

Trapped in the Past, Seeking out a Future

A Study on the Cambodian Media Sector

Commissioned by Sida and Forum Syd
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Abstract/Executive summary

The Cambodian media sector is still rather small and it faces a range of problems and challenges. Sida and Forum Syd commissioned this study of the Cambodian media sector in early 2000, seeking an inventory and an analysis of the sector with respect to the actors, the main problems and development assistance. The study is also looking into possible ways in which Sweden and Swedish NGOs can assist the sector in its development towards ensuring the public of a diversity of information sources.

Freedom of the press is guaranteed under the Constitution of the Kingdom of Cambodia, and the press laws indeed give the country a relatively free press by international standards. Although much of the Cambodian print press enjoys its freedoms with alarmingly little responsibility, newspapers are threatened by the government on an arbitrary basis, with suspension, closures, etc. There is however no systematic repression against the press, regardless of their political alignment.

The circumstances of broadcast media appears totally different, though. All television channels are linked to the government or the CPP, and so are most radio stations. This was clearly reflected in the lead-up to the elections in 1998. For example, during the first two weeks of July, private television featured the CPP 446 times, FUNCINPEC six times and the SRP nine times. There is an urgent need for diversity and independence on the airwaves.

The Ministry of Information is on the one hand the co-ordinator of the government's relationship with the media, licensing and control. At the same time, it has national television, radio, the news agency and the Cambodian Communication Institute under its umbrella. Extremely cash-strapped, the ministry seems hesitant to grant autonomy for these media organisations, since they in fact are its main breadwinners. Due to its provincial networks, the national television and radio stations enjoy great advantages ahead of other media organisations when it comes to serving the general public. It is paramount that the ministry decides which way to go, in order for these organisations, or some of them, to develop to their full potential. Once they are autonomous and/or independent, they may also facilitate a closer dialogue between the media and the government.

Many media professionals express deep dissatisfaction that there is no common platform from which they can advocate the freedom of the press, while perhaps also sharing resources and experiences. Such an initiative, which should attempt to also incorporate the broadcast media, would not only strengthen the identity of journalists and promote self-regulation, but also be a neutral point of convergence where journalists could identify their sector's more pressing problems.

The level of journalism education among Cambodian journalists is low and so is the quality of most media output. Since the early nineties, a plethora of short-term training courses for working journalists on issue specific reporting, ethics and writing skills have been provided by development agencies. Short-term training for working journalists still serves a purpose, not least since there is a continuous trickle of new topics for journalists to deal with. Nevertheless, there is a need for more comprehensive education for a new generation of journalists.

The level of education is not the only factor behind low quality output: the culture of personality politics and patronage is another. Narrow purchasing power of the media consumers leads to financial constraints both regarding the salaries of the journalists and the amount of advertising in the media.

Widespread illiteracy, limited access to the media in the provinces and little coverage of what happens in the provinces are other concerns. Additionally, the limited transparency and unclear mandates of information officials within public administration restrict the access to information for journalists. Trying to address this problem, the Ministry of Information has given training to information officers, but the ministry itself is struggling with accessing information from other ministries, while the budget for disseminating the information is insufficient.

There are many ways in which stakeholders in the international development sector can support the Cambodian media sector. It is of great importance, however, to decide whether the objective is to

support the sector as a whole entity, or specific segments of it, which has been the case for many of the short-term training courses and gender support.

The problems of diversity and independence within the broadcast media are urgent, not only for the promotion of democracy in a stricter sense, but also in order to inform and educate the general public. Radio remains the most widespread source of information and enjoys advantages by being cheaper to operate as well as to buy and use. In order to assist in the development of public service broadcasts, a very wide approach is needed, ranging from the reform of policies, structures and direction, to the introduction of technology and skills.

Training for information officials both at central and provincial levels would benefit the media in the medium to long-term, as also would training to working journalists in the provinces.

Education is already a field for international assistance. Several actors are involved, and there is call for co-ordination of efforts ahead of choosing a strategy. The Asia Foundation and Japan Relief for Cambodia are already engaged in the Journalism Section at the Royal University of Phnom Penh, and GRET, which is assisting other faculties at present, is considering to launch support. To turn the present course into a full faculty programme is a considerable task, so co-operation between several stakeholders might be preferable.

Finally, to support the formation of a formal or informal journalist association could promote the courage of journalists to increase self-censorship and tackle unprofessional journalism. Moreover, it could serve as a forum for exchange, of both experience and information, and be the point of convergence for external support for a shared resource centre. As Cambodia is becoming more of an integral actor in the international field, so will its journalists. Regional networks of different kinds would also be easier to access if Cambodian journalists have a common platform.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background to the study

The situation of the media is a reflection on the level of democracy in a society; the right to information—that is neutral and truthful information—is a prerequisite for people to take part in and keep themselves informed about issues of concern in their society. The role played by the media does not only help uphold democracy in a given society, but also it supports the development of new democratic traditions by bringing concerns of the people into the open. The media's role as the fourth estate—to scrutinise the performance of the authorities—will, if played soundly, contribute to the strengthening of democracy.

Paul Chadwick of the Communications Law Centre in Melbourne wrote in a paper presented in Cambodia back in 1995, that although there is inevitably some tension in the relationship between the media and the government, both parties have a lot to gain by working together. The benefits of extended media freedom include: a better protection of human rights, enhanced legitimacy of the government, boosted quality of government administration, and assistance in lubricating economic activities (International Journalist Federation, 1995). This is easy to apply to the Cambodia situation..

The Cambodian media is still young. Widespread illiteracy, limited access to the press outside of Phnom Penh, the highly politicised ownership of media organisations as well as the uneven distribution of electronic media are some issues of concern. Sida and Forum Syd commissioned the study of the Cambodian media sector in early 2000. Its aim is to describe and analyse the media sector with respect to the actors, the main problems and development assistance to the sector, and to make conclusions as to possible ways in which Sweden and Swedish NGOs can assist in the development of the sector.

The study will serve as a background for the agencies' future strategies within its programmes promoting human rights and democracy in Cambodia.

1.2 Scope and methodology

The study, undertaken over the months of February to April 2000, aims to give an overview of the Cambodian media sector and outline what donors are doing in the field. It provides a brief background to the present situation, a review of earlier studies as well as a glimpse into the views of the future as seen by some of the key actors. With reference to the rapid alteration of technical standards and equipment, data of this kind has been kept to a minimum. Instead, the study tries to convey a broad picture, outlining trends, ideas and visions.

The media sector in Cambodia is far from unexplored and yet, there is a general lack of information and reliable statistics regarding owners, patrons and not least, the media consumers. The study has pieced together surveys as it seeks to provide an idea about habits and impact. However, it does not aim to provide a clear picture of the media habits of today's Cambodians.

Initially, information and documentation was collected and reviewed. Subsequently interviews with a number of key actors followed, ranging from policy makers in the Ministry of Information to editors, journalists and scholars. They have provided information about their roles as well as having identified the most pressing problems and expressed what their perceived needs of the sector are and what they believe will unfold in the future.

Due to the ephemeral existence of many newspapers, the study is taking a closer look at a handful of longer-serving papers only. And as regard the broadcast media, a selection of outlets representing the full picture has been chosen for closer study.

One field trip, to Kampong Som, 230 kilometres south-west of the capital, was made in order to meet with some media and information representatives outside of Phnom Penh.

This report gives a brief background to the media sector of today before it turns to describe the various segments of the sector first in general terms in the beginning of each chapter. Thereafter the chapter takes a look at a number of the key actors in order to deepen the understanding of the views, problems and challenges as they perceive them. Finally, the chapter of conclusions and recommendations wraps up the presentation.

2. The Setting

2.1 Politics, Culture and Power

Cambodia has a highly hierarchical power structure. The god-kings of the Angkorian era left traces in the centuries to follow. Traditionally, one divided the population into “those who gave orders (neak prao) and those who received them (neak bamrao), between those who exploited others and those who paid homage”, or “those who ‘possessed’ goods and power (neak mean) and the much larger component of the population who were deprived (neak kro)”, according to historian David Chandler (Chandler, 1998). Loyalty, he writes, was not a two-way street. During their rule the Khmer Rouge demonstrated perhaps the most excessive desire for absolute power.

Of course, wars and god-kings, personalised rule and power abuse are not the only features that have shaped Cambodian society and the space that the society provides the media and its consumers.

Traditionally, the main sources of information in Cambodia has been the grapevine, informal channels of word of mouth, and the Buddhist clergy has played a significant role as relays of this information. Oral information has generally been much more important than the written word (Seanglim Bit, 1991).

Religion, or more specifically, Khmer Buddhism, has also moulded people and the institutions meant to serve them. Cambodian Buddhism has developed in an agricultural society, in which peasants have searched for economic protection from the elite by bestowing them with their loyalty. Hence, Buddhism has evolved in a system that inherently stifles the development of a strong sense of collective social responsibility and has acquired conservatism rather than counterbalancing the elitist power structure (Yos Hut Khemacaro, 1998). This system may give an additional explanation as to why the Cambodian society has remained so permissive to the notions of *neak mean* and *neak kro*, and ultimately showed limited incentive to change the existing social order.

The power-sharing agreement brought about by King Sihanouk after the 1993 UNTAC-led elections was nothing less than a peacekeeping tool after CPP’s refusal to accept the results. The entire power apparatus: armies, police, media and bureaucrats, remained divided along political lines, and the co-operation between FUNCINPEC and CPP lasted for three years (Ashley, 1998). During the years after the 1993 elections, the local media came to play an important role in informing and mobilising public opinion, in that it encouraged many Cambodians to make their own judgements. Also, and more importantly, the media made the public see that the leaders became increasingly dependent on them (Lao Mong Hay, 1998). The role of the media came to reflect the adversarial climate of the civil administration. As an example, publishing peaked during the crises leading up to the 1997 fighting. Today, most media organisations remain owned or backed by political parties, and many are under tight government control. Even if they may not have to back the government, the habitual support by state-owned media organisations for the government still prevails.

Although the country remains in sharp transition since the 1991 so-called Peace Accords, politics remains trapped in the past. Along with the end of the Cold War, the Peace Accords provided ample reason for optimism, but the transformation into democracy in its ideal form has proven to take time. Just across the threshold into a new century, Cambodia is at peace for the first time in three decades. Still, its democratic tradition is young, and so are its democratic institutions.

2.2 Freedom of Press

2.2.1 A Repressive Tradition

There is little tradition of press freedom in Cambodia. After the departure in 1953 of the French, who had suppressed freedom of expression in the country, the number of newspapers rose from four to 30 (Mehta, 1997). Yet, during the sixties, while the country was still at peace, but as political tension was brewing, the press was far from free. No opposing institutions such as an independent judiciary or an analytical press were allowed to develop (Chandler, 1998). To the Western educated politicians, “the press was no more than a slave through which they could get their political ideas across”, writes Harish C. Mehta in his monograph *Cambodia Silenced*. According to the editor of Koh Santephiap, journalists could not criticise the regime without risking to be stopped from publishing (Mehta, 1997).

The Lon Nol regime was also very repressive of the media, keeping parts of the preceding press law, but adding provisions for pre-censorship (Mehta, 1997). During the Khmer Rouge, the press was reduced to complete silence with the exception of three fervently party supportive publications and one radio station, transmitting propaganda from Phnom Penh.

After the ousting of the Khmer Rouge, the Vietnam backed government of People's Republic of Kampuchea (PRK) set up a number of media outlets, basically acting as government tools for disseminating information and party propaganda. Dissent was systematically repressed and information was monopolised by the regime. In September 1980, the regime banned foreign journalists to enter into the country, a ban that lasted until 1986. Throughout this time, and beyond, a propaganda war was waged on the short wave: resistance forces, in the camps in Thailand and in the jungle broadcast their opinions, while the PRK regime's beliefs echoed back from Phnom Penh. The PRK were more successful in their propaganda venture; especially as their anti-Khmer Rouge voice gained strength from Hollywood, through the release of *The Killing Fields*. But the resistance factions, i.e. FUNCINPEC, KPNLF, and the Khmer Rouge, enjoyed the opportunity of having access to foreign journalists through Thailand, which was in fact managing Cambodia news abroad (Mehta, 1997). This was the situation when in 1989 the PRK turned into the State of Cambodia (SoC), headed by Prime Minister Hun Sen, who embarked on economic and, to a lesser degree, political reform, with a new press law. Pen Samitthy, former editor of weekly *Phnom Penh*, said that his paper remained under party control until 1992 and could do little to push the limits of freedom (as quoted in Mehta, 1997). The changes in the Soviet Union, the subsequent withdrawal of Vietnamese troops and tentative political reform made the SoC government pass a new, more liberal press law which was largely drafted to keep Cambodian journalists in check. A wearisome licensing system for newspapers and enormous fines for infringements counteracted the new liberties provided by the law (Mehta, 1997).

2.2.2 A Taste of Freedom

Press freedom was first provided in Cambodia during the time of UN administration ahead of the 1993 elections through the UN's liberal media code (see e.g. Mehta, 1997). Taking advantage of the media code, the *Phnom Penh Post* was established in July 1992. Ahead of the elections came two Cambodian newspapers, *Kob Santepheap* and *Rasmei Kampuchea*, followed by a range of others. By the end of the UN mission, newspapers of questionable quality were proliferating in the capital and through Radio UNTAC, radio had become a provider of public service. Radio UNTAC was a tremendous success. A groundbreaking move for the UN, it contributed to spreading information on the elections in a public service fashion. It was one factor behind the high voter turnout and played a critical role in convincing the electorate on the secrecy of the ballot (Radio UNTAC, 1994).

2.2.3 The Battle for and against a Press Law

As the SNC handed over power to the newly elected government in September 1993, Cambodia had a boisterous and rather irresponsible Khmer language media, the result of the transformation of the country towards (something of) a liberal democracy. During 1993-94, the apparatus of repression did not work, according to Brad Adams, a human rights lawyer, formerly with the UN Cambodia Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, UNCOHCHR¹. There was too much chiselling on new areas of work, power sharing agreements, etc. and the government was uncertain as to what to expect from the international community, should it opt for repression. In this vacuum, there was little attempt from government quarters to limit the freedom of press. Largely unaccustomed to outspoken criticism and possible scrutiny, in December 1993 the government announced it wanted to reinstate the SoC Press Law and, by doing so, limiting the freedom of press drastically. UNTAC renounced the announcement, saying reinstating the old press law was in fact reversing the democratic development by several steps. The government announcement was also met with strong reactions from journalists, and catalysed the formation of Khmer Journalist Association, KJA (please, also see page 29). The whole spectrum of journalists at that point had a common platform in its opposition against the SoC Press law.

The attempted coup in July 1994 changed the lenience and in the wake of the coup attempt, the first journalist after 1993 was jailed, for reporting allegedly false information on who was behind the coup.

As the government was firm about reinstating the SoC press law, KJA lobbied for a system similar to that of the US, with a constitutional benchmark, but with no regulations. A compromise was reached to draft a new law.

Brad Adams was at this time a legal advisor for the National Assembly Commission on Human Rights, headed by Buddhist Liberal Democratic Party (BLDP) representative Kem Sokha. Adams was asked to assist in the drafting of the new press law for the Ministry of Information, then headed by another BLDP representative, HE. Ieng Mouly.

The first draft had clear provisions for defamation, in response to how the press appeared, but was otherwise not limiting the freedom of press. The Council of Ministers rejected it, so Secretary of State Khieu Kanharith drafted the next one, which met fierce resistance and loud outcries from the international community. The third draft found the middle ground between the two previous and by December 1994, the draft landed at the Council of Ministries. Illustrating the line of reasoning about the law, both the Minister of Justice and then second Prime Minister Hun Sen wanted to add criminal penalties, while on the other hand, the king asked to have the special provisions on the king taken out, according to Adams. In June 1995, the compromise was passed (See Appendix 1).

2.2.4 The Present Press Law

The new Press Law gave Cambodia one of the most liberal legal frameworks in the region. Still, some vague provisions and the arbitrary application of the law have proved to pose restrictions on the media. The main concerns are some vague formulations: Article 12 states that “The press shall not publish or reproduce any information which may affect national security and political stability”. The other provision of concern is that of identification of editors, i. e. what criteria should be posed on persons who want to obtain publishing licence from the Ministry of Information. When the law was approved by the Council of Ministers, these articles met much resistance from media people. On the issue of identity, the Press Law gives very few limitations at all, and although the government has tried to curtail licensing, they haven’t succeeded. There are palpable problems with the current lax registration procedure. If somebody should try to sue an editor for defamation, something that Brad Adams initially encouraged, most papers’ assets are so intricate and hidden that the plaintiff would never get any money through suing. Patrons behind publications are veiled, so the only thing likely to happen is that the paper closes and opens under a new name (often an already registered publication), but with the same patrons – and the same defaming stories as before the law suit. By reacting strongly against a defaming story, the person making a case may only put his own security at risk and yet, limiting the licensing procedure would pose undesired impediments onto the only real section of the media sector actually enjoying freedom of expression.

Both camps of journalists (pro-Hun Sen on the one hand, pro-FUNCINPEC and the opposition on the other) were much against defining the articles further, as they feared that any definition would be used against them. The sub-decrees came under heavy discussion 1994/95, but as political bickering escalated into 1996, the discussions withered. Now, some elements want to revive the discussion, but it seems likely they will be passed only when the government is confident that the international community won’t react too strongly against it. Naturally, most journalists oppose more definitions and limitations. Pen Samitthy, editor of *Rasmey Kampuchea*, sees no need to further define national security for two reasons: It can be found in other existing laws, and definitions, he believes, always entail limit and can be used against journalists.

In sharp contrast with many of her journalist colleagues, Tive Sarayeth from the Women’s Media Centre, sees advantages in applying stricter rules. She believes that the Ministry of Information is issuing too many licences if one takes into account the lack of skills and lack of human resources in the sector.

Most editors and journalists argue that self-regulation is better than a strict press law. In its rhetoric, so does the Ministry: “We cannot rule by decree”, said Khieu Kanharith in an interview. Still, the Ministry of Information has opted for limiting freedom of expression lately: a number of songs, the lyrics of which were deemed as devaluing Cambodian girls, were banned from the airwaves in February, and in April, mini-skirts were banned from television. And it also threatened two papers with suspension as late as in February, *Samleng Yuvachun Khmer*, for comparing Hun Sen to a dog,

and Moneaksekar Khmer, for being against the King and instigating racial violence (Cambodia Daily, 17-02-00).

In the Press Law, the last provision nullifies all other previous provisions relating to the press, thus saying that whenever there is a case against a journalist/editor in his or her capacity as a journalist/editor, the Press Law applies. However, the UNTAC Penal code is at times being used against the media, but the usage is arbitrary and capricious. (As late as Feb. 2000, the Ministry of Information threatened two editors under an article in the Penal Code.)

2.2.5 Gagging the Media

Given that many of today's CPP politicians were officials in the communist eighties, when repression against political opposition was the norm, it is hardly surprising to see their reluctance towards or understanding of complete freedom of expression and freedom of the press today. Most repression and intimidation against the media are directed from the CPP elite against non-CPP journalism.

A bit more surprising, perhaps, is that those, whose party structures were created by the part of the elite who were educated in France and the US, seem equally unwilling to cherish the notion of freedom of press. The Sam Rainsy supportive media are still appallingly irresponsible in their production; pro-Ranariddh militia launched a deadly attack on a pro-CPP media outlet prior to the 1997 fighting, and FUNCINPEC has seemed a CPP-cohort in suppressing the media ever since 1994, unless that opposition has stemmed from the party itself. The present Minister of Information, Lu Lay Sreng, a long-serving FUNCINPEC figure with a degree from an American university, was even averse to discuss the role of the Ministry of Information as regards press freedom in an interview.

Journalism has been, and perhaps remains, a dangerous profession in Cambodia. Human rights watchdogs have published a range of documents relating to suspensions of papers, arrests, intimidation and killings of journalists and publishers. The press freedom, to the degree it is enjoyed today, has paid a high price. After UNTAC, reports of human rights violations were rife, and again in the period before the 1997 factional fighting, as the rhetoric in many, if not in most, papers were outright vitriolic, violence directed at the press increased. (For a list of documented cases of killings, suspensions, intimidation, etc. please see Raoul Jennar, 1997.)

Impunity has been allowed to rule when violence has been directed against journalists: Only once has a perpetrator been found. The second murder of a journalist after the 1993 elections ended with the arrest of Sat Suong, a powerful security official dealing with logging companies in Kg Cham (Interview with Brad Adams). After a 5,000 US\$ bribe was paid, Sat Suong was acquitted, according to Brad Adams. Since 1995, five journalists have been killed (Hammarberg, June 1998).

2.2.6 Politics on the Airwaves

Before the national elections in 1998, access to the broadcast media became a great concern. After the July fighting, the FUNCINPEC run radio and television stations were confiscated, and many opposition papers were scared into silence. As the exiled politicians returned to join the battle for power in the National Assembly, they had very little chance of retrieving even a fraction of the media access they once had had, while the CPP enjoyed access to the national as well as private electronic media. (A clear example of the imbalance is the fact that the return from exile of Prince Ranariddh, who won the 1993 elections, was not even mentioned on the national news.) After an appeal from the UNCOHCHR, the National Election Committee (NEC) decided to give in to pressure. In order to comply with their own election campaign rules, NEC made sure all 38 parties running in the elections were given five minutes transmission time each to advertise and promote their party. However, statistics from just ahead of the electoral campaign gives a clear view of the one-sidedness: In June, state radio and television (TVK, TV3 and TV5) featured Hun Sen 170 times, Prince Ranariddh 17 times, and Sam Rainsy was 12 times. Also on private television news the unequal portrayal was clear: during the first two weeks of July, CPP appeared 446 times, FUNCINPEC six times and the SRP nine times (Hammarberg, 1998).

In defence of the situation a Ministry of Information official said that the opposition used foreign radio stations, Radio Free Asia and Voice of America, which both have powerful transmitters and large audiences, according to *Nature and Causes of Conflict Escalation* (Hughes, Real, 1999). The

study argues that although it is true that both RFA and VOA are popular and have a large coverage, these foreign outlets ought not to be weighted against state media. After all the wider interest of democratisation of state media should serve the interest of all, and to reach this goal, the state apparatus must remain independent (ibid).

2.3 Cambodian Journalists

There are an estimated 500 journalists in the country (Clarke, 1995). A handful of them have experience from pre-1970 Cambodia, and they are valued for their seniority and skills. A larger group, including some of the more senior journalists in the country worked in the profession during the eighties for the government (party-controlled) media. Journalists from the refugee camps on the Thai-Cambodian border constitute a smaller and less influential group. The largest group, just over 50 percent, is made up of people with no previous experience in journalism (ibid.).

In society, journalists enjoy certain status, especially among the educated classes. This is particularly true for journalists who are viewed as more or less independent, according to several of the interviewees for this study. Ham Samnang of the Cambodia Daily said that the elite view the Daily as a trustworthy source of information and therefore look on its journalists with respect. Still, as many media enjoy limited power, suffer from rather a bad reputation and offer relatively low-paid jobs, a career in journalism does not seem so popular as in many other parts of the world.

The trained human resource base within the sector is limited. As a result, many donor agencies have opted to train journalists in reporting on specific topics. However, another widely made comment among the interviewees was that the old group of journalists, i.e. those who form part of the highly partisan press that dominates the scene, is a lost generation. Several of the editors and journalists said that in order to develop the media sector, it is essential to assist a new generation of journalists, who need not justify their previous actions.

Journalism in Cambodia is a male dominated occupation. This is evident in most editorial offices and also in the media content. The Women's Media Centre is the exception, for obvious reasons, and they play an important role in shaping the identity of Cambodian female journalists.

The explanation given by the media actors interviewed as to why few women are attracted to the media has to do with women's role in Cambodian society. At the university, a number of students claimed it was difficult for women students to follow the curriculum, which requires field trips to the provinces. "Women cannot travel alone, without their families. It is seen as improper," said one male student. Also editors gave this as the main reason for not having more female staff. Additionally, some claimed that women don't have the right courage to do the job, so instead of working as reporters, they prefer to sit at the desk, typing or editing. The female journalists interviewed refuted this and claimed that they were prepared to fight traditions.

At the Journalists Section of the Royal University of Phnom Penh, the dropout rate for women is much higher than for men. No surveys have been made to explain this, but both students and teachers said it had to do with the fact that the women have to work more than the male students outside of their studies, and that families sometimes refuse to let female students join field trips outside of Phnom Penh.

3. Public Institutions and Access to Information

Transparency is not self-evident to Cambodian authorities. Although officials often make themselves available to journalists, they may not provide the information the journalists are looking for. Facts and figures are very rare, and middle-ranking officials are inclined to refer policy questions to top leaders rather than elaborate on the answers themselves. Secretary of State, Khieu Kanharith acknowledges that access to information from the public authorities may be obstructed. A reason for this stems from fear on the part of government officials for ill-reputed journalists, whose articles could present a distorted truth. Therefore, the dialogue between journalists and government officials must be reinforced. According to Kanharith, this mutual understanding emanates from trust, a sufficient level of general education, and training. Twice, the Ministry of Information has given training to information officers within the ministries in an attempt to address this problem, but in fact, the information officers complain that they have little access to information themselves.

A key to information is, like elsewhere, connections. As a result, says one Cambodian media monitor, the government-run TVK is the best channel for government news. For information from CPP officials the fastest sources tend to be the Apsara and Bayon television stations. Others, in particular the opposition media, have to struggle to get hold of the right sources.

This chapter takes a glance at the Ministry of Information, as well as the information office of the National Assembly, in an effort to understand their responsibilities and problems.

3.1 The Ministry of Information

“The Ministry of Information is tasked with the responsibility of assisting the government in managing [the constructive] relationship and rapport with both local and foreign media through a variety of facilitation services and programmes. The ministry is the key link between the government and the media”, the Minister, HE. Lu Lay Sreng said at The Asian-German Editors Forum arranged by Konrad Aduenauer in Phnom Penh early February. Although budget constraints drastically limit the possibilities to act, the Minister sees improvements underway. The present government has introduced TVK in the cable channels and transmits its broadcasts via satellite to this purpose, and it has detailed new directions for both television and radio to boost their development towards more public service, all according to the minister.

The protector of freedom of the press or even a hindrance for the freedom, the Ministry of Information is one of the key actors in the field of media. It is divided into four departments: Admin and Audio-visual, TVK, Agence Khmer Press (AKP), and National Radio. The budget of the ministry for 2000 is just over 5 billion riels (approx. US\$1.3 m), but disbursements seldom reach beyond 30 percent of the budget, so planning and implementation of activities and directions is greatly impeded.² Leng Sochea, director of the Press Department, emphasised over and over again that a paramount step for improving the services of the ministry’s institutions is through privatisation, to make them take full responsibility for their income generation, and hence avoid being put on hold by the cash-strapped treasury. Leng Sochea as well as the Minister, HE. Lu Lay Sreng view privatisation as a tool for achieving improvements in terms of quality and quantity, both of which are lagging behind the private stations.

AKP was the first institution for which the Ministry, then under the leadership of Ieng Mouly, drafted a privatisation plan, but so far no further steps have been taken. The plan details that 70 percent of AKP could come from foreign (or other) investors, whereas 30 percent would remain in the hands of the government. Privatisation is so far only an idea, and the present Minister believes that TVK would be the first target once it is to be implemented. At any rate, the development of TVK and the radio towards more of public service is necessary, he believes.

Once the freedom of the press came into existence, the role of the AKP was drastically changed, and in competition with private initiatives, they could not compete. Their news bulletin, which until 1993 was a significant source of news and information, and the news service itself had some significance in spreading news about Cambodia internationally (esp. in the Eastern bloc) and locally. Now, international coverage of Cambodia is in the hands of foreign media organisations, while most

Cambodians turn to private media. As a result, the government media outlets, which include two newspapers, *Prachiechun* and *Kampuchea*, the TVK and two national radio stations, all facing problems. But by no means are the problems facing TVK and the radio as pressing as those facing the aforementioned papers. TVK is still popular, and the radio too, not least because of its wide transmission.

All provinces have a provincial department of Information, called the Information Services, which act under the control of the Ministry of Information. Battambang, Pursat, Kampong Som and Stung Treng have their own television stations. The stations co-operate with TVK and exchange information with them.

The provincial offices of the Ministry of Information have different mandates in the different provinces. During the eighties, there were active departments in every province, but since the end of Soviet aid, most eke out a dull existence due to grave financial constraints, unclear mandates and a lack of training. (For an account of the work in Sihanoukville, one of the most active provincial offices, please see Appendix 3a.)

One idea expressed for the Ministry to improve information access in the provinces, is to set up three regional centres, from where television and radio could be broadcast. Leng Sochea mentions that the round shape of Cambodia doesn't make coverage too difficult, and that the regional centres could easily cover 90 percent of the whole country. Another suggestion, introduced by Khieu Kanharith, is to provide every province with their own transmitter, e.g., a 10 kW radio transmitter. Neither of these ideas is likely to be realised as long as the daunting budgetary constraints remain.

Another task that the ministry is involved in is to make sure that the media has access to public information. The Media Centre is charged with this duty, but it encounters difficulties to do this job, due both to lacking resources and limited contacts with other public authorities.

H.E. Lu Lay Sreng envisions that the new technology will facilitate this task as staff will compile information from the various ministries for dissemination over the Internet.

In sum, the ministry has an ample range of tasks with which to control the media, to provide them with information, and to be a main media outlet itself. With its fledging finances and a weak human resource base, neither of these tasks can be performed to satisfaction. Its dialogue with the local media is weak; the direction of its development does not seem clearly defined; plans are short and vague; and its goal to be the provider of public service far from achieved.

3.2 The National Assembly's Information Department

In July 1999, the National Assembly Information and Library Office was separated, and a new Information Department was created, giving more attention and weight to information issues. Less than a year of existence, the 22 staff strong department is trying to formulate what to do and how. Its four offices, exhibition; dissemination; audio; and Internet, have little equipment to carry out its new tasks, while they also await the finalisation of the maintenance work at the National Assembly, which has forced them to rent a new house for a short term. At the moment there is only one telephone in the whole building, and at the National Assembly itself, they didn't even have the interim address of the Information Department.

The Exhibition Office is in charge of a bulletin, 300 copies of which are printed and distributed to Members of Parliament (MPs), committees, government offices and some NGOs. A black-and-white newsletter, the bulletin presents activities of MPs, reports by MPs, name lists of the commissions. For the MPs the bulletin is a way of disseminating information about the activities they undertake in their contingencies, but if they don't request the bulletin staff to join their mission or write an official report themselves, they get no publicity there. The media doesn't receive copies of the bulletin.

Additionally, they have official pictures of the National Assembly opening ceremony and some individual MPs. The Information Department also issues visitor passes to the National Assembly, and helps refer visitors to the person or commission that holds the information they might be

looking for. At times they provide footage from plenary sessions to TVK, otherwise contacts with the media are rare.

The National Assembly provincial offices (operational in some ten provinces) at times provide the bulletin staff with information about MPs' visits or activities related to their province.

Hopes for the future are to upgrade the bulletin into a full-colour publication carrying photos, and to establish an FM station, through which they can broadcast debates and other information.

A large number of media and communications related activities don't belong to this office. They have, for instance, nothing to do with press conferences, with publication or dissemination of research from the commissions. Nor do they provide the media with information kits, but instead refer them to whoever might have the information. The previous monitoring of the print media, which rendered in a photocopied compendium of articles distributed to MPs, has come to an end.

The whole department seems unclear as to what to do with their new heightened role. The audio office is largely inoperative, as their equipment still remains with the National Assembly administration, which was previously in charge of the audio systems. Also the Internet office lacks equipment to pursue their tasks.

The staff lament lack of skills, both in communications and languages. Some of them have received short-term on-the-job training at various NGOs and institutions, but they have never gone through training in the particular jobs they are mandated to perform. The National Assembly information office seems to share many of the problems facing public institutions: it is a structure with potential, but with limited experience and expertise to act and ill-defined policies as to what role to play towards the media, the public and internally.

4. The media organisations – Private, Public – and Partisan

State-owned television and radio form part of the Ministry of Information and are both suffering from limited resources.

The number of newspapers, at over 200 registered outlets, may at first sight seem very high in Cambodia, but a look behind statistics quickly reveals the contrary. Only between 20 and 30 of them publish regularly, and very few publish their newspaper every week. As in the rest of the world, television enjoys steadily more media consumers. Cambodian television still doesn't broadcast nation-wide, although coverage is increasing. Radio remains the most important of the mass media.

A number of wire services and foreign news bureaux operate in Cambodia, and much of the international coverage of the country comes from these. For a country of this size, the representation of news organisations is relatively large, although the present political stability may soon change that. (For a fairly up-to-date complete list of Cambodia's news organisations, please see 2.)

4.1 Electronic Media

The broadcast media in Cambodia is dominated by the CPP. This is true for both government media outlets and private ones, two of which are very closely linked with the CPP (Apsara Network) and Prime Minister Hun Sen (Bayon Network). In total, there are six television stations, excluding the provincial stations in Sihanoukville, Battambang and Stung Treng, and a test-run for a television station of the Ministry of Information in Pursat. All of the six are directly or indirectly under the control of the CPP.

The number of Khmer language radio stations in the country is eleven, ten operating on FM frequencies, one on AM. One of these, FM102, is to be considered independent, and is run by the Women's Media Centre, one is an opposition radio (FM105), and FM90, the FUNCINPEC station, has only just resumed operations. The BBC World Service broadcasts its 24-hour international English language service from Phnom Penh on FM100. Recently, a number of licences for provincial stations have been granted by the Ministry of Information, and some test-runs of provincial stations have been initiated by the Ministry's provincial offices (although operations have yet to commence). In addition, VOA and RFA operate on short wave, broadcasting from Thailand.

4.1.1 Fickle Distribution of Licences

The Sam Rainsy Party's attempts to win television and radio licenses have repeatedly been turned down on the grounds of overcrowded airwaves and limited advertising (International Crisis Group, 1998). In 1993, the Ministry of Information decided not to grant licences to political parties, a decision that has been applied in a partisan manner, first jointly by FUNCINPEC and CPP, and after the 1997 fighting, ahead of the elections the following year, turning against the royalists. In May 1998, the Son Sann Party received a licence for their station, which is no longer on the air (Hammarberg, June 1998).

In an interview, Secretary of State Khieu Kanharith repeated the reasons stated above for not granting licences to new stations, but added that it only applies in Phnom Penh and for nation-wide broadcasts. He also said that the present situation shows that the CPP are more professional and that it is a big party with the economic potential and technical skills to run networks. He added though that for television, there is a possibility to establish new stations if they go digital or use an ultrahigh frequency.

4.1.2 Electronic Media as an Information Provider

Broadcast media enjoy rather a different status than does the press. Its prime focus is placed on entertainment; and information programmes and newscasts show a very poor quality. Although more people have access to a radio, a survey commissioned the Women's Media Centre indicate that television is perceived as the most important source of information, followed by Cambodian radio stations. Third most important source is said to be Cambodian newspapers and magazines (WMC, 1998). It should be noted though that the survey was carried out in four urban areas across the country and one rural area only, in Kandal province, which neighbours Phnom Penh, and therefore enjoys a wider selection of television and radio stations than most other rural parts of the country.

Radio is the source of information with the widest coverage of the countryside. In 1997, 41 percent of household nation-wide possessed a radio, an increase of 13 percent since 1993-94.

(Ministry of Planning, 1999) The radio also enjoys the advantages of not being so expensive to purchase, and it runs cheaply with batteries where there is no electricity.³ Yet another advantage is that the radio is portable so people can listen to it while they are working outdoors.

Radio remains by far the most important means of communication, and with quality programming, radio would provide a way to educate the general public. Until now, educational broadcasting forms only a small part of broadcasting time, both at the government stations and the private ones. The Minister says the guidelines for what to broadcast and how, are in place and broadcasters abide by them. However, he feels that the legacy of the Khmer Rouge and the long wars force Cambodia to be more permissive towards foreign influence than they would like to be.

Like elsewhere in the world, television is gaining importance. According to statistics from the Ministry of Planning, over 20 percent of the total number of households have a television set, a climb from just under 14 percent in 1993-94 (Ministry of Planning, 1999).

Social issues on the whole receive little airtime, but some NGOs and other agencies buy time to broadcast programmes, such as panel discussions dealing with the current issues, notably panel discussions of e.g. Khmer Institute of Democracy and the Center for Social Development.

Audience research (CFI, 1999 in Siem Reap, Phnom Penh, and Sihanoukville) shows that the most popular television station is TV5 (Joint venture between a Thai company and the Ministry of Defence), followed by TV3, a channel of the municipality of Phnom Penh. These two stations focus on entertainment, broadcast Thai films and soap operas.

The Cambodian radio channels offer great diversity in scope, economic viability and backing. On one extreme of the scale one finds the state-owned FM96, which pays extremely low wages, has old and inadequate equipment. The privately owned stations are more modern, live on advertisements, and at the far end, the donor financed WMC's radio now boasts digital equipment and good salaries.

The FM radio has chosen another way than the more conservative AM station, which in the words of HE. Lu Lay Sreng is as hard to tune "as an old string [instrument]". The FM station would, according to the Minister, possibly be the best radio station in the country if it only had accurate equipment.

Due to increased competition, many observers say that radio broadcasts seem to move slowly toward more information, rather than only entertainment, which was what came out when the time of mere propaganda came to an end in 1991. A survey from the National Institute of Management identifies FM105 as the most popular radio station, followed by FM103, FM99, and FM98 in falling order.

On a typical national newscast, there are few, if indeed any, interviews in the field. Instead, the newsreader in the studio announces the featured events (often from the previous day), which are presented according to the hierarchical protocol, starting with the King, followed by the Prime Minister, the President of the National Assembly and so on. There are no investigative reports whatsoever, but news is dominated by official visits, inaugurations, conferences, etc.

Speeches of dignitaries are sometimes broadcast during the newscast, with the exception of the opposition leaders, who are very rarely featured.

The sub-chapters below aim at giving a presentation of the national television station, the national radio stations, one opposition radio channel, WMC's FM102 and a brief glimpse into the still very influential short-wave radio.

4.1.3 Television Kampuchea, TVK

National television runs one government-controlled television channel, the coverage of which is countrywide through satellite. The provincial offices, i. e. the Information Offices under the ministry, receive the signals from the satellite and can broadcast through their transmitters, approximately covering a 10 km radius from the station. In reality TVK reaches at a maximum the estimated 400,000 households with television set, but most likely a lot less as there are household with televisions outside of the provincial relay's coverage.

It faces problems attracting viewers for other programmes than news. Yet, the news programmes maintains rather low quality, both in terms of contents, presentation and timing. (For a more thorough account, see Appendix 3b.)

4.1.4 National Radio

There are two national radio channels run by the Ministry of Information, one AM station and one new station on FM96. A survey from the National Institute of Management shows that the AM radio has faltering popularity; the more modern stations do a lot better. The impression given from most actors is that only people who have no other choice listen to it.

FM96 was scheduled to start in 1994, but was not established until March 1999, a result of political turmoil. Purchasing second hand non-professional equipment in the Phnom Penh markets, the total budget for setting up the station was 900 USD, and within one year, it has gained both supporters and popularity. Deputy Director-General of National Radio FM96, Sovathero Nouv, runs the operation with the goal to turn it into a radio for the masses, drawing on the lessons learnt by the AM station as well as the relative success of non-government aligned and popular stations, such as the VOA. (For a more thorough account, see Appendix 3c.)

4.1.5 FM105 – Sambok Khmum (Beehive) Radio Station

Established in 1995, suspended in 1998, and reopened in early 2000, FM105 is the only opposition broadcast media. Its 1 kW transmitter gives a coverage area of between a 40 and just over 100 kilometre radius around Phnom Penh (depending on the direction, weather conditions, etc.). The radio is managed by Mam Sonando, a Cambodian businessman repatriated from France in 1995, and 18 staff, four of whom are reporters (one woman); it has an annual budget of just over 60,000 US\$. Even though FM105 is the most popular radio station (National Institute of Management), it is not a viable business according to Mam Sonando, who supplements the meagre advertising income with approximately 3,000 US\$ monthly out of his own pocket. He claims there are two reasons for this: that competition in Cambodia is not about business, but about politics, hence, depriving FM105 of its expected market share, and secondly, and probably more importantly, because Sonando has decided against broadcasting advertisements for tobacco and alcohol related products.

The radio is presently non-partisan (although the owner ran in the elections with his own Beehive Party). Instead it sides with the general population, those deprived of their rights and lack the courage to speak thereof, says Sonando, a vocal critic against the government and to a lesser degree against the Sam Rainsy Party-led opposition.

In addition to music, phone-in programmes and news, FM105 runs two popular shows: a job hunting programme, to which both jobless and employers can turn, free of charge; and a programme trying to locate missing persons, also that a free service. (For a more thorough account, see Appendix 3d.)

4.1.6 FM102

Women's Media Centre, WMC, has run a radio station, FM102, since March 1999. (For other WMC activities, please see page 23.) It is the best-equipped studio in the country, although for lack of knowledge of certain technologies, they do not use all the equipment.

On the whole, this new station doesn't reach enough listeners (yet) to be listed in the National Institute of Management's survey on the most popular radio stations. Many observers say that quality is high, but that programmes are too intellectual and not urgent enough for most Cambodians, which explains its limited popularity. The news programmes still lag in quality: The staff is qualified, prepared and willing and equipment is available for bettering the news quality as soon as there is a change in policy. A recent internal test-run of a listener survey shows that the most popular programmes are those focusing on a general audience rather than on women only.

The station, supported by Unicef, Danida in Bangkok, the Australian and British embassies and UNESCO, broadcasts 15 hours a day mixing programmes dealing with social issues (with air time reserved for NGO's), musical entertainment and phone-in programmes. The radio receives support from Australian ABC, which sends their Khmer language news (a service for Cambodians in Australia) for free to FM 102.

In recent discussions, Swedish National Radio, SR, has looked into the possibility of repeating a media programme they ran in Vietnam. This would include the donation of a 10 kW transmitter to replace the present 200 W, a change that would multiply WMC's coverage area from a present 30 km radius around Phnom Penh into covering a large part of the country. That expansion would allow WMC to introduce advertising to finance their activities, according to Sarayeth.

After meetings with SR, WMC has submitted a proposal to Sida regarding a three-phased programme, largely copying what SR has done in Vietnam, involving the:

- 1: Transfer of digital equipment and training to use the equipment. After initial training, focus will be placed on programming, making the radio more alive, more public service, with more field coverage (which the modern equipment facilitates).
2. Transfer of a 10kW transmitter, to be able to cover a large part of the country, and hence get access to advertising, through which to finance the operations.
3. Transfer the equipment left over from step 1 (the older, obsolete things) to the provinces, where the centre establishes local radio stations, two or three, perhaps, in order to spearhead journalism in the rural areas.

4.1.7 VOA and RFA

VOA has been an important alternative for Cambodians since it set up operations at the border camps in Thailand. Funded by the US government, this propaganda tool against the Hun Sen/Heng Samrin government lasted until the late eighties, providing an alternative source for information to the Phnom Penh propaganda. Today, VOA runs two parallel services, one Khmer language, which remains rather openly partisan, and one English language service that has provided a more respectable news service since the late eighties. The two services, broadcast on shortwave from Thailand, have rather little to do with one another, but sometimes share information. VOA has repeatedly tried to open an FM station inside Cambodia, but has not been given a licence.

Radio Free Asia, the other US-backed station, has no English language service and is by and large considered more partisan than VOA.⁴

4.2 The Press

With more than 200 newspapers and magazines licensed with the Ministry of Information, Cambodia may seem a country of a vibrant press. And, unlike the broadcast media, the press gives a voice to the political opposition as well as a wide range of factions within the government.

4.2.1 Varied Sources of Income

Interesting, even surprising, with the large number of newspapers, is the fact that only a fraction of them carry paid advertisements. According to statistics run in *The Mirror*, around 30 titles are published every week, and around ten of them carry paid ads (*The Mirror*). The survival of the others depends on sponsors, most often in the form of backing from patrons (often politicians) or political parties, and bribery and blackmail, both common practices, as maintained by the editors present at the National Editors Forum early February. Bribery would most commonly include a donation for running a certain story, and blackmail typically is the reverse: if paid, the editor does not run a particular story.

One newspaper editor commented in an interview that it is difficult for party supported papers to survive. What a paper needs is individual support, from one powerful figure. Normally, a paper that publishes twice or three times a week receives between 400 and 500 dollars a month from their guardian sponsor, a donation that is paid back in loyalty. Sales prices of papers rarely exceed or even par that of printing costs, so for all the papers that do not carry advertisement, other solutions keep them operational.

Most papers are small ventures, owned by the editor. Investments are often low and the struggle for survival hard. It should be added that at present, a 12 percent government tax is levied on newspapers.

The price of a newspaper is one factor limiting the readership. Even though it might sound cheap with between 500 and 700 riels, poverty is widespread and hampers regular purchases of a newspaper.⁵ A common practice is to rent the papers from newspaper boys. 200 riels give you access to many papers, and in some provinces you can even rent a publication to take home.

Another factor restricting accessibility of the press is distribution. The transportation system is faulty, transportation costs are high and delivery irregular.

4.2.2 The Press as a Source of Information

Unfortunately, the Cambodian press cannot be considered a very important source of information at the present point in time. Of the 200 newspapers, only around 30 titles appear on the news-stand in a given week, around ten of which are publishing regularly (*The Mirror*). In the provinces, newspapers are few and far between, and the quality of press is, with a few exceptions, extremely poor. The literacy rate now reaches 62.8 percent of the total population, but it should be mentioned that there have never been any checks as to how much a literate person can actually understand from a particular text. Written Khmer is complicated, and there is reason to believe that many of those who claim they are literate cannot fully comprehend a newspaper article. Literacy among adult women is considerably lower, 57 percent, than among men, 79.5 percent (General Population Census of Cambodia 1998).

Reading habits in Cambodia are still rather weak. Before the 70's, there were 20 papers in the country, the largest of which had a print-run of 5,000 copies, according to Reach Sim, editor of *Popular Magazine*. This indicates the readers were few. "During the PRK regime, the government papers printed over 50,000 copies, but they were all for complementary distribution, so whether anyone actually read them or not, we don't know", comments Reach Sim. He sees many reasons behind this: level of education, poverty, and the quality of the press; people often don't trust the journalists, so why should they read what is written. Poverty limits people's options. While there isn't enough food on the table, there won't be any magazines or papers either, but if the economy improves, the press will see increased print-runs, he says. Ahead of the political fighting in 1997, before the regional economic turmoil and the economic effects the political crisis brought, the number of copies of papers and magazines were higher than today.

Reading habits are important for the improvement of the press, says Reach Sim. While people don't habitually buy or subscribe to a publication, the day-to-day news will decide which one the purchaser chooses. This, in turn, means that developing quality can be impeded by the need to sell individual issues.

And there is certainly call for quality. The opposition press, anti-monarchy and some furiously pro-CPP papers, display a political journalism that is not only provocative and blunt, but also racist, untrustworthy and slanderous. Stories in these papers bear little or no resemblance to the truth. (Please see appendix 4 for examples: Sam Rainsy Sells His Brain To Foreigners... Sangkruos Cheat, Yuons In Cambodia Began Worrying... Samleng Yuvachun Khmer and CNN To Unveil Strong Dictatorial Leader: Hun Sen) Pictures of slain bodies, victims of violence, etc., are commonplace and demonstrate the lack of ethics prevalent in much of the Cambodian press.

Papers have limited access to information from official channels, leaving them without much scope to fulfil the role of educator or communicator to the general public. The non-transparent tradition of Cambodian rank-and-file makes it very difficult for journalists to actually unveil the truth. And of course, the newspapers' dependence on parties, political patrons or others, makes much of the reporting unreliable.

Yet it must be noted that parts of the Cambodian press of today gives the reader a glimpse into the current affairs. More and more news stories are first published in the Khmer language press, then find their way into the English language press. This is mostly true for government related news, published in the Koh Santepheap and Rasmey Kampuchea. Previously, it was more the other way around, when the English language press set the agenda. Yet, agenda setting the way it is seen in many other countries, where the power of media includes setting the political agenda to a degree, remains absent here.

There is also foreign language press in Phnom Penh. The Cambodia Daily and the Cambodge Soir are dailies; the Vision a weekly and the Phnom Penh Post publishes every fortnight. There is also Chinese language press, notably the Commercial News, which is published six days a week and carries a few local stories, some translations of English language articles, and reprints of articles from papers in China, Taiwan, Singapore and Hong Kong. (Additionally, there are a number of magazines and newsletters listed in Appendix 2.)

4.2.3 Present Trends

From the time of the formation of the present coalition government in December 1998, the press has improved immensely, and shows a tendency to move towards more investigative reporting. Especially the two largest papers, both government friendly, have improved drastically. Their relative economic success, especially the Rasmey Kampuchea, could stand as a role model for others in the future.

Before that, news articles seeking to strike a balance by quoting sources or officials from different sides were rarely found anywhere. There was much less of a distinction between news articles and editorial pages, leaving the reader rather confused about what was presented as the truth and what was meant as an opinion piece. In a report published before the 1998 elections, Ambassador Thomas Hammarberg expressed concern about the use of the press to threaten or incite violence against members of parties or ethnic minorities, with a special reference to the ethnic Vietnamese. The opposition press, lead by figures with an anti-Vietnamese bias, published strong attacks which began at the time of voter registration (Hammarberg, June 1998).

As has been said, the press today is far less violent than it was prior to the elections, but hatred against the Vietnamese is still flourishing. Recent examples are the stories of the eviction of ethnic Vietnamese from a Phnom Penh pagoda area and the rescue of illegal factory workers, found living in slave-like conditions. In connection with these events, numerous untrue articles citing human rights watchdog Licadho as involved in unlawful protection of illegal immigrants were published. This indicates on the one hand that the press is indeed free, while on the other, displays the limited responsibility on the part of the press when it comes to ethics.

In the editors' forum mentioned earlier a number of the leading personages of the Cambodian press met and discussed some of the gravest concerns. Corruption, owner influence and irresponsible reporting were issues discussed with great openness, and ill-practices were vented and lamented.

“Cambodian newspapers in general have failed to fulfil their role as a provider of accurate information to the public. Some have embarked on the “blackmailing track” by printing articles that unfairly alleged certain people for wrongdoing. In most cases the accused were never given a chance to defend themselves. The goal of those articles was obvious—soliciting financial gains”, said Ker Munthit, a reporter of the Associated Press.

Below follows a presentation of the two most successful of the Cambodian newspapers, two opposition papers, the editors of whom view their respective missions quite differently, the largest magazine, an interview with a provincial stringer, and lastly the Cambodia Daily, still the role model for many Cambodian media organisations.

4.2.4 Rasmey Kampuchea

The largest daily newspaper in the country, Rasmey Kampuchea has a circulation of 20,000 copies daily, six days a week, and a 70 people strong staff, out of whom 16 are journalists (no women). It is one of the two existing print media corporations in the country and it is owned by business tycoon Teng Boonma and his Thai company, Thai Boon Roong. (The other is Hun Sen backed Evening News, which forms part of the Bayon Network.) Rasmey Kampuchea makes a good profit; the journalists receive an average monthly salary of 200 US\$, which is enough to make a decent living.⁶ Rasmey Kampuchea, a full-colour publication, has its own printing house, with a large, modern rotating printer. So far, only the daily is printed there, although the plan is to sell printing services. Like most other newspapers, Rasmey Kampuchea, the most sizeable of all, charges 700 riels per copy, and is financed through advertisement. It carries around one third of all advertisement in Cambodian press.

The owner, Theng Boonma, is an associate of Hun Sen's, but that doesn't shape the contents of the paper, says the editor (although others claim the reverse). (For a more thorough account, see Appendix 3e.)

4.2.5 Moneaksekar Khmer

Moneaksekar Khmer is the second largest of the opposition newspapers. It is a 4-page black-and-white publication that has been running since the second half of 1994. For 700 riels, the readers get highly politicised, blunt political news, produced under the leadership of editor Dam Sith, a Sam Rainsy Party (SRP) steering committee member.

Since its beginning, circulation has fluctuated. Just before and after the factional fighting, sales soared to between 8,000 and 10,000, while they presently print 2,800 copies daily. Dam Sith explains the drop with the fact that people are tired of politics and that no big news occur these days.

Moneaksekar Khmer has eight staff, seven reporters, all of whom are men.

Dam Sith admits to engaging in political journalism; they write about government shortcomings to be “an opposition paper”. Even in the future, he sees no need for the paper to change styles: the paper's value is vested in its opposition voice. Another role of the paper is to educate its readers about their political and social rights, and their rights to make their own decisions.

The abundance of anonymous sources is a result of people's fears of repression, he says, affirming he would never quote things that aren't truthful. Information access is no longer a problem for Moneaksekar Khmer. (For a more thorough account, see Appendix 3f.)

4.2.6 Samleng Yuvachun Khmer – The Voice of Khmer Youth

Another of the outspoken opposition papers is Samleng Yuvachun Khmer, a six-day paper with a print-run of 3,500-8,000 copies. Editor Ou Sovann is a steering committee member of the SRP, too, and doesn't receive any financial support from the party either. Sales of papers and of advertisements gives a low, but sufficient income to run the 13 staff strong venture. The journalists, all of whom are male, receive a monthly salary of 80-120 (higher for reporters), depending on the day-to-day sales.

In contrast to Moneaksekar Khmer's editor, Ou Sovann claims that information access is limited, because government officials do not want to, or do not dare to talk to those they know are

opposing the government. At crime scenes, the police don't give opposition papers access, so rumours become an important source for these papers, as do anonymous public figures.

However, this is not the only reason for their angry, often vitriolic style. "I think about the buyers [of the paper], and write what they want to hear", the editor says. Even though he says he knows how to work as a proper journalist, he has chosen another path in order to foster Cambodians. It is to give the general public courage to raise their voice that Samleng Yuvachun doesn't follow normal media ethics. Still, role models for Ou Sovann are the Cambodia Daily and the Phnom Penh Post. (For a more thorough account, see Appendix 3g.)

4.2.7 Prachieprey – The Popular Magazine

One of the largest publications in the country, The Popular Magazine has a circulation of 25,000-30,000 copies of its glossy publication, which comes out three times a month. Around half of the readership is in Phnom Penh, while the rest is spread across the provinces with the largest shares in Siem Reap, Battambang, Banteay Meanchey and Kampong Cham.⁷

The Popular Magazine is sold wholesale to traders, who take charge of the distribution to individual salespeople nationwide. Hence, the faltering distribution system is circumvented. The traders order ahead of printing and therefore their demand decides the print-run.

The magazine lives off advertising. In addition to a small marketing unit, The Popular Magazine engages marketing firms to sell adverts. An ongoing price war, however, has made the advertising market a bit shaky lately.⁸

The magazine contains articles on current events, crime, trends and social issues. Some of the contents is created by local reporters, while some is translated from the Internet or other magazines.

The 30 strong staff have salaries ranging from US\$150 to US\$300 a month. One sub-editor is a woman, and two part-time reporters are newly graduated women from the RUPP. In total, six reporters, two photographers and the editorial leadership shape the content of the magazine. (For a more thorough account, see Appendix 3h.)

4.2.8 The Cambodia Daily

The English language daily, the Cambodia Daily, was set up in 1994 by American former Newsweek correspondent Bernard Krisher as a means to foster the freedom of press. The Daily is a six-day publication, produced and printed in Phnom Penh. Its roles, beside being a role model for Cambodian newspapers, are to disseminate information and to be a market place for opinion.

Initially, the training component was linked with the desktop publishing training of the RUPP (see page 32), but today, all the training is undertaken on-the-job, where Cambodian journalists work side-by-side with foreigners, mostly Americans, who manage the editorial side of the paper.

The Cambodia Daily has a total staff of approx. 60 people; a dozen foreigners and some 22-24 Cambodians run the editorial side of the operation. The total expenditures per month reach between 20,000 and 25,000 US\$, and every month Bernard Krisher supplements the income (mainly from advertising) with approx. 5,000 US\$ out of his own pocket.

Cambodian journalists make between 180 and 500 US\$ per month, depending on how long they have been employed, while the foreigners make 10,000 US\$ in their first year with the paper, 12,000 in their second and thereafter have a negotiable salary.

Half of the readership is foreigners and half Cambodians. There is an emphasis on international news to compensate for the lack of international coverage in the Khmer language media. (For a more thorough account, see Appendix 3i.)

4.2.9 Kampong Som freelance group

An interesting rather new development in the Cambodian media scene is that of freelancing stringers. Chun Saran, a reporter since 1996, heads a group of freelance journalists in Sihanoukville. Together they cover the news for the two largest newspapers, Koh Santepheap and Rasmey Kampuchea, to which they are tied as stringers. (Saran also heads the provincial office of the League

of Cambodian Journalists, LCJ, and he provides the LCJ with rewrites on the same stories which the LCJ office releases to their member organisations (see page 28.)

Both newspapers pay the group per article, between three and eight dollars, depending on the length of the story and the number of pictures. The office in the middle of the city has no computers, nor a typewriter. The only communication equipment is a hand phone and an I-com, which they use for communicating with local authorities. Articles are sent by taxi at a cost of 4-5,000 riels per envelope.

As the provincial stringer for Koh Santephiiep and Rasmey Kampuchea, Saran is also the local contact for advertisers, as well as the distributor to the province of all printed media, except for the opposition press.

There are other freelance groups around the country, but this one is probably the most established provider of local news to the Phnom Penh press. They also sell the highest number of newspaper copies at the markets.

No formal education in journalism, he says he would like to attend some formal training for working journalists to improve his operation and his skills. (For a more thorough account, see Appendix 3j.)

4.3 Wire Services and Foreign Media Offices

Cambodia has its own wire service, AKP, although very little—if indeed any—of the news coverage of Cambodia abroad stems from this source. Japan's Nihon Denpa News was the first non-Soviet bloc news organisation to open an office here, in 1982. In 1989, The Nation from Thailand arrived, followed by Far Eastern Economic Review.

Today, the most important wire services have bureaux in Phnom Penh. Associated Press, Agence France Presse, BBC World Service, Deutsche Presse Agentur, Kyodo, Reuters, VNA (Vietnam) and Xinhua News Agency are some of the news services with offices in Cambodia. Stringers, i.e. journalists who are not salaried staff but are paid per piece, run the majority of the offices.

An important development to note is that many of the wires now employ Cambodians as reporters. This, according to Khieu Kanharith, is proof of the improvements made by local journalists.

4.3.1 Agence Khmer Presse

Created in 1951, the national news agency, Agence Khmer Presse, AKP, is under the guidance of the Ministry of Information, and with the General Director's seat vacated, three vice-Directors run this moribund operation. SPK was the name of the agency during the regime of People's Republic of Kampuchea, when it enjoyed an enormously important role and had a budget exceeding the present budget of the whole ministry.

AKP has its headquarters in Phnom Penh, and offices in Siem Reap, Kampong Som and Kampong Cham remain. Around 250 staff are on the payroll, although far fewer show up to day-to-day work.⁹ The monthly salaries of staff vary between 40,000 and 80,000 riels (US\$10.50 – US\$21).

There is no budget anymore for the AKP, according to Vice-Director Tath Ly Hok. Irregular disbursements are made from the Ministry of Information, which needless to say cause tremendous planning problems. The AKP has developed a plan on how to resume operations and submitted that to the Ministry, from where it is still awaiting comments.

There is some modern equipment in the head office, such as up to a dozen computers (mostly from the time around UNTAC, some newer), camera equipment for the photo department, plus a photo lab for black and white as well as for colour prints. Much of the equipment needs repair, for which there are no funds.

AKP used to subscribe to newsprint from Reuters and AFP, but have been cut off for not paying their subscription fee. From the Vietnamese News Agency, VNA, still provides AKP with newsprint for free, in line with an agreement between the two agencies. (For a more thorough account, see Appendix 3k.)

5. NGOs and Donor Agencies

There are a number of NGOs and agencies that form part of the media sector or direct assistance to the media sector. The co-ordination between agencies seems very limited and concerted efforts, apart from within the field of education and training, are absent. The interest in the media sector seems to be on the increase. Below follows a closer look at the key agencies, and thereafter a listing of other NGOs active in the field.

5.1 Local NGOS

5.1.1 Open Forum of Cambodia

Established in 1995, Open Forum is a local NGO working to “provide opportunities and resources for Cambodian citizens to develop new skills and insights in policy questions”, under the leadership of Administrator Norbert Klein. An e-mail provider and the publisher of the *Mirror*, the organisation wants to promote free and open communication in post-conflict Cambodia, across the political frontiers.

Although the provision of e-mail has implications on the exchange of information, this account will place focus on the *Mirror*, a weekly magazine, published since 1997. After a test-run, its English edition started publishing, with two main objectives:

- To provide non-Khmer readers with an overview of issues dominating the Cambodian press, and to reflect the diversity in opinion within the Cambodian press by compiling summaries representing all different political voices.
- To provide printed news in the provinces.

The first objective is aimed at a target group of the international news organisations, embassies, international NGOs and others with a willingness to understand Cambodia. The second and overriding objective is aimed at people with an outreach at provincial level, e. g. teachers, NGOs, Buddhist monasteries, provincial administration offices, etc., as well as opinion makers, policy makers countrywide.

A short time later, a Khmer language edition was established, and soon became much larger than the English edition, with a print-run of 1,200 copies, all complimentary copies delivered through the mail. The English edition is available for subscription against payment.

Since 1999, e-mail versions of the two editions have been made available in the highly compressed .pdf format, the Khmer version for free, the English at 50US\$/year. In order to read or print the Khmer version, owing to the .pdf format, Khmer fonts are not required on the receiving computer.

The *Mirror*, and its Khmer language edition *Kanhchok Sangkum* (*Mirror of Society*), are advertised through posting its weekly summary and a table of contents on Internet based news groups.

Cost recovery through subscription is far from reached, but the Open Forum is looking for support to continue the publishing of the *Mirror* and *Kanhchok Sangkum*, until there is regular newsprint to access in the provinces or its objectives have been met by other means.

Main donors are German Ewangelische Zentralstelle für Entwicklungshilfe and Swedish Diakonia, although in total, Open Forum’s services boast the accumulation of more than half (in 1998, 64 per cent) of its own budget, totalling just over 200,000 US\$/annum.

Acting on an initiative from UNESCO, a monthly media analysis was developed in 1998. Intended to support the self-regulation of Cambodian journalists, the monthly analysis was to be presented at monthly meetings attended by journalists. At the meeting, issues of concern would be raised, and a reward would honour the journalist of the month. As UNESCO’s funding never materialised, the project had to end, although the structures for undertaking the analyses still remain in place.

Internal problems include a shortage of funding, and in consequence lacking translation capacity (Khmer-English and vice versa), according to Norbert Klein.

5.1.2 The Women's Media Centre, WMC

The Women's Media Centre, WMC, is a Cambodian NGO, with an over-arching goal to upgrade the status of women in the country by disseminating information on women's issues. They work to improve the portrayal of women in the media and increase female participation in journalism.

Their principal tools are:

- Production and broadcasting of radio and television productions on women's issues
- Workshops and seminars for media people, editors and journalists
- Monitoring of the media, to sketch a picture of the portrayal of women in general and to keep up-to-date with issues of concern.

The Audio-Vision Centre, one of five departments, is the only income generating unit at the centre. So far, only around five percent of total expenditures come from the AV Centre. WMC is highly dependent on donors. One explanation, according to one of its five-headed leadership, Ms. Tive Sarayeth, is that education of the general population through the media is expensive and it takes time.

Few donors are keen to finance the centre's core support, instead preferring to support projects. Now, they have attached core budget to project budgets to minimise this problem. WMC don't view donors as too influential when it comes to actual activities; most of the present donors find WMC's goals suitable to their own guidelines. NOVIB and USAID through the Asia Foundation are the largest donors, followed by Forum Syd, Netherlands's Embassy in Hanoi and Danida in Bangkok. UNICEF supports radio for youth since a few years.

A trend to spend more on democracy and human rights may reduce the donor support ahead, but Sarayeth believes the WMC's mandate as a media organisation places them within the framework of these issues.

WMC is an independent broadcaster, unlike many of the other, politically affiliated stations. It is not a privately run station either, with financial motives behind its operations. Its focus on women issues as well as capacity building of their predominantly female staff is also an advantage they have ahead of other media organisations, according to Sarayeth.

WMC's television productions are broadcast on four channels, two of which have a 70 percent coverage of Cambodia (TVK and Apsara). TV5 is the only one that broadcasts free of charge, but their broadcasts are irregular.

Productions are also spread to Rattanakiri province, where a CAREERE partner translates and dubs the productions into three minority languages, after which they are shown on mobile units. WMC produces some programmes themselves, some in co-operation with other NGOs or agencies. The majority of productions deal with women's issues, but the centre produces spots on other social topics on behalf of partner NGOs.

As a two-year project, WMC's monitoring unit quantified the portrayal of women in the media. Based on the report of the outcome, WMC has lobbied other media organisations as well as authorities, particularly on how to stave off obscenities. Although at the end of the two-year period, significant improvements have been made, WMC keeps monitoring other media but in a more general fashion, to keep being a women's rights watchdog (WMC reports).

30 women and 4 men, two of whom are speakers/announcers, currently staff WMC. The imbalance will last only for a transitory period; the female staff are trained and given opportunity in a media climate that generally favours men. However, if the imbalance in other media changes, so will WMC (although being it in the opposite direction).

The most pressing problems for WMC is the lack of human resource, and the uphill battle encountered by women who want to be journalists.

Internally, the centre is suffering from structural problems. It is a strictly hierarchical organisation, with a wide gap between the apt, strong women in the leadership on the one hand, the regular staff on the other. Measures to improve this imbalance are underway. A staff council has been set up,

bringing more democratic rule to the internal organisation. And capacity building of the staff has been given increasingly more scope.

An former advisor to WMC, Petra Bergwall, says that the neutral reporting of WMC can serve as a role model for others; it can also be a provider of highly trained staff, fostering a new generation of journalists. The centre has a good reputation among other media people in the country, a view that is reiterated by Pen Samitthy of Rasmey Kampuchea. "WMC produces good material and their support for women in general and women in the media is valuable." He also commends their involvement in The Asia Foundation's internship programme for the American University in Paris. WMC is charged with the selection of students, and the results have improved.

To establish a roster of extra staff, WMC has trained RUPP students as well, an indication of the general development input the centre can give. Additionally, WMC co-operates with RUPP and CCI in the ongoing training given by Impacs. One upcoming training is directed at information staff in the Ministry's provincial offices and journalists in provinces where CCI has not been. A curriculum for the training has yet to be formulated, but focus is radio journalism and possibly general information access.

5.1.3 Mom & Mab

The children's magazine Mom & Mab is by far the largest and the most known of the two children's magazines in the country. Set up as a project within Save the Children Norway, Mom & Mab was to provide extra curricular reading for children in grade three, when at the time of establishment, drop-out and repetition rates in primary school were the highest. The objective of the project is to foster reading habits, while boosting curiosity among children (in a country with limited reading habits).

Mom & Mab is a varied magazine, with Cambodian and foreign tales, child related news articles, brief science stories, and a vigorous letterbox to which the readers send pictures, poems and letters. Per annum, around 2,000 children send drawings, poetry and letters to the magazine office in Phnom Penh, mostly through NGOs working at their school.

It is a quarterly magazine, printed in full colour. Save the Children Norway is the largest user of the magazine, save the two years that PASEC (EU's Primary Education Programme) and Unicef/Sida purchased a considerable amount of copies. Save the Children Norway distributes magazine to schools and libraries through its education programme. In 2000, the print-run is planned for 30,000 copies, and in 1999, large purchases by Unicef increased the circulation to 70,000, making it the largest regular publication in the country. The remainder of the circulation is sold to other organisations and agencies, and at a subsidised price at some markets in Phnom Penh, Takeo and Kampot. Sales are more successful in the middle-class areas in Phnom Penh.

A staff of five, including an editor-in-chief, an administrator and a graphics designer, a guard and a distributor, run the magazine's production in co-operation with a number of external collaborators. The office is an annex of the Cambodian Children's House, a resource centre and meeting point for children and people working with children's issues. The co-operation with the Children's House gives the magazine staff insight into many child-related activities. Since the establishment of FM102, the Women's Media Centre (WMC) reads and broadcasts stories from the magazine once a week, and staff of the WMC staff sometimes provide the magazine with stories when they have been travelling to the provinces.

At times, Mom & Mab purchases photos from Rasmey Kampuchea, otherwise it has no or very little formal contacts with other media organisations.

Mom & Mab remains a project of Save the Children Norway, although the plan is to make it into a partner organisation per December 31, 2000. The total budget of the magazine was 120,000 US\$ in 1999, although expenditures were considerably less. The unit cost per magazine is approx. 0,65 cents including overhead when the print-run reaches 30,000 copies.

5.1.4 Newsletters and Bulletins

Many local and international organisations produce newsletters and bulletins, mostly as a means to raise awareness about the issues with which they work. To a degree, these publications form part of the media scene, although most of them have small print-runs and are distributed within the NGO sector and the government administration. Many of them lack financial sustainability and skills in marketing and journalism.

Two of the most professional publications are the Neak Chea, a long-serving magazine of human rights organisation ADHOC, and the quarterly newsletter Cambodian Development Review by CDRI, the Cambodian Development Resource Institute. (For a brief account on Neak Chea, please see Appendix 3L.)

5.2 Donor Agencies

5.2.1 The Asia Foundation

One of the main donors in the field of media development is The Asia Foundation, TAF. Since 1995, this American NGO has run a media training programme in the country, which has changed and developed over the years.

To help journalists pursuing the new possibilities of freedom of press, Cambodian journalists, with support from TAF, formed an association, Khmer Journalists Association, KJA, to give them common grounds. In response to the fact that there was no journalism training, TAF developed and set up a curriculum of basic journalism at the KJA. However, as political animosity between the two major political parties grew and a splinter group to KJA, the League of Cambodian Journalists was created, The Asia Foundation opted for more neutral grounds for the training. Within the Computer Training Department, at the Royal University of Phnom Penh, the Section for Journalism Training found a new home, and it was the first training ever in journalism in Cambodia.

Structural problems did not end there; after the factional fighting in July 1997, the US government decided against supporting projects that were linked to the Cambodian government, a decision still in place in 2000. To find a solution, the Governing Council for Journalism Training was created, and it still takes charge of the development of curricula, disciplinary action against students and set up examinations for the training.

With five years of experience, the training today focuses on journalism principles, ethics and the press law. It is a five-month course, which has been running for over two years, for which the Asia Foundation sponsors teacher salaries, administration and other running costs. The foundation also sponsors scholarship programmes for Cambodian students to study abroad, at the American University in Paris. The focus for the course is print media and the prime target group is working journalists. Two other groups of students may also enrol: third or fourth year university students, who have to pass an exam; and NGO workers whose duties are in the field of communication. Admission includes a gender perspective; a goal is to achieve a 50-50 distribution between the sexes. That has yet to be achieved, however. At admission, women account for around 40 percent of the students, but women drop out in much higher numbers, so by the end of the five months, they amount to a mere 20 percent. This has to do with culture, according to trainer and programme officer Chhor Sokheang: Women have problems in the interview situation, since the Cambodian woman is brought up to be shy, mild and submissive. In addition, some women or girls are not allowed by their parents to join the field trips, when the class would go for practice stints in the provinces.

Out of around 200 applications for every course, between 20 and 25 are selected.

NGO staff as well as working journalists are not obligated to sit an entry exam, but are welcome to start if their editors or directors find them suitable candidates.

For about two years, discussions on a four-year mass communications programme have been evolving. Basically, this came as a response to an evaluation of the present programme, administered by TAF. In the evaluation it was said the present training places much focus on working journalists, and accommodates very little for related fields, such as public relations. The four-year programme would be focusing only on full-time university students. (See also the chapter on RUPP, page 32.)

Impacs may be willing to continue their support, and Australian MediaLink has also expressed an interest.

TAF's media training programme has two staff, one who is permanent at the section (RUPP), one who is dividing his time between the university and the NGO.

Previous to the 1997 fighting, TAF also supported the KJA and the LCJ financially.

5.2.2 Impacs

With a project budget of 200,000 US dollars, Canadian NGO Impacs have set up a media training project in-country, its first one ever. The project focuses on radio, because very little assistance is directed to radio in Cambodia, and no radio journalism training exists from before. They work together with three local partners, the CCI, the RUPP's Journalism Section and the WMC. Impacs provides with trainers who give training to radio stations whose leadership expresses a need and willingness, or at the faculty. A two-week training course has been accomplished, for radio journalists at the state owned FM96 (See also page 15).

This project started in November 1999 and it draws on the expertise from Canadian radio journalists, two of whom have been here as trainers. The project has three components, training for journalists being the largest. There is also training of trainers; presently one local trainer is engaged by Impacs. Thirdly, the roving manager, Wayne Sharpe, is networking with owners and editors to facilitate an ongoing discussion on the freedom of expression, owner influence and democracy.

The target group has very little previous training in the trade, let alone general education. During the two-week session with FM96, the radio journalists were given a donation of portable tape recorders and were for the first time recording in the field. They had never previously recorded interviews outside of the studio. It should be noted the studio does not have a telephone.

Training for NGO staff is under way, and the first provincial training is due in Battambang.

After any given training, monitoring continues, partly to assess the training, partly to support the students continued learning and support.

In December 2000, an independent evaluation will be carried out, and its outcome will form the basis for a decision on whether or not to continue the project. The project is funded by Cida's Peace Building Division, the division mandated with good governance and democracy issues.

Through its partners, Impacs provides training both to working journalists and students who want to learn the trade. Wayne says Impacs sees the need of broader training, too (such as CCI's diploma course), while there is a shortage of capacity in the public relations sector and other related fields.

5.2.3 Other

5.2.3.1 NGO Forum – the Information Project

As Cambodia was preparing for national elections in 1998, NGO Forum launched the Information Project in an effort to provide donors, decision-makers and the media with balanced, truthful and timely information about Cambodia. The project has turned into something of a node for Cambodia related information assisting journalists and others to gather information and finding contacts.

Activities of the project include a weekly newsletter, contributions to Internet newsgroup CamNews, compilation of a daily electronic clipping service.

5.2.3.2 The Konrad-Adenauer Foundation in Cambodia

German Konrad Adenauer Foundation, KAF, started initiated its first programme for Cambodia in 1983 in refugee camps along the Thai-Cambodian border. In 1994, they opened an office in Phnom Penh and since then it has co-operated with Khmer Institute for Democracy and Buddhism for Development movement, promoting democracy and rule of law, and rural development. In addition, it has supported various government bodies and public institutions in their development towards good governance.

KAF arranged within the framework of its regional media programme a German-Asian Editors' Forum in Phnom Penh early 2000, followed by a National Editors' Forum. KAF should be noted for its long experience working with media development across the region, not least given their role in regional networks and the number of highly professional contacts they have.

5.2.3.3 GRET

GRET is a French NGO which has had projects in Cambodia since the late 80's, mainly in the field of rural development, training and micro-finance. Very recently, they have carried out an assessment of the sector to decide whether to enter the media sector. The assessment recommends a closer look into the University, where it is believed that GRET could play a co-ordinating role.

5.2.3.4 Other stakeholders in the media sectors are:

Agence intergouvernementale de la francophonie (ACCT)

American Assistance to Cambodia

Australian AIDP

Danida in Bangkok

Diakonia

Forum Syd

Freedom Forum

The French Embassy

German Ewangelische Zentralstelle für Entwicklungshilfe

Japan Relief for Cambodia

Netherlands's Embassy in Hanoi

NOVIB

UNESCO

Unicef

The University Agency for French-speaking communities

6. Journalist Associations

There are current discussions on whether to establish some kind of journalist association again, but among many of the active media people, a great resistance lingers as a reflection of the political bickering that arose in the previous two organisations. (In fact, at one point there were three associations, divided along political lines: pro-CPP, pro-the rest of the government, pro-opposition. The third group has never been formally recognised by the Ministry of Information, because the members don't want to develop and adopt a code of ethics, which according to Khieu Kanharith is a prerequisite to establish a journalist association.)

At the Konrad Adenauer Editors Forum, an informal co-ordination group was formed, which to date consists of five notable print press editors and news agency reporters. It has yet to outline activities. A suggestion made the members, who represent the whole political spectrum of the press, is to discuss the possible establishment of a joint newsroom, with Internet facilities, wire services and other resource. The initial mission of the group, however, is to ensure that the following objectives outlined at the forum are achieved:

- reinforcing the profession and ensuring respect for the professional code of ethics;
- setting up a think-tank to work on providing solutions to the problems encountered in printing and distributing Cambodian newspapers and magazines and problems linked to advertising and the financial management of a newspaper firm, etc

Pen Samitthy, the editor of Rasmey Kampuchea, said in an interview that a potentially important role for this group is to provide a common voice to journalists, and that is why his paper joined the initiative. An already successful operation, Rasmey Kampuchea doesn't need the shared resources as much as others, but alone it cannot struggle for freedom of the press, such as against the need expressed by the Minister of Information to tighten rules for those who want to establish a paper, said the editor.

This view seems to be shared by most journalists and editors interviewed for this study. Ham Samnang of the Cambodia Daily said that an independent organisation could really be the parent of the media, "taking care of the threatened or injured, and provide a platform for exchange of information, initially perhaps international news".

6.1 Khmer Journalist Association, KJA

Created in an effort to join forces against government threats to reintroduce the SoC Press Law, Khmer Journalist Association, KJA, was initially a dynamic association, with members from the whole political spectrum and a high profile. It received funding from The Asia Foundation among others. Many agencies were initially keen to conduct training within the KJA's framework. However, when things started to turn sour, the association split, and today, KJA "has only a name", to paraphrase the vice-Director.

6.2 League of Cambodian Journalists

The League of Cambodian Journalists is the breakaway faction of the KJA. The present president, Oum Chandara, was one of KJA's seven co-founders back in 1994. In June 1995, LCJ was established, according to Chandara as a result of KJA President Pin Samkhon's allegedly using the KJA as a political tool, and mismanagement of funding (refuted by TAF programme manager Chhour Sockheang). Although the LCJ President claims otherwise, LCJ is the CPP-supportive association, while KJA when it was still working, was in favour of FUNCINPEC and the opposition.

Chandara was elected president in May 1999, after his predecessor became an advisor to Prime Minister Hun Sen. Since then, LCJ has, according to its new president, seen substantial reform, ridded itself from political linkage (although he also said it was non-aligned earlier, too).

The association has a total of over 700 individual members, representing 65 media organisations. The number of women is around 20, reflecting the under-representation of women in the media

sector. The members pay a monthly fee of 500 riels, money that is accumulated into a fund in support of journalists with ill health, in case of death, etc., as a locally administered insurance.

No opposition papers or media organisations are members; but six or seven former FUNCINPEC papers (belonging to supporters of break-away factions after the 1997 fighting) have membership.

The objective of LCJ is to be a neutral organisation in support of the freedom of press, protecting journalists. It also wishes to gather funding to set up a desktop publishing resource centre available for members at its office. The LCJ claims to work to oppose violence and to promote human rights in general, but without having any specific activities in support of these objectives.

The former bulletin of the association is not printed anymore, due to a lack of funding. Lobbying is the most important activity; in support of the freedom of press, LCJ pushes the Ministry of Information not to intervene against member newspapers or broadcasters, unless they have actually broken the law, according to Chandara. In these cases, LCJ acts as a mediator, trying to develop compromises between the Ministry on the one hand and the media organisation on the other.

A staff of six, two administrators, two computer operators and one guard, plus the president, work full-time on a tight budget, presently depending on private donations. A recent donation includes a computer workstation given by National Assembly chairman, Prince Ranariddh. Chandara says they are unwilling to accept money from the government for fear of losing its neutrality. Prior to the 1997 factional fighting, Asia Foundation supported LCJ.

With five provincial branches, in Kampong Cham, Kampong Chhnang, Sihanoukville, Battambang and Koh Kong, it has an aim to be active across the country. The branches in Battambang and Koh Kong have only just been established, and have yet to start their activities.

Unlike many other media actors in Cambodia, Oum Chandara doesn't see the shortcomings within the media as very alarming, although he acknowledges problems with lacking professionalism and shortage of funds for media organisations. The disputed practice of accepting money from people who want or do not want certain events to be covered is, to Chandara, more a means to finance an operation rather than a serious problem. The readers, he said, have to be the judges. In addition, this practice is part of democracy, he says.

Despite LCJ's seemingly withering operation, it has a significant outreach among journalists. Around 500 people attended its latest meeting in January 2000, when – perhaps illustrating its weak role as platform for journalists countrywide – Secretary of State for the Ministry of Information, Khieu Kanharith, was invited to talk about professionalism in the media.

Oum Chandara did not appreciate the creation of the new journalist association at the National Editors' Forum, arranged by Konrad Adenauer Foundation. As the president of the only working journalist association, he says he should have been invited to be on the panel, which he wasn't. Feeling that KAF has limited knowledge about “the real situation of Cambodian journalists”, he regretted the rift that may have been caused as a result. It is, however, important to note that one of the representatives of the new association previously was the first deputy head of LCJ, but now feels the organisation is largely redundant.

7. Printing

As was previously mentioned, printing is expensive in Cambodia. Printing in neighbouring Vietnam cuts the costs by two thirds, and also in Thailand it is much cheaper.

For the press, access to printing is vital. Today, there is an abundance of small printing houses around Phnom Penh. Many of them have one A3 offset printer and a paper-cutting machine only, and technical skills are rather low. Nevertheless, there are some larger operations, with all equipment necessary for quality production.

To print papers, large offset machines are required, and there are few of those around, so prices can remain high. Another drawback for the press is the fact that the majority of printing houses has little long-term planning. The irregular printing of most newspapers makes it difficult for steady working relations between the two, but lacking managerial skills on the part of the printers is also a reason for this.

Rasmey Kampuchea is the only print press with its own printing facility. Since two years it is printing the newspaper there and the intentions for the future is to provide services for customers, too.

In the provinces, there are very few printers. Photocopying, although more expensive, is more common.

After the ouster of the Khmer Rouge, only a couple of old printing houses reopened, notably the national printing house, now named Ariyathoar, and the Ministry of Education's old facility, which came under the supervision of the Direction of Pedagogical Services. The old machinery, largely destroyed, was replaced by Vietnamese equipment.

The largest was the new Ministry of Education printing house, set up by decree in 1981, with assistance from Unicef and Japanese 24 Hour Television. Initially, only textbooks and material for the ministry were printed there, but towards the end of the 80's, also other non-profit publications were printed, e.g. for Unicef, other ministries and international organisations. After some time, other ministries opened their printing facilities, and so did the state-owned press, Kampuchea and Phnom Penh.

In 1987, when Cambodia first opened towards market economy, some small printers were established.

Most of the small enterprises around the capital have old equipment, imported from Vietnam or other countries in the region. The necessity to import spare parts, equipment, paper and ink inflates prices, according to the former Director of MOEY's Printing House and Chief of Bureau, Roath Kim Soeun, now retired. Also, as in so many other sectors, insufficient human resources is a problem. There is no academic training available in this field, only shorter skills training. Theory and practical training is given at Japan Sotoshu Relief Committee, JSRC, and Don Bosco. JSRC, which first set up activities in the border camps, now runs a printing house in Phnom Penh, possibly the best quality operation around. Prices are very high. Here, technicians receive training on the job.

Don Bosco runs a technical education centre on the outskirts of Phnom Penh with a printing section, in which they also run a printing house, providing service to customers while giving practical training.

8. Education and Training

A survey from 1996 indicates that the majority of journalists in the country have graduated from upper secondary education, while less than 15 percent have a university degree (Brown, 1996). Both the survey and the output of Cambodian media, point out a need among journalists for further education both in their profession and on general knowledge. Of the 15 percent of university graduates, many had their training in Vietnam and the former Eastern Bloc, where the concepts of the media's role were limited and the freedom of press restricted. Since the early nineties, a plethora of workshops and short-term training has targeted journalists, shedding light over a range of current issues. The journalists associations, NGOs, international agencies and public administration offices have housed teaching on ethics, elections, human rights, gender issues to name a few of the most frequent topics.

Of the journalists surveyed by CCI, more than half had worked as journalists for a minimum of five years. Almost half of them perceived a need for journalism skills training, second only to language training, which was the most requested training in the survey (Brown, 1996). Also in interviews and during the editors' forum early 2000, the need for journalism skills training has been reiterated again and again.

In a follow-up to the survey mentioned above, editors were asked what they perceived as the greatest training needs in the sector. Unanimously, the editors expressed a wish for a national training programme, although none of them expressed a willingness to commit any reporters to enrolling in full-time training. However, all but two editors said they would make reporters available for part-time training (Brown, 1997). A few prominent editors have said in interviews for this study that they see a national training programme at the university as a resource for fostering a new generation of journalists, while continuous training can be given elsewhere (or within the framework of other programmes at the university) to working journalists. However, not everyone seems to agree. The Minister of Information on the contrary says there are already too many journalists in the country, so he wishes to see a greater focus on training of those already working.

One of the most effective ways of becoming a professional journalist remains to join the foreign papers, such as the Cambodia Daily, the Cambodia Soir and the Phnom Penh Post, all of which give on-the-job training to its staff. These individual journalists could in theory later benefit the Khmer language media, but considering the difference in payment and job security, this benefit will not be seen in the near future. However, the sector is so small that this on-the-job training ought not to be overlooked.

Surprisingly, there is very little discussion within the sector dedicated to ideas about how to upgrade the capacity or train editorial leadership or management of media outlets.

8.1 Cambodian Communication Institute

Cambodian Communication Institute was established in late 1993 in response to a UNESCO assessment of media and information in 1991, which found urgent needs in the sector (UNESCO, 1993, Appendix A). A subsequent UNESCO-funded round-table with editors and media actors identified training as a pressing need and a training centre to support the sector in the new situation as a solution. UNESCO wrote a proposal, which was endorsed by the Supreme National Council, and an agreement between the government and UNESCO to set up this joint project was signed in September 1994. A first phase of the project (Sept. 1994-Sept. 1996) set forth, with core funding from Danida (for salaries, facilities, trainers as well as running costs) and the French government (whose support was more modest and directed to the actual training). According to plan, the first phase included a complete hand-over of the project to the government, but government finances were too scarce and instead a new agreement of a continuation of the joint project was signed between the government and UNESCO, covering phase two, 1997-2000. A few months into 2000, CCI is still running on remaining phase two funding, which will last until June 2000, according to Sek Barisoth, who heads the institute. For phase two, Danida is the sole core donor.

On top of core funding, other donors, e.g. the Freedom Forum, Australian AIDP and others have supported specific training courses.

A third phase is planned, and Danida may continue their support if some conditions are met. This concerns the hand-over of the project and the set-up of the institute. Since 1997, a draft of the

future CCI statutes have been awaiting endorsement by the ministry of Information, which would send it on for approval by the council of Ministers. This has yet to happen. The statutes would turn CCI into an independent body, under the supervision of a Board of Directors, one person from the Ministry, the rest from the Cambodian media sector.

The Minister of Information and the Secretary of State of the former government were favourable towards independence for CCI, but due to political problems failed to win priority for the statutes with the Council of Ministers. Now, with relative political stability, the chances are that the new Minister could succeed should they decide to push for it in the Council of Ministers. One possible explanation why the present minister has failed to push the issue, may be that after the statutes are approved, the CCI would be governed by a Board of Directors, with one member being from the Ministry, hence diminishing the Ministry's influence over the institute. The issue of independence may well be decisive for the development of CCI, as donors can place conditions ahead of their support.

Secretary of State Khieu Kanharith says that there is a draft plan for independence at the Council of Ministers, where it is awaiting the endorsement of the new statutes (in a subdecree). However, the Minister doesn't see the call for independence of the institute, instead saying that CCI has so much autonomy within the Ministry, and an income on top, so the status quo is preferable. Meanwhile, most journalists and editors interviewed for this study did in fact express certain reluctance about CCI's role, referring to its close connection with the government.

Presently, CCI is supervised by UNESCO's Kuala Lumpur office, to which the communication projects in the region belong. The KL office is trying to lobby the Ministry to expedite the handling of the matter.

With an annual budget of just over US\$110,000, CCI has thirteen full-time staff, two of whom are trainers. The trainers are hired to RUPP for US\$12 per hour, paid by TAF.

The head of CCI is also on the governing council for the journalism training at the university.

CCI's overall objective is to increase the free flow of information and increase public participation through an improvement of the quality of media output. Their main activities are training courses and workshops for journalists, as well as seminars and workshops on related subjects.

Up until this year, duration of training courses has been between two weeks and about one month. Most short courses relate to issue specific reporting, such as reporting on AIDS, the environment, etc. Commencing January 2000, the institute is also offering a one-year certificate course in basic journalism. Funding for the whole course is not yet secured, but Sek Barisoth believes Danida will continue their support.

The present one-year course is providing training for fifty journalists from various media, who form two groups that attend two hours of classes in the morning or in the afternoon. Dr. Crispin Masruk, PhD from the University of Los Baños, Philippines, developed the curriculum while a consultant for the UNESCO, partly responding to the findings of John Brown's 1997 study on Cambodian editors and journalists.

Unlike at the Journalism Section at RUPP, where the majority of students are university students, CCI directs its courses at working journalists. Duplication is not a problem, partly because the two facilities co-operate extensively, partly because both have more applicants than they have places available.

This pinpoints one noteworthy improvement between journalists today as compared to 1994: editors and journalists are aware of their training needs, comments Barisoth. In 1994, invitations for training went largely unnoticed.

CCI could, and does to a degree, function as a meeting place for journalists and a market place for their views and ideas. In class, current problems are raised; outside of class, discussions take place about events that make headlines. In view of this, Sek Barisoth believes CCI can take on a larger role (once it is independent), e.g. provide housing for the recently established facilitation group, for meetings and (more) seminars.

8.2 Royal University of Phnom Penh (RUPP)

The governing council of journalism training is the body overseeing the journalism section, which does not formally belong to the university, but is considered non-formal training. In practice, the Vice Director, Dr. Ouk Chhieng, Director of the Computer Science Department is heading the council, since the former rector, Varsim Samreth, left the University to become Cambodia's ambassador to Vietnam.

The new rector, Pit Chamnat, has yet to take over the leadership of the council, the members of which are the section's three lecturers, CCI's head, Sek Barisoth, Ker Munthit of AP, plus four members lingering from former times: two representatives of KJA and two from LCJ. The council members say it needs urgent reform.

The journalism section was set up within the framework of the Computer Science back in 1994, when Bernard Krisher's Japan Relief for Cambodia donated computers and assisted in the establishment of a desktop publishing training there. JRC and TAF are the only donors at present. The section receives no funding from the government.

A total of 300 students have gone through the basic training at the RUPP, and the best students have been recruited to continue at an advanced level, a three-month follow-up course. The training is not attractive enough; only a small share of those leaving the programme remain in journalism.

A scholarship programme has provided an opportunity for four students so far to study at the American University in Paris, a one-year (non-degree) programme. Two of them are back working in Phnom Penh (AFP and Cambodia Daily), one remains in Paris studying for a Master of Journalism. It is hoped that this student will come back and be a resource for the development of the journalism section. In 2000, two women students will go to for the Paris scholarship.¹⁰

The council wants to upgrade the course to a degree programme, as a complement to the six-month basic journalism training and the three-month advanced course. However, there are presently no Cambodian lecturers carrying a degree, who can run the programme.

There are principally two ways of developing the section, according to the council. One would be to set up a two-year programme targeting year three university students (social science and language students), which is what former TAF advisor Mike Fowler suggested. The second would be to set up a full faculty communications programme of four years, as suggested by Anne Nelson from the University of Ohio, who was here in 1998 and drafted on a future curriculum in response to a request from Bernard Krisher.

Either way, the section has to identify a sister university, according to the council. One of the council members paid a visit to Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok, which has a communication department with a full faculty degree programme. So far, no links have been made between the two universities, so the council is saying that they are open to linking up with any university willing to support the section here. The development of the programme would require a foreign advisor to outline the curriculum in co-operation with the council and to take on the actual training for the initial years, while simultaneously up-grading the capacity of the Cambodian lecturers. Material and literature are still very limited, and the council is requesting assistance for improvements.

The council's Vice Director says the process to move ahead is for the council to decide which way they prefer, to try and identify a sister university, to develop the curriculum, and thereafter submit the plan to the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports. The identification of a sister university, from which to draw ideas and possibly also lecturers, is a key issue, according to Dr. Ouk Chhieng, who doesn't believe it by necessity has to be in an ASEAN country. Any university where there is freedom of the press would be an option. The council wishes to have a foreign specialist as a member, someone who can be the driving force in the development and act as an intermediary between potential donors, the sister university and the RUPP.

The Ministry of Education is said to be supportive of the plans so far, but has no means to actually finance the development.

Due to the US government's policy not to give direct support to the Cambodian government, TAF may face problems assisting a formal education at the RUPP. However, the US agency might

consider a continued support for the shorter training targeting working journalists, according to the programme co-ordinator.

The journalism section has eight staff: three journalism lecturers, three in computer training, one administrator and a guard for the computer room. One lecturer and the guard are paid by JRC, which also gives forty complimentary copies of the Cambodia Daily to teachers and students. The rest of the annual US\$30,000 budget comes from TAF.

Bernard Krisher said in an interview that the former rector asked his help to develop the section into a full faculty education. Already in the autumn of 2000 he believes some steps will be taken in this direction. Donors have, if not pledged, then at least tentatively promised a sum of US\$20,000 to launch the programme, which follows Anne Nelson's outline of a four-year full faculty programme.

Former editor of the Cambodia Daily, Jeff Hodson has been recruited for a three-month contract and Mike Fowler (formerly with TAF) will also possibly join, according to Krisher. The two of them will, if everything works according to the rather flexible plan, develop the curriculum, based on the Anne Nelson report.

One new interesting feature presented by Krisher is that candidates from universities in Burma, Laos and Vietnam, will be selected to join the programme.

9. Conclusions and Recommendations

The Cambodian media sector is not only made up by the actors and institutions mentioned in this report, but time, knowledge and understanding have placed limits on what could be covered. However, an outline of the sector has been provided in order to identify the key problems facing the media and what the Swedish government and Swedish NGOs could do to assist in addressing those problems.

Reviewing the actors presented in the study, a common feature is that most of them need to develop in various ways. Below is a summary of the problems that have been presented or touched upon in the previous chapters, to give hints as to how the last part, the recommendations, were drawn.

9.1 Conclusions

9.1.1 Public Institutions

Over the years, some support has been given to building capacity within the information sector of the public administration, but it is fair to say that there is a gigantic need for greater transparency as well as a greater focus on the development of information offices within the public institutions. The Ministry of Information is itself struggling with accessing information from other ministries, while the budget for disseminating the information is insufficient.

To upgrade communications work within the public administration is a gargantuan task, yet it is of immediate concern for the media (as well as for the administration itself).

9.1.2 Electronic media

There is very little independence and pluralism in the electronic media. Television on the whole is a mouthpiece for the government or the CPP as far as news programmes are concerned, but mostly they engage in entertainment. Radio is slightly more diverse, but also here entertainment far surpasses information and news with regard to airtime. Main problems are access for people outside urban areas, low quality and limited independence and pluralism regarding news and information, and there is very little focus on public service. Although WMC's FM102, the national FM96 and some other stations are moving closer to their audiences, broadcast media remains far from the masses and uses little of its potential to inform and educate the general population.

To assist in the development of the broadcast media, more training ought to target technicians and journalists within radio and television. Another area of concern is to make managers of stations aware of the needs their staff and audiences might have.

Equally important is to find out what the future direction of the government media outlets is. Both the radio and the television require technical and financial assistance, and especially the television needs support in the process of restructuring the operations, in terms of policy development, management, programming, technical development, control and structure.

9.1.3 The Press

The press is the scene for the freedom of expression as far as that exists in Cambodia, and in that regard the press enjoys paramount importance. Although newspapers on rather an arbitrary basis are threatened with suspension, closure, etc., on the whole, there is no systematic repression against the press, regardless of political alignment. The last couple of years have seen a steady development of the newspapers. The best newspapers now carry news articles with more informative reporting, and the number of topics featured is on the increase. There are a couple of Khmer language papers today that are successful enough, both in terms of advertisement and readership, to serve as role models for other papers (together with the Cambodia Daily, Cambodia Soir and the Phnom Penh Post).

However, many problems that need to be tackled remain. Most papers simply do not have money enough to successfully run an operation. They have little if any advertisement and lack management and marketing skills. Printing is expensive and so is the faltering distribution system if the papers want to access readers outside of Phnom Penh. Typically newspapers are supported by patrons or parties (who require loyalty), and in particular the opposition press have to struggle to gain access to reliable facts and figures from public officials. Bribery and blackmail to earn money is rampant. Almost no journalists have gone through proper training.

There is ample reason to believe that the training courses given over the years have strengthened journalists in their issue specific reporting, and as new topics constantly enter media's agenda, short-term training for working journalists still serves a purpose. The CCI has assumed a co-ordinating or implementing role for many such previous and present training courses and should be apt to continue, as long as its relationship with the Ministry of Information is sorted out.

As far as journalism ethics goes, it is hard to conjure up a solution for how to make newspaper journalists and editors more responsible. But there is an internal drive among some of the media professionals to create a common platform to share resources and to lobby for press freedom. Such an initiative could help strengthen the identity of journalists and promote self-regulation.

9.1.4 NGOs

Some of the more successful publications produced by local NGOs for awareness raising purposes or in order to lobby for a certain cause could benefit greatly from technical assistance. Mostly though, such assistance would support the actual issue of concern, rather than the development of the media sector. The same goes for radio and television productions from the development sector.

The children's magazine, *Mom & Mab*, does serve the purpose of encouraging young people to read, which makes it different from most other NGO originated publications or productions.

Two other local NGOs work directly with the media, too, both of which assist the development of the sector. The *Mirror of the Open Forum* provides Khmer readers in the provinces with newspaper articles from a wide range of newspapers, and hence fills a gap until the local press finds its way to rural areas. The *Women's Media Centre* trains women journalists and lobbies the media to be more responsible towards women in their reporting. Simultaneously, its radio station aims to provide its listeners with education, entertainment and information from women's perspectives. Considering the present gender imbalance in the media, WMC has an important role to fill. Its high quality output can also help to foster other media outlets.

9.1.5 Journalist Associations

As was mentioned earlier, a common platform for journalists could be a means to enhance self-regulation as regards media ethics. Today, there is no journalist association that serves that purpose either directly or indirectly. The moribund associations that still exist are more of partisan lobby groups. Moreover, they focus on writing journalists, excluding much of the broadcast media. Of course any initiative to form an association has to be taken by the Cambodian journalists themselves, but many express regret that there is none. By the same token, it is difficult to direct support to the journalists as a group unless they have some point of convergence.

9.1.6 Printing

Considering the recent development in the field of printing, both the interventions of JSRC and Don Bosco and the growth of a private business sector, the present shortcomings may be adjusted within the next few years. The opposition papers no longer experience difficulties having their publications printed apart from when they are suspended and printing of them is illegal.

There is still a shortage of printers in the provinces. Yet, printing difficulties is not the main impediment to proliferation of papers in the provinces, so support to the local printing sector is not deemed a priority.

9.2 Recommendations

The following concluding remarks and recommendations draw on the information presented in the previous chapters (and the appendixes), but they also contain observations, analysis and perhaps a bit of forecasting. There are a number of actors introduced in the previous sections of the report that do not appear here. This is not to say that they need no assistance or support. However, to assist in the development of the media sector as a whole, rather than individual outlets or projects, the most urgent priorities in the view of the author are listed and explained below.

9.2.1 Assistance in encouraging pluralism and independence in the broadcast media:

In view of the highly one-sided broadcast media, there is a need to assist existing outlets to become more independent and neutral. Although assistance to this end is vague, it is nevertheless of great significance for the development of the Cambodian media sector. Influencing the private broadcasters may be very difficult, as long as they have enough money—either from patrons or through self-generated income. Instead, lobbying the programming managers to take on more responsibility in terms of impartiality, informative scope and journalistic ethics is one way. Supporting the draft of broadcast policies (e.g. how much of broadcasting time should be programmes produced in Cambodia, how much should be educational in scope, etc.) another. Also, training courses on these issues targeting broadcast media should be considered.

Another issue is the political will to achieve fair access to the media. When it comes to granting licenses to new television and radio stations, the fickle application of rules and policies must be tackled. Lobbying is one means to this end, training of ministry officials another.

Related is media access for various political parties. CCCP/CDRI suggests in its study on the elections, that in order to avoid conflict, a definition is required of the notion of fair and equitable media in the political context ahead of election campaigning (Hughes, Real, 1999). This idea could be broadened to include a public monitoring system that monitors and publicises inequities on national media in order to highlight the problem. Ahead of granting election aid, donors ought to assist the country in setting up such a system.

9.2.2 Encourage the development of national radio and television into independent public service broadcasters:

To make the national broadcasters (TVK, the AM station and FM96) independent from the government might help develop them towards more public service and perhaps the cash strapped national budget could expedite the process of making them autonomous. A BBC report from 1994 sketched how this restructuring could look (with the BBC as a role model), but so far, no major changes have occurred. It is difficult to gauge whether the political will is there and capacity within the structures is missing, or whether in fact the government is satisfied with the stations being its mouthpiece. The emergence of FM96 does indicate that there is room for and a readiness to accept change. This station displays a willingness to take on a new role as something of a community radio.

The prospects of making a good business by broadcasting information in the remote areas won't be present in a long time to come. Yet, it is in the provinces that people really need better access to neutral, educational and worthwhile information.

The Ministry has started supporting radio stations in the provinces. Budgetary constraints may work against a concerted effort, though, and the different views within the Ministry might also split its vision and ambition. The Minister sees television as the most important media, while the Secretary of State and most of the others view the radio as the most paramount source of information. Considering the infrastructure and widespread poverty together with available statistics¹¹, would suggest that radio still enjoys more importance.

Assistance could be directed at the upgrading production, content and presentation of broadcast news and current affairs through the provision of new technology and the exposure of staff to such technology. In addition, the restructuring would need assistance to outline national legislation and policy guidelines for the television and the radio.

As has been suggested earlier, radio should be prioritised ahead of television.

The efforts of the Swedish National Radio to support the development of extensive public service would serve a major purpose, although the target for such a programme ought to be the structures that are most fit to take on the public service role. The WMC may be the closest to a public service radio available in terms of quality, partly because of its technical and human resources. However, the centre's focus on women's issues limits its scope. And although WMC's training of female journalists is much needed, it is hard to believe that the training of these women would benefit the whole of the media sector in the short to medium term. They already work for an outlet with one of the highest salaries and decent job security and are unlikely to change jobs. Furthermore, WMC is an NGO living on external support to cover for a relatively expensive operation. To transform the WMC into a media organisation requires structural changes that might undermine its other activities, deemed important not only by themselves, but also by its keen donors. FM102 with its intellectual messages and its short time on the air has rather limited transmission coverage and in order for the station to take on a more public service approach, it needs much input. In view of that, both the FM96 and the FM105 might be better options: FM96 because of its provincial networks, FM105 for its popularity and populist approach.

Considering the structure, objectives and outreach of the Women's Media Centre, the author of this study would recommend a review of the choice of WMC, and tentatively suggest FM96 instead.

9.2.3 Assistance to establish an association for journalists and editors:

The primary objectives for creating a journalist association in Cambodia are many. It could work to safeguard and promote press freedom. It could serve as a resource centre that gives access to international news and info, Internet, manuals, textbooks and study materials (and possibly a node for assistance in the translation into Khmer of those), as well as desktop publishing equipment to prepare material for publication. It could also serve as a node in the establishment of a legal defence fund for journalists facing prosecution, and develop a network for monitoring violations of journalists' rights.

When it comes to the press, the biggest problem relating to the government is the arbitrary use of the Press Law and the UNTAC Penal Code. The recent bans on songs and mini-skirts show the government's perception of freedom of expression, even though the consequences of the bans are not so dire.

The media itself would manifest its role as the fourth estate by shedding light on the government's shortcomings in its dealings with the media. The ways in which they could do this are many, but by joining forces much would be achieved.

The rift of the KJA has created a reluctance to form an association or a syndicate, so therefore it seems reasonable to support the formation of the informal group set up during the February Editors' Forum. Animosity may still linger, or at least the LCJ feels excluded by that the latest development, so in order not to polarise those on the inside and the outside of this group, this problem must be tackled.

The members of the informal group have taken on a great responsibility, and they are still unclear as to what they want to achieve. If the ultimate objectives are to create a common resource centre and a common platform, the next steps they are taking in that direction are crucial. They would certainly find donors to support them, being a cross section of the political spectrum as well as rank-and-file media people in the country.

It is vital that Cambodian journalists, perhaps not all of them, but those who are willing to be professional in their vocation, act in a more concerted way. Together they could lobby for their own cause, for freedom of expression and greater openness from government quarters, while finding courage to address sensitive issues in their media outlets. In order to address blackmail directed towards journalists, an effective measure tried in many other countries is to publish or broadcast about such blackmailing attempts.

There is also limited willingness among the media to cry out against the problem in a joint effort. If the media outlets reported on hampered media access as an event, they could perhaps root it out. But this has not yet happened. Patron-client relationships prevail and much of the media is held hostage by their dependence of certain individuals or groups.

Addressing the needs of Cambodian journalists has to emanate from the needs as perceived by themselves. The key to identifying these needs, whether they have to do with training, policy making, technical assistance, etc. is to make journalists come together and outline their perceptions.

9.2.4 Assist in the linking up with regional networks:

Particularly through the work of KJA, Cambodia's journalists took a step towards joining formal and informal networks of journalists in the region. The interest in Cambodia is greater among its neighbours than in other countries, so consequently, regional networks are a source to enhance that interest. Although the political situation has changed, Cambodia is still suffering from a negative image abroad. The killing fields, land mines and the legacy of the Khmer Rouge are the main features that still linger in people's minds abroad. Despite the features being true, there is also another Cambodia that receives little international attention, to the disenchantment of many Cambodians. This is also the rationale behind the NGO Forum's Information Project. Does this have anything to do with the development of Cambodian journalists and the Cambodian media sector?

One explanation to the static Cambodia reporting given by a number of editors and journalists consulted in this study is that Cambodians take very limited part in the reporting on their own country, with the news agency practically dead and the other national media suffering for want of quality. Moreover, the transnational media corporation enjoys an increasing power over the portrayal of individual countries as well as events.

In a paper on engagement versus non-interference in ASEAN, Kao Kim Hourn writes:

“For Cambodian-ASEAN relations, there is an urgent need to work toward a reduction of the problems of perception by ASEAN toward Cambodia. At the same time, Cambodia needs to build stronger ties with ASEAN collectively and with ASEAN member-states individually.” (Kao Kim Hourn, 1999)

ASEAN is one platform upon which Cambodia can boost its integration into other regional networks, journalism being one of them. This integration of Cambodian journalists into groups of Asian peers would not only polish or expand the way in which Cambodia is perceived abroad, but it would also in itself build capacity of local journalists by providing them with a clearer identity, contacts and links.

The Konrad Adenauer Foundation has a substantial network of professional media people across the region and the continent. KAF has expressed a willingness to provide advice, support and act as a node for networking, aiming at developing Asian media on its own terms. The facilitators at the National Editors' Forum and the presence of Asian journalists and editors demonstrated their interest in incorporating Cambodia into their networks. This is of vital importance for several reasons: professionalism, identity, and for the Cambodia image.

To succeed in this undertaking, Cambodian journalists need further training, particularly in language and new technology. A few times the author of this report heard editors and media people bemoan the fact that they had been asked to act as a resource for regional networks, but had to decline due to lacking capacity in language and technology. For a country with a limited skilled human resource base perhaps international networking ought not to be first priority, but the informal group, if it proves to function, could be a first linkage point with regional and international peers. The networks have the advantage of being for mutual benefit: not only the Cambodians gain from this, but also for those who need and want access to information sources inside this country.

9.2.5 Media and communications training

Education and training are the prime targets for present assistance to the Cambodian media, both through the CCI, the university and other NGOs. Short-term training for working journalists have been ongoing for almost a decade and should probably continue, in order to support the media's coverage of new or complex topics. The CCI seems fit to continue this venture, although its relationship with the Ministry must be straightened out, preferably making the institute independent so as to serve the media in the best possible fashion. The one-year training at CCI has only just started, so it is difficult to assess its likely achievements. Unless it is draining the university of its trainers or duplicates what is taking place at the Journalism Section, there is certainly potential to provide working journalists with a better theoretical platform.

If Cambodia ultimately desires a new generation of journalists, there is a need to move over to long-term education as well, where the students not only study the craft, but also are given a general education in subjects such as history, political science and literature. A four-year, full faculty programme within the framework of the university would be ideal, although the development of such a programme is a long process: trainers need training and degrees in order for the education to be internationally recognised. Japan Relief for Cambodia, TAF and GRET are other potential actors in such a development.

This programme can serve both future journalists and information workers if the first two years are turned into general communication studies, as has been suggested. The specialisation that would subsequently take place ought to cover both broadcast media, print press and PR. Up until now, much focus has been placed on the print press, and possibly rightly so since the press is freer to incorporate new ideas than broadcast media. Yet, as broadcast media enjoys such an important role, and displays rather poor quality, more attention ought to be given to them.

Another angle is training of other media related professionals, above all editors, managers and marketing people. Trained, talented and professional journalists may find themselves working for politically motivated editors with a limited understanding of journalism. Perhaps most editors know what they are doing and why, but it is striking to see that so few actually try to copy the papers they claim are their role models, either they are the Cambodia Daily, the Rasmey Kampuchea or the Phnom Penh Post.

9.2.6 Assistance to training of journalists and media managers in the provinces

When it comes to the print media, coverage of provincial events is meagre, and accessibility to newspapers is limited. The development of the general infrastructure might amend this shortage to a degree. However, reading habits remain weak and it is probably too early to be able to establish viable media businesses in the provinces, catering for the needs of local news.

The freelance system applied by some of the Phnom Penh based papers is interesting and could call for attention. Very little training is given to media people at provincial level, whether they work for government-owned or private initiatives.

One possibility is to draw on the training developed by CCI and assist in the proliferation of such training to all provinces. Another measure is to make sure media managers are aware of the importance of local news for their readers, also through training.

9.2.7 Training officials in PR and use of the media, also in the provinces

The government has yet to realise how the media can serve their purposes, and how a reinforced dialogue in fact strengthens the government's activities. Dialogue between government officials and the media is vital, and not only including the pro-government media, but all. Even if the relationship between the government and the media at times is outright adversarial, it is essential to break an evil circle, with mistrust from politicians leading to limited information access for journalists, which is followed by faulty reporting which reinforces mistrust from the politicians, and so on.

The capacity within the public administration to deal with information and PR in general and the media in particular is very far from perfect. Cash-strapped government offices don't allocate funding to improve their communications work, even though that most likely would be a way to safeguard a budget. The example of the National Assembly, where there is a small budget for information purposes, shows that most is spent on internal information, rather than setting up structures for informing the media and through them the public.

It is hard to judge whether the provincial information offices would be a source of independent, accurate and neutral information if they had had the required resources. What is clear is that the provinces are under-represented in the media contents, and they also have limited access to information of concern for people living out of Phnom Penh.

Communications training to public officials has been carried out by the Ministry of Information and the CCI, both in Phnom Penh and in the provinces. This process should be allowed to continue and possibly also to intensify it. The fact that information officials have limited access to the information

they are mandated to disseminate would suggest that training has to be given also at a higher level in the hierarchy. Training must most likely be combined with the provision of new technology (and training on how to use it).

In the bilateral agreement between Sweden and Cambodia, one paragraph states that Sweden should look into the possibilities of capacity-building support to the National Assembly. Perhaps this is one issue to be addressed, as transparency and information dissemination are very strong features in the Swedish civil administration.

9.2.8 Women in the media

Educating and supporting female journalists is important in order for the media to reflect and represent the whole society. For those who support the establishment of a full faculty programme at the university, the present dropout rates for women students must be investigated in search for solutions.

There is a need to direct attention to the alarming gender imbalance in Cambodian media. WMC seems indeed fit to do this, through their various programmes. They have taken on an important role to monitor and lobby the media about the coverage on women, while also strengthening women journalists in their profession and by placing women's issues on the media's agenda.

Once there is a journalist association in place, efforts could target women members, through training programmes, study trips, etc.

9.2.9 Monitoring of the media, research into media consumers

Many countries have media monitoring institutions following not only specific topics in the media, but also the development of the media as a whole. The efforts of Open Forum of Cambodia in this regard are creditable, not only for providing mixed news to its readers, but also by keeping an eye on which papers are publishing, on advertisers and on the main topics dealt with in the print media.

Support to the establishment of a media monitoring institution may not be a priority, but to support individual projects to this end might be, either they are undertaken by public authorities (such as the press clipping service formerly undertaken by the National Assembly information office) or international agencies. Media monitoring issues should be incorporated into the curriculum for training targeting the government's information officers.

Advertisers and businesses may themselves soon develop a greater interest in their media coverage, creating opportunity for a business venture serving this purpose.

Considering the sketchy picture about the Cambodian media consumers, it would be of interest and significant importance for all actors involved to initiate research into this. Many of the opposition media claim that their readers want the kinds of news they publish, whereas in fact, the higher quality newspapers have far more readers. At the same time as research could enlighten media outlets on the views of their consumers, it would also give a more in-depth picture of the general media habits of Cambodians (perhaps as a base-line study for further development of national television and radio).

9.2.10 Educational broadcasting development:

In support of distance education and the development of information programmes for broadcasting, donors could co-operate with the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport and the Ministry of Information. With the formal educational system still suffering from lack of materials, resources and trained staff, educational broadcasting could be an alternative model, especially for adult learning in remoter areas.

9.2.11 Co-ordination of efforts

The media sector receives assistance from a number of donor agencies — grassroots level organisations, bilateral agencies and international organs. Reports on the media are often internal documents instead of being spread among those interested and involved. The co-ordination of efforts ought to be highlighted, to make sure that there is a strategic consensus, as well as to avoid duplication. Considering the fact that the agencies working in the media sector have different scope and ambition, funding capacity and experience, co-ordination would facilitate a more optimal utilisation of resources.

It would also be useful to establish a system for monitoring the media development. The sector is changing fast, and a complete picture of the media sector is nowhere to be found. There are some institutions, such as the CCI and the Open Forum of Cambodia, that perhaps could take on this task if they were provided with resources to do so.

10. List of interviewees

Name	Date
Leng Sochua, Dept. Dir, Ministry of Information	27-Jan-00
Ker Munthit (AP), Pen Samitthy (Rasmey Kampuchea)	1-Feb-00
Wayne Sharpe, project manager, Impacs	7-Feb-00
Chhor Sokheang, The Asia Foundation	8-Feb-00
Norbert Klein, Open Forum	8-Feb-00
Sek Bariso, Director CCI	9-Feb-00
Students at RUPP	10-Feb-00
Tiw Sarayeth, WMC	15-Feb-00
Pen Samitthy, editor-in-chief, Rasmey Kampuchea	16-Feb-00
Ker Muntith, reporter, AP	18-Feb-00
Petra Bergwall, advisor, WMC	18-Feb-00
Him Soung, Deputy General Director, TVK	19-Feb-00
Brad Adams, former legal advisor, National Assembly and Ministry of Information	21-Feb-00
HE Khieu Kanharith, Secretary of State, Ministry of Information	21-Feb-00
Ham Samnang, media monitor, Cambodia Daily	23-Feb-00
Om Chandara, chairman, League of Cambodian Journalists	9-Mar-00
Ou Sovann, editor of Samleng Yuvachun Khmer	10-Mar-00
Tath Ly Hok, dep. Editor of Kampuchea Newspaper	10-Mar-00
Ouk Chheang, Director of Computer Science Dept. RUPP, acting head of Governing Council for journalism Training	13-Mar-00
Sun Heng Meng Chheang, editor Mom & Mab magazine	15-Mar-00
Tath Ly Hok, dep. Director, AKP	15-Mar-00
Roath Kim Soeun, printing expert	16-Mar-00
Sek Bariso, Director CCI	17-Mar-00
Yin Sok San, Kha Pot, ADHOC's Neak Chea	20-Mar-00
Ek Sam Ol, Office manager, National Assembly Information Dept.	21-Mar-00
Nouv Sovathero, manager FM96	22-Mar-00
Kang Sarann, National Television Sihanoukville	23-Mar-00
Chun Sarom, freelance journalist, LJC rep. Sihanoukville	24-Mar-00
Svay Ketthana, AKP Sihanoukville	24-Mar-00
HE Lu Lay Sreng, Minister of Information	28-Mar-00
Leng Sochua, Dept. Dir, Ministry of Information	28-Mar-00
Dam Sith, editor, Moneaksekar Khmer	29-Mar-00
Kay Johnson, VOA	3-Apr-00
Mam Sonando, Beehive Radio	8-Apr-00
Bernard Krisher, publisher of Cambodia Daily, chairman Japan Relief of Cambodia	9-Apr-00
Chris Decherd, editor-in-chief, Cambodia Daily	11-Apr-00
National Editors Forum (KAF)	03-04 Feb 00
Konrad Adenauer Foundation Editors Forum	31 Jan-01 Feb 00

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Endnotes

¹ Previously named United Nations Commissioner for Human Rights, UNCHR, the UN's human rights office is referred to as the UNCOHCHR even in the period before it changed names.

² Secretary of State Khieu Kanharith, a prominent government spokesman, remarked that the Ministry of Finance, which allocates and disburses the budget, is the most corrupt of all ministries. "We have to pay them to get money", he said in an interview at his office in Feb. 2000.

³ Just 16 percent of the total number of households in Cambodia have electricity from line or generator, according to Cambodian Poverty Assessment, 1999

⁴ The BBC World Service broadcasts on the FM100 from Phnom Penh. They have no special programming for Cambodia or Khmer language service, but transmits their world-wide reports only.

⁵ A daily purchase of the largest newspaper, Rasmey Kampuchea, would add up to approx. 218 400 riels in one year, i.e. two thirds of the 330,000 riels which is the average annual non-food consumption expenditure (which covers education, health, transport. etc.).

⁶ It is noteworthy that the salary is in fact higher than the initial payment for local journalists at the Cambodia Daily.

⁷ The reason behind higher sales in these provinces may, in the words of the editor, be the relatively large share of business people esp. in the border areas, in addition to the fact they are populous.

⁸ The author of this study was told that Koh Santephiop has lowered advertising prices to a level below the actual cost of printing them, thus creating problems for other papers. This price war was stirring emotions in many editorial offices at the time of writing.

⁹ During the author's visits to AKP during office hours, a maximum of ten people were seen in the large building. "The staff only comes on pay-day", commented one official.

¹⁰ The media sector is so small that all the (local) key actors know one another, and they seem not to fear to invest in particular individuals who they believe will become assets in the future. E.g. the Cambodian reporters of AP and AFP belong to the exclusive group of journalists with a degree, and as such have been part-time lecturers at RUPP. In the development of a journalism programme, these two reporters are often mentioned as possible candidates for graduate training overseas in order to take on the roles of future trainers at the faculty.

¹¹ Looking at statistics on ownership of television sets and radio, one can see that the rate in which ownership increases for both is about the same (Ministry of Planning, 1999).