice in China’s Court System,” by Joseph Kahn, *The New York Times*, 21 September 2005

<sup>32</sup> “Among China’s Boom, No Helping Hand for Young Qingming” by Joseph Kahn and Jim Yardley, *The New York Times*, 1 August 2004.



writers, the lead does not become obvious until they have written the rest of the story. If the perfect lead does not immediately spring to mind, move on to the body of your story and return to the lead later.

## **2. Quotes and paraphrasing**

Good quotes add color, context and drama to your story, as well as lending credibility by giving your source a voice. Don't use a quote just to prove you spoke to a source. Bad or irrelevant quotes will only weigh your story down.

Direct quotations are the exact words your source used and are placed inside quotation marks. Indirect quotes are statements of fact that do not need to be in quotation marks.

**Direct quote:** - "I took the money from the project finances and gave it to my relatives," said the provincial official.

When you are using direct quotes, you must introduce each new speaker in a separate paragraph. If you are quoting a series of speakers, you must make a transition between one speaker to the next.

Direct quotes **MUST** be the exact words, in context as they are spoken to you by the person you are quoting.

**Indirect quote:** - The provincial official admitted that he had taken the money from the project finances and had given it to his relatives.

An indirect quote is paraphrasing: - taking the general idea or theme of what the source tells you and writing it in your story without quotation marks. Be careful not to twist what the source has said to suit your story. Always keep the context! You must attribute the paraphrased information to that source, even though you are not quoting him or her directly.

Avoid putting into quotations information that you can simply tell the reader in the body of your story, e.g. facts. There is no need to quote a ministry official who says, "The royal family has been a constant in Cambodian society."

Beware: If you quote a source making a defamatory statement, you may also be guilty of defamation. Please read the ethics chapter for more information.

### **Quotations**

A **direct quote** is the exact words, in context as the person you are quoting speaks them.

eg: "I am suspicious of where the money has come from," said Bun Kimsang "It makes me feel there is something going on that is not legitimate."

An **indirect quote** is paraphrasing: - taking the general idea or theme of what the source tells you and writing it in your story without quotation marks.

eg: Bun Kimsang said he was suspicious about the source of money, making him feel that much of the activity was not legitimate.

**Be careful not to twist what the source has said to suit your story.**

**Always keep the context!**

**You must attribute the paraphrased information to that source, even though you are not quoting him/her directly.**

<sup>33</sup> "Road Construction," by Bun Khy, *Internews training project*, October 2006



### **3. Attribution**

Attribution is identifying the people or sources that told you something, whether it is a statement of fact or an opinion.

What must be attributed?

- All quotes.
- Paraphrased ideas.
- Facts and figures.
- Anything you did not witness or observe first-hand.
- Statements of opinion.

What does not need attribution?

- Indisputable facts or issues of common knowledge, i.e. The National Assembly met on Tuesday to discuss a new law on sex trafficking.
- Events you observed directly.
- Background information on the issue or people you are writing about.

### **4. The Kicker**

Your story must have a good ending to satisfy the reader. One common and effective way of ending a story is tying it back to your beginning – this is called “the kicker.” If you highlight the case of an individual in your lead, try to come back to that person at the end of your story with a description or forward-looking quote.

Two journalism students of the Institute of War and Peace Reporting, Anastasiya Dorofeeva and Alexandra Kozlovskaya, wrote of the ongoing dangers of the nuclear accident site, Chernobyl. They started off with a description of a postal worker cycling to work, pass a “Chernobyl” sign, before expanding their article into an investigation.

Natalya Leonenko usually has the whole road to herself while she cycles to work accompanied by her dog. As the post woman for Savichi and Dvor Savichi, two villages in southern Belarus, she does not expect to encounter many other travellers.

A sign at the side of the road announces that just 15 km away is the area known as the “Zone”, a forbidden territory, 30 km in radius, around the remains of the world’s most infamous nuclear power station: Chernobyl.

By concentrating on one person, the reporters have made a very wide subject – nuclear accidents, into a personal story that is engaging from the start. At the end of their investigation, they return to the post woman.

.....Natalya does not intend to leave Dvor Savichi. The others in the village say the same. They say they have nowhere to go. The post woman said, “Life is easier here: our own home, our own farm. In summer we go to pick berries with the children. We check them for radiation, of course. There are places we always go that we know are clean.”

However, during one checkup the berries gathered from the nearby danger zone were declared clean, but those picked around the village were not to be eaten, she said.

Despite the uncertainties, however, the rhythms of daily life continue. As dusk begins to fall, Natalya cycles home by the same snowy road, accompanied as always by her cheerful dog. On the way, she passes the school bus, bringing home the children.<sup>34</sup>



## 5. Accuracy

For every journalist, there is one uncompromising rule:

**“Get it first, but first get it right.”**

The journalist can only gain the trust and respect of readers by practicing the highest standard of professionalism. Simply stated: Always, always get your facts right.

It is the investigative reporter’s job to make sure everything in his or her story is absolutely accurate and honest. One mistake – whether it is the misspelling of a person’s name, an inaccurate fact or figure, or misquoting a source – can mean your story- and you lose credibility.

If you do not take care to double-check the spelling of a person’s name, then what else in your story might be wrong? If you included a figure in your story related to a budget matter that you failed to confirm by another source, what other numbers in your story might be inaccurate? Mistakes will sink your story.

It is your responsibility to verify all the information you use.

- If your story has numbers, call someone familiar with that subject and ask them to **review the data** with you. In Sem Saroeun’s story, published in the New Millennium on the misuse of education department funding, he asked a Ministry of Education accountant to help him read the budget and to confirm the figures.
- If you use numbers in your story, **double check** that those numbers are correct, and make sure that you are putting them in the right context.
- **Verify all information** that you intend to use in your story with at least another source, regardless of whether your original source was an official document or a person. This means checking spellings of names, street addresses, dates and even minor details that may seem unimportant. Every fact is important.
- **Talk to experts.** In Jerry Kammer’s investigation into corruption in awarding of U.S. defense contracts, one of his best sources was a retired Department of Defense official who explained the inner workings of the department and provided background information on how contracts are awarded.<sup>35</sup>
- For stories that are especially complicated, technical and potentially controversial, **read parts of your story back** to your source. However, never give your entire story to a source before publication as this can open the door to censorship. (Do not let a source have any right of waiver, and do not let a source have approval before publication).

## 6. Keep It Simple!

Use familiar words that will be understood by everyone.

For example, “give” is simpler than “contribute.” “Go” is more direct than “proceed.”

Avoid technical terms, academic ‘flowery’ phrases, and official jargon. Or ask yourself: If I lived in a village and saw a reference to “section 14 of the 1995 Constitution” in the paper, would I know what “section 14” says?”

Keep in mind that many of your readers may have had less education than you have. If you use simple words, everyone will understand you. Do not condescend your readers but keep in mind that you want this information to be read and understood by everyone.

<sup>34</sup> “Life in Chernobyl’s Danger Zone” by Anastasiya Dorofeeva and Alexandra Kozlovskaya, Institute of War and Peace Reporting, 7 February 2003.

<sup>35</sup> See Appendix I, The Money Trail.





## 7. Foreshadowing

Foreshadowing is when you give a clue at the beginning of the story about something that will be expanded on later in the story. This technique gives the readers just enough details to reel them in and keep them interested, then gradually unfurls more details until you reach the story's climax. The element of suspense keeps the reader wondering, "What happens next?"

The last line of the narrative lead of this story about atrocities committed by American soldiers during the Vietnam War is a chilling hint at what the rest of the story will unveil.

"The men of B Company were in a dangerous state of mind. They had lost five men in a firefight the day before. The morning of Feb. 8, 1968, brought unwelcome orders to resume their sweep of the countryside, a green patchwork of rice paddies along Vietnam's central coast.

They met no resistance as they entered a nondescript settlement in Quang Nam province.

So Jamie Henry, a 20-year-old medic, set his rifle down in a hut, unfastened his bandoliers and lit a cigarette.

Just then, the voice of a lieutenant crackled across the radio. He reported that he had rounded up 19 civilians, and wanted to know what to do with them. Henry later recalled the company commander's response:

Kill anything that moves."<sup>36</sup>

Boston Globe reporter Yvonne Abraham used foreshadowing to hook the reader into a tale about a Cambodian woman who gained the trust of other Cambodian refugees to cheat them out of \$2 million in an illegal pyramid scheme.

LOWELL - She arrived at their homes in the back of a black Mercedes S500, her hair swept into a neat chignon, her fingers sparkling with diamonds.

They had never seen a Cambodian woman like Seng Tan before.

She was an immigrant, just as they were. She had fled the horrors of the Khmer Rouge, as they had. Her life in America was once as hard as theirs, she said.

She knelt in their temple, offering incense and promises. Don't tell anyone, she warned them. People grow jealous. We have suffered long enough. Now it is our people's time to be rich.

The immigrant families scraped together money from relatives and equity loans on their homes, and signed it over.

Right away, the investments brought returns. Checks came every month, just as Tan had promised. They bought giant televisions, quit jobs, drove Mercedes of their own.

And then, after five years, the payments stopped, and everything collapsed.<sup>37</sup>

## 8. Pacing

Give your reader a break by pacing your story. Your story's pacing can set the tone and create movement, which helps readers feel they are there at the scene watching the event unfold.

Chris Hooyman's bedroom is every bit a young man's space, the story of his life clinging to every inch of wall. Racing bibs and medals from the high-school cross-country team, a corkboard cluttered with photos of friends and family and posters of some of the world's highest peaks cover up hints of the playful rainbow wallpaper he insisted on keeping, even into adulthood.

<sup>36</sup> "Civilian Killings Went Unpunished," Nick Turse and Deborah Nelson, *The Los Angeles Times*, 6 August 2006



He climbed so many mountains: the northern Sierra; the North Cascades.

Step by step. Mount Rainier. Mount McKinley. Until he reached the top.

He always came back. Back down the mountain. Back home.

Except this last time when Hooyman disappeared into the brilliant white snow that thickens the air on Mount McKinley.

After disappearing June 6 on a descent from the peak in Alaska's Denali National Park, Hooyman's body was discovered by park rangers yesterday near a crevasse at 15,200 feet.<sup>38</sup>

The short, measured sentences give the readers a sense of movement, as if they too are climbing a mountain. Write short sentences and paragraphs. Most sentences should be 15 to 20 words or less. Some should be less than 10.

You should always be able to read a sentence aloud in a single breath. A long sentence is harder for the reader to follow, and difficult for the listener to understand. If a sentence is too long, break it into two complete sentences. Eliminate unimportant words.

## **9. Read it Out Loud**

If you read your story out loud to yourself you can hear how the story flows and spot sentences that are too long or complicated. You may also identify sentences that need active verbs or more suitable words. You may find there are parts you can cut to tighten the story.

Use a conversational tone. Even if you are writing a serious investigative piece, it should sound natural and be easy to read. If you stumble over your own sentences, imagine how hard it would be for the reader.

Scrutinize each sentence and piece of information you include in your story. Ask yourself: "Does this relate to my hypothesis? What, if anything, is lost by taking it out?"

Be willing to cut your writing. Be ruthless. Ask yourself with each paragraph, "Is this information essential to the story? Alternatively, am I including it just because I have it? Does it repeat other information already included?"

Ask a trusted friend or colleague to read your story and give you unbiased feedback. If they are bored or confused, your readers probably will be too.

## **10. Be a Good Reader**

The more you read and the more examples you find of good and bad writing, the more you will improve your own writing.

Read as many newspapers and journals as you can to stay informed of issues. Learn the mechanics of good story telling. You will know when you recognize a good story. Does the lead pull you in and make you want to learn more? Does the story flow and can you follow the narrative or plot? Does it place you at the scene of the event? And do you still think of the story long after you have folded up the newspaper and put it away?

Reading, like anything else, is a skill. The more you read, the more patience you will have when it comes to your own research. You will be able to read and analyze documents quickly and glean only the most useful information. Poring over countless pages can be tedious, so you must develop a discerning eye for relevant information.

<sup>37</sup> "Alleged pyramid scheme, offered kinship, a dream" by Yvonne Abraham, *The Boston Globe*, 19 February 2006

<sup>38</sup> "Seattle climber's body found in Alaska" by Putsata Reang *The Seattle Times*, 15 June 1998.



In a story about the mismanagement of a \$73 million fund for Internet technology to help low-income students, Atlanta Journal-Constitution reporters Paul Donsky and Ken Foskett read 5,000 pages of documents obtained from filing freedom of information disclosures. They discovered that some schools had used the money to purchase plasma television sets and football stadium upgrades.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> “Investigative Reporting: What it takes,” Poynter Online, [http://poynter.org/content/content\\_view.asp?id=80183](http://poynter.org/content/content_view.asp?id=80183)



## Questions you should ask yourself about your writing

There are basic requirements about how you put your story together and the way you behave and perform. When you have finished your story, be tough on yourself.

Review your work and ask yourself the following

### Accuracy

Is everything in your article absolutely accurate?

Are the sources you use reliable and credible?

Is every quote accurate and in context?

When you ask questions, make sure you understand the answers.

Double check dates, names, titles, location spellings, etc.

Be sure numbers add up and the math is right.

*Ask yourself: Will the reader believe this story? Can the reader trust me?*

### Fairness

No story has one side – have you considered all sides? This is one of the hardest things to be totally aware of and self-check on. We all have our own prejudices, but your opinion has no part on the story – leave it out! Treat all sides fairly.

*Ask yourself: Will the reader trust me? Will the reader think I am biased?*

### Interest

Look for the drama – where is the conflict? Create energy in a story. Always write with an active voice.

*Ask yourself: Will the reader care?*

### Timeliness

Does this matter now? Old news is no news. The story must be current or be important enough to report now - not about something that may have happened six months ago and is no longer important.

*Ask yourself: Am I saying something new?*

### Lead

The first paragraph is the lead –and it has to catch the reader’s attention, so they will read on. You do not want the reader to think “so what?”

*Ask yourself: Will the reader be interested and engaged? Will the reader want to read to the end?*

### Structure

Does your article make sense? Can it be easily read and followed? Is it confusing? Do the important elements come first? Does it have a focus and a clear reasoning?

*Ask yourself: Will the reader find this easy to follow? Will it be interesting for them until the end?*

### Quotes

Have I quoted people correctly? Have I got enough quotes? Have I chosen the right quotes? Are they interesting? Is there enough variety in the people I have quoted?

Are both sides represented fairly? Have I put the quotes in the right punctuation?

*Ask yourself: Will the reader hear all sides? Will the reader know that certain statements are quotes?*

### Detail

Is there enough detail? Has a picture been painted? Is there a sense of smell, touch, taste, atmosphere, color, shape? Are general statements supported by specific numbers and facts? Statistics? Have I made it clear what I am trying to say? Is my central hypothesis totally clear?

*Ask yourself: Will the reader be able to picture the event? Is there enough information for the reader to understand the issue?*

### Background

Give appropriate background. History, context (story development), explanation of causes, cultural context, etc. A local issue can be placed in a national perspective, or vice versa.

*Ask yourself: Will the reader understand the significance of this story?*

### Clarity

Use words that ordinary readers understand. Keep sentences short. Keep the focus sharp. Simplify complicated ideas.

*Ask yourself: Will any reader understand this story?*



## Chapter 11 | Rights and Responsibilities: Media Law and Ethics

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Investigative reporting seeks to uncover corruption and secrets that some would prefer remain hidden. Such stories regularly raise allegations of wrongdoing. Such stories may accuse people of very bad things. Journalists who write investigative stories are often vulnerable to attack—verbal, physical or legal—by the people they are writing about.

Know your rights as a journalist: They can offer a safeguard against prosecution and help you get access to public records.

While media laws can help and protect journalists, regulation of the media can also harm reporters. This chapter examines the 1995 Press Law, as well as the 1992 UNTAC (United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia) Penal Code, both of which have been used to regulate and sometimes muzzle the media.

### **Legal Landscape of Cambodia's Media**

Article 41 of the Cambodia Constitution provides for a free press while the 1995 Press Law and 1992 UNTAC penal code regulate the media. Some argue that Cambodia has one of the freest presses in the region. This is true in one sense, as anyone with the resources can set up a newspaper.

A majority of newspapers in Cambodia are closely affiliated with, if not financially supported by the ruling Cambodia People Party. Most of Cambodia's broadcast media is owned or operated by the state or people connected to the CPP. There are two truly independent radio stations, Beehive Radio and the Women's Media Centre. The amount and kind of news available largely favors the CPP. Media perceived as being too critical of the government faces suspension, lawsuits and other punitive measures.

The 1995 Press Law is not strongly enforced. For example, it indicates that a journalist may request public documents in writing and the government body must reply within 30 days. But there are no punitive measures in place for officials who don't comply with that 30-day limit, and there are no procedures journalists can follow to ensure they will get the information they request.

The Press Law was created to regulate standards of journalism and the way in which reporters operate. It also provides certain rights and protections to journalists. But a debate rages as to how useful and effective it is.

Under the 1995 law, journalists have access to any information that is not deemed a risk to national security. In practice, journalists struggle to obtain even basic public documents such as ministry budgets.

### **Access to Information**

Access to information policies are intended to foster a transparent society by allowing journalists and all members of the public access to documents created by government bodies. What amounts to "public record" is poorly defined. In general, a public record includes all materials made or received by a government body or institution.

In India, journalists can rely on the Freedom of Information Act of 2002 and a Right to Information law passed in October 2005, allowing them to request and receive access to public records. Under the RTI, if a reply is not provided within 30 days to a request for information the requester can file an appeal. The official in charge of replying to the request can be fined up to \$535 if the reply is not provided within a month of the appeal.



But even those countries with access to information laws impose restrictions. In Sri Lanka, the public has a right to information, but only information from the national government, not at the provincial or local level.

In the U.S., journalists have to file public records requests to government agencies for documents such as budgets, reports and statistics related to their stories. Although the U.S. Freedom of Information Act requires government agencies to respond in writing to a journalist's request within 10 days, the agency may respond with a letter indicating they have a backlog of public disclosure requests and that there will be a delay. Investigative reporter Jerry Kammer filed a request related to his investigation into a corrupt congressional representative, but did not receive the documents requested until nearly a year later, long after his stories were published.

In Cambodia, the push for a freedom of information law has been slow. At a freedom of information workshop sponsored by UNESCO in partnership with the Cambodian Communication Institute and Internews held in Phnom Penh in 2006, an official from the Ministry of National Assembly and Senate Relations and Inspection suggested such a law would threaten a person's right to privacy and could endanger national security.

Other public officials argue that Cambodia desperately needs an access to information law so that government can operate more effectively and openly. Sam Rainsy parliamentarian Son Chhay says a freedom of information policy would allow him to access public records on suspicious contracts awarded to construction companies building the new National Assembly. "Government also needs information," Chhay said. "It's difficult for us to work without access to information."

The nongovernmental organization Pact is working with the Ministry of National Assembly-Senate Relations and Inspection on a freedom of information policy paper that would serve as a guideline for a draft law, scheduled to be completed and ratified into law at the end of the 2007. The law is expected to face significant challenges by lawmakers arguing it would impinge on an individual's right to privacy more than it would help society.

### **Problems with the Press Law**

Several articles of the press law are intended to protect and help journalists as well as set guidelines for what kinds of information journalists can access. They include:

- **Article 3**, which prohibits pre-publication censorship;
- **Article 4**, which protects journalists from prosecution for publishing official information such as statements and reports so long as the journalist is reporting the information accurately; and
- **Article 5**, which gives the press the right to public documents so long as doing so does not:
  - ◆ harm national security or relations with other countries;
  - ◆ violate the rights of individuals, including files of civil servants, medical files and other confidential official documents;
  - ◆ expose confidential commercial and financial documents and information related to the regulation and supervision of financial institutions;
  - ◆ affect a person's right to a fair trial; or
  - ◆ endanger public officials in carrying out their duties.

Under Article 5, journalists may request information in writing and officials are required to respond within 30 days. If the request for the document is denied, the article stipulates that a reason shall be provided. However, there is no mention of any punitive measures if the official does not comply. Cambodian officials have little incentive to respond to these requests, and if they do they often use delaying tactics to discourage journalists from chasing stories.

Journalist Sem Saroeun recently requested a law relating to safety on ferryboats that cross the Tonle Sap,





and received a notice back indicating it would take three months to locate the law.

When *Reasmei Kampuchea* editor Pen Samitthy dispatched one of his journalists to the Ministry of Interior to get a list of the names of all the villages in Cambodia, he was met with resistance. “They say: ‘My bureau has no funds to print. I have no staff,’” Samitthy said.

Beyond challenges in accessing information, the law in some respects hinders investigative reporting.

- Article 12 bans the media from publishing information “that may affect national security and political stability.” Journalists and editors say the notion of what constitutes national security is too vague and has been interpreted broadly by the government to attack the press. Those who violate this article can face a fine of one million to five million riels (roughly \$260 to \$1,300) and may also face punishment under the criminal law. The Ministry of Information also has the right to confiscate the offending newspaper issues and suspend the newspaper for up to 30 days.
- Article 13 bans the press from publishing false information “that humiliates or (holds in) contempt national institutions.” Violation of this law can result in a fine of up to 10 million riels, or \$2,630.

“We are not allowed to write about national security,” said Pen Bona, editor of *Somne Thmey*. “We are not clear with the definition of national security or public order. When we write an article that affects the government, they may accuse us of inciting or causing national insecurity.”

An additional law that journalists have also found unfriendly is the 1992 UNTAC Criminal Code, which makes defamation a criminal offense punishable by a prison sentence and fines. The Cambodian government has often used this law to target journalists who write controversial articles about public officials or the government.

Defamation is the publication or broadcast of a false statement that damage’s a person’s reputation. Journalists in Cambodia often find themselves facing defamation charges for reporting rumors or failing to verify facts. In other cases, journalists are sued for defamation because a source, often a public official, is upset that a negative story about them appeared in the newspaper – not necessarily grounds for a defamation charge.

#### Before you publish you must consider:

1. Is the story truthful and an honest representation of your source?
2. Is the information accurate?
3. Have you verified and double-checked?

In a recent case You Saravuth, editor of *Sralanh Khmer*, was sued for defamation and allegedly harassed by Hun To, one of the prime minister’s sons, for writing a story alleging his involvement in a land grabbing case. The story quoted an anonymous source who alleged Hun To grabbed thousands of hectares of land. After death threats were sent to his office, You Saravuth fled to the U.S.

In October 2005, radio journalist Mam Sonando was arrested and charged with defamation after broadcasting an interview with a source who criticized the Cambodian government’s handling of border issues with Vietnam. The source suggested that the Prime Minister was making backroom deals with the Vietnamese government to cede a long-disputed island to Vietnam.

Sonando became one of five human rights activists and journalists to be detained and charged with defamation in a government sweep to silence voices of dissent in late 2005 and early 2006. Although the men were subsequently released, they still face defamation charges.

In a positive step for the media, the Cambodian Parliament in May 2006 abolished prison sentences as a punishment for criminal defamation. However, journalists remain vulnerable to civil codes, specifically Article



12 of the Press Law, under which they can be fined and sentenced to prison for defamation.

In one of the country's most notorious defamation cases, Cambodia Daily journalist Kay Kimsong was sued for quoting a late senator as saying that then Minister of Foreign Affairs Hor Namhong was a high-ranking Khmer Rouge official during the Democratic Kampuchea period who ordered the killings of countless victims **in Boeng Trabek work camp**. Kimsong was reporting the comments of the late royalist Senator Keo Bun Thuok as he spoke on the Senate floor during a session in 2001. The case finally worked its way through the courts in 2006; Kimsong avoided a prison sentence, but was ordered to pay more than \$2,000 in fines for repeating a defamatory comment.

In a lesser-known case in 2005, provincial-based journalist Hang Sokhan was imprisoned for eight months after reporting that a provincial court prosecutor accepted \$3,000 in bribes to drop an illegal logging case against the director of Kirirom National Park. Sokhan was charged with defamation. He had previously written about corrupt officials and believes his imprisonment was intended to muzzle his coverage. Editors and journalists are pushing for amendments to the Press Law to provide better protection for journalists and create a freer press. Meanwhile, they say the best protection they have against prosecution is to write stories that include as much evidence as possible.

### Protecting Yourself Against a Lawsuit

A philosophy professor at the Preah Sihanouk Raja Buddhist University was fired for teaching from his own anti-government textbook that alleged corruption by some government officials. At the time, Minister of Information Khieu Kanharith predicted that the officials named in the book would sue the teacher.

"He has the right to write, but they also have the right to sue," Kanharith told the Cambodia Daily. "What evidence does he have?"

The best way to ensure you are not prosecuted for defamation is accurate, fair and balanced news writing. If you make an allegation in your story, you must be able to prove it. Strive to be fair, balanced and, above all else, accurate.

You should not report gossip or rumor; it can have a devastating effect. When a radio reporter falsely reported that a Thai movie actress said Angkor Wat really belongs to the Thais, it created a wave of violent anti-Thai riots in 2004, which led to strained relations between the two nations and millions of dollars worth of damage to the Thai Embassy and Thai-owned businesses.

In 1999, one newspaper falsely reported that Vietnamese- and Thai-made condoms were tainted with the AIDS virus, causing a major public health scare. The government demanded and got a retraction but not before word had already filtered through largely uneducated Khmer community.

Nothing is more important than making sure everything in your story is 100 percent correct, whether they are facts, the name of a source and her official title, the name of a place, etc. One mistake can threaten your entire project and eat away at your credibility and reputation.

### Ethics

Cambodia's media has been referred to as a "mad dog" rather than a "watchdog" because it is largely unregulated, and journalists do not operate within standard ethical boundaries.

What makes a corrupt media? Many argue that some reporters are corrupt because they live in a society that forces them down that route. Working within a context of political patronage and paltry salaries, journalists routinely accept payments to attend press conferences or to cover affairs of the state. Sometimes journalists use extortion tactics to cover or not cover a story, accepting money and other gifts.

Ethical questions that arise during the course of gathering information, writing and publishing investigative articles are rarely resolved without serious discussion between the reporter and editor. Often there is no right or wrong answer, but only bad or less bad.



### Is it unethical to:

- ◆ steal what someone else has written and try to pass it off as your own?
- ◆ lie to get information?
- ◆ not identify yourself as a journalist to get a story?
- ◆ steal documents or ask someone else to steal them for you?
- ◆ accept money for writing a story?
- ◆ accept free transportation and lodging during junkets with public officials?
- ◆ name victims of sexual abuse or juvenile offenders in crime stories?
- ◆ place on the front page photographs of victims of traffic accidents, or a crime such as murder?

Most newspapers in Cambodia do not have formal ethics policies, and decisions are made on a case-by-case basis.

An attempt by the Club of Cambodia Journalists in 2003 to create a uniform ethics policy collapsed because editors disagreed on too many points of the policy.

Nevertheless, in 2005, editors from 43 Khmer newspapers and magazines held a conference to discuss ethics and freedom of the press issues. The group agreed on an 11-point media reform plan that addressed specific areas for improvement, such as avoiding plagiarism and the use of profanity in news stories, and not identifying juvenile crime suspects and sexual assault victims.

Today, journalists and editors continue to grapple with ethics issues both in and outside of the newsroom.

### The Business of Bribes

In March 2006, an editor and reporter of a little-known newspaper were charged with robbery after allegedly accepting \$500 in bribes not to publish a story about the Indochina Food Company. The newspaper's editor told the Cambodia Daily that he had accepted other bribes from the company in the past. "They called us to fetch the money in exchange for our stopping the bad publicity against the company," editor Nem Bun Hout told the Cambodia Daily. "They offered money and we took it."

In Banteay Meanchey province in March 2005, three men who claimed to be journalists were arrested and sentenced to five years in prison for demanding \$75 from a woman they allege had trafficked women into Thailand.

As in many developing nations, journalists in Cambodia are known to practice journalism-by-envelope – accepting bribes to not publish a story, or as payment to write a story following a press conference or other public event. Most journalists earn roughly \$60 per month, so bribes remain attractive.

"Many of them are controlled by the reality of their situation," said editor Pen Samitthy. "The quest for surviving is enough."

Journalists are obliged to practice the highest standards of professionalism and objectivity, and to avoid conflict of interest, both real and perceived. It is a conflict of interest to accept money to write a story because the expectation by the person paying you is that you will write a story that puts them or their organization in a favorable light.

While it can be difficult to operate with a high standard of ethics when it could mean the difference between whether or not your family has dinner or your children can go to school, journalists can't expect to be treated with respect as long as bribe-taking continues.

Often when journalists attend press conferences, opening ceremonies and other official events, they are given an envelope with cash. It is usually \$5, "gas money," the official handing out the envelopes will say.

Most journalists accept the money to supplement their low salaries. But the problem with accepting even \$100 from anyone seeking news coverage is that it automatically destroys any potential for objective reporting.



Journalists should also never pay a source for an interview, as it could raise questions about whether the source is telling the truth or saying what the journalist wants to hear.

Policies surrounding gifts – other than money - vary from newspaper to newspaper; some ban all gifts, regardless of value, while others will accept gifts valued \$25 or less. The international standard is that gifts share the same status as money.

### Public information vs. privacy protection

Tied into the ethics debate is a broader one on the public's right to know. Does the public need to know when a public official is having an affair with an employee? Generally no, although some individuals may argue that a conflict of interest, for example in employee promotions, could arise as a result.

Journalists around the world debate the issue of whether or not to name and publish other personal information such as home addresses of certain sources in stories, from juvenile criminal offenders to sexual assault victims to convicted pedophiles.

In Japan, the criminal court system makes known the names of victims in juvenile offender cases, but not the names of juvenile perpetrators. The idea is to protect the juvenile perpetrators from permanent harm to their reputations and provide a chance for the youths to be rehabilitated and re-enter society. However, the debate continues as to the severe impacts this then has on victims of such crimes, who themselves often face harassment once their names appear in the newspaper.

In the U.S. state of California, the state is obliged by law to make available the names and addresses of pedophiles who have served their time in jail and reintegrated back into society. That public right to know is called "Megan's Law," which was created after Megan Kanka, a 7-year-old girl from the U.S. state of New Jersey, was raped and killed by a convicted child molester who moved into the girl's neighborhood.

But the unintended consequence of naming names can be tragic. In California, a convicted pedophile who had been released from jail had his name and details published. He was hunted down by the father of one of his victims and murdered.

This example shows there are always two sides to the debate concerning the public vs. private debate. On the one hand, information is made public with the intention of providing safety to the people. On the other hand, failing to keep private some information can lead to harassment and worse for those who are identified.

In Cambodia, each newspaper has its own policies on naming names. The decision on whether to name names of certain sources is a judgment call that must be made by the individual newspaper in absence of a code of ethics in the Cambodian media. Journalists should remember that their job is to inform, but they also have an obligation and duty to protect the privacy of sources in certain circumstances, especially in highly sensitive stories.

You and your editor must weigh the public good versus the potential consequences of naming names in your story. What would happen if you do not name the source and what would happen if you did?

### Anonymous Sources

*"Anonymity is an invitation to exaggerate, embroider, embellish, slant, or take the cheap shot. This is true for the reporter, as well as the source. It is a bad habit and it is getting worse."*

- Gene Miller, Miami Herald editor

Anonymous sources are commonly used in the Khmer press, although this should only take place sparingly and in specific circumstances.



Political instability and a culture of extreme impunity for powerful people motivate many sources in Cambodia to speak to reporters only if they are promised anonymity. In many cases, it can be well understood why a source needs to hide his/her identity. But using anonymous sources should not be a routine practice, especially with stories that are not regarded as sensitive or controversial.

One problem with using anonymous sources is that it gives sources the opportunity to criticize another person freely and perhaps unfairly. Using anonymous sources can also open the door to defamation.

As a journalist, protecting your sources may also put you in jeopardy. If you use an anonymous source who is running from the law, you must be prepared to protect that source if the courts or law enforcement officials try and force you to disclose their identity. In the U.S., journalists are protected by the Shield Law, which generally allows journalists the right to keep their sources secret. However, there have been cases where the U.S. courts have forced journalists to reveal the identities of their sources on the grounds of national security, or face a term in jail.

While it is generally a good idea to avoid using unnamed sources in your story, there are some situations in which anonymous sources are imperative. In those cases, the journalist has a clear responsibility to protect the source, specifically when the source faces serious repercussions such as being injured or threatened, or losing a job, as a result of being identified in the story.

If at all possible, outline the nature of your source to give him or her credibility in your story. It is better to write, “according to an official at the Ministry of Education,” than “an official said” or “a source said.”

### Undercover Journalism and Deception

Is it ever ok to pose as someone other than a journalist to get your story?

In one of the earliest examples of undercover investigative reporting, in 1887, an 18 year old Nellie Bly pretended to be mentally ill to expose the abuse of patients at an institution for the mentally ill in New York. It was considered ground-breaking journalism at the time for exposing a major crime and injustice, but similar tactics are now sometimes frowned upon as deceptive. Does it diminish your credibility if you lie about your identity to get a story?

In the West, many newspapers consider it a last resort. Editors will agree to allow their journalists to go undercover only when the public’s right outweighs all other considerations. You must always consider whether there is any other way to get the story before you pursue an undercover investigation.

#### Is it ethical to go undercover to expose corruption?

One journalist decided to attend driving school in order to learn first-hand whether or not teachers were extracting bribes from students to let them pass their exams. The story dealt with unsafe drivers, many of whom bought their driver’s license and never acquired the safe driving skills. The journalist decided to test the bounds of his story by offering a bribe to the teacher in exchange for right answers on his exam. Was any of this ethical? Was it ethical up to a point or not at all? What would you have done?

### Fact vs. Opinion

Many newspapers publish stories that are largely the journalist’s opinion but pass them as fact. You must make every effort to keep your stories clear of your own thoughts, feelings and attitudes. By giving your opinion, you are creating bias and undermining your own role as a fair, accurate and balanced journalist. Your job is to give the facts only, and allow your readers to formulate their own opinions on the person or issue you’re writing about.



## Plagiarism

Among the most common ethical transgressions of journalists in Cambodia is plagiarism. This is defined as taking ideas and writings of another person and trying to pass them off as your own.

Khmer language newspapers regularly take stories that have appeared in other newspapers (frequently from international, English-language newspapers) and publish these stories without giving the newspaper or writer credit. Some journalists also take entire passages, including paragraphs and quotations, from one person's story and insert those passages into his/her own story. This is also plagiarism.

If you read something and would like to use it in your story, you should seek permission if at all possible, and attribute the information to the original source.

It is simply very bad journalism to plagiarize.

### Tips for making sound ethical decisions

**There is no easy answer for how to make the best ethical decisions. However, some questions you can ask yourself will help you make a better decision. These come from Poynter Online at <http://www.poynter.org>**

1. What do I know? What do I need to know?
2. What is my journalistic purpose?
3. What are my ethical concerns?
4. What organizational policies and professional guidelines should I consider?
5. How can I include other people, with different perspectives and diverse ideas, in the decision-making process?
6. Who are the stakeholders -- those affected by my decision? What are their motivations? Which are legitimate?
7. What if the roles were reversed? How would I feel if I were in the shoes of one of the stakeholders?
8. What are the possible consequences of my actions? Short term? Long term?
9. What are my alternatives to maximize my truth telling responsibility and minimize harm?
10. Can I clearly and fully justify my thinking and my decision? To my colleagues? To the stakeholders? To the public?





## APPENDIX I

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### *The Money Trail by Jerry Kammer*

In the spring of 2005, Marcus Stern of the Copley News Service performed a “lifestyle audit” on Rep. Randy Cunningham of San Diego County, home of the largest Copley newspaper, the San Diego Union Tribune. What Stern discovered, mostly through Internet database searches, would lead to Cunningham’s conviction on charges of taking \$2.4 million in bribes. It would also produce the first, key stories in an investigative project that won the Copley News Service and the Union Tribune a Pulitzer Prize.

In a quick check of property records, Stern learned that Cunningham owned a \$2.5 million estate in an exclusive part of the county. Surprised at the apparent affluence of Cunningham, whose heroism as a Navy fighter pilot ace in the Vietnam War had helped him launch his congressional career in 1990, Stern made his big find as he examined records on the house that Cunningham sold before buying the estate.

The buyer of Cunningham’s old house had a curious name: 1523 New Hampshire. LLC. A check of business records soon revealed that a company owned by defense contractor Mitchell Wade was based at 1523 New Hampshire Ave. in Washington D.C. Nine months after buying the house, while the San Diego real estate market boomed, Wade sold the house at a \$700,000 loss. He had obviously overpaid the powerful Congressman

After more database checks and some phone calls, Stern was able to write a blockbuster story that shook Southern California and sparked the interest of prosecutors at the U.S. attorney’s office in San Diego. Stern reported that while Cunningham had dramatically upgraded his living quarters, he had used his position on the defense appropriations subcommittee to help Wade “who had been suffering through a flat period in winning Pentagon contracts” go “on a tear – reeling in tens of millions of dollars in defense and intelligence-related contracts.”<sup>40</sup>

Stern then invited me to help him widen the investigation. Within three weeks, after checks of Coast Guard and real estate data bases and a hectic weekend of chasing clues across Long Island, New York, we wrote that Cunningham had sold a boat at a suspiciously high price to a businessman friend whom federal prosecutors would eventually include as a co-conspirator in the charges they filed against Cunningham.

Then, as reporters at the Union Tribune dug deeper into the story of the federal investigation in San Diego, Marc and I began writing about the congressional “earmarks,” which were the currency with which Cunningham paid Mitchell Wade for the bribes. Earmarks are special favors that individual members of Congress insert into spending bills, often with little or no oversight by other members.

Union Tribune reporter Dean Calbreath soon learned that Cunningham had also provided considerable assistance to San Diego defense contractor Brent Wilkes, who had rocketed to wealth and into a Playboy lifestyle on a foundation of earmarks and Cunningham’s bullying of the Defense Department on Wilkes’ behalf.

As the Cunningham scandal grew and received close coverage in the national press, it put a sharp focus on earmarking and on the Appropriations Committee, which was derided by disgraced lobbyist Jack Abramoff as “a favor factory.” In December 2005, I reported on the extraordinarily close connections among the chairman of the committee, the lobbyist who had helped Wilkes obtain earmarks, and the large campaign contributions by the lobbyist and Wilkes to key appropriators.

That story was based on confidential sources, close scrutiny of the often carefully concealed earmarks, and several weeks spent analyzing the disclosure forms filed by lobbyist Bill Lowery as required by federal law. Those forms are available at the Website of the Senate office of public records: [sopr.senate.gov](http://sopr.senate.gov). They disclose not only a lobbyist’s client list, but also the approximate amount of pay received from each client, the issues on which he lobbies, and the agencies that he lobbies. Unfortunately, many of the forms



are both sloppy and incomplete, flaws that have not been properly addressed in Congress. Lobbyists are only required to file these forms twice a year, thereby delaying reporters' efforts to draw quick connections between earmarks and campaign cash.

Keith Ashdown, a remarkably energetic and perceptive earmark watchdog at Taxpayers for Common Sense, provided key advice and analysis. And the *opensecrets.org* database maintained by the Centre for Public Integrity was also indispensable in documenting that while Lowery, his colleagues and clients were donating hundreds of thousands of dollars to Rep. Jerry Lewis of California, Lewis had "green lighted hundreds of millions of dollars in federal projects" for Lowery's clients.<sup>2</sup>

Rep. Lewis's role was critical because from 1999-2005, he had served as chairman of the defense appropriations subcommittee. Then, in 2005, after he had contributed more than \$650,000 – much of it raised by Lowery – to the National Republican Campaign Committee, House Republican leaders named him chairman of the full Appropriations Committee. Lewis called the honor "the highlight of my career."

Lobbying disclosure forms also helped us document the exchange of key personnel between the offices of Lewis and Lowery, himself a former San Diego Congressman who had served on the Appropriations Committee before acquiring fabulous wealth marketing his ability to obtain earmarks. Jeffrey Shockey managed earmarks for Lewis in the 1990s before becoming Lowery's partner and earning over \$2 million a year. Then in 2005, Shockey returned to work for Lewis on Capitol Hill, while his wife – another former Lewis staffer – began lobbying for Lowery.

Then there was the story of Letitia White, Lewis's principal earmark gatekeeper who in 2003 also joined Lowery's firm, soon acquiring a lengthy list of corporate clients eager for her influence and the defense earmarks she knew so well. I wrote that these job shifts, which we illustrated with a large graphic, "The Lewis-Lowery personnel swirl," that demonstrated how the two men's offices were "so intermingled that they seem to be extensions of each other."

Our reporting drew the attention of federal prosecutors in Los Angeles, near Lewis's home district, who launched an investigation into the highly lucrative relationship between the two men, both of whom firmly deny that they did anything wrong. Both point out that earmarks are a well-established part of the work of Congress.

Now, Randy Cunningham sits in a federal prison in North Carolina, serving a 100-month sentence. Mitchell Wade has pleaded guilty and is helping prosecutors with their widening investigation. Bill Lowery and Letitia White continue to lobby and live the regal life styles of Washington's lobbying elite. Jeffrey Shockey is helping Jerry Lewis craft appropriations bills, having left Lowery's firm with a \$2 million severance package in his pocket as he returned to public service.



## APPENDIX II

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### *DO-IT-YOURSELF INVESTIGATIONS*

Excerpts from the PCIJ book, *Investigating Corruption, A Do-It-Yourself Guide* (2002)

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OF LATE, lifestyle checks on public officials suspected of corruption have gained currency in the media. Following allegations of corruption among military generals that spawned the recent failed mutiny of junior officers, media coverage has focused on the perks being enjoyed by the top brass of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), including mansions and generous bank loans, as in the case of former chief of staff and defense secretary Angelo Reyes.

The investigations come months after the PCIJ conducted a six-month research that included a lifestyle check on Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) personnel that yielded a wealth of information on the grand houses and expensive vehicles of revenue officials and employees who earn only a modest income.

Findings of the Centre's report released in May were later confirmed by the finance department's investigation team, which saw top officials and employees of the BIR and the Bureau of Customs failing its own administered lifestyle checks.

The PCIJ has employed the lifestyle check as one of the many techniques available to journalists to pursue its independent investigations. Its award-winning work in uncovering the unexplained wealth of deposed President Estrada predates the Arroyo government's push to conduct investigations and lifestyle checks on corrupt officials. For those who would like to do actual investigations of their public officials, the following serves as a guide.

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**CORRUPTION** takes place because individuals who have been entrusted with power take liberties with the law and with the public purse. Pursuing the trail of wrongdoing inevitably leads to individuals who commit malfeasance. Sooner or later, therefore, those uncovering corruption will have to check on the lifestyles, assets, and behavior of public officials.

These are areas that are ripe for investigation. The accumulation of wealth by those who hold public office is hardly kept secret, and there is bound to be documentation proving such illicit amassing of riches. Moreover, even while corrupt deals are transacted behind closed doors, those who commit wrongdoing invariably leave a trail, either in the form of botched procedures or behavior that violates codes of ethics.

One of the techniques that has been successfully used to investigate corrupt public officials is to check on their lifestyles.

Extravagant lifestyles are one of the most obvious indicators of corruption and among the easiest to document. They are also a violation of the law, if an official is unable to prove where she got the wherewithal to support such a lifestyle.

The Anti-Graft and Corrupt Practices Act (Republic Act 3019) says that a public official can be dismissed if he "has been found to have acquired during his incumbency, whether in his name or in the name of other persons, an amount of property and/or money manifestly out of proportion to his salary and to his other lawful income." There is a presumption of culpability if an official cannot explain where she acquired income or assets. Among the things mentioned in R.A. 3019 as indicators of unexplained wealth are unexplained bank deposits, "manifestly excessive expenditures," and ostentatious display of wealth, including frequent travel abroad.



Visits to offices and houses are a good way to begin a lifestyle check. Among the things to look out for are fancy vehicles (boats, cars, jet skis, etc.) parked in these homes or used for ferrying officials, sumptuous parties hosted by them, the retinues they keep (bodyguards, valets, maids), the suits and jewelry they wear. Other lifestyle indicators are foreign trips, children sent abroad for schooling, or, as in the case of former president Estrada, luxury houses built for mistresses and family members.

After taking note, one can begin asking questions. Remember that public officials are banned by the anti-graft law from receiving gifts. Find out whether they have a plausible explanation for the manner in which they live. What salaries do they get from the government? Did they inherit or marry into land or other forms of wealth? Did they make money from a business or profession?

To answer these questions, one must do a background check. Ask for curriculum vitae; interview family, friends, staff, classmates, and townmates; scour newspaper archives for articles about these officials.

### Statement of Assets and Liabilities

When casing public officials, researchers should first get hold of the statement of assets and liabilities all government employees are required to file every year. Underreporting and nonreporting are common, so researchers should be wary.

The most visible signs of wealth are real property assets. Fortunately, land records are routinely available in the Philippines. The problem with investigating real property assets, however, is that astute public officials conceal ownership by putting the property in the names of other people, like relatives, and companies. Still, asset tracing is worth doing, as the PCIJ's own experience with investigating then president Estrada's wealth has shown. Researchers may find useful the following form used by a local detective agency to trace real property assets of people they place under surveillance:

### Asset Tracing Form

Owner's Name	Owner's Address	Tax Declaration No.	Area (sq. m)	Type	Location	TCT No.	Remarks

Non-real property assets of public officials also provide telltale signs of wealth. Here's a checklist:

- stocks
- golf/club shares
- vehicles (registration, make/model, year, peculiarities, especially accessories)
- collectibles
- bank accounts
- cash
- jewelry
- clothes

It may also help to observe the following of public officials:

- their hobbies/form of recreation
- their social/lodge affiliations
- the bars and restaurants they frequent
- the type of tobacco and alcohol they consume
- the shops they, their spouses and children patronize
- the schools where they send their children



## APPENDIX III

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### Diary of a two-day reporting effort

Eric Nalder

*San Jose Mercury News*

#### Monday, Jan. 5, 1998:

A call from a reader: Steve Finley, a person I know to be an expert on maritime issues, leaves this voicemail: “Over the weekend I saw the movie Titanic and it reminded me of something. You know, the Titanic just had life rafts for about a third of the passengers.

You know the Washington State Ferries, they don’t have 100 percent life raft capacity . . .

On a day like today, I don’t know how many people would last in the water. Not a long time. And how many people would die. Since everyone has been seeing the movie.Titanic. this might be a time to revisit this and ask the question, why don’t we have 100 percent life raft capacity on the wash. state ferries?”

#### Wednesday afternoon, Jan. 7:

The assignment: I pass on Finley’s thoughts at an I-team meeting, thinking someone else might want to do the story. I-team kicks it around and my editor Dave Boardman wants to know if I could have it ready for Sunday.,

Quick research: Seattle Times database reveals 10-year-old stories on the issue but very little that is new. I ask librarians to do a national search. Fellow investigative reporter Deborah Nelson pulls from her files a 10-year-old National Transportation Safety Board study on passenger-boat safety that hits the lack of life rafts on ferries.

Starting down the people trail: I never start with a p.r. person, so I study the ferry system phone directory and select the ferry system safety director. He’s new to the job, so I get from him the name and current location of his predecessor. I gently ask him to explain how the ferry system records work. For life rafts, there’s the U.S. Coast Guard. Certificate of Inspection, posted on the wall of every ferry, which tells the maximum number of passengers and the number of life rafts on each boat. I also ask: “When someone screws up in the ferry system, where do they write it down?” Then I get the exact location in the ferry office of all these records, and their flow through the organization. Eventually, the safety directors gets wary and suggests I talk to the p.r. director. I tell him, honestly, that I will be talking to her.

Exploring the ex-employee trail: I call the former safety director at his home 100 miles from Seattle. He is very critical of the ferry system for not installing sufficient life rafts for all passengers, and I get a detailed, chronological story of anything he knows about the issue and the names of others – ferry captains, bureaucrats, etc. – who were involved. I get a brief synopsis of his life story, like I do with everybody..

Working the voicemail: I call the others, catching some and leaving courteous voicemails with the others.  
Starting down the paper trail: The ferry system public relations person has heard by now that I’m working on the story, but when I call she’s not yet available. I fire off messages to all her bosses and she quickly calls back. It is easy getting what I want, in part because I already know the records I need, where they are located and who I need to talk with.. I quiz her, too, looking for other documents, sources and her knowledge. I am honest with her about the kind of story I am doing, and I think that helps.

Getting control of my information: In my computer, I create my control files: -- a list of names, a “to do” list, and a chronology. Reviewing my interview notes, I start marking the good stuff with words preceded by asterisks which are easily searchable -- \*quote, \*fact, \*checkthis



Moving in: Late in the afternoon, I arrive at the ferry system office to copy documents, but another purpose is to insert myself into the operation. Leafing through paper, I talk with the manager of operations and as he mentions other documents. I ask for copies.

Pretty soon I've got several people rifling the files for me. I even get stuff like a list of cell phones for all the engine rooms on the ferries. And I get people's home phones. While I am using the fax machine, the ferry system operations director Joe Nortz walks in. The p.r. director had told me he didn't want to talk about life rafts, but now he has no choice. It pays to be there.

Analyzing data: Back at the office that evening, I enter data from the U.S. Coast Guard. Certificates of Inspection into an excel computer program. It tells me the ferries have only enough life rafts, on average, to serve one passenger out of seven when fully loaded. Worse situation than I had expected. An editor re-checks my data. I ask the photo desk to put a photographer on a heavily-loaded ferry the next day. I read my new documents and organize the stuff into my computer. Planning a ferry ride the next morning, I check the schedule.

#### Thursday morning, Jan. 8:

Contacting the regulators: On the way to the ferry terminal, I call the National Transportation Safety Board on my cell phone. I get a guy who wrote a report calling for more life rafts, He's in a hurry, but I slow him down to gather recollections. He put me in touch with a co-worker who find a chronology of NTSB efforts and faxes it to me. Going to sea: On the ferry, I want anecdotes as well as passenger opinions. One woman was thinking about the Titanic movie on the way to the ferry, and I put her in slow motion to get all the details. (See my interviewing handout: Loosening Lips)

Hanging around: Back at the ferry terminal, I revisit the p.r. woman, so I can hang around the main office again, getting more documents and meeting more people. Even in a hellish hurry, journalism-by-hanging-around pays off. As I am talking to the p.r. woman, a ferry captain walks in who has been assigned to study ferry system safety regulations. As we chat, he looks over at the ferry system p.r. woman and blurts: "I can't lie to the reporter, If I had my druthers, I'd love to see life rafts for everybody. If we had a fire on board, with a simultaneous grounding, it would be much safer."

Thursday afternoon:

Looking for holes: Back at the office, I organize my new material and rough out a story outline. Though I'm not ready to write, this is a way of looking for holes in my reporting.

Filling the holes: On the phone, a ferry system naval architect gives a detailed account of how the ferry system talked the Coast Guard out of requiring more life rafts two years ago. Like the Titanic, he says the ferries are virtually unsinkable. Coast Guard officials confirm the naval architect's account, but say they think life rafts are necessary. Documents are arriving by fax from the NTSB and Coast Guard. I interview, among others, an ex-congressman who had tried to force more life rafts in 1988, and a leader of a ferry passenger group, and more experts.

Writing: I write all night, calling more people to fill holes as holes appear. I re-check everything..

#### Friday, Jan. 9:

I turn in my story to Boardman at 6 a.m. and head for home.

#### Saturday, Jan 10:

I call the ferry system p.r. woman, the naval architect and others to re-check the details of my story. .

#### Sunday, Jan 11:

After my first story hits the streets, I started calling policymakers to do a follow story.

#### Tuesday, Jan. 13:

The original tipster, Steve Finley, calls. He says he had no idea that the situation was that bad, that there was only one life raft for every seven people. He thought there were at least enough for a third of the passengers.





## APPENDIX IV

### International Federation of Journalists

## DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES ON THE CONDUCT OF JOURNALISTS

*Adopted by the Second World Congress of the International Federation of Journalists at Bordeaux on 25-28 April 1954 and amended by the 18th IFJ World Congress in Helsingör on 2-6 June 1986.*

This international Declaration is proclaimed as a standard of professional conduct for journalists engaged in gathering, transmitting, disseminating and commenting on news and information and in describing events.

1. Respect for truth and for the right of the public to truth is the first duty of the journalist.
2. In pursuance of this duty, the journalist shall at all times defend the principles of freedom in the honest collection and publication of news, and of the right of fair comment and criticism.
3. The journalist shall report only in accordance with facts of which he/ she knows the origin. The journalist shall not suppress essential information or falsify documents.
4. The journalist shall use only fair methods to obtain news, photographs and documents.
5. The journalist shall do the utmost to rectify any published information which is found to be harmfully inaccurate.
6. The journalist shall observe professional secrecy regarding the source of information obtained in confidence.
7. The journalist shall be aware of the danger of discrimination being furthered by the media, and shall do the utmost to avoid facilitating such discrimination based on, among other things, race, sex, sexual orientation, language, religion, political or other opinions, and national or social origins.
8. The journalist shall regard as grave professional offences the following:
  - plagiarism
  - malicious misrepresentation
  - calumny, slander, libel, unfounded accusations
  - the acceptance of a bribe in any form in consideration of either publication or suppression.
9. Journalists worthy of that name shall deem in their duty to observe faithfully the principles stated above. Within the general law of each country the journalists shall recognize in professional matters the jurisdiction of colleagues only, to the exclusion of every kind of interference by governments or others.



## Glossary of Journalistic Terms

- **Access to information:** The right of the public, including journalists, to seek and receive public documents or to question public officials about their decisions and actions.
- **Accuracy:** The truthfulness of information, context and interpretation. To ensure accuracy, a reporter needs to verify all the important information with reliable sources.
- **Angle:** The focus or emphasis a reporter takes in pursuing a story.
- **Anonymous source:** A source who provides information to a reporter only on condition of not being identified. Journalists should be careful about agreeing to making such agreements because the identity of a source is important information the public needs to evaluate the credibility of the information. Confidentiality should be granted only if the source would be seriously affected by being identified, and then only if the reporter is sure the information is reliable. Information from anonymous sources should be verified with other sources.
- **Attribution:** Identifying the source of facts or opinion.
- **Background:** Information included in a story that provides factual context, either historical (recent or long past) or situational. (See context) Background also refers to information provided by a source that can be published but not attributed to the source.
- **Balance:** Giving the opportunity to all sources involved in a controversial story to tell their side of the story, and presenting all sides neutrally, without favoring any side.
- **Blog:** Online reporting or commentary written by journalists or individuals about issues, events or personal hobbies or areas of specialist interest. Blogs have become a major source of news and an international forum for discussion. Also known as a weblog.
- **Byline:** A line between the headline and the article, telling who wrote the article.
- **Censorship:** Restrictions on the publication of information or opinion by government or other powerful interests, including the reviewing of the content of a publication by before it is published. If there is such a law, the government can forbid the publication of information, pictures or opinions that it does not like. In a liberal democracy, in principle there is no such censorship except in extreme cases where the harm or danger of publication outweighs the threat to free expression, such as child pornography. In a democracy that is not matured some journalists exercise self-censorship by not publishing anything that may upset the government or put themselves in danger.
- **Close-ended question:** A question seeking specific information.
- **Confidentiality:** Protecting the anonymity of a source a journalist has promised not to reveal in exchange for information.
- **Conflict of interest:** The conflict that is created when a writer allows personal interests (friendship, family, business connections, etc.) to influence the outcome of the story
- **Contempt of court:** The criminal offence of ignoring court rules or orders.
- **Context:** The history, situation, events or other information needed for a reader, viewer or listener to understand newsworthy events and developments
- **Correspondent:** A reporter generally based in a region or another country.
- **Credibility:** Believability of a writer or publication
- **Deadline:** A time given to a reporter by which S/he must turn in a story.
- **Defamation:** Published information that harms the reputation of another person. Only false defamation is subject to legal action in free societies; the truth is not punishable, even if it harms a reputation.



- **Delayed lead:** A writing technique in which the story begins with an anecdote, vivid description, historical setup or illustration followed by a “nut graph” summary of the major themes of the story.
- **Editor:** The person who makes decisions about what will be published. Top editors decide on the policy and approach of a news organization; others assign stories and direct the reporters in gathering information and writing the story; others “polish” the story by correcting grammar and spelling.
- **Editorial:** An article expressing a newspaper or magazine’s position on an issue
- **Ethics in Journalism:** The code of morals and principles that journalists follow. These include a commitment to tell the truth, objectively and to avoid being influenced by self-interest, to maintain the confidentiality of sources, and to attribute what is said to the appropriate source.
- **Evidence:** Facts or information provided by journalists that tend to prove that a hypothesis made in an investigative story is true.
- **Fact:** A piece of information that is known to be true.
- **Fair:** In journalism, fairness has both a narrow and a broad meaning. Narrowly, fairness refers to the equal opportunity given to different sides of a story to present their views or position. In a broader sense, fairness means objectivity, neutrality and open-mindedness in approaching a story, with a commitment to the truth but also to minimizing the harm that telling the truth may cause.
- **Feature:** A “soft news story,” as opposed to “hard” breaking news; a story written to be interesting as well as informative, often longer and more in-depth and frequently offering literary writing devices such as dialogue and description. Features usually emphasize the “human angle.” Many features are profiles of interesting people, either important ones or common people. Others explain, illustrate, describe or just tell a good story.
- **Five Ws and H:** The primary questions a news story answers --Who? What? When? Where? Why? How?
- **Follow up:** New stories reporting new developments or giving previously unavailable information in an event reported in a previous story.
- **Hard news stories:** Factual accounts of important events
- **Headline:** The “title” of a newspaper or magazine story.
- **Human interest story:** A story that focuses on the human side of news and often appeals to the readers’ emotion.
- **Hypothesis:** Proposition or supposition made as the basis for reasoning or investigation in an investigative story.
- **Inverted pyramid:** The structure of a news story which places the important facts at the beginning and less important facts and details at the end, enabling the reader to get the essence of the news quickly and the editor to cut bottom portion of the story if space is required.
- **Investigative journalism:** A story that requires a great amount of research and hard work to come up with facts that might be hidden, buried, or obscured by people who have a vested interest in keeping those facts from being published. Many investigative stories often reveal wrongdoing; others give in-depth explanations of how complex events occurred.
- **Jargon:** Any overly obscure, technical, or bureaucratic words that would not be used in everyday language
- **Journalism:** The work of gathering, writing, editing, and publishing or disseminating news and opinion, as through newspapers and magazines or by radio, television and the Internet.
- **Journalist:** Someone who works in the news gathering business, such as a photographer, editor or reporter.



- **Kicker:** An ending that finishes a story with a climax, surprise, or punch line.
- **Lead:** The first sentence or first few sentences of a story.
- **Libel:** Publishing in print (or other media) false information that identifies and defames an individual.
- **Media:** All the news organizations, such as newspapers, radio, television and the Internet, that provide information for the public.
- **Money trail:** Following the flow of corruption money to find and report the sources of money, the way it is spent and misspent, and the reasons why the wrongdoing occurred.. Investigative journalists often say, “Follow the money!”
- **Newsroom:** An office where journalists work.
- **Newsworthy:** Information interesting or important to readers, viewers and listeners; having all the important elements that can be regarded as news.
- **Nut graph:** The paragraph summarizing the important information and telling the angle or focus of the story, especially in an article that begins with a delayed lead.
- **Objectivity:** The state or quality of being without bias or prejudice; detached, impersonal. The journalist’s job is to report the facts, not colored by his personal opinion; except in the case of opinions or editorials.
- **Off the record:** Something a source does not want repeated in a news story. It’s an agreement between reporter and source that information the source gives will not be printed but only serve to help the reporter understand.
- **On the record:** Information given by a source that can be used in an article.
- **Open-ended question:** A question that requires a source to illustrate or explain an answer.
- **Opinion:** A person’s beliefs or ideas about a subject or an issue.
- **Paper trail:** Finding important documents, which are usually hidden, to be used as proof to support a hypothesis made by an investigative reporter.
- **People trail:** A network of important sources, including anonymous sources, needed to be interviewed by investigative reporters to gather evidence to prove their hypothesis and allegations.
- **Plagiarism:** Using the work of another person (both written words and other intellectual property) and calling that work your own.
- **Plagiarist:** Person who steals the work of another person.
- **Proof:** Facts, information, documents, etc. that convince a reader, viewer or listener that something is true.
- **Pulitzer Prize:** Pulitzer Prizes are annual awards for achievements in American journalism, letters, drama and music. The prizes have been awarded by Columbia University in New York City since 1917, on the recommendation of a Pulitzer Prize Board. Fourteen prizes are given in journalism. The award is named after Joseph Pulitzer, American newspaper publisher, who endowed the journalism school and the awards.
- **Publisher:** Person who puts up the investment to start a newspaper then makes the business decisions necessary to keep it operating profitably; on larger newspapers, a publisher is not the same as the top editor, who makes independent editorial decisions about coverage and publication.
- **Quote:** Record of what a source or interviewee has said.
- **Reporters:** Journalists who gather facts for the stories they are assigned to write
- **Sidebar:** A secondary story explaining, illustrating or reporting on a part of angle of a “main” story, often a column of copy and/or graphics on the page of a magazine or newspaper giving information about





the story or contents of the paper.

- **Slender:** Similar to libel, but spoken instead of written.
- **Source:** A person who gives a reporter newsworthy information, either on or off the record or on “background,” not for attribution.
- **Stringer:** Freelance newspaper correspondent based in a region or country.
- **Style:** Conformity of language use by all writers in a publication (e.g., Reasmei Kampuchea Newspaper has chosen to write stories in Khmer language with subscripts rather than the scripts that spread out.)
- **Subjectivity:** The state or quality of being effected by the feelings or temperament of the subject or person thinking.
- **Summary lead:** The traditional journalism tool used to start off most hard news stories. It’s the first few sentences of a news story which usually summarizes the event and answers some or all of the questions: Who? What? When? Where? Why? How?
- **Tabloid:** Technically, a publication smaller than a standard newspaper page; but commonly, any newspaper that is splashy and heavily illustrated and concentrates on crime, celebrity, sports and other news with strong “human interest” angles.
- **Transition:** A rhetorical device used in writing to move the story smoothly from one set of ideas to the next by finding a way to connect the ideas logically.
- **Verification:** Cross-checking unclear or controversial information with other sources or documents or by personal observation to make sure that the information is accurate.
- **Work plan:** A plan to do a complicated story such as an investigative story to guide reporters in gathering information, determine the people to interview, the information and documents needed, places to go, and time and money needed to be spent.
- **Yellow Journalism:** The use of cheaply sensational or unscrupulous methods in newspapers to attract and influence the readers. This term came into use in the 1890s when a publisher in the US published a yellow-paged newspaper and printed false information to sell the newspapers.



## Useful Contacts

### ► Journalist Associations in Cambodia

- [Club of Cambodian Journalists](#)

# 26A, Street 336, Tuol Kork, Phnom Penh, Cambodia  
Tel: (855 23) 884 094, (855 12) 938 333  
E-mail: ccj@online.com.kh

- [Cambodian Association for Protection of Journalists](#)

# 26, Street 271, Tuol Kork, Phnom Penh, Cambodia  
Tel: (855 23) 215 834  
Fax: (522 23) 215 834  
E-mail: umsarin@hotmail.com, bossokol@hotmail.com

- [Cambodian Press Association for Liberty](#)

# 36, Street 218, Tuol Kork, Phnom Penh, Cambodia  
Tel: (855 12) 911 407  
E-mail: ctehoenvironment@yahoo.com

- [Cambodia's Media Forum on Environment](#)

# 177, Street 86, Daun Penh, Phnom Penh, Cambodia  
Tel: (855 23) 350 296, (855 12) 888 664  
Fax: (855 23) 350 296  
E-mail: cmfe\_cambodia@yahoo.com  
Website: environmentaljournalistgroup.org.kh

- [Cambodian National Journalists Association for Freedom](#)

# 7 E, Street 11A, Russei Keo, Phnom Penh, Cambodia  
Tel: (855 12) 299 123, (855 11) 999 181

- [Federation of Cambodian Journalists](#)

# 9 IE0, Street 139, Prampi Makara, Phnom Penh, Cambodia  
Tel: (855 12) 885 963

- [Independent Journalists Union](#)

# 338, Street 355, Russei Keo, Phnom Penh, Cambodia  
Tel: (855 11) 603 779, (855 16) 930 666

- [Independent Journalists Organization](#)

# 60, Street 257, Tuol Kork, Phnom Penh, Cambodia  
Tel: (855 12) 679 733/ 895 853

- [Khmer Democratic Journalists Association](#)

# 103, Street 324, Tuol Kork, Phnom Penh, Cambodia  
Tel: (855 12) 772 267

- [Khmer Journalists Friendship Association](#)

# 93, Street 202, Tuol Kork, Phnom Penh, Cambodia  
Tel: (855 12) 826 802  
E-mail: 012826802@mobitel.com.kh

- [League of Cambodian Journalists](#)

# 76 Eo, Street 276, Chamka Mon, Phnom Penh, Cambodia  
Tel: (855 12) 479 890, (855 11) 318 299

- [Neutral Democratic Journalists Association](#)

# 75C, Street 28 BT, Meanchey, Phnom Penh, Cambodia  
Tel: (855 12) 932 801/ 488 440

- [National Independent Journalists Association](#)

Street 207, Takhmao, Kandal, Cambodia  
Tel: (855 12) 406 496, (855 11)

- [Newspaper Distributors Association](#)

# 26A, Street 336, Tuol Kork, Phnom Penh, Cambodia  
Tel: (855 12) 852 930

### ► Foreign Journalists Organizations

- [Committee to Protect Journalists](#)

330 7th Avenue, 11th Floor, New York NY 10001, USA  
Tel: (1 212) 465 1004  
Fax: (1 212) 465 9568  
E-mail: info@cpj.org  
Website: www.info@cpj.org

- [Center for Media Freedom and Responsibility \(CMFR\)](#)

2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Ateneo Professional Schools-Salcedo  
#130 HV dela Costa St., Salcedo Village,  
Makati City 1227, Philippines  
Tel: (63 2) 894 1314/ 894 1326/ 840 0903  
Fax: (63 2) 840 0889  
E-mail: staff@cmfr-ph.org  
Website: www.cmfr.com.ph

- [Freedom House](#)

120 Wall Street, Fl. 26, New York, NY 10005, USA  
Tel: (1 212) 514 8040  
Fax: (1 212) 514 8055  
E-mail: info@freedomhouse.org  
Website: www.freedomhouse.org

- [International Freedom of Expression Exchange](#)

555 Richmond St W., Post Office Box #407  
Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5V 3B1  
Tel: (416) 515 9622  
Fax: (416) 515 7879  
E-mail: ifex@infex.org  
Website: www.infex.org

- [Index on Censorship](#)

6-8 Amwell Street, London EC1R 1UQ, United Kingdom  
Tel: (44 20) 7278 2313  
E-mail: rohan@indexonensorship.org  
Website: www.indexonensorship.org





- **International Federation of Journalists**

IPC-Residence Palace, Bloc C, Rue de la Loi 155,  
B-1040 Brussels, Belgium  
Tel: (32 2) 235 2200  
Fax: (32 2) 235 2219  
E-mail: ifj@ifj.org  
Website: www.ifj.org

- **International Pen-Writers in Prison Committee**

50 / 51 High Holborn, London, WC1V 6ER, United Kingdom  
Tel: (44 20) 7405 0338  
Fax: (44 20) 7405 0339  
E-mail: info@wipcpn.org  
Website: www.internationalpen.org.uk

- **International Press Institute**

Spiegelgasse 2, A-1010 Vienna, Austria  
Tel: (43 1) 512 90 11  
Fax: (43 1) 512 90 14  
E-mail: ipi@freemedia.at  
Website: www.freemedia.at

- **International Publishers' Association**

3, Avenue de Miremont, 1206 Geneva, Switzerland  
Tel: (41 22) 346 3018  
Fax: (41 22) 237 5717  
E-mail: secretariat@ipa-uite.org  
Website: www.ipa-uite.org

- **Philippines Center for Investigative Journalism**

3th Floor, Criselda II Bldg., 107 Scout de Guia St.  
Quezon City 1104, Philippines  
Tel: (632) 410 4768/ 992 93117  
Fax: (632) 929 3571  
Email: pcij@pcij.org  
Website: www.pcij.org

- **Reporters Sans Frontières**

5, rue Geoffroy-Marie, 75009 Paris, France  
Tel: (33 1) 44 83 84 84  
Fax: (33 1) 45 23 11 51  
E-mail: rsf@rsf.org  
Website: www.rsf.org

- **Southeast Asian Press Alliance (SEAPA)**

538/1 Samsen Road, Dusit, Bangkok, 10300 Thailand  
Tel: (66 2) 243 5579  
Fax: (66 2) 244 8749  
E-mail: seapa@seapabkk.org  
Website: www.seapabkk.org

- **World Press Freedom Committee**

11690-C Sunrise Valley Dr., Reston, VA 20191, USA  
Tel: (1 703) 715 9811  
Fax: (1 703) 620 6790  
E-mail: freepress@wpfc.org  
Website: www.wpfc.org

- **World Association of Newspapers**

7 Rue Geoffroy St. Hilaire, 75005 Paris, France  
Tel: (33 1) 47 42 85 00  
Fax: (33 1) 47 42 49 48  
E-mail: contact\_us@wan.asso.fr  
Website: www.wan-press.org

- **World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters**

705 Rue Bourget #100, Montreal, Quebec, CANADA, H4C 2M6  
Tel (1 514) 982 0351  
Fax: (1 514) 849 7129  
E-mail: secretariat@si.amarc.org  
Website: www.amarc.org

## ► Human Rights Organizations in Cambodia

- **Cambodian Human Rights and Development Association (ADHOC)**

# 1, Street 158, Daun Penh, Phnom Penh, Cambodia  
Tel: (855 23) 218 653  
Fax: (855 23) 217 229  
E-mail: adhoc@forum.org.kh  
Website: www.online.com.kh/user/adhoc

- **Cambodian League for the Promotion and Defense of Human Rights (LICADHO)**

# 16, Street 99, Chamka Mon, Phnom Penh, Cambodia  
Tel: (855 23) 330 965/ 211 391/ 982 669  
Fax: (855 23) 330 965/ 217 626  
E-mail: contact@licadho.org  
Website: www.licadho.org

- **Cambodian Center for Human Rights (CCHR)**

# 9, Street 287, Tuol Kork, Phnom Penh, Cambodia.  
Tel: (855 23) 883 832  
Fax: (855 23) 883 481  
E-mail: info@cchr-cambodia.org,  
admin@cchr-cambodia.org  
Website: www.cchr-cambodia.org

- **Community Legal Education Center**

# 54, Street 306, Chamk Mon, Phnom Penh, Cambodia  
Tel: (855 23) 215 590  
Fax: (855 23) 211 723  
E-mail: clec@clec.org.kh



• **Cambodia Defenders Project (CDP)**

# 12, Street 282, Chamka Mon, Phnom Penh, Cambodia  
Tel: (855 23) 720 032/ 901 199  
Fax: (855 23) 720 031  
E-mail: [cdp@cdpcambodia.org](mailto:cdp@cdpcambodia.org)  
Website: [www.cdpcambodia.org](http://www.cdpcambodia.org)

• **Legal Aid of Cambodia (LAC)**

# 43, Street 306, Chamka Mon, Phnom Penh, Cambodia  
Tel: (855 23) 215 274 / 360 708 / 214 824  
Fax: (855 23) 212 206  
E-mail: [lac@online.com.kh](mailto:lac@online.com.kh)  
Website: [www.lac.org.kh](http://www.lac.org.kh)

• **Project on Rights and Justice**

# 43, Street 208, Dau Penh, Phnom Penh, Cambodia.  
Tel: (855 23) 224 782/ 221 164  
Fax: (855 23) 224 783  
E-mail: [info@ewmi-praj.org](mailto:info@ewmi-praj.org)  
Website: [www.ewmi-praj.org](http://www.ewmi-praj.org)

• **United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights/Cambodia**

# 10, Street 302, Chamka Mon, Phnom Penh, Cambodia  
Tel: (855 23) 993 590/ 987 671  
Fax: (855 23) 211 579/ 213 587  
E-mail: [cambodia@ohchr.org](mailto:cambodia@ohchr.org)  
Website: [www.cambodia.ohchr.org](http://www.cambodia.ohchr.org)

• **United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)**

# 2, Street 352, Chamka Mon, Phnom Penh, Cambodia  
Tel: (855 23) 362 150/ 216 005/ 220 318  
Fax: (855 23) 216 274  
E-mail: [camph@unhcr.ch](mailto:camph@unhcr.ch)  
Website: [www.unhcr.ch](http://www.unhcr.ch)

▶ **Human Rights Organizations  
outside Cambodia**

• **Asian Human Rights Commission**

19<sup>th</sup> Floor, Go-Up Commercial Building,  
998 Canton Road, Kowloon, Hong Kong, China  
Tel: (852) 2698 6339  
Fax: (852) 2698 6367  
E-mail: [ahrchk@ahrchk.org](mailto:ahrchk@ahrchk.org)  
Website: [www.ahrchk.net](http://www.ahrchk.net)

• **Amnesty International**

17-25 New Inn Yard, London EC2A 3EA,  
United Kingdom  
Tel: (44 20) 7033 1500  
Fax: (44 20) 7033 1503  
Website: [www.amnesty.org.uk](http://www.amnesty.org.uk)

• **Human Rights Watch**

350 Fifth Avenue, 34th floor, New York,  
NY 10118-3299, US  
Tel: (1 212) 290 4700  
Fax: (1 212) 736 1300  
E-mail: [hrwnyc@hrw.org](mailto:hrwnyc@hrw.org),  
[hrwuk@hrw.org](mailto:hrwuk@hrw.org) and [scolm@aol.com](mailto:scolm@aol.com)  
Website: [www.hrw.org](http://www.hrw.org)  
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