

REPORT ON INVESTIGATIVE WORKSHOP AGAINST CORRUPTION

1. Background:

The concept of training on investigative journalism for the working journalist to generate an anti-corruption culture and to identify areas of corruption and individuals and/or entities involved in corruption has been generated for several reasons. First, there is the perception that, with the current level of investigative journalism in Nepal, journalists (including the TV and radio media) were not focused enough on the problem, and when they were focused did not have the tools, or set of skills, necessary to “dig” into the issues as they should. Their efforts resulted in incomplete stories, very often reportage that was biased, or reporting that was based on conjecture and/or assumptions, were not fact based. The perception has grown that much of this problem is due to a lack of training in the areas of investigation, and a minimal knowledge of the mechanisms of corrupt practices, and how to reveal these mechanisms, and people, responsible for the corruption. To appropriately inform the public through the media, and to enhance the ability of journalists to attack the local and national problem of corruption, this training was proposed by the CIAA and few media groups for which the following expectations of participants were incorporated in the workshop agenda.

1.1 Expectations of the participants

- Clear discussion and sharing experience.
- Identification of weaknesses in current writing for improvement
- Steps of reporting on Investigative Journalism.
- How to make report writing simple and easy
- How to pressurize to punish corrupt people.
- More information about anti corruption
- Types of corruption in Nepal and how to curb them
- How to reach at the root of corruption
- How to identify the document and proof-loose
- How to deal with risk and bear it while reporting
- How to report corruptions issues on “digital media”.
- In-depth knowledge on Investigative Journalism
- Impact of news.
- Process to adding new dimension to IJ after the workshop

The agenda based on the need assessment before the workshop and expectations of the participants collected in the beginning of the workshops proposed to achieve the following objectives.

1.2 Main objective:

To enhance Journalists' capacity in writing against corruption in order to inform public well through media.

1.3 Workshop Objectives

- ❑ To enhance additional capacity on the concept, theory, source and writing style of investigative journalism
- ❑ To enhance additional knowledge, and skill on the role of media about the concept of corruption, investigating it, and ways to minimize it.
- ❑ To enhance additional skills and capacity in writing style on investigative journalism against corruption

1.4 Expected Outcome

1. Self confidence in investigative journalism further developed
2. Public trust towards Investigative Journalism increased
3. Trained on investigative journalism

2 Agenda & Resource Persons

The agenda (see Appendix A) and resource persons (see Appendix B) of both workshops in Pokhara and Kathmandu were almost the same. The agenda was developed on the basis of report and recommendations made by ARD international consultant Michael Genelin and the ReMAC workshop report on the Investigative Journalism against Corruption, which was organized from 2-9 September 2005. Conceptually, the previous course was an opportunity for participants to attend the training, it had well covered theoretical knowledge on IJ was initiated on corruption at the national level. However, the whole course was not designed for the practical purpose. Therefore, the Need Assessment Workshop recommended less theory, and more practice, and local cases relevant to local situation and real cases faced by the journalists to be designed for the upcoming workshop.

After reviewing ReMAC workshop, conducting needs assessment on April 2, 2006 and consulting selected resource persons, ARD sub contractor Training and Development Center

(T&D) finalized four day agenda on May 24, 2006, which was unanimously accepted by both organizers as well as by ARDROL. The workshop agenda was basically divided into three major headings, namely investigative journalism with practical sessions based on case study in corruption stories and reporting. Six Nepali instructors having good knowledge and experience in respective areas were selected for both workshops. One foreign expert from Romanian Center for Investigative Journalism participated in both workshops and actively shared his own experience and international practices. Elaborately speaking, the resource persons were assigned to develop and deliver concept, theories, sources of investigative journalism and style of reporting, and concept, dimension and trend of corruption and role of media against corruption, and reporting art and skills of investigative journalism against corruption. They were also requested to develop one case study on their respective topics that intended to summarize their discussions and add more learning.

3 Workshop Modality

The workshop modality organized on 15 May 2006 was intended for working journalists and therefore, the techniques of adult education was mostly applied. The experts from T&D (see Appendix B) as training facilitator coordinated both instructors and participants and managed time of each session as per the schedules. Of the total 19 sessions of the training in four days, the participants were given separate time to ask questions or to share experiences in each session. The T&D provided all kind of support to the participants and instructors whenever required. Learning Log, Goal Setting and final evaluation format were used during the workshops to strengthen the learning and making the workshop more fruitful.

4 Workshop Organizers & Participants

The two workshops on investigative journalism against corruption successfully completed at Pokhara and Godawari, Lalitpur with the financial and technical support of USAID/ARD, Inc. Rule of Law Project. Mechi Mahakali Media Society (MMMS) and Nepal Institute for Professional Journalism and Communication Studies (NIPJCS) (see Appendix B) organized the workshops respectively. Both organizers selected participating journalists for each workshop separately. The Pokhara workshop was organized on June 27-30, 2006, which was attended by 33 journalists (see Appendix C), mostly from western and far western region of Nepal. The Godawari workshop was organized back to back after Pokhara workshop, from third to sixth July and 24 journalists (see Appendix D), mostly from eastern Nepal

participated in the program. The participation of women journalists in both workshops was significant. The number of women journalists in Godawari workshop was one third of the total participants.

5 Summary of the Workshops

5.1 Inaugural Speech

Mr. Friederick Yeager, the Chief of Party of ARDROL highlighted the nine core principles in his inaugural speech, which the Project for Excellence in Journalism has identified. The essence of these principles are journalists' obligation to the truth, loyalty to the citizens, discipline of verification, maintaining independence in coverage, monitoring of power independently, providing forum for public criticism and compromise, story telling with a purpose, comprehensive and proportional reporting, and exercise of a personal sense of ethics and responsibility

Mr. Mihir Thakur, the Sr. Anti-Corruption Coordinator of ARDROL, highlighted the background information and the rationale of organizing the workshop on investigative journalism against corruption. ARD Rule of Law as a first step in Nepal initiated the rationale being a high priority to bring journalists to a place and learn more about reporting skills against corruption.

5.2 Session on Investigative Journalism

The session was opened up by the input from the instructor in defining journalism, which is related to information, and information is related to society. Investigative journalism was defined as a wider genre of journalism. The development history of the terminology included journalism, then specialized journalism, then in-depth journalism and now investigative journalism. Individual work on Meta cards was given to the participants to write the information that is accessible and inaccessible. Accessible information is more a soft side of information; whereas the inaccessible information is ones hard like iceberg under the water. The later are related to political, social, illegal economic, and judiciary crimes. Similarly, three groups defined the word investigative journalism in one, two and three words. The importance of investigative journalism was highlighted with emphasis that it boosts the confidence of the journalists.

Brainstorming was done on the effects if information is not available. It was highlighted that investigation should be continued by using sources like people, documents, contexts,

circumstances, proof, observations, experts, analysis, briefs, new articles, data exchange via e-groups, personal observations, court records, etc. The professional approach to winning sources is the utilization of sources provided information.

An example slide on "The Company" and "Follow the Money" related to investigating corruption was presented. Database and photo investigation were demonstrated as practical tools for investigating corruption. Digging out the available resources and documents; mobilizing resources; exploring for interlinked information; analyzing published materials; setting up networks, and networking were some of the learning from the discussions on investigative journalism.

Obstacles to and the relevance of investigative journalism in Nepal, it's context and practice were discussed by drawing different live examples and stories when the international consultant shared his experience from Romania and other European countries. The whole discussion was summarized, in that credibility; research and the role of journalists not only as a watchdog but also as the biter are qualities essential to a journalist in overcoming the obstacles to investigative journalism.

A discussion on the skills of investigative journalism to which a journalist should always pay his attention to, were properly elaborated as tips for the participants. These skills; to put onto paper; provide human and electronic tracks and intense fieldwork were presented as the investigative trails. There was also a discussion on the seven pillars of national ethics, where journalism is the number one out of seven.

Reporting is a presentation that has time limit as well as word limit. Word limit has four dimensions scoop; feature; news, and research (investigation). All were discussed in detail with specific examples. Then in groups the participants explored areas for investigation.

The case study of former minister Chiranjibi Wagle was presented and three groups worked on the questions below:

How appropriate is the case from the point of view of investigative journalism?

What punishment could have been given against the corruption?

What can be included in the presentation from a journalism viewpoint?

After the group work, there was a discussion on how to develop a presentation style, language to be used in the news, accuracy, and objectivity as well as how to accommodate balance in the news.

5.3 Session on Corruption

Corruption was defined from the general understanding and the specific meaning of the CIAA that has been practicing within the Nepal context. Similarly, different understandings about corruption, its nature, type, dimension, areas prone to corruption and the general observations on the campaign against corruption were discussed in a question-answer form. Then the discussion focused on the causes of corruption and their effects in corruption prone areas that include ostensibly government and political sectors as big areas of corrupt in Nepal. In this context groups worked on defining some control measures for corruption mainly in government, private and civil sectors, with one group on each sector.

To enhance the group work the measures to curb corruption in the global context by UNDP and UN and World Bank policy, and efforts initiated by ADB, OECD and Transparency International were studied, as well as the efforts initiated at the national, local level, and by the populist authorities.

Punitive, preventive and promotional investigations were discussed as measures to curb the corruption.

An integrity test for assessing self (interest) was an exercise among the participants with a view that the journalists should stand honest and trustworthy within the civil society where they incessantly look for support.

Role of media in corruption control before, during and after investigation; the media report and media code of conduct received specific emphasis. At the same time the significant role to be played by media as FIR; also their limitation to be counted upon were cited as the first priority or debate during the session. Point wise, the roles of media against corruption are intimately related to descriptive words and phrases like, watch-dogging, database, informant, investigative, intelligent agency, policy making, deterrents of corruption, integrity, and vetting. Another classifications of the role of a journalist are understood as being overt, covert, direct and indirect.

The roles of the CIAA in investigation and prosecution of corruption were clearly presented with examples illustrating that investigative journalism has a big role in support of CIAA and CIAA to journalists. The formula of Daniel Kaufman provided a good example in investigating corruption.

Case Study on financial crime (Nepal Government Vs Laxmi Prasad Acharya and Sher Bahadur Thapa) was processed by the three groups in the form of a role play with; 1 division bench of 2 judges, 1 plaintiff, 1 government lawyer and rest of the group were a civil society, and journalists (watchdogs). The journalist participants summarized the case study as lively and an interesting area to begin more investigation. To enrich the learning about the investigation process slides on Bank Fraud were presented that outlined the process of digging out company records (Registration of Commerce), establishing business connections, documenting what information is collected (proper field work), consultation of social impact experts and follow-up.

5.4 Session on Reporting

Reporting was defined as the last process of investigative journalism where the reporter should have his antae alertly wound-up without any pause. A video clip on a quack doctor who killed his patient was put on and all the discussions on arts and skills, qualities, stages, impact, importance of reporting was built into the story of the doctor.

Qualities of a reporter were discussed as having experience in IT; the ability to work at difficult time, an active personality with the desire to investigate news and developing the feeling of professional dignity as reporter. In addition a slide series on what is a professional reporter and what makes a reporter was presented and discussed.

Reporting skills; before writing (phase to collect information, sources); during (preparation phase) and after (writing phase) were brainstormed by the group and the work was discussed through examples and sharing experiences. This discussion covered the whole process of reporting: evidence collection, interview of stakeholders, documentation, fact finding, presentation through language, layout, picture, cartoons, break news story, etc

On the impact of reporting there was a story slide presented about a person who was released from jail after a 12-year murder case as he became aware about DNA testing through the news paper and it reopened his case in the court. Thus the journalists should have their convictions that their news has short-term and long-term impact.

Regarding the impact the report will have becomes an ethical dilemma, which was discussed with an example of medicine being smuggled into the market so cheaply, it was affordable to buy and easily available for the poor community. Now the question arises whether a journalist should report it or not? Two reasons were given not to report it. Firstly, people may die due to the lack of medicine. Secondly, transit may be blocked and will affect the transportation of other essential goods. It was summarized that if illegal activities like smuggling do not affect the economy, no reporter should have to report it. So, is empathy on humanitarian grounds for a woman who is forced to become a prostitute? In such a difficult situation and dilemma a reporter should know the role of a journalist that he is not sending people to jail, he is not writing on behalf of any authorities but providing honest information, he is not personally involved but has a responsibility to tell the truth, and he is not dependent on any authority

The group worked on the case study of the Quack Doctor for which they brainstormed the answer to the question "What could be done to make the news more effective?" Use of database, easy language, more investigation of case related persons and their background, political affiliation, doctor's relation with the wife of deceased, process of his registration with medical council were some of the steps discussed for further investigation.

Insurance by working organization, security by state, keeping documents and evidence safe, timely communication, interaction among publishers, editors, reporters, NGOs, publishing threats, etc. were some of the tips presented in mitigating risk and building up the confidence of a journalist.

Follow-up in reporting was discussed as a crucial process to achieve the ultimate goal of writing a report. It was also discussed that follow up can be done in a different ways either in the same paper or using other media.

6 Achievements of workshops

No specialized agenda was ever designed nor any training on anti-corruption was given to Nepali journalists who were in actual need to get theoretical and practical knowledge about certain principles and techniques of investigative reporting. The ARDROL, in consultation with the stakeholders designed an agenda on investigative journalism against corruption and implemented it in three workshops and provided trainings to nearly 100 journalists from various newspapers and from different part of the country. The achievements of the work

shop lies on the fact that participants have gained some knowledge and skills useful and important for them in investigative reporting on corruption. It really depends upon their enhancement in reporting skills. After all, it is anticipated that participants must have gained or enhanced knowledge on basic concept of investigative journalism, obstacles of investigative journalism in Nepal, tools and techniques of investigative journalism, investigative reporting against corruption – its overall effect and impact on investigative agency like CIAA, art and skills of investigative reporting and reporting process. The real success of such program was judged on the basis of reports that the participating journalists prepared and published according to their commitments made at the end of program through individual goal settings.

The CIAA Commissioner Mr. Beda Prasad Shivakoti attended the Pokhara workshop in the last concluding sessions, distributed the certificates to the participants and interacted with the them on corruption issues. At Godawari workshop CIAA Chief Commissioner Mr. Surya Nath Upadhyay participated in the concluding ceremony as the chief guest and distributed training certificate to the participants and also spoke in the program. The other guest at the concluding ceremony of Godawari program was the President of Nepal Federation of Journalists Association (NFJA) Mr. Bishnu Nisthuri.

7. Follow up Workshop and Fellowship

At the end of each workshop, participants were asked to submit a topic in which s/he would write or publish investigative reporting. ARD international consultant Paul Radu also in his trip report had recommended that ARD would ask the participants to submit investigative project proposals and Nepali resource persons could assess the projects and decide which ones should be sponsored by ARD for fellowship programs. In order to materialize the idea the two media organizers (MMMS & NIPJCS) in consultation with ARD and T&D implemented the following steps before the follow up workshop:

- a. Organizers (MMMS & NIPJCS) contacted each participant every week and asked him/her about the plan and progress as per proposed goal setting.
- b. The organizers asked the participants to develop a conceptual proposal in the follow up workshop
- c. Designed agenda and organized the follow up workshop

The follow up program was organized in Kathmandu on October 14, 2006 following the two main work shops with two objectives: (a) to look into the skills development on writing

investigative reports and improve the areas needed, (b) add premium brand to the skills through fellowship process.

There were 21 journalists (see Appendix C), who submitted a topic, published or unpublished, for investigative report and attended the follow up workshop. Each participant presented their reports within 10 minutes and the resource persons gave immediate feedback. The journalist participants found this process very effective in terms of mirroring their strengths and areas to improve their report writing skills. Moreover, the follow up workshop gave the journalist participants an opportunity to openly discuss about the limitations and difficulties they had to face in writing an investigative report against corruption.

The resource persons for further development in writing a report identified the following areas:

- The reporters need to change their thinking that facts are not only news but detail investigation is the essence. The overall initiation taken by the individual participant in writing an investigative report was very much encouraging.
- There is still some mismatch between the presentation and language of the investigative reports. Reports need to be edited by someone before publishing.
- The investigative reports should be clear on both the central purpose of the report and identification of the subject. In the same fashion, headline and theme should be understandable.
- It was encouraging that some journalists tried to be a “case” by themselves for the investigation purpose. There is no right or wrong of being such a “case” as it is the situational and individual choice.
- Timely prevention of corruption is the main purpose of the investigation. It is really a challenging job to control corruption, which seems to be like “finding the black cat in a dark room” because it is an organized crime with a joint effort of various actors. Despite time, space and resource constraints, we need to have courage, patience, and continuous efforts for achieving our aims.
- The styles of writing in relation to language and presentation skills were discussed to reinforce the best practices. The use of adjective and selection of words are the main skills still to be improved by the journalist participants.
- Reporters should use exact figures with evidence. For instance dozen is not used for living things.
- To make a clear distinction between news and views is very important.

- Based on the defined criteria the selection committee of resource persons in consultation with ARD has decided to provide the fellowship program to the participants and their instructors assigned to support them on their need felt areas (see Appendix D).

8. Evaluation by Participants

Participants both in Pokhara and Godawari found the workshops as an eye opener to investigative journalism against corruption and have more expectations to enhance in-depth knowledge, arts and skills on it. Because of the new and interesting topic relevant to them all participants were encouraged to set their goals and firmly committed to apply the tools and techniques in investigating corruption, and arts and skills in writing the report.

On an average they found the topics, presentation style of the resource persons, organization of the workshop good. The whole course as they assessed at the end of the workshop was very useful and practical for the participants to develop their professional career in investigative journalism. However, they found the 4-day workshop short and were more enthusiastic to spend more days on the topic and have more practices mainly on reporting skill.

9. Budget

A total of NRs 545,000.00 was the agreement amount allocated for T&D Centre under Purchase Order No. 0081 to pay resource person's fees and T&D facilitation, administration and report presentation. The amount was spent for the purpose of need assessment, and designing and delivery of the agenda in two workshops.

10. Conclusion

Both of the workshops were successfully completed in terms of applying training modality, content delivery and learning attitude demonstrated by the participants to bring changes into their media of investigative journalism. In this sense, the participants as a learning processes who have strongly recommended such type of training to be continued in one or another way internalized the workshops.

Based on the follow up criteria, twenty-one participants (33 % female participants) who completed writing reportage against anti-corruption attended the follow up workshop and shared their learning.

All the participants presented their proposals for fellowship program, which is being selected by the committee against the interest, commitment and professionalism to be developed by the proposal presenter.

11. Recommendation

We recommend that:

- Role of key actors be defined from the very beginning.
- Field level needs of participants be assessed before the design of the actual workshop.
- An opportunity to apply for selection of participants be given to the journalists, not calling them as invitees only.
- The whole efforts are focused on developing commitment, initiation, practice and sustainability of the skills developed by the participants.
- ARD to train other journalists on IJ to meet the acute need existing all over the country.

12. T&D, as facilitators concludes the workshop findings in the graph below.

