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Summary Report

By

Virgilio Labrador
MANUSHI-AMIC Workshop on Editorial Management
for Women Journalists

December 7 - 14, 1994
Kathmandu, NEPAL

Prepared by

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WORKSHOP ON "EDITORIAL MANAGEMENT FOR SENIOR WOMEN JOURNALISTS"

7-14 December 1994
Kathmandu, Nepal

SUMMARY REPORT

Introduction

This report summarizes the proceedings of the workshop on "Editorial Management for Senior Women Journalists" held in Kathmandu from 7-14 December 1994. The seminar was organized by the Asian Mass Communication Research and Information Centre (AMIC) and MANUSHI, a non-governmental women's organisation based in Nepal with the support of the Communication Assistance Foundation. The Kathmandu workshop was the third in a series of four workshops on editorial management for women journalists in South and Southeast Asia organised by AMIC as part of a two-year programme started in 1993.

Twenty-five editors, sub-editors and reporters representing English and local language newspapers and newsmagazines from Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka participated in the workshop. The participants were carefully selected from among a list of nominees from the respective Press Institutes, AMIC country representatives and reputable women journalists. Among the criteria used for selection include having at least three years journalism experience and having the potential to move up in the management ranks.

The objective of the eight-day workshop was to impart advanced reporting, writing and editing skills, to introduce newsroom management skills and to raise the consciousness of participants on the role of the media in Asian society and their professional obligations.

Programme

The workshop was an eight-day intensive and integrated programme with lectures, discussions, practical exercises, field trips and demonstrations. The workshop programme ensured a mix of lectures and discussions and practical exercises. Field trips were arranged to visit a development project and the offices of the largest publishing group in Nepal, the Kamana Group.

The workshop proceeded with an overview of the situation of women journalists in South Asia in a panel discussion on "Women Journalists in South Asia: Trends, Opportunities and Issues." The discussion generated an enthusiastic response from the participants, with each participant providing a situationer on the status of women journalists in their respective countries. The discussions were later amplified and probed in greater depth during the breakout sessions, where the participants were divided in small groups. The issues identified during the panel discussion and the small group workshops set the tone for the entire workshop. The issues identified during the discussion were expanded in the course of the workshop proceedings by the resource speakers and in the open discussions following the presentations. Some of the issues identified include the harassment in the workplace, the lack
of women in top editorial and managerial positions in newspapers, the difficulties of balancing work and domestic obligations and the cultural barriers affecting women journalists. Interestingly, the issues raised by the women journalists of South Asia were very similar to the issues raised in the previous workshop in Southeast Asia. Each lecture-session was followed by an open forum which allowed each participant to lend their own country's perspective on the topic and the issues discussed. A vibrant exchange of views and experiences ensued which the participants greatly appreciated.

The workshop had two main components: skills-oriented sessions and conceptual sessions on aspects of editorial management which the participants will be encountering when the move up the management ranks. Under the first heading, topics covered by the workshop include advanced newsgathering, writing development stories, copy editing, writing newsfeatures, editorial and persuasive writing, newspaper lay-out and design. Written exercises, which the respective resource persons provided comments and suggestions, followed each skill-oriented session. Experienced practitioners lent their expertise in the skills-oriented sessions (see the section on "resource persons" for their backgrounds). The resource persons also made it a point to make themselves available for individual consultations with the participants.


One of the main outputs of the workshop was a 500-800-word story based on a field trip to a development project. The participants went on a field trip to the Association of Craft Producers, a non-governmental organisation providing skills training and livelihood programmes for Nepalese women. The participants were required to write an 800-word newsfeature story based on their field trip. A visit was also organized to Nepal's largest publishing group--the Kamana Group, where the participants were able to observe newsroom operations, and exchange views and experiences with editors and staff.

(see Appendix A for the workshop programme and Appendix B for the list of participants).

Principal Resource Persons

Regional media experts served as resource persons. They made presentations, led discussions, and conducted practical exercises on the various subjects covered by the workshop.

Mr. Darryl D'Monte has over twenty-five years journalism experience. He started his career as a trainee reporter with a rural newspaper in England, the Kent Messenger, and thereafter held various editorial positions with The Times of India and the Indian Express. Until recently he was Resident Editor of The Times of India, Bombay. Mr. D'Monte is also a very active environmental journalist, serving as vice-president of the International Federation of Environmental Journalists and Chairperson of the Forum of Environmental Journalists of India. He is a syndicated columnist and a documentary producer. He holds a bachelor's degree from Sydenham College on Bombay, India and a master's degree in economics from St. Catherine's College, Cambridge. He conducted the sessions on "Copy
Editing," "Investigative Journalism," "Writing Newsfeatures," and "Newspaper Layout and Design."

Ms. Anita Anand is Director of the Women's Feature Service (WFS) based in New Delhi, where she manages 175 journalists in seven country offices including Japan, the Philippines, the United States, Costa Rica, South Africa and Europe. Prior to establishing the WFS, Ms. Anand worked with the Interpress Service based in Rome, Italy as a coordinator of the Women in Development programme. Ms. Anand has a master's degree in non-formal education from Ohio University, USA. She conducted the sessions on "Development Journalism," "Writing Development Stories," and "Editorial and Persuasive Writing."

Mr. Mustafa Jabbar is Chief Executive Officer of Ananda Computers and Info Bangla, two companies that pioneered desktop publishing in Bangladesh. He also developed a popular Bangladeshi language script interface system called Bijoy, which has a 98 percent market share in Bangladesh and is used by various international news agencies such as the BBC, VOA, the Beijing Foreign Language Press and the Australian Broadcasting System, among others. He has written five books on computer technology and also currently serves as editor of the Daily Anandrapatra and the weekly Dhakar Chitri. He conducted the sessions on "Trends and Developments in Pre-Press Technology," and the "Impact of Computers in Newsroom Operations."

Mr. Virgilio S. Labrador, head of the seminars and institutional development programme of AMIC, has over ten years experience as a journalist and public relations and advertising account executive in Asia and North America. He conducted the sessions on "Market Research for Newspapers," and "The Newspapers and its Publics." He facilitated the panel discussion on "Women Journalists in South Asia: Trend, Opportunities" and he also handled or assisted in the conduct of all of the workshop exercise sessions.

Medium of Communication

All the participants had a working knowledge of English. As such, the presentations and discussions were conducted in English.

Workshop Management

AMIC organized and implemented the workshop, including the development of the workshop programme, the preparation of training materials, and the invitation of resource persons. To assist in local organisation, AMIC enlisted the support of a local partner, MANUSHI, which made all the local logistical arrangements.

Evaluation

The participants rated the sessions highly, giving mostly ratings of between 3 and 5 on a scale of 1-5 (where 5 is the highest). 21 percent of the participants gave the workshop an overall rating of 5, while 67 percent gave it a 4. No respondent gave the overall quality a rating of 1 or 2. 83 percent of the participants expressed that the right number of participants were selected for the workshop. 83 percent also indicated that the right target group was selected.
The overwhelming majority of the participants gave the sessions a rating of between 3-5. On the relevance of the workshop to their work, 58 percent gave it a 5, 25 percent gave it a 4 and 12.5 percent gave it a 3, and no rating of 1 or 2 was given.

With regards to the objectives of the workshop, i.e. to impart advanced reporting and editing skills, 29 percent gave it a 5, and 21 percent gave it a 4 and 25 percent gave a 3. On the objective of introducing newsroom management skills, 13 percent gave it a 5, 42 percent gave it a 4 and another 42 percent gave it a 3. On the objective of introducing the role of newspapers in society and their professional obligations, 42 percent gave it a 5, another 42 percent gave it a 4 and 13 percent gave it a 3.

On the organisation of the workshop, 63 percent gave it a five and 29 percent gave it a four. No rating below four was given.

The participants appreciated the mix of lectures and practical exercises. Most of the participants however appreciated the opportunity not only to exchange views and experiences with resource persons, but with other participants from other countries. One of the highest ratings were given to the opportunity to exchange with fellow participants.

Follow-Up

After three months, a follow-up survey will be conducted by mail with all the participants as respondents. The survey will measure any changes achieved made as a result of the inputs provided during the workshop. It will also determine if any follow-up action or activity is necessary.

Conclusion

On the whole, the workshop was a success. The main objectives of the workshop were met and the participants were generally satisfied with the result. A number of the participants suggested that follow-up workshops be conducted in the future.