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Training Journalists In An Emerging Democracy: The Case Of Cambodia

Cambodia's democratic system of government, conferred by the 1991 Paris Peace Accords, provides for press freedom, and, with the start of the campaign for the 1993 United Nations-supervised election, the news media started to expand to unprecedented levels. This created a huge demand for journalists, but few already in the profession had experience of a free press. Foreign governments, international organisations and non-governmental organisations stepped in with expertise and finances to run courses. This resulted in many short sessions concentrating on basic skills, though in time longer courses were put on and specialities taught as well. With the government and the profession now more settled, quick-fix training seems no longer adequate, and this year the situation has reached a crisis. Criticism of the validity of training in terms of its Western orientation and its appropriateness to the still chaotic media is causing a reassessment of the sector.

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The Paris Peace Accords were signed in October 1991 to end the conflict in Cambodia and the international conflict surrounding it. They promised the country democracy, of which one component was press freedom. Up to this point the news media had been severely restricted: the State of Cambodia (SOC), based in Phnom Penh, had seven Soviet-style media outlets; the exiled resistance groups had several bulletins for overseas Khmers and operated radio stations broadcasting into Cambodia from Thailand; and in the late 1980s a newspaper was set up in a UN-run camp for Cambodians on the Thai border. There had been no private news media in the country since 1975. The United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC), established in 1992 under the terms of the accords to supervise elections, had the task of promoting media freedom.

The sense of security provided by the UN body encouraged the emergence, tentatively at first, of new publications and broadcasters as resistance members returned home and the old

government opened up. By the time of the election in 1993 there were about twenty news organisations; a year later there were 50; and when the second election took place in 1998 about 200 were registered. The majority of print media have been fleeting organs of politicians standing for election, but they have all been genuine, appearing on newsstands at one time or another. Today there is a solid core of twenty or so well established newspapers and magazines as well as more than a dozen radio and television stations with regular news programmes. This rapid development of the news media created a need for more journalists than ever before in Cambodia.

The profession had thrived during times of press freedom under then-Prince (now King) Norodom Sihanouk in the 1950s and 1960s and in the Khmer Republic of 1970-1975, though there were periods of repression, and, in the latter years the news had been circumscribed by the growing internal war against the communist Khmer Rouge. When the latter won in 1975 they abolished the existing news media completely, allowing only their own party organs. Journalists, like other professionals, were targets of the Khmer Rouge and many died or were killed. The survivors fled abroad or managed to keep their past secret from the authorities. When the Vietnamese invaded and ousted the Khmer Rouge in late 1978, most of those remaining stayed out of the profession under the next administration, the People's Republic of Kampuchea (PRK), known from 1989 as SOC. The journalists who ran the PRK/SOC media were generally new to the field.

The news media had a crucial and controversial role to play in the merging of the conflicting factions in the new regime. With few other means of expression available, people from all sides took the opportunity to open newspapers and set up broadcasting stations. Yet few entering journalism had much schooling, let alone professional knowledge. The need to equip them with the skills needed for a free-press system was widely felt. This article examines how in these difficult circumstances the educating and training of journalists has been conducted in the last decade, and examines some of the considerations for its future development.

As the number of newspapers increased in the years after the peace agreement, several sets of journalists appeared. One important group comprised those who had worked in the pre-Khmer Rouge news media. Nearly a quarter of the 43 chief editors in 1994 came from this background, indicating the leading role they played in getting the news going again. A second contingent was made up of PRK/SOC journalists, some of whom had been trained (though not always in journalism) in Vietnam, the Soviet

The News Since 1991

Union and Eastern Europe. In 1994 they provided five chief editors but many more rank-and-file journalists from the overstuffed government and party news media. A third group had worked on the resistance radio stations or on the border camp newspaper, and some became prominent opposition voices. The largest group, however, were those with no experience in journalism at all.¹ This situation showed that press freedom was working extremely well.

Cambodians of all backgrounds and political opinion availed themselves of the opportunity to enter the news media over the next few years. However, the suddenness of the surge of free expression did not allow time for the development of the ethical constraints which have become accepted in the longer established democracies. Government officials in particular were upset at the coarse language used to criticise them. Newspapers filled space with stories based on rumour or even imagination. It was difficult to make journalism pay because the debilitated state of the economy meant that cover prices had to be kept low and advertising was extremely limited, so political patronage became common. The 1993 constitution of the new Royal Government of Cambodia guaranteed freedom of the press, but there were no further laws on how to deal with journalists who went beyond what officials thought were acceptable bounds. A press law went through several drafts as it passed between the government, journalists and foreign experts before a compromise version was finally passed in 1995.

The news media also reflected the growing political conflict. There was increasing tension between the two members of the ruling coalition, the Cambodian People's Party (CPP) of the former SOC and the royalist ex-resistance group FUNCINPEC, and the latter group split when its former finance minister, Sam Rainsy, formed his own party. Between 1992 and 1998 a number of journalists and their offices were attacked, half a dozen editors and reporters killed. The bloody July 1997 coup which ousted FUNCINPEC from the government, followed by the CPP's election win in 1998, have led to a more stable political situation, allowing some of the better established media to settle into a style and format considered more professional by Western standards. However, the opposition media have become more marginalised, though they remain outspoken.

With little funding available locally for training courses, there was room for foreign funders to move into the sector. Assistance to the news media was becoming a staple of overseas aid programmes as a form of encouragement to democratic government, especially to the former Soviet Union and eastern

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and southeastern Europe.² Cambodia, the only country in the region moving from Soviet-style communism to democracy, was open to such donations, and foreign funders have taken an important role in developing the sector.

Training Institutions

Early on, UNESCO became the most prominent of the aid agencies concerned with the media. A needs assessment visit early in 1991 by its regional communications adviser produced recommendations that included courses for print and broadcast journalists, the development of national radio, and training for media professionals outside the news.³ Phnom Penh's first course in journalism, however, was taught in October 1991 by Susan Aitkin, an Australian journalist who had been approached for help when she visited as a correspondent for *The Canberra Times* in September 1989. Back home she arranged funding from a number of Australian organisations and, with the help of a Cambodia-based journalist colleague, Sue Downie, set up the four-week programme. There was an enthusiastic response, and 26 journalists were enrolled. The classes concentrated on basic skills. Part of the time in class was spent working on the daily copy of the government news agency SPK. Speedy translation between Khmer and English enabled the students to work in their own language.⁴ Aitkin later joined forces with UNESCO, becoming its information officer in Phnom Penh.

The UN body became increasingly active in training journalists and others working in the media. Courses were again directed towards basic skills, but were also designed to make participants aware of major issues of the day: human rights, the huge problem of land mines, the environment and Cambodia's cultural heritage. UNESCO worked with the Australian government aid agency, then called AIDAB, and its Danish counterpart, *Danida*, who funded various courses. Training was also arranged by UNESCO at the Asia-Pacific Institute for Broadcasting in Malaysia and the Northern Territory University in Australia. UNESCO's flagship media project was to set up the Cambodian Communication Institute (CCI) with funding from Danida and the French government and the involvement of a number of other agencies.

UNESCO's training reached the masses. A report dated October 1994 listed in the previous year 37 courses involving 590 attendees from *Agence Khmère de Presse* (AKP, the new name of SPK), six broadcast stations, 22 local newspapers, five foreign news organisations, 12 government ministries and other bodies and 21 non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Funding came from

AIDAB, the United States Information Service (USIS), the French embassy, *Danida*, the American media organisation Freedom Forum and the *Centre Canadien d'Etude et Coopération Internationale*.⁵ The courses were all short and specific in nature, though UNESCO's overall recommendation was that media education should become part of the school curriculum and that a degree course should eventually be taught at the university.

UNESCO's key plan came to fruition in 1995 with the setting up within the Ministry of Information of the CCI under the directorship of Sek Barisothe, a former journalist who had worked on UNESCO's courses. In the ensuing years CCI carried out a thorough survey of the training needs of the Cambodian media.⁶ However, the completion of the project was hindered by a change of personnel at UNESCO and the 1997 coup, and it seems never to have been used.

CCI has continued to cater mainly to working journalists, with many short courses in various aspects of journalism from basic skills to specialities such as AIDS coverage and election reporting. Early in 2000 a year-long part-time course was set up on a curriculum designed by Crispin Maslog, a retired Filipino journalism professor hired by UNESCO, and its first session was well attended. Sek Barisothe estimated that the institute had trained "almost every journalist in Phnom Penh" at one course or another.⁷

One of the characteristics of CCI is its cooperation with other aid agencies in putting on courses. Fifteen local, foreign and international NGOs and governmental agencies are mentioned in its literature, including Freedom Forum, the Friedrich Nauman Foundation, the Singapore National Union of Journalists, the Thomson Foundation of Britain and the UN Development Programme. There have also been private donations. The Institute says it provided 32 courses in 1998 and 26 in 1999, the slowdown being partly due to the introduction of the one-year course.

Other organisations also began moving into the field with separate programmes. The French government, which had worked at times with UNESCO, set up a journalism course at the Royal University of Phnom Penh (RUPP) in 1992, initially training working journalists in French. After two years it was incorporated into the French course in the Languages Department and made an elective for third- and fourth-year students of French at the university, taking up 200 hours of teaching in each year. Student numbers have been between 10 and 15 a year. Links have been set up with French journalism schools, and the *Ecole Supérieure de Journalisme (ESJ)* at Lille has sent trainers and hosted Cambodian students. Some of the graduates have been employed on a French-funded week-night magazine programme on the government television station, TVK, where further training is provided both

on-the-job and during visits to France. One of the team is now in charge of the university course.⁸

A little later another programme was begun by the Indochina Media Memorial Foundation (IMMF), established in Britain in 1991 by a Vietnam War photographer to commemorate journalists who had died in the region since 1945. In 1993 the group set up an office in Bangkok run by resident foreign journalists with the aim of training others from the region. Like UNESCO, IMMF has worked with many partners, including The Asia Foundation (TAF, an American NGO which relies largely on funding from the US Agency for International Development), AusAID (the new name of the Australian government aid arm), the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), *Danida*, Freedom Forum, the Japan Foundation, the *Konrad Adenauer Foundation (KAF)* of Germany, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), the Thomson Foundation of Britain, the UN Environment Programme and USIS. IMMF's first course, in basic journalism, took place in Bangkok in 1994 and nine more have been conducted since then, covering photojournalism, business and economic reporting, environmental reporting and programmes for specific news organisations. Courses last three weeks, take place mostly in Thailand and are attended usually by 16 people, whose expenses are paid. Up to the beginning of 2000, 40 Cambodian journalists from 25 local and international news organisations had been on IMMF courses.⁹

At about the same time more training was developing through a number of other organisations. The Khmer Journalists Association (KJA), set up with the help of UNESCO and other aid bodies in 1994, planned to put on its own sessions. The association was receiving funds from TAF, and asked for a grant for the projected programme. At the same time, an American friend of Cambodia, Bernard Krisher, a former journalist himself, was setting up a desktop publishing course at RUPP and was asking for TAF help as well as soliciting the donation of computers and other equipment from his adoptive country Japan.

As the KJA was becoming increasingly polarised between supporters of the two opposed ruling parties, it was decided to set up a joint programme. TAF supplied funding for the courses, which began in April 1995 under an American trainer, who wrote a course and gradually handed it over to a Khmer ex-journalist employed by TAF and several highly experienced journalists working part-time.

The KJA itself, rendered moribund by the split, was no longer involved. Krisher continued until this year to support and solicit support for the desktop operation. With the end of the eighth course last April, 444 students had graduated with a TAF/RUPP

diploma. However, in recent courses only 40 per cent of attendees have been working journalists; 20-30 per cent are university students and the rest NGO personnel.¹⁰

Overseas university scholarships

TAF has also been involved in the selection of candidates for annual scholarships for a year's journalism study at the American University of Paris. The choice has been made in the past by the Journalism Council, a body comprising a number of senior editors and the head of the CCI set up with TAF's help in 1995. In the last two years the scholarship selection has been made by the Women's Media Centre (WMC), which enjoys TAF support. Six students have been through the Paris course, one staying on to complete a first degree and a master's degree. Those who have gone have had little experience in journalism, and it seems that only two have gone into the profession.

In earlier years the Freedom Forum, an American media foundation, provided fellowships for experienced Cambodian journalists to spend a term at a US university. Six, including Sek Barisoth of CCI, went, though one stayed on in the US and another returned home before completion.¹¹

Sweden has also provided some scholarships for journalists, and more recently Japan has been taking one student at a time for a year-long university course.¹² In the current academic year, two educated and very experienced journalists, both of whom have been teaching at RUPP, are studying at Columbia University in the US for an MA in Journalism on scholarships provided by the university through the facilitation of Bernard Krisher.¹³ These are the first scholarships to offer a complete degree course in journalism. This year ESJ at Lille was set to take a student for a one-year course, the first time such a long-term training period has been given in France.¹⁴

One-off, intermittent and short-series training programmes

Many other programmes have been provided for Cambodian journalists on a short-term basis outside the auspices of the institutions mentioned above. Two significant courses have been put on by overseas broadcasters for local organisations. From 1996 to 1998 the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) with AusAID help provided five two- to three-week courses for TVK in various aspects of television production, including journalism.¹⁵ ABC also did a radio course for the Phnom Penh municipal radio station.¹⁶ The Canadian NGO Institute for Media, Policy and Civil Society (IMPACS), which is funded by CIDA, did an in-depth needs survey and decided to concentrate on radio journalism.

Since November 1999 it has provided courses through RUPP, CCI and the WMC, which has its own radio station. Some courses have been for trainees from a variety of radio stations and for NGO officers, but three have been for single broadcasters (WMC's FM102, the government's struggling FM96 and the Phnom Penh station) and others have been specifically for provincial radio stations.¹⁷

The German KAF, which has its own office in Phnom Penh, became active in 1995-1996 when it funded an Australian trainer, Huw Watkin, to provide courses for about 100 local working journalists through AKP and at the *Phnom Penh Post*, a local English-language newspaper, and to extend an Australian-funded programme taught by Sue Downie for information officers in the ministries. KAF also printed a journalists' handbook by Watkin in English and Khmer, the latter version being given to all Cambodian journalists. This round of KAF's help stopped after the July 1997 coup. This year KAF's interest has returned, and the foundation has organised two international meetings in Cambodia with sessions for local journalists to talk to the visitors as well as facilitated the formation of a new journalists association.¹⁸

Other short-term courses were mentioned by interviewees in Phnom Penh. The British news agency Reuter did at least one course in business reporting in Phnom Penh in 1993 or 1994, while the Singaporean Asian Media Information and Communication Centre (AMIC) has conducted training in environmental reporting and setting up websites; it also co-organised a conference with CCI in 1998 on *Media and Economic Development*. Some Cambodian journalists have gone abroad for short courses. The Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism invited two Cambodian journalists to Manila in 1998 to learn about crisis reporting, their trip expenses being paid by the *Dag Hammarskjold Foundation*.

On-the-job training

Despite the large numbers of journalists who have attended one course or more, this kind of training is still the most widespread. The main reason is that many of the courses are very short and limited in scope. This situation is in fact preferred by many editors, who have enough difficulty making ends meet without paying employees to take time off. However, there are also pockets of journalists missed by selection procedures for other reasons. One is that there is a floating group of journalists who drift in and out of journalism, especially in some of the government media, mostly former PRK/SOC organs. These are greatly overstaffed and continue to pay extremely low wages and require little work. Part-time jobs are necessary, and employees sometimes

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work in other professions and so do not get selected for training. This applies in particular to the government radio, and the IMPACS courses helped plug the gap, though it appears that many radio journalists still have had little or no formal training.

Another gap is the newspapers loyal to the opposition Sam Rainsy Party (SRP). These publications are run on a shoestring and editors feel they cannot let employees go, but there are other problems. One is the tense atmosphere in classes with participants of different loyalties, especially at CCI in the Ministry of Information. Another is that many articles are contributed anonymously, and authors would have to identify themselves to attend training. This also applies to writers on other newspapers as well. However, the opposition newspapers have actually had some personnel trained, including one editor who attended an IMMF session, and another editor commented that he himself had benefited from what one of his reporters had learned at RUPP.

There has been no formal evaluation of the effectiveness and effects of training so far, so that assessment is largely anecdotal. With demand so great, the many courses and programmes done on an ad hoc basis have been welcomed by journalists, especially those with no previous experience but also those from the PRK/SOC media. Trainers, trainees and employers have generally been very positive. Those who attended the early classes with Sue Aitkin were given a boost into journalism, and many have become editors themselves. People speak highly of the benefits of CCI's short courses, especially because of their wide reach into the journalistic community. One trainer who taught two three-week courses there on Freedom Forum funding was impressed by the "profound impact" of each course, and reckoned that one such course was more valuable than two years at journalism school.¹⁹

Journalists who have been on IMMF courses return with new insights and inspiration for their work. Their editors say the trip outside Cambodia alone is a good education and the training a bonus. A 1997 evaluation of the RUPP course done for TAF by an American journalism professor from Ohio University, Drew McDaniel, reported that both students and professionals among the trainees were happy with the course, while government officials were "enthusiastic" and the university administration and teaching staff "regarded the program as a success".²⁰

Pen Samitthy, chief editor of Raksmei Kampuchea, one of the most popular newspapers, says he has seen an improvement in his journalists' skills: "I spend less time correcting because reporters understand better than before how to be professional".²¹

There have been plenty of criticisms as well, particularly of the shortness of courses and the lack of recognised qualifications. Samitthy himself, speaking at the KAF-organised editors' forum in February, said training so far had produced "only basic knowledge".²²

Lin Neumann of the Committee to Protect Journalists noted a great deal of similar criticism in a report he contributed to a study on the media in post-conflict societies.²³ Lao Mong Hay, head of the Khmer Institute for Democracy, points out that the many short courses have been put on at random without any coordination. He says that there had been many such courses in AIDS coverage and environmental reporting just because organisations had money for this kind of training. He also feels that not enough attention has been paid to the prior educational qualifications and career aspirations of those who go on journalism courses, so that many attendees are not journalists and do not want to be journalists, just wish for some education.²⁴

This view is reflected at the Ministry of Information. Leng Sochea, deputy director general, says that the people who register newspapers are often not journalists themselves and tend to hire others who are untrained, while many of those who go on courses do not become journalists. He said, "We're wasting money on training the wrong people".²⁵ This has led to the ministry's trying to introduce a law requiring all proprietors to undergo training.

Other critics say trainers have over-emphasised freedom of the press, leading some journalists to believe that anything at all can be published, including bad language and rumour. They point to this as contributing to politically related conflict and violence. Another point is the problem of political opponents attending the same classes.

In the same vein, Michael Hayes, the American publisher and editor-in-chief of the *Phnom Penh Post*, expressed extreme dissatisfaction because at the amounts that have been spent on courses when journalists are often unable to use what they learn because of the political nature of the press.

He said: "I'm not sure reporters want to get the basics of the profession because newspapers are viewed as tools in an on-going political struggle between competing individuals and power groupings. Thus, even if someone understands the basics of balanced, professional reporting, it is likely that they chose not to abide by these rules and conventions because to do so would not enable them to support their anti- or pro- agendas."

Perhaps the most thoroughgoing criticism, made by Lao Mong Hay among others, is that not only are there too few jobs for all the trainees, but the newsrooms of the biggest employers, the broadcast media, engage in little real journalism because they

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follow government events, taking others only if paid to do so. It is difficult for journalists who have attended courses to criticise their bosses' practices.

Journalism training in Cambodia stands now at a crossroads because of changes on both global and local levels.

The international situation

Ten years after the end of the Cold War aid donors are clearer about their function in the new world order. There has been a huge expansion of NGOs over the last decade: the *Economist* magazine estimated that there are two million in US alone, most formed in past 30 years, while in Russia, where there were none before 1990, there are at least 65,000.²⁷ With democracy more than ever a major aim of assistance, there has been increased interest in the media. Research by the British Council puts the number of funding agencies in Britain and Europe alone at 18 and 'training providers and advisory groups' at 121.²⁸ Yet at the same time other aspects of democracy are of interest to donors, particularly human rights, which has become a preferred target of assistance. Thus more aid organisations want to help train journalists, but they may not have much money for the job.

The local situation

The overall aid situation is having its effect on Cambodian journalism training. CCI, still UNESCO's flagship, has over the past year benefited from the new interest from overseas, especially the IMPACS group. However, the institute's French support ran out early on and in December 1999 *Danida* failed to renew its grant because it was unhappy with CCI's being part of the Ministry of Information. A study by UNESCO recommended moving away from the ministry and setting up at RUPP or, if that could not be done, seeking its own premises and operating independently. In August this year the ministry liberated CCI, which hoped thereby to regain *Danida's* support. However, the situation remained unsettled as CCI sought new housing, initially hoping for an RUPP site. The surge of interest from aid groups new to the scene has produced confusion and threatens to take away the leading role played so far by UNESCO and CCI.

The criticisms that training courses are too short, uncoordinated and provide no qualifications have made their mark, with the result that the long-planned setting up of a degree course in journalism has become the focus of attention. Bernard Krisher, encouraged by the previous rector of RUPP, distanced himself from the current university course this year to probe the

possibility of a degree there. He arranged an assessment visit by the director of the international programme at Columbia Graduate School of Journalism, whose report recommended the gradual implementation of a four-year degree course.²⁹ It was this connection which secured the MA scholarships for the two journalists, who are good candidates to lecture at degree level. Krisher helped secure fellowships from the Knight Foundation of the US to fund two American lecturers, the former KJA/RUPP trainer and an ex-editor of Krisher's newspaper the *Cambodia Daily*, to teach on the next RUPP course and start to set up the degree programme.

However, in the meantime KAF has renewed its interest in journalism in Cambodia. KAF now wishes to take part in establishing a department of journalism at RUPP, and the new rector, Pit Chamnan, is keen to move on this offer. KAF's plan will start with discussions in Cambodia with visiting experts from Germany and the Manila-based ASEAN Press Institute, followed by return visits by a Cambodian delegation, after which the curriculum will be designed and teaching staff located. It is hoped to admit students in the 2000-2001 academic year. The rector hopes Krisher will continue to provide technical help.³⁰ A major problem is the lack of qualified teaching staff. Even the two who return from Columbia will at most have master's degrees and anyway may well choose to return to their better-paid jobs with international news organisations. Lack of a PhD might be overlooked in the search for other trainers, but there seem to be few other candidates even with a first degree. A related problem is funding the course: the Ministry of Education cannot provide, and it is not clear yet whether KAF or any other donor is willing to foot the bills. RUPP salaries are not high enough to attract good staff.

The plans for the university do not yet include TAF, which was originally in favour of helping with a degree programme but cooled to the idea after the US government funding reduction following the 1997 coup. TAF officials say they will continue the five-month course as before, though they emphasise that they concentrate on skills for working journalists. This is a possible threat to CCI, which considers itself to be the prime provider of such training. Moreover, if CCI settles at the university there will be direct competition from its one-year course. If this means a reduction in students, or even hard feelings between the two organisations, the effect could be that TAF, whose USAID funding comes up for renewal next year, may consider dropping out altogether and using its money elsewhere. The French are also re-considering their course, the perception being that there are few jobs available for journalists who speak French, and that often the

standard of French is not high enough. Late last year students of the course went on strike and burnt tyres because French teaching staff were failing some students.³¹

At the same time other aid providers are looking seriously at helping the news media in Cambodia, but they too seem to be thinking along the same lines as the current funders. SIDA, the Swedish development agency, and *Forum Syd*, a Swedish NGO which has been providing some media help to the WMC, commissioned a survey by a Swedish journalist who had been working with a children's magazine in Cambodia. Among her recommendations are a degree course, where she suggests a partial role along with Krisher, TAF and the French aid organisation GRET. Further recommendations include the training of trainers and of senior editing staff, of provincial journalists and government information officials.³² GRET has also produced an extensive report, which finds that support to the media is "essential". Among its recommendations is one to support the establishment of a degree course at RUPP, possibly in a coordinating role. It also suggests a joint effort, naming the French embassy, KAF, SIDA, *Danida* and the Dutch media aid NGO CAF, and calls for expertise from French, Belgian and Dutch universities and the European Journalism Centre in the Netherlands, as well as experienced Cambodian journalists.³³

The entry of new aid-givers and the new ambitions of established ones has already caused some ill feeling among donors and may well lead to friction over who aids whom for what purpose. Anecdotal evidence suggest that at present too much training may be on offer, and aid to it spread too thinly. This indicates that cooperative efforts as suggested by SIDA and GRET would be most helpful to donors and recipients alike. SIDA has proposed a meeting in November to discuss cooperation, and GRET has offered a coordinating role, though the established aid givers may see no need to join unless these new providers start to make real efforts in the field, or at least solid proposals. Coordination is difficult because aid organisations have different policies and operate in different ways. Some, like *Forum Syd*, just provide a sum for an organisation to disburse, but most like to have some control over their projects. They may insist on hiring their own country's nationals, or they may want to keep in place the foreign and local employees they already have. However, if no coordination is forthcoming, current moves may result in duplication of effort and some aid organisations may decide to drop out altogether.

One important issue is how much funding each

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organisation is prepared to commit. An NGO official suggested that US\$100,000 was needed to set up a proper university course; a government official told a UNESCO media forum in late June that US\$10 million would be needed to establish a professional media system. *Danida's* funding for CCI has been substantial, and the French input to their own programmes must also be large, though official figures are not available and much of their aid comes from existing services. IMPACS has also invested a big sum in training. Other donors have mostly been putting in sums in the tens of thousands of dollars or less, as far as can be ascertained. With human rights, justifiably, a major target of aid to good governance, individual aid organisations may not be able to produce large amounts for journalism education. The high cost of the IMPACS programme has led CIDA to question plans to keep it going for the planned three years. Again, a cooperative effort might provide a more consistent situation.

However, before deciding how much outlay is needed, some consideration should be given to the whole question of aid itself. Given that most journalists learn many of their skills through work experience, it can be asked whether aid for off-site training is necessary at all. On-the-job training has proved very effective. For instance, the two English-language newspapers, *Phnom Penh Post* and *Cambodia Daily*, both of them highly respected, have trained their own staff, many of whom have moved on to work in other media. Moreover, aid in general has been criticised for helping to develop a culture of dependence. Cambodia has a free market economy, and its aim should be to operate without foreign funding, in the long term at least. Some news media are now moving towards commercialisation, and professionalisation in the Western sense is a natural concomitant of that progression. *Koh Santhepheap*, a newspaper dating back to the 1960s which was re-started in 1993 by a journalist who had worked on it previously, was an editor-centred, party oriented publication but last year took on a more professional style. This surprised readers, who speculated that this was one of the effects of training, but the current editor says this was done in fact because its main competitor, *Raksmei Kampuchea*, was going along that path.³⁴ The ethical standards of Western-style journalism are learnt not only in the classroom but from the wallet.

There is also a danger that foreign aid will impose outside values on the Khmer media through an overly narrow view of what the media ought to be or overambitious targets for professional standards. Training tends to teach the objective style of reporting, trainers deploring the use of opinion in Khmer newspaper articles, but even in Europe editorialising is a traditional and acceptable form of journalism. Another characteristic of the Khmer media that has been condemned by trainers is the use of

gory pictures, yet the same phenomenon is found in other free press regimes of Asia, such as Thailand, Hong Kong and Japan.

Khmer journalism has traditionally been politically oriented, sensational and outspoken, and the Western reportorial style, while not wrong, may not be totally appropriate. After all, the situation that developed after the first election in 1993 was, while chaotic, in fact similar to that in pre-mass media Europe and America, whose modern press systems have come under fire by "left-wing" critics such as Ben Bagdikian, Noam Chomsky and Edward Herman, who say the news media are controlled by the establishment and big business.

Despite these valid matters, ending aid for training altogether is probably too drastic a course. Cambodia's news media are still very fragile and foreign support lends credibility to courses and encourages journalists in a politically tense atmosphere. It also enables institutions to work better and provides respect for them in the community. The free press system was imposed from outside and has been embraced by Cambodians who had little experience of it, and training has been vital for its maintenance. It would be a pity if CCI were to disappear now purely for lack of funding: it has done a lot of good work.

Even if its short-term courses have been criticised, it has responded by adding a longer one; and many editors are still likely to prefer quick training anyway. The amounts to be spent should be appropriate for what is needed: expertise and encouragement cost little and may be enough, but donors should be prepared to find a large sum for a course or courses if they are likely to provide the kind of training needed and have the chance of standing on their own feet after a period of outside support. Bringing in senior local journalists to advise and to participate on training boards and course designing committees is a possible way to improve knowledge of the needs of the news media and make training useful and relevant.

Now that the initial surge of news media in the wake of democratisation under the terms of the peace accords has settled, the media training set up almost as an emergency measure has arrived at a critical point. Care will be needed in deciding where to invest aid and how to ensure the kind of training that will most benefit Cambodians while preserving the "Khmerness" of the news media and encouraging self-reliance. ■

Notes

1. Judith Clarke, "Phoenix From the Ashes: The Influence of the Past on Cambodia's Resurgent Free Media", *Gazette*, 55, 1995, 93-111. See also

- John Marston, "Cambodian News Media in the UNTAC Period and After". In Steven Heder and Judy Ledgerwood (ed.), *Propaganda, Politics, and Violence in Cambodia*. Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1996, 208-242, p. 210.
2. See John Maxwell Hamilton & George A. Krinsky, 1998, "Exporting American Media". In Everette E. Dennis & Robert W. Snyder, eds., *Media and Democracy*. New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 87-95.
 3. UNESCO Office for Cambodia, "UNESCO in Cambodia, 1951-1993", Phnom Penh, March 1994. pp. 30-31.
 4. Susan Aitkin, "Notes on the Media in Cambodia", Phnom Penh, October 1991.
 5. UNESCO, "Report for the Ministry of Information on the results of the program of cooperation with UNESCO in the 12 months from November 1993", Phnom Penh, 22 October 1994.
 6. John C. Brown, "The Khmer language print media since the UN intervention: An historical and quantitative overview", "Report on Cambodian editors' preferences, needs and priorities for the training of Cambodian journalists", "Report on Cambodian journalists' perception of their own training needs", CCI, Phnom Penh, 11 January 1997. Thanks to CCI for giving me access to these reports.
 7. Interview from an interview with Sek Bariso, CCI, Phnom Penh.
 8. Information from interviews with the Centre Cultural Français, Phnom Penh, and Hubert Colombeau, adviser to Rendezvous.
 9. Information from Sarah McLean, IMMF Project Director, by post and e-mail.
 10. Information from interviews with Jon Summers, TAF Representative in Phnom Penh, and Chhour Sokheang, TAF Program Officer, Phnom Penh, Mike Fowler, former KJA adviser and now Knight Fellow at RUPP, and Bernard Krisher, by e-mail.
 11. Information from interviews with TAF and with Sek Bariso of CCI.
 12. Information from students who have attended courses.
 13. Information from Bernard Krisher by e-mail.
 14. Information from the French Cultural Centre, Phnom Penh.
 15. Information from an interview with Him Suong, deputy general director, TVK, Phnom Penh.
 16. Information from an interview with Yun Savay, newsroom chief at FM103 and TV3, Phnom Penh.
 17. Information from interviews with Sek Bariso of CCI and Ouk Kim Seng, local representative of IMPACS, Phnom Penh.
 18. Information from interviews with Dr Peter Koeppinger, KAF Permanent Representative, and Ros Than San, Assistant to the Representative, Phnom Penh.
 19. Interview with Stan Sesser by phone, Hong Kong.
 20. Drew McDaniel, "Development of a civil society: An evaluation of The Asia Foundation/Cambodia media program", The Asia Foundation, Phnom Penh, 31 December 1997.
 21. Interview with Pen Samitthy, Phnom Penh.
 22. Pen Samitthy, speech to 3rd Asian-German Editors Forum, 1 February 2000, Phnom Penh.
 23. Lin Neumann, "Cambodia", in Monroe E. Price (ed.), *Restructuring the Media in Post-Conflict Societies: Four Perspectives*, a background

- paper for the UNESCO World Press Day conference in Geneva, May 2000. 20-28.
24. Interview with Dr Lao Mong Hay, Phnom Penh.
 25. Interview with Leng Sochea, Phnom Penh. This observation is behind a ministry effort to require proprietors by law to undergo training.
 26. Interview with Michael Hayes, Phnom Penh.
 27. "Sins of the Secular Missionaries", *Economist*, 29 January 2000, 25-27
 28. British Council, "*Media and Information: How Media Training Can Promote Democracy and Economic Reform in Transitional Developing Countries*", British Council, Manchester, 1999.
 29. Anne Nelson, "A Journalism Curriculum for Cambodia: Needs Assessment Report", New York, 20 March 1999. Provided by Bernard Krisher.
 30. Information from interviews with Pit Chamnan, rector of RUPP, and KAF.
 31. This incident is mentioned in Anne Perrin, "The media in Cambodia: Current situation and perspectives", Paris, April 2000, p. 33, citing an article published in the local French-language newspaper *Cambodge Nouveau* in November 1999.
 32. "Cambodian Media Sector", Phnom Penh, 12 May 2000. p. 41. Thanks to the Swedish embassy in Phnom Penh for supplying the report.
 33. Perrin, as above. Other information in this section comes from interviews with the people involved.
 34. Editor, Koh Santhepheap, Phnom Penh.

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