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Workshop Report

By

Victor Valbuena
This report covers the implementation of the last Workshop on Management of Small Newspapers in a series of four programmes covered by grants from the Communication Assistance Foundation in The Netherlands.

The first three workshops were all held in Kathmandu: 1-6 March 1987; 13-18 September 1987; and 16-21 December 1991. The first workshop included participants from all over Nepal; the second concentrated on participants from the eastern part of the country. The third programme invited participants from the Kathmandu Valley, particularly editors and publishers of new papers and magazines established after the pro-democracy movement.

The final workshop was held in Tansen, Palpa, a hill station town in Western Nepal. (The town is 10 hours away from Kathmandu, by public bus.) Participants also came from the western parts of the country.

The programme was conducted primarily in Nepali. Two resource persons spoke in English but majority of the participants could understand the language. To ensure that everybody comprehended the presentations in English, however, summary translations and interpretations were given in Nepali. Reading handouts in Nepali were also given to the participants.

All four workshops were organized by AMIC in collaboration with the Nepal Press Institute (NPI). Local arrangements in Tansen were arranged by Mr. Binaya Kumar Kasaju, an "alumnus" of the first (1988) workshop in Kathmandu.

WORKSHOP OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the workshop series were:

1. To upgrade the knowledge and skills of community newspaper publishers, editors and reporters on editorial management, newspaper organization, and financial management in order to increase the economic viability of small newspapers;

2. To upgrade their skills in editorial management in order to improve the quality of news coverage and reporting in community newspapers, and promote the pluriformity of news and ideas.
SUMMARY OF WORKSHOP PROCEEDINGS

Thirteen community newspaper publishers, editors and reporters participated in the Workshop on Management of Small Newspapers held in Tansen, Palpa, a hill-station in western Nepal on 18-22 May 1992. Fifteen had originally signed up for the course but two were not able to make it. One was an editor contesting a mayor's post in the local elections, the campaign period for which coincided with the dates of the programme.

Majority of the participants were young writers and editors representing Nepali-language daily and weekly newspapers publishing out of the main district/town centres of Bhairahawa, Butwal, Palpa, and Pokhara in western Nepal. Two represented a pilot development-oriented weekly newsmagazine due to come out with its initial issue soon. One participant was the district correspondent of the national news agency. All were males.

Following are the names and designations of the participants:

1. Tej Bahadur Ale
   Writer-Compositor
   Satya Samachar Saptahik
   Tansen, Palpa

2. Shalik Ram Bajade
   Legal Adviser/Writer
   Chautari Daily
   Butwal

3. Iswor Prasad B. Bhattarai
   Writer-Reporter
   Janakranti Weekly
   Pokhara

4. Bal Krishna Chapagai
   Editor
   Dainik Janashangharsh
   Butwal

5. Jhependra Prasad Gahire
   District Correspondent
   Rastriya Samachar Samiti
   (National News Agency)

6. Laxmi Nath Gnyawale
   Editor-Publisher
   Janta Weekly
   Siddharnagar

7. Mahamuni Hamal
   Reporter
   Panjabeshar Weekly
   Pokhara

8. Ram Prasad Khanal
   Reporter
   Janata Weekly
   Butwal/Kathmandu

9. Basant Pokharel
   Editor
   Sandesh Daily
   Bhairahawa

10. Shashi Dar Sharma
    Reporter
    Dainik Janashangharsh
    Butwal

11. Meg Raj Sharma
    Editor
    Satya Weekly
    Palpa

12. Man Mohan Shrestha
    Editor
    Rural Development
    Palpa

13. Tarak Jung Thapa
    Reporter
    Rural Development
    Palpa
The programme consisted of lecture-discussions, workshops, video presentations and practical exercises on newspaper organization and management, newspaper economics and financial management, marketing and promotions, advertising, circulation and distribution, revenue-generating strategies, printing technology options for small newspapers, news writing, headline and caption writing, and newspaper design and lay-out.

The first three workshops were 6-day programmes. The last programme was trimmed down to five days, due primarily to cost factors. Fuel and utility costs have recently soared in Nepal, resulting in increased transportation, hotel and food costs. Funds provided by the CAF grant would not have been enough to cover workshop expenses.

However, reduction in the number of days did not mean a watered-down version of the first three workshops. The same essential subject matters were taken up, but the longer discussion on computers in the newsroom and the demonstration on desktop publishing were eliminated as they were deemed irrelevant to the economic reality of the newspapers in Western Nepal. Also, some of the afternoon sessions were extended to early evening hours to accommodate discussions and exercises.

18 May 1992

Opening Session... Mr. Binaya Kumar Kasaju, Editor of Sat Samachar Saptahik, the lone newspaper in Tansen, welcomed the participants and expressed his elation at having the workshop in his town. He recounted the benefits he gained from his participation in the first workshop held in Kathmandu and wished that the present participants would also find the workshop useful in their work.

Mr. Gopal Das Shrestha, as Chairman of the Nepal Press Institute, also welcomed the participants and expressed his hope that they would participate actively in the discussions and practical exercises.

Dr. Victor T. Valbuena, Head of AMIC's Seminars and Institutional Development Programme, addressed the group on behalf of AMIC and gave a brief orientation on the programme. Following this, the participants took turns in introducing themselves.

After the opening tea, Mr. P. Kharel, Executive Editor The Rising Nepal and Lecturer, Nepal Press Institute, started working sessions with his presentation on "Small Newspapers Nepal: Status, Problems and Prospects". Mr. Kharel cited the poor quality of newspaper reporting, underdeveloped circulation, inadequate training of publishers, editors and reporters as the problems. He was positive about the increasing opportunity for training and potential for developing a news reporting paper among small newspapers in the various regions of Nepal.
After lunch, Mr. Gopal Das Shrestha, in his capacity as Editor-Publisher of *The Commoner*, the oldest English-language newspaper in Nepal, talked about "The Importance of Management in Small Newspapers: Principles and Practices". Mr. Shrestha candidly admitted that he had to learn newspaper management on the job. He said that due to exceedingly different working environments between the Western countries and Nepal, it was necessary to make adjustments in management practices. Many Western newspapers are run as big operations; in Nepal, many small newspapers are one-man to two-men operations, or as family enterprise. He recounted how simple computer technology has helped him to streamline some of his editorial management functions.

19 May 1992

The morning session was devoted to a presentation on "Printing Technology: Options for Small Newspapers" by Mr. Thomas Jacob, AMIC/IFRA Press Development Consultant. Mr. Jacob discussed the possible range of printing options for small newspaper operations and gave advice to individual publishers and editors. Mr. Jacob was formerly Technical Manager of the Mathrubuni newspaper group in India.

After Mr. Jacob's presentation, computer possibilities for data-gathering, processing and editing were demonstrated, using a small lap-top computer.

The afternoon session was focused on the topics of newspaper organization and newspaper economics. Mr. Mukunda Pradhan, Planning and Financial Development Manager, Gorkhapatra Corporation and Consultant, Ministry of Industry, discussed principles and practice of newspaper organization and management, and strategies for maximising efficiency and productivity in newspaper operations. He demonstrated how newspapers should calculate for cost factors, conduct management inventory, plan for break-even and profitability levels, and respond to economic pressures.

After the lecture-discussions, Mr. Pradhan conducted a practical exercise on identifying costs factors in small newspapers. The objective of the exercise was to make the participants conscious of the cost and expense centres in their publishing operations, and how they can balance these to promote viability and prevent excessive losses.

20 May 1992

The morning session was devoted to presentations cum discussions on "Marketing and Revenue-Earning Strategies for Small Newspapers". Dr. Victor Valbuena discussed the principles and process of marketing and their applications to newspapers. He emphasised that editors should treat their newspapers or magazines as products that must be marketed or "sold" in terms of the quality of news and information in their pages, the right price that readers would perceive as "value for money", the packaging or make-up of the publication, the publication's position vis-a-
vis other similar materials, and appropriate distribution channels. He also illustrated how small newspapers can do simple and inexpensive market research to improve quality and circulation.

After the discussions, the participants went through an exercise in identifying the target audiences of the participating newspapers. The results were fed back and discussed with the group. The group were encouraged to expand their target markets to include not only politicians and their followers, but also women, local businessmen, and students, among others.

Video. Shortly after lunch, a video presentation on computerization of editorial and distribution management was shown. This was to have been presented after the session on printing technology, but it could not be done due to some technical problems with the VCR machine.

During the afternoon session, Dr. Valbuena tackled the subject of "Newspaper Circulation and Promotion". He enumerated and illustrated various strategies for developing newspaper readership and circulation, including "free trials", tie-ups with literacy programmes, contests and product promotions, public relations, etc. He also engaged the participants in some brainstorming on how they could try some of the strategies listed.

21 May 1992

Dr. Valbuena took on the morning session to discuss the subject of newspaper advertising and present strategies for developing classified, display special supplement advertising for small newspapers. He showed examples from various newspapers in both developed and underdeveloped countries in Asia. He asked the participants to look at their own publications and examine the possibilities for advertising, in order to improve the financial viability of their papers.

Story-Generation / Newswriting Exercise. In the afternoon, Mr. Kasaju and Dr. Valbuena led the participants in a discussion on various stories that local newspapers could include in their coverage. Both emphasized the need to go beyond purely political news reporting, the staple in local newspapers. Later, Mr. P.Kharel conducted a newswriting exercise among the participants. The written exercise were to be used as inputs to the session on "Newswriting Structure" to be held the following morning.

22 May 1992

For the first part of the morning session, Mr. Gokhul Pokharel, formerly a Journalist with The Rising Nepal and now a practising Communication Consultant, discussed the need for identifying and writing for the target audience of the newspaper. He emphasized the need for reaching out to a wide readership through varied reading fare, including national and local developments to ensure a more informed audience.
The second part was devoted to the subject of newswriting. Using the written exercises of the participants, Mr. Pokharel illustrated the do's and don't's of good newswriting. Each written exercise was reviewed by Mr. Pokharel and criticized constructively.

In the afternoon, Pro. Lal Deosa Rai, Head of the Journalism Department, Trivubhan University lectured on and illustrated the subjects "Headlines and Illustrations" and "Newspaper Design and Layout". Using the copies of their newspapers brought by the participants, Pro. Rai pointed out the strengths and weaknesses of each publication and suggested how they may be improved. Later, he gave the participants a practical exercise in headline writing and page make-up. These outputs were later returned, with critical comments and suggestions for improvements.

Participant Evaluation. While Prof. Rai was correcting the workshop exercises, Mr. Kharel and Dr. Valbuena conducted an evaluation of the workshop among the participants. Following is a summary of this evaluation:

All the participants said they found the workshop good and relevant to their work as editors/journalists.

They thought that the resource persons were very good; well-prepared. However, they felt that some of the examples and case illustrations were not very relevant to the economic conditions in the rural districts of Nepal. They were more applicable to big and modern newspapers in city areas.

They said that the sessions on newspaper management and newspaper economics were very helpful. They said they liked the exercise but would have wanted longer sessions on how to analyze costs and plan newspaper expenses.

They found the presentations on advertising and marketing, and circulation and promotions, clear and easy enough to understand even as these were made in English. The summary translations in Nepali helped to reinforce the knowledge gained.

The session on printing technology was interesting and educational but majority found it too technical to be fully understood and appreciated. It did not help that the planned accompanying audio-visual support did not materialize due to the unavailability of a projector in Tansen.

The participants found the practical exercises on newswriting, headline and caption writing, page make-up and layout very, very helpful. (It turned out that majority of the participants have not had any previous training in news reporting and editorial management.) The participants singled out the practical sessions of Prof. Rai as the most informative and useful in their work.
They suggested the following:

1. Follow-up training, with emphasis on editorial management;

2. On-site consultancy training for the newspapers and their staff in the region so that inputs are more focused;

3. Holding similar training programmes in other regions of Nepal, to accommodate other local newspapers, but increasing the period to two weeks to maximize training impact;

4. Designing a training programme with the locally available editorial manpower and printing resources in mind;

5. Designing a 15-day, two-hour daily programme for editors publishing in contiguous areas;

6. Technical workshop for compositors, printers, and pressmen; and

7. More practicum-oriented training.

Closing Session. After the evaluation and feedback session on Prof. Rai's exercises, the closing session was held. Mr. Kharel summarized the workshop activities while Dr. Valbuena thanked the workshop supporters, organizers, resource persons and participants. He presented each participant with a copy of the book *Newspaper Management in the New Multi-Media Age*, an MIC publication. Mr. Gokhul Pokharel, in his capacity as Member-Secretary of the Nepal Press Institute, also delivered closing remarks and the vote of thanks.

WORKSHOP MANAGEMENT

Mr. P. Kharel, NPI and Dr. Victor T. Valbuena, AMIC served as Co-Workshop Coordinators. Mr. Kharel also acted as the principal discussion facilitator.

Mr. Binaya Kumar Kasaju and two other staff members of the Nepal Press Institute, Messrs. Amrit Neupane and Saroj Koirala, assisted as members of the Workshop Secretariat.

CONCLUSION

The evaluation made by the participants seem to indicate that the workshop was able to meet their expectations. In that sense, the workshop was a success.
The workshop participants constituted a small group. This allowed for maximum interaction between participants and resource persons, and among participants. The participants were very eager to learn, raising questions with the resource persons and arguing points among themselves.

The level of interest was high throughout the five-day duration of the programme. This could be illustrated by several participants who had to take two-hour bus rides and 35-minute hill treks every morning to make it to the workshop on time. The same people also had to trek downhill and hitch rides for home on passing cargo trucks. By the time the workshop programme ended every afternoon, the last bus to the next town would have left.

They were offered accommodations near the workshop venue but declined, saying that they had to return to their places in order to put their next day's newspaper edition to bed.

In daily post-workshop conversations, the participants also expressed to the organizers their appreciation for conducting the workshop in the region, and reiterated their request for follow-up training, particularly in editorial management. Likewise, they also reiterated their desire to have, if possible, a roving consultant-trainor, who can visit their papers and conduct on-site training programmes to improve their management and editorial operations. Perhaps the Communication Assistance Foundation could be approached to support this kind of training activity.
THE VENUE OF THE WORKSHOP

G.D. SHRESTHA, BINAYA K, KASAJU, THOMAS JACOB AND P. KHAREL AT OPENING
WORKSHOP COORDINATOR,
MR P KHAREL, EXECUTIVE EDITOR,
THE RISING NEPAL, ADDRESSES THE PARTICIPANTS

MR G.D. SHRESTHA, EDITOR - PUBLISHER OF THE COMMONER, DISCUSSES NEWSPAPER MANAGEMENT PRACTICES.
WORKSHOP SESSION ON PRINTING TECHNOLOGY

MR. THOMAS JACOB HOLDS UP EXAMPLE OF DTP OUTPUT
MR M PRADHAN, PLANNING AND FINANCIAL DEVELOPMENT
THE RISING NEPAL, TALKS ABOUT NEWSPAPER ECONOMICS.
MR P. KHEREL SUMMARISES THE MARKETING PROCESS IN NEPALI.

DR VICTOR VALBUENA EXPLAINS NEWSPAPER MARKETING STRATEGIES.
PROFESSOR L.D. RAI HOLDS UP CASE EXAMPLE ON LAYOUT.

PARTICIPANTS WORK ON THEIR PRACTICAL EXERCISES.
PARTICIPANTS HUDDLE FOR A SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION.

A PARTICIPANT RAISES AN ISSUE ON NEWS DEVELOPMENT.