



The Centre for Democratic Institutions

INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM COURSE FOR INDONESIA

9-20 June 2003

Murdoch University, Perth, WA

In response to the needs generated by the situation of media openness in Indonesia, Murdoch University, the Australia Indonesia Institute and the Centre for Democratic Institutions developed an Investigative Journalism Course. The course was designed specifically for Indonesian journalists and focused on the skills required for effective investigative reporting. CDI selected eight journalists to attend the course which was conducted from 9-20 June 2003. The course was directed by Professor Gail Phillips and conducted through the School of Media and Communication and Culture and the Asia Research Centre at Murdoch University.

Background

The collapse of the Suharto regime in 1997 ended an era of government censorship and allowed Indonesian journalists to work within a 'free press'. This was not, however, the end of the struggle for freedom of expression. The end of censorship does not necessarily result in objective and critical reporting and the Indonesian media is still falling short of the needs of a democratic society.

Indonesian media practitioners often face problems of partisanship and murky ethics in their reporting. Journalists are sometimes paid to publish a particular stakeholder's viewpoint. Commonly, due to the absence of formal training, journalists lack the necessary skills to report effectively and critically. It is therefore important not only to secure the rules that promote a free media, but to follow this through with the institutional support and formal training that will enable journalists to report effectively within a free media environment.

Participants

The selection of participants was undertaken through a process of mentors. CDI invited the following mentors to bring the course to the attention of promising journalists who then applied to CDI:

1. Aristides Katoppo, Chief Editor, *Sinar Harapan*
2. Andreas Harsono, Chief Editor, *Pantau Magazine*
3. Goenawan Mohamad, Senior Editor, *Koran Tempo* and *Tempo Magazine*

4. Bambang Harymurti, Chief Editor, *Koran Tempo* and *Tempo Magazine*
5. Lukas Luwarso, Executive Director, *Dewan Pers*
6. Atmakusumah Astraatmadja, Director, *Dewan Pers*

CDI selected participants whose previous publications and experience demonstrated a commitment to quality journalism:

1. Ms Chik Rini, Journalist, *Analisa Daily*
2. Mr Akuat Supriyanto, Announcer and Reporter, *Spirit in the Morning*
3. Mr Nezar Patria, Editor Staff, Investigation Desk, *Tempo Newsweekly Magazine*
4. Mrs Rita Widiadana, Journalist, *The Jakarta Post*
5. Mrs Brigitta Isworo Laksmi, Chief Bureau, *Kompas Morning Daily*
6. Mr Refliani, Journalist, *Media Indonesia*
7. Ms Fransisca Ria Susanti, Editor, *Sinar Harapan*
8. Mr Iwan Setiawan, Journalist, *Tempo Weekly News Magazine*

Course Aims and Approach

The course content was designed by Professor Gail Phillips, Steve Tanner and Chris Smyth from Murdoch University who provided the continuity needed to pull the various strands together. For many of the journalists attending the course, investigative journalism is a high risk activity. Course coordinators were therefore conscious of the fact that practising what they preached from within the safe shores of Australia could have serious consequences for the Indonesian journalists back home. It was intended that the course experience would extend beyond the traditional teacher/learner paradigm into a more ‘community of practice’ model, whereby journalists could learn from each other’s practice and build networks and support structures that would endure beyond the course. The three main aims of the course were:

1. to provide the Indonesian journalists with practical forensic skills to improve their researching and reporting techniques in the context of investigative journalism;
2. to give the Indonesian journalists the opportunity to meet with and learn from practising journalists in Australia to help encourage international networking and mentoring;
3. to encourage the Indonesian journalists to learn from each other’s experiences which might translate into improved networking and mentoring amongst journalists in Indonesia.

Training

Hands-on training was provided in database searching and spreadsheet analysis. These are skills which Indonesian journalists rarely have the opportunity to acquire during their daily routine but which have an immediate impact on the nature and quality of reportage. Inevitably, the participants found this the most challenging part of the course.

Meeting Practicing Journalists

Perth is fortunate to have a group of investigative journalists with national and international reputations who conducted sessions at Murdoch University and hosted visits at their places of employment. This provided the opportunity for Australian and Indonesian journalists to learn from each other through the mutual sharing of information and experiences. The following local journalists contributed to the course, either through leading sessions at Murdoch University or through hosting visits to their workplace:

Martin Saxon, Senior Journalist, *Sunday Times*
Estelle Blackburn, Investigative Journalist and author
Neale Prior, Finance Reporter, *The West Australian*
PT Singam, Foreign Editor, *The West Australian*
Pam Casellas, leader writer, *The West Australian*
Zoltan Kovaks, leader writer, *The West Australian*
Andre Malan, Senior Reporter, columnist, *The West Australian*
Colleen Egan, Reporter, *The Australian*
Philippa O'Donnell, Program Director, *720 ABC Perth*

Developing Networks

The visit by Bill Birnbauer, an investigative journalist from *The Age* newspaper, provided the opportunity for participants not only to meet one of the most experienced Australian practitioners of investigative journalism, but also to access a network of international journalists working under the umbrella of the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ) project. Similarly Estelle Blackburn is linked with the International Innocence Project which is a network of journalists working around the world to assist people who have been wrongfully convicted and sentenced to prison.

Johan Lidberg, the presenter of the Freedom of Information session was a journalist based at Murdoch University who is doing a comparative study of Freedom of Information regimes and the impact on journalism practice. Participants in the course consented to be part of the study. This will be another vehicle for maintaining ongoing links.

Evaluation

The most valuable sessions identified by the participants were the session by Estelle Blackburn, the session by Bill Birnbauer, the Access database training, the Freedom of Information as a journalistic tool session and the Writing Up Your Research session.

The group noted the importance of the course in targeting, as it did, talented up-and-coming journalists who were mid-way between novice journalists and those who are in the later stage of their career. It was believed that this cohort would derive the greatest long-term benefit from training of this kind.

Suggestions for future courses focused on the inclusion of more practical sessions, practical sessions offered in less intensive slabs and more interaction with local

journalists. The participants also thought further in-country training based on Indonesian case studies would take participants to another level and enable them to become trainers in their own right, allowing good investigative techniques to become embedded in the domestic journalistic practice.

Outcomes

The skills developed and knowledge learned during the course are such that they are able to be implemented immediately and impact directly on the ability of the journalists to conduct investigative reporting more effectively. It is hoped that the relevance and value of the course will extend beyond this particular group of journalists through more broadly improving the quality and quantity of investigative reportage in Indonesia.

Two participants in the course recently conducted an investigation into the Indonesian government's purchase of Russian Sukhoi fighter planes. Controversy surrounds the government purchasing process which has been criticised as unlawful by critics. The media is demanding greater government accountability. In tracing the irregularities and inconsistencies of the government purchasing process these journalists commented that the investigative course has enhanced their ability to deal with the issues. For reporting on this case visit the *Tempo Weekly* website at: www.tempo.co.id , www.tempointeractive.com.

Participants saw the potential for wide ranging benefits through their own capacity to become trainers for their less experienced peers in Indonesia. Most participants expressed an interest in acting in a training role and therefore collected information and purchased books from Murdoch University to aid the development of investigative skills of their colleagues back home. As many of these resources are unavailable or out dated in Indonesia, this course provided an opportunity for Indonesian journalists to access relevant and up to date investigative reporting resources.

Participants and instructors alike also recognised the potential for more wide-ranging benefits through the establishment of international and national links particularly between Australian and Indonesian journalists and institutions. The course saw the development of collaboration between Australian and Indonesian journalists and enthusiasm for maintaining this support network, at both the domestic and the international levels. To facilitate this it is hoped that web networking will be established to sustain future collaborations on stories as well as online discussions on key challenges in modern-day journalism.

The School of Media and Communication and Culture at Murdoch University is establishing a Journalism and Justice online network group linking journalists worldwide. The contacts that have been established as a result of this course will hopefully result in future collaborations on stories involving teams of Indonesian and Australian journalists.

More specifically, the investigative journalism course has assisted two participants involved in developing a Centre for Indonesia Investigative Journalism. This Centre is a

new initiative established under the Alliance of Independent Journalism and predominantly funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA). The participants believe that the investigative skills they have developed during the course will assist them in enhancing the effectiveness of their investigative reporting within the Centre. The course was also a valuable opportunity to establish international and national links and network with those interested in becoming involved in the development of the Centre.

Participants were dedicated and engaged throughout the course and gave positive feedback on its relevance and value to their work as journalists in Indonesia. Their feedback reinforced that the project targeted a need within the Indonesian media for institutional support and formal training to improve investigative skills and reporting. CDI therefore hopes to conduct an Indonesian Investigative Journalism Course again in 2004.

**Indonesian Investigative Journalism Course Program
9-20 June, 2003**

WEEK ONE

Monday 9 Jun,

Murdoch University

- Lecture: Issues of corruption;
- Lecture: Introduction to Investigative Reporting;
- Lecture: Accessing Materials;
- Guest lecturers: Estelle Blackburn, Investigative Reporter and Grant Stone, Murdoch University Senior Librarian.

Tuesday 10 June

Murdoch University

- Lecture and case study: Planning a Journalist's Story;
- Lecture: Accessing Information Using the Worldwide Web.

Wednesday 11 June

Murdoch University

- Lecture: The International Dimension by Bill Birnlauer, Associate Editor , *The Age*
- Hypothetical exercises based on Bill Birnlauer's talk.

Thursday 12 June

Murdoch University

- Lecture: Introduction to Financial Statements by Mr Patrick Hoiberg, Immediate Past President, Institute of Chartered Accountants;
- Lecture: Reading Company Reports and Balance Sheets.

Friday 13 June

Murdoch University

- Lecture: Understanding Databases and Manipulating Data using Microsoft Excel and Microsoft Access by Samantha Jacobs, *Simply Better Training*.

WEEK TWO

Monday 16 June

Murdoch University and the Royal Commission of Police Corruption

- Continuation of understanding databases;
- Visit to the Royal Commission on Police Corruption;
- Lecture: The Royal Commission and other Commissions of Inquiry delivered by Mr Peter Hastings, QC, Chief Counsel Assisting the Commission and Mr Luke Morfesse, Chief of Staff WAN Reporting Team.

Tuesday 17 June

Murdoch University

- Lecture: The Freedom of Information by Johan Lidberg, POI Expert, Lecturer in Radio Journalism, Murdoch University;

- Lecture: Sources and Interviewing Techniques Colleen Egan, *The Australian*.

Wednesday 18 June

Visit to West Australian Newspapers

- Lecture: Working with the Regulators by Neale Prior, Senior Finance Reporter, *The West Australian*;
- Lecture: Legal and Ethical Issues in Investigative Journalism;
- Lecture: The Minister and their Minders- Tricks of the Trade.

Thursday 19 June

Murdoch University and Parliament House

- Lecture: Investigative Techniques and Piecing Together the Story by Martin Saxon, from *Sunday Times*;
- Round table forum on current events in Indonesia and the role of the media with Indonesian journalists and academics from the Asia Research Centre, The School of Asian Studies, & The School of Media, Communication and Culture;
- Visit to the Perth Parliament House to observe question time and tour of the House of Representatives and the Senate.

Friday 20 June

Murdoch University and ABC Radio Station

- Visit to Perth ABC radio studio;
- Lecture: Writing up your Research;
- Lecture: Summary on the two week course.