



## **The Centre for Democratic Institutions**

### **PNG ELECTION REPORTING WORKSHOP PORT MORESBY 18-22 MARCH 2002**

#### **Introduction**

Building on the CDI Public Affairs Reporting Workshop held in November 2001, twenty-five PNG journalists came together at the week-long PNG Election Reporting Workshop in Port Moresby in March 2002, to discuss strategies for covering the national elections and rehearsing news story approaches.

The workshop was targeted specifically at improving news coverage of the elections by promoting a more sustained and professional approach to handling election news and issues, with the broader goal of contributing to the improved governance of Papua New Guinea.

This workshop was facilitated by the Centre for Democratic Institutions and the Centre for International Journalism (CIJ) at the University of Queensland. The host organisation was the PNG Media Council.

The instructors were Dr Stephen Tanner, of the CIJ, Sean Dorney, Pacific Correspondent for Radio Australia and Francis Damien (PNG counterpart trainer).

Major speakers were the editor of the Post Courier, Oseah Philemon, and the managing director of the Post Courier, Bob Howarth, who generously gave a detailed presentation on how the newspaper planned to handle its election coverage. This was very well received by participants.

The full-time journalist participants were:

Name	Organization	Region	Gender
Kamo Kini	FM Morobe	(Lae)	
Barthy Ewada	NBC	(Popondetta)	
Steven Haroharo	NBC	(Kerema)	
Michael Asagoni	NBC	(POM)	
Lisa Pagelio	NBC	(POM)	
Estella Cheung	UPNG	(POM)	
Joycelyn Giumala	UPNG	(POM)	
Frank Asaeli	UPNG	(POM)	

Clifford Faik	UPNG	(POM)
Wanita Wakus	UPNG	(POM)
Firmin Nanol	Yumi FM	(POM)
Therese Natera	Nau FM	(POM)
Ilan Kaprangi	EM-TV	(POM)
Sophia Magi	EM-TV	(POM)
Mataria Rupa	FM 100	(POM)
John Apami	National	(POM)
Br.Aloisus Aisi	Independent	(POM)
Neville Choi	Independent	(POM)
Alison Anis	Wantok	(POM)
Peter Niesi	Post Courier	(POM)
Gabriel Paite	Post Courier	(POM)
Robyn Sela	Post Courier	(POM)
Gorethy Kenneth	Post Courier	(POM)
Eric Kone	Post Courier	(POM)
Elizabeth Sasere	Post Courier	(Rabaul)

Several other journalists attended for one or two sessions, and five journalism students from the University of Papua New Guinea also attended the program.

From the feedback received from participants, the workshop was an outstanding success. The proposal was to provide journalists and journalism students with insights into election reporting strategies that would enable them to cover the forthcoming campaign. Given the gap between PNG elections, many of the journalists, even those with considerable experience, had not covered a campaign before, so the workshop was very timely.

The aim of the workshop was to combine the experience of the presenters, with that of the local journalist-participants who covered the previous campaign. This worked particularly well. Despite the acknowledgement between participants that there would be competition between their various organisations once the election commenced, the participants were keen to work together to improve the skills base across media organisations.

The workshop involved a combination of lecture sessions, groups exercises and discussions.

### **Topics covered included**

#### 1: Journalists and politics

- (stories from the campaign trail)
  - a broad view
  - the PNG retrospective)

#### 2: Understanding election campaigns

- (stories from the campaign trail)
  - The Australian experience
  - The PNG experience.

#### 3: Planning for the campaign

- (stories from the campaign trail)
  - who to follow and when
  - sharing information/stories

#### 4: Generating story ideas

- (stories from the campaign trail)
  - the number of candidates seeking election (and how that compares with past campaigns; parties registered; voters enrolled, explaining how the voting system works etc.
- (stories from the campaign trail)
  - pic and colour stories (oldest voter, political dynasties, people refusing to vote etc)
  - campaign promises
  - launches and policy announcements
  - broken promises
- (researching the story)
  - where do you get the information from (MPs, minders, chief electoral officer, local party officials)

#### 5: Beware the manipulators

- strategies politicians and their minders use in trying to manipulate journalists

#### 6: Looking out for corruption

- covering the corrupt politicians
- minding your back

#### 7: Public opinion polling

- (how to conduct your own poll)
- (interpreting the poll data)

#### 8: Ethical and legal matters

##### **Practical sessions**

Each day a series of practical sessions was held in the *Post Courier* training room. The *Post-Courier* had set up computers for use in the workshop. Practical sessions included:

- a brainstorming session on story ideas
- writing up candidate profiles
- policy launches
- press conferences
- designing opinion polls
- interpreting opinion poll data
- writing up election results

Much of the information for these exercises was drawn from a mock campaign launch/press conference.

Two short videos were also shown:

- an SBS documentary on the 1996 Australian federal campaign which highlighted how politicians and their minders sought to manipulate journalists
- an ABC piece by Sean Dorney on the last PNG election.

Both were well received by participants.

### **Difficulties**

The only problems experienced by the facilitators were that some local speakers the host organisation had asked to attend kept postponing their sessions and then did not turn up. They included a politician and representatives of the Electoral Commission. However, given a very full teaching program, the breadth of experience of the three instructors, and the excellent inputs of other speakers, this was not a serious issue.

### **Highlights**

The involvement of Sean Dorney in the program was an inspired idea. He was able to provide insights into the PNG political scene that only one or two of the participants could match.

As indicated above, the mix of participants was very good. The younger journalists and journalism students were able to use the workshop as a networking exercise. In the group exercises it was structured to ensure there was a mix of experience in all teams. It was clear the older journalists took on a mentoring role and encouraged the younger journalists and students to actively participate in group discussions (and in the writing up of group tasks).

Participants have been advised that if they want advice on story ideas or approaches during the forthcoming campaign they should feel free to contact the main facilitator Dr Stephen Tanner.

The PNG Media Council was very helpful and supportive of the whole exercise.

### **Conclusion and follow-up**

The positive consensus following the workshop suggested the workshop had been a resounding success and it was felt that there was scope for other workshops that will build on and consolidate the improvement achieved in this program, and the November 2001 workshop conducted by CDI and the CIJ.

One way to proceed would be to conduct a review of actual news coverage of the elections and to use this to provide a practical information base for a follow-up workshop that would seek to identify directions and needs for future election coverage and political news coverage generally.

## PNG Election Reporting Workshop

### PROGRAM

Day 1 - Monday	
Session 1	<p>Introduction (Dr Stephen Tanner, Centre for International Journalism, University of Qld).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Media and democracy</li> <li>- The purpose of elections</li> </ul> <p>A PNG retrospective (Sean Dorney, Radio Australia), including video.</p>
Session 2	<p><b><i>Discussion of likely issues, and how to plan for forthcoming campaign.</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Writing up stories in advance;</li> <li>- Candidate and party profiles;</li> <li>- Policies/announcements/the polling period</li> </ul>
Day 2 - Tuesday	
Session 1	<p><b>Understanding the mechanics of elections</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Chief Electoral Commissioner, PNG</li> <li>- Electoral Commission's PR manager from previous election (Tarcisius Bobola)</li> <li>- PM's press secretary (Mark Davis) To discuss changes to the Constitution that increases the importance of political parties.</li> </ul> <p>(to be conducted in a press conference format)</p>
Session 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Practicum – at <i>Post Courier</i></li> <li>- Writing stories from morning press conferences</li> </ul>
Day 3 - Wednesday	
Session 1	<p><b>The Editor's perspective – various views</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Bob Howarth, <i>Post Courier</i></li> <li>- Joseph Eladona, former editor of NBC</li> <li>- Peter Aitsi, NAU FM</li> <li>- Oseah Philemon</li> </ul>
-Session 2	<p><b>Elections and corruption</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the international perspective (Stephen Tanner)</li> <li>- the PNG perspective (Sean Dorney)</li> <li>- other ethical issues (balance, fairness, objectivity)</li> </ul>
Day 4 - Thursday	
Session 1	<p><b>Building the relationship</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- prominent politician speaks on the role of the media (Bernard Narakobi, Speaker of the Parliament)</li> <li>- mock campaign launch (John Pasca, union leader)</li> </ul>
Session 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Prac session at the Post Courier (focusing on Narakobi and Pasca presentations)</li> <li>- Tricks of the trade (manipulative politicians)</li> <li>-</li> </ul>
Day 5 - Friday	
Session 1	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>ON THE CAMPAIGN TRAIL</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- video (SBS on 1996 Australian federal election)</li> </ul> <p><b><i>Elections and opinion polling</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Michael Mel, local polling expert.</li> <li>- Session on interpreting and writing up opinion poll results</li> </ul>
Session 2	Wrap up and conclusion