

Country Report:

“Media and Gender in Cambodia”

Part of the IFJ Media and Gender in Asia-Pacific Research Project





Media and Gender in the Asia Pacific Region

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Introduction to IFJ gender and media research

Research Study on Media and Gender in Asia-Pacific is a foundation project which has been jointly initiated by the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) and the South Asia Media Solidarity Network (SAMSAN), with support from UNESCO and UN Women after a resultant of the Global Forum on Media and Gender held in Thailand in 2013.

The research study outlines of professional media from across the Asia-Pacific show their minimum standards, principles and experiences on gender equity in the media industry in the region and highlight key areas for action which conducted by seven countries in Asia Pacific such as India, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Pakistan, Malaysia, Cambodia, and Vanuatu.

This research study involves with a review of women in Cambodian media and provides case studies, analysis, and recommendations from local and international media organisations and unions.

The IFJ Research Study on Media and Gender in Asia Pacific conveys the condition of women in media industry in Cambodia. More importantly, it shows about the challenges, hindrance, and demand of women in media to figure out their capacity and experience on work which assumed by IFJ associated by the regional team for results and references.

In the research highlights about the current situation of women in decision-making roles of the media field, gender policy at the workplace, sexual harassment against women, and practice case studies of the issue that affect woman's presentation.

The termination of the survey is conducted to find out issues related to gender in media industry to encourage for having media development in media organizations and unions.

An evolving democracy and media

Cambodia's media today continues to fight for its freedom, particularly the right to be free from government control. Although substantial gains have been made in the last 20 years, ongoing restrictions and repressive controls still affect all areas of the media.

As a young democracy in transition, challenges to press freedom and attacks on freedom of expression are changing and evolving in Cambodia, as they are in many countries across the globe.

In 2014, three journalists were murderedⁱ representing a worrying decline in the working environment for the country's media. The most recent case was that of Taing Try, a 48-year-old journalist fatally shot in Kratie province while reporting on corruption and the country's logging trade. His death highlights a disturbing trend, following the murders of two other journalists in 2012 also reporting on the country's illegal timber trade.

Since the Paris Peace accords in 1991 that brought the war-torn country into liberal democracy and peace, the media in Cambodia has undergone a complete transformation. Before then, media had been restricted to seven Soviet-style media outlets; plus bulletins produced by overseas Khmers and radio stations broadcast into Cambodia from Thailand by exiled resistance groups; and a newspaper set up in a UN-run refugee camp for Cambodians on the Thai border. It is understood that only an estimated ten Cambodian journalists working prior to 1975 survived the ravages of the regime.ⁱⁱ

But under the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC), media freedom was promoted and supported but (not without its struggles). UNTAC formed radio UNTAC to promote the media growth and slowly exiled journalist began returning.



By the 1993 elections, 20 news organisations had sprung up. A year later, there were 50 and by 1998 there were 200. Today, there are 16 television stations in the capital Phnom Penh and 70 stations in the provinces. However, all of the main television stations are either known or believed to be linked to the Cambodian People’s Party (CPP). Generally news follows the party line or is adapted from news issued by the Ministry of Information. Radio is not immune to similar government controls. The state controls radio through the management of licenses which can simply be revoked.

The radio landscape includes 69 Phnom Penh stations and a further 119 in the provinces. Across the country, there are also 139 newspaper outlets. But newspaper and magazines have a much smaller stake of the population’s eyes, with only eight percent and three percent of the population getting its news from them respectively – in part possibly to the country’s low literacy rates.ⁱⁱⁱ

Freedom House currently lists Cambodia’s press freedom status as ‘not free’, due in no small part to the notion that the government does very little to support the media.^{iv} A lack of political will, legal intimidation and the politicisation of the media, combined with corruption and poor ethics in some areas of the media continues to prevent media in Cambodia from becoming truly free, independent and sustainable.

In May 2006, Cambodia's situation of media changed from ‘not free’ to ‘partly free’ on ponder the defamation law, harassment of journalists’ diminution and attack on the press, according to World Audit Organization.^v

Reporters Without Borders’ *World Press Freedom Index 2014* ranks Cambodia 144th out of 180 countries with this rank no doubt impacted from its climate of self-censorship.^{vi}

The 1995 press law of Cambodia is used by the government to regularly censor stories in contravention to its constitution obligations to protect freedom of expression. Article 13 states that the press shall not publish or reproduce false information that humiliates or is in contempt of national institutions. The reality is that today, many Cambodian journalists are self-censor when they report about corruption and crime.

While a free press is guaranteed by the 1993 constitution, impunity continues to impact on journalists’ ability to report fearlessly. Last year, the successful prosecution of the murderers of Suon Chan, a 44-year-old reporter for the Khmer language *Meakea Kampuchea* newspaper was regarded as a decisive victory against impunity – with serious limitations given that most of them remain at large. Tran was killed on January 31, 2014, in Cholkiri district’s Peam Chhkork commune when he was set upon by a gang of fishermen who attacked him with stones and bamboo sticks after Tran’s reports on illegal fishing in the local commune. In November, 2014, the six attackers were charged with ‘attempted murder’ by the prosecution, in absentia. The killers were each charged with 13 years in jail and also each ordered to pay Suon’s family five million riel each (USD1,250). Thea Leng, who was arrested in October, is the only killer currently in police custody.^{vii}

On May 2, 2014, the bashing of Voice of Democracy (VOD) reporter Lay Samean also draws attention to the failures of the state to protect journalists. Samean was attacked after attempting to take photos of security guards chasing a monk; and beaten unconscious by up to ten security guards, who left him laying in the street. The attack threatens Article 41 of the Constitution of the Kingdom of Cambodia, which protects “freedom of expression, press, publication and assembly”, and Article 38 which protects against physical abuse. While the attack was also denounced by the Ministry of Information as a “very serious violation on freedom of the press”, which called the relevant parties to uphold their duties, no serious action has been taken.



In 2014, a draft Cybercrime Law was leaked to the media and received widespread criticism as it threatened to criminalise poorly-defined categories of online expression.

Despite this, blogging has experienced explosive growth in recent years with the birth of cloggers (Cambodian bloggers) who are overcoming some of the censorship challenges in the mainstream media. Internet penetration may be low, according to the World Bank just 1.3% in 2010^{viii}, but citizen journalism and clogging continue to grow.^{ix} The growth of online media and blogging has seen young people share their views on social and political issues beyond the physical borders of Cambodia and the constraints of mainstream media.

Sadly, journalism in Cambodia remains a profession that is not widely respected and journalists face low wages, poor working conditions and worrying safety concerns. Women journalists also face these challenges along with other gender issues, with many unaware of what sexual harassment is and many facing pressure from families who can hinder their efforts to join the profession.

Cambodia's media today is still largely dominated and made up of men. This is reflected across studies, with the Women's Media Centre in Cambodia finding that in 2005 women made up the minority across all media sectors, comprising 17% of those in journalism. This was also evident in the IFJ research.

Demographics of Survey Respondents

As part of the "Research Study on Media and Gender in the Asia-Pacific" initiated by the IFJ, an online survey of media workers was developed at the regional level and administered in Cambodia in September 2014.

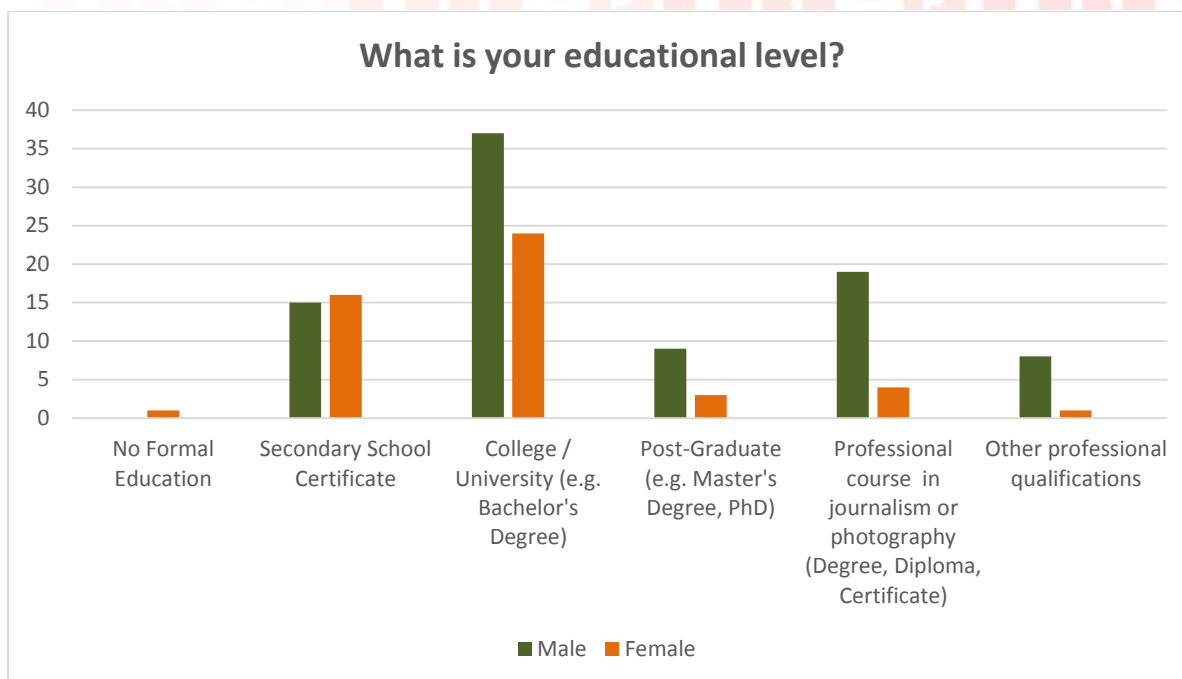
The survey aimed to get a ratio of 70 percent female to 30 percent male gender breakdown. However, Cambodia's survey struggled to reach this threshold. Ultimately women made up just 42% of the 106 respondents. In all, Cambodia garnered 106 survey responses; 61 male and 45 female.

Indicative of Cambodia's young population, a total of 93 respondents (90.29 percent) were aged under 45, with the highest proportion of respondents were aged between 26-35 (50.00 percent). Women were most strongly represented in the 26-35 age bracket (55.55 percent) as were men (45.90 percent). The bubble in growth in women journalists entering the profession reflects a social push and interest in joining the media profession.

The majority of respondents in the survey were from Cambodia's capital, Phnom Penh (61 percent).

Only 4 respondents (3.77 percent) identified as being from an ethnic or religious minority. In terms of religious beliefs, respondents were largely Buddhist (97.16 percent).

Over half of respondents (57.55 percent) had a college or university degree. More men (60.65 percent) had degrees than women (53.33 percent).



The rise of Cambodia’s “cloghers”

Internet penetration is still relatively low in Cambodia, with only 2.7million internet users as of 2013^x. However, a report released by the Minister of Posts and Telecommunications in 2014 shows that Cambodia’s internet usage grew at a rate of 42.7% last year alone with blogging or ‘clogging’ (Cambodian blogging) as it is known in Cambodia on a steady rise. Such a hike in numbers can be attributed to increased use of smartphones and overall broadband services in Cambodia.^{xi}

With it, many journalists are turning to the internet to make their voices heard and overcome many of the stigmas associated with traditional journalism. ‘Cloghers’ – the ‘hers’ defining women – are the new breed of female Cambodian bloggers.

Kounila Keo is one of Cambodia’s best-known cloghers. Since starting her Blue Lady Blog in 2007^{xii}, she has presented a *TedTalks* on blogging in Cambodia and been part of the team that organised [Blogfest.Asia](#) - a festival for bloggers in South East Asia in 2012. A journalist by training, Kounila has worked for *AFP*, *Los Angeles Times*, *The Phnom Penh Post*, *Global Voices Online* and *The Independent UK*.

Blogging in Cambodia emerged in the early 2000s and, to date, has been relatively “free” for reporting politics and other sensitive issues. A limited number of websites and blogs, such as [Ki Media](#), have been shut down or posts removed due to negative comments on the government, but in terms of overall censorship, bloggers have experienced freedom in their ability to produce content.^{xiii}

Kounila says that “blogging has opened the eyes of both young female and male Cambodians to more possibilities and a huge sum of knowledge.” She also says ‘cloghers’ are now a force to be reckoned with in Cambodia’s media scene and shaking up the traditional forms of journalism – as well as the cultural challenges.



For women in Cambodia there are quite a few impediments. She says journalism is not highly respected as a profession and, on top of that Cambodian society dictates that women should be softly spoken, walk lightly, be well-mannered and always in the home. For obvious reasons, these cultural norms are not exactly conducive to encouraging women to join the field of journalism.

“There might be a lot of challenges but one of them is to do with the perceptions that people hold,” Keo said. “First of all, journalism is considered a risky and low-paying job. While it is extremely important, it also involves some risks especially in a country like Cambodia where the rule of law hasn’t been followed and respected to a great extent. There’s history of journalists being gunned down for the things they wrote.”

She has also noted a concerning trend that young female journalists tend to leave the profession after a couple of years, opting for better pay and security in the non-profit sector. She firmly believes clogging is one way for women journalists to have their voices heard, plus it takes away some of impediments that push them out of traditional journalism.

But, just like journalists, cloggers also receive negative feedback and threats. Most of the time, the attacks on Keo come from people who don’t see eye-to-eye with her on her opinions. Generally threats are made online or social media so she feels there is a relative level of safety. She has never been physically attacked or threatened in public, which she puts down to not putting her identity online too often.

As a platform, clogging and cloggers have the potential to make change, spark public discussion, empower and motivate the public and have their voices heard. Two-thirds of the Cambodian population today is aged under 25 and clogging is giving this young population power in terms of driving public discourse.

Keo says clogging gave her to the opportunity to share information with people and educate them to make their decisions. And as more women continue to join the ‘clogging-sphere’ they are driving women’s issues into discussion and giving other topics a female perspective that has thus far been missing.

She is certainly testament to the fact that the virtual space of clogging is empowering women in Cambodia’s male-dominated media landscape.

“Now more and more women are more open to discussing many issues including politics, social affairs, beyond the daily topics we see in the traditional media,” she said.

Media in Cambodia today

Research suggests that journalism has traditionally not been considered a respected profession in Cambodia, yet the survey data indicates that families are changing that view.^{xiv}

This sentiment is echoed by Ung Chansophea, a news producer and presenter for the Cambodian Television Network (CTN) who said: “My family, especially my father, at first, also contested my decision for choosing journalism as my lifetime career, but later on they gradually agreed.”

Arguably, given the young age of the respondents, a shifting trend in how Cambodian society views journalists is helping the development of the media, particularly among women who are joining the industry in much higher numbers.



When asked of their reasons for joining the profession, most respondents (80.19 percent) selected 'love of journalism'. This was followed by the desire to 'call the powerful to account' (23.58 percent), 'fame/glamour/opportunity/prestige' (16.98 percent) and family tradition (10.38 percent). Remuneration and job security received virtually no responses.

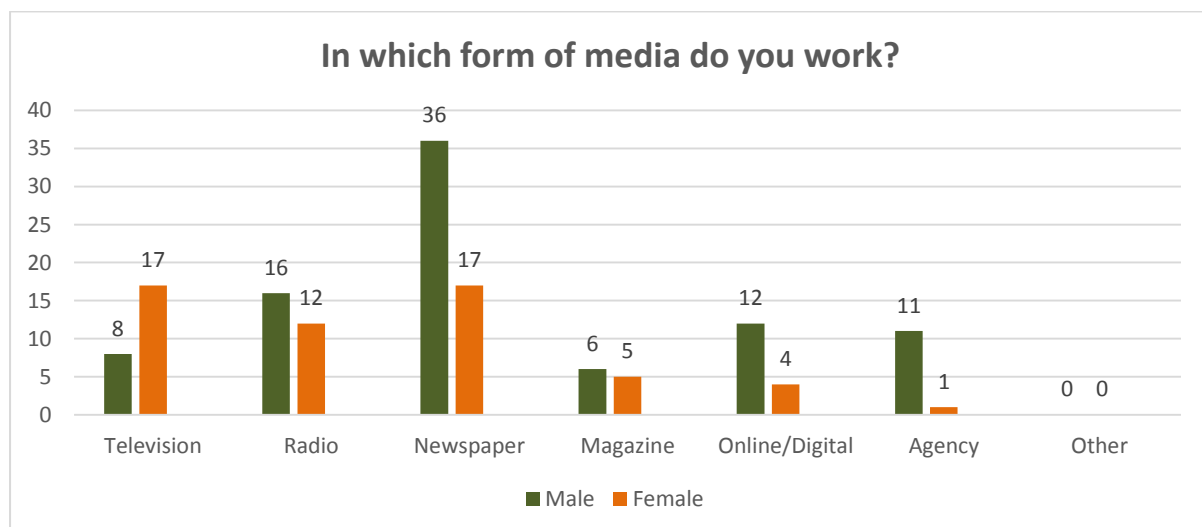
Over half of the respondents (56.60 percent) noted that their families were supportive of their choice to become journalists, with only 7.54 percent saying that their family were against the decision. Interestingly, those who were supportive were evenly distributed between male and female respondents, yet more females (11.11 percent) had a negative response from their families compared to males (4.92 percent).

What was your family response to your career choice?	Total	Female	Male
Neutral	38	15	23
Opposed/Negative	8	5	3
Supportive	60	25	35
Grand Total	106	45	61

Newspapers were the biggest employers of respondents (50 percent), followed by radio (28 percent), television (23.58 percent) online/digital (15.09 percent), agency (11.32 percent) and magazines (10.38 percent).

Within their group, men were clearly dominant in newspapers (59.02 percent) whereas women were more evenly spread across television (37.78 percent), newspapers (37.78 percent) and radio (26.67 percent).

Respondents were able to select more than one form of media that they worked in. Multiple responses across media indicated that up to a quarter of the men and women worked in at least two or more media.

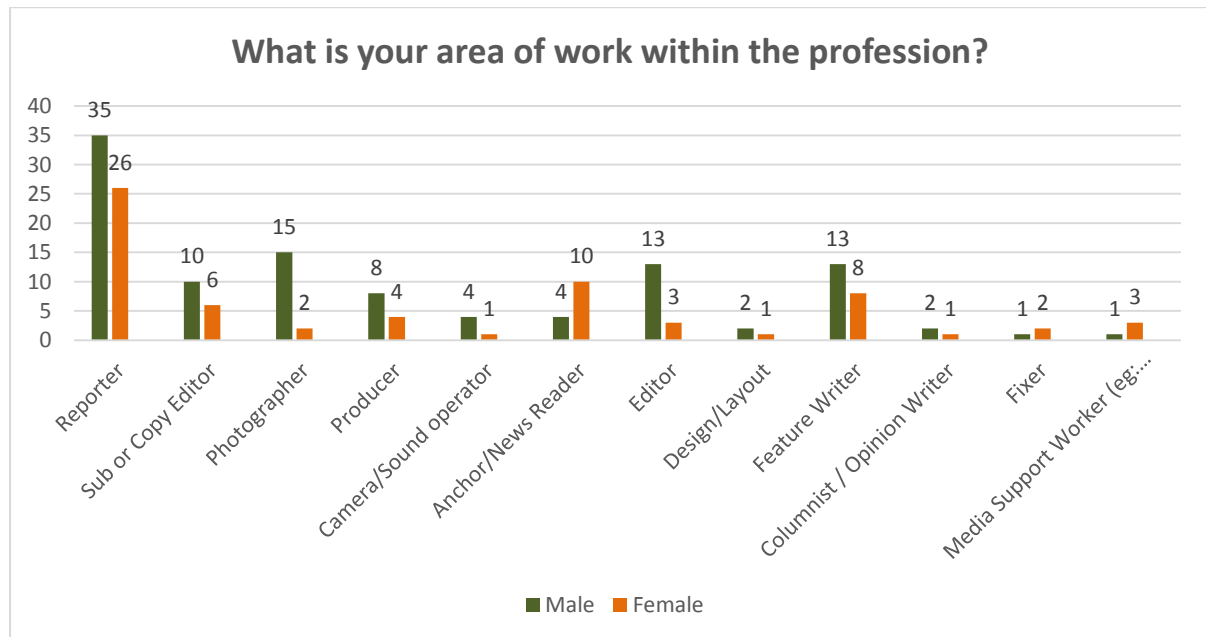


Similar trends are evident when looking at the area of work respondents undertake. Again, they were encouraged to select all that apply. The highest proportion of respondents described



themselves as a reporter (57.55 percent), followed feature writer (19.81 percent), and editor and sub-editor (each 15.09 percent). Of the women, 57.78 percent worked as a reporter compared to 57.38 percent of men.

When it came to the editors represented, 81.25 percent were men. Most of the photographers (88.23 percent) were men, as were sub editors or copy editors (62.50 percent). Women on the other hand, dominated in the role of anchor or news reader (71.42 percent) – this was the only field where they led men.



Nearly three-quarters of respondents (70.75 percent) used Khmer as their primary language for work and 27.35 percent used English.

Most of the respondents (90.56 percent) worked full time as media workers. More than half the respondents (68.86 percent) worked as full-time regulars. Another 21.69 percent worked as full-time contract workers.

Nearly half (44.94 percent) of all respondents to this question, worked in media organisations with between 100 to 1500 employees. Another 37.07 percent were employed in small companies with less than 100 employees. 17 respondents did not answer this question.

Most men had worked in the industry between 3-10 years (42.62 percent) or ten or more years (42.62 percent) while more women (46.66 percent) had been in the industry between only 1-3 years. This could suggest a growth in women entering the industry in recent years.

Comparatively, only a very small percentage (15.55 percent) of women had made it to ten or more years in the industry which could show either a high attrition rate of women from the industry and/or merely reflect the long-running tradition of male-domination of media.

Flowing from this, just over one tenth of women (11.11 percent) described themselves as senior journalists, compared to nearly half of men (47.54 percent) – a major disparity. Though mid-level journalists comprised just under 50 percent of each gender – suggesting more gender equity balance at this level.

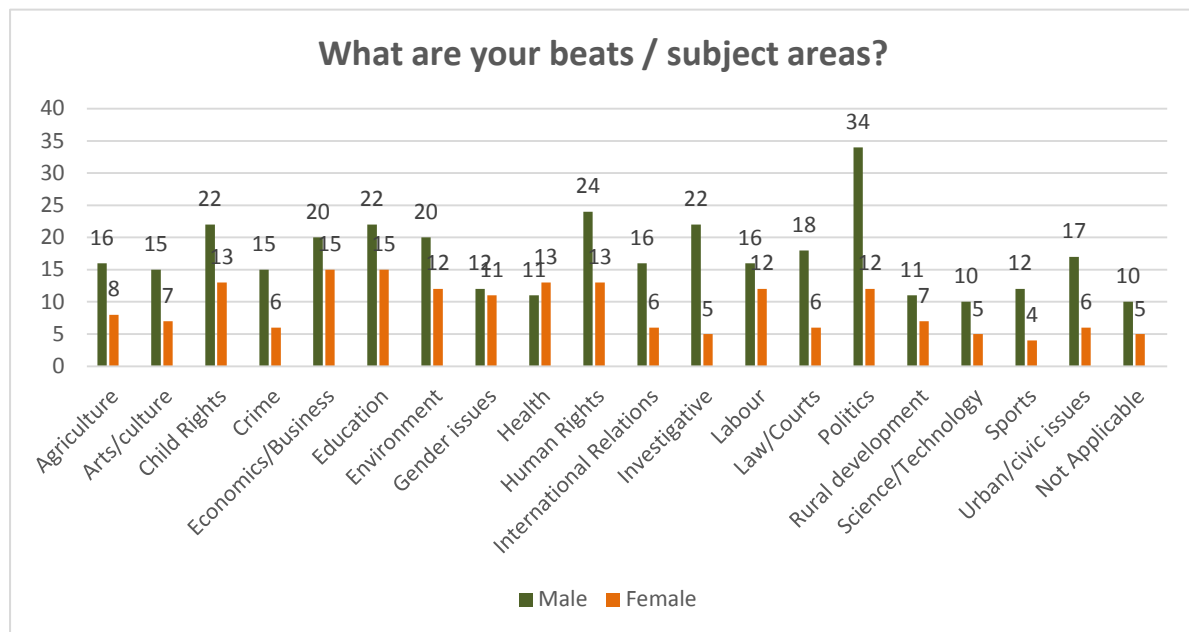


Unfortunately, junior media workers were mostly women, comprising 28.88 percent of all women – though this could suggest growth in this area or that targeted strategies to bring more women into the industry may be working.

More than half the respondents (54.71 percent) were positive about their ability to choose their beats. Just over a quarter of respondents (27.35 percent) felt they could choose their beats ‘to some extent’. Women made up over half of the latter group – representing 40 percent of women.

When it comes to beats and subject areas, the research showed Cambodia’s media are multi-skilled – usually covering a variety of subject areas. Nevertheless, there appears to be some gender-based differences in the beats covered by the respondents.

Although women seem to be represented in all the subject areas, their presence (from the highest) is most prevalent in the areas of economics/business, education, child rights, human rights, health, politics, labour, environment and gender issues. Men were most represented (from the highest) in politics, human rights, investigative journalism, child rights, education, economics/business, the environment and law and courts.



Women were more dominant than men in only one subject area; health, and were marginally more dominant within child rights, economics/business, education, environment, gender issues, health, human rights, labour and rural development beats.

Men were marginally more dominant than women in agriculture, art and culture, crime, international relations, investigative journalism, law/courts, science and technology, sport and urban issues.

In terms of been able to determine the content of their work, a third of women felt they could do this ‘most of the time’ and a quarter ‘always’. Men on the other hand, were more in control with 39.34 percent said they ‘always’ determined their work, while 32.78 percent they could do this ‘most of the time’.



In terms of the ability of respondents to influence news and content in their organisation, again male respondents were positive in their responses with the majority (37.70 percent) saying they could do this ‘most of the time’. More women (42.22 percent) felt they could influence news and content ‘some of the time’ and 20 percent said they could ‘never’ influence content.

Ung Chansophea, a news anchor from the Cambodian Television Network (CTN) said: “There is no one is able to control my content. I can speak whatever I want, but I have to be careful if the topic is controversial and sensitive.”

Marching to her own beat

Cambodia is a country under pressure, not only from the strains of a developing democracy, but its weak land laws and rich natural resources have made it a haven ripe for environmental exploitation.

For Cambodian journalists reporting on sensitive environmental issues, especially the rampant illegal logging trade, they too frequently find themselves in the firing line.

In April 2012, Bopha Phorn set out to investigate claims of illegal logging in a protected area of Cambodia. With her was another female journalist, Olesia Plokhii, and an environmental activist, Chut Wutty. No stranger to threat, prior to the journey Phorn had scrawled her mobile telephone number across her torso just in case she was killed and she could be easily identified.

Ironically, the trip to the jungle was intended to be an easy assignment for Phorn after she had received threats via telephone from high-level officials for her recent coverage of the drug trade for the Cambodia Daily newspaper. Instead, the trio found themselves in a jungle ambush, surrounded by gunmen firing AK-47s. Phorn and Plokhii managed to escape their car and fled into the jungle. Wutty was not so lucky.

Reporting on the land grab for rubber and timber plantations, illegal fishing practices and the sensitive issues such as the damming of the Mekong, is deadly work for journalists in Cambodia. Since 2012, three journalists have been killed reporting on the timber trade and another violently speared in 2014 in a gang attack by angry fisherman unhappy with reporting on the local industry.

Phorn’s bravery in the jungle ambush and her other work government land deals, dam construction, and gender issues won her the International Women’s Media Foundation’s Courage in Journalism Award in 2013.^{xv} You could say she is doing her own bit to change perceptions on journalism as a profession.

“Ten years ago, journalists were not that well respected,” she said. “People said at the time that journalists were corrupt and took money as an exchange to not writing stories. These days, more people have changed their perspective about journalists who are working for some independent media organizations.”

Phorn now works as a freelance writer and journalist for VOA Khmer, a multimedia broadcaster funded by the US government and one of the largest Khmer language broadcasters in the world.

Growing up in rural Cambodia, she says her inspiration to become a journalist was an actor in a Khmer Rouge movie: “He played a journalist in the movie while chasing a truck and trying to escape spray of bullets behind him. I thought he was very brave, so I wanted to be like him. That’s when I



was really young, less than 10 years old! Later on I came to know that the job is not that easy and fun as we have seen in the movies.”

Over the years, Phorn has received plenty of phone threats with lawsuits and two or three times with physical threats. While she says she has never faced sexual harassment, though she says being a single woman in the newsroom means developing a tough skin.

“When you’re a female journalists working in an industry dominated by male journalists, you have to face being picked on most of the time,” she says plainly. Questions about marital status are common and tiresome.

But, Phorn considers herself very lucky, since “I can write pretty much everything I want”. Her determination is clearly another factor.

“In general the journalists in Cambodia don’t have freedom to report on everything they want,” she says. “Self-censorship is a big problem. Most of the media is pro-government media so they don’t want to report anything that might affect the government.”

As for getting more women in newsrooms?

“The key for creating better gender equality in journalism is a good protection system. If Cambodia had a good protection system to protect journalists then more people will want to be journalists, irrespective of gender.”

Women under-represented across all media

The low-participation rate of females in the media profession in Cambodia is evident across all mediums as the research shows; however women are starting to make inroads. But does it flow to key decision-making roles?

The key media in Cambodia today are the newspapers are *Rasmei Kampuchea Daily*, *Koh Santepheap Daily*, and *The Phnom Penh Post Daily*; online news website DAP News; television networks National Television of Kampuchea (TVK), CTN, Bayon News and radio networks Radio National of Kampuchea (RNK), WMC FM102, FM103, Radio France International (RFI), and Radio Free Asia (RFA).^{xvi}

A third of respondents in the IFJ survey said that women in top-level management (board, executives, chief financial officers and general managers) comprised less than 10 percent. Another 20.75 percent said they comprised between 10-25 percent.

At senior editorial levels, 37.73 percent of respondents said women comprised less than 10 percent of these positions including managing editor, editor-in-chief, executive producer, bureau chief or director. Another 16.05 percent said women comprised 10-25% of these positions.

At middle editorial level, again most respondents (37.73 percent) said women took up less than 10 percent of these positions including the roles of senior editor, chief correspondents, feature or foreign editor or similar titles.

The IFJ research also questioned the ratio of men to women in respondents work areas. Just over a third of respondents to this question (36.27 percent) said women comprised between 5-20 percent



of the department workforce, followed by just under a third (31.37 percent) who said women made up between 20-50 percent of their department. A not insignificant group (14.70 percent) said women were less than 5 percent of their department – quite a bleak picture.

The newsroom challenge for women

The Phnom Penh Post, the oldest newspaper in Cambodia, is a four-colour tabloid published in both Khmer and English. It was founded in 1992 by Michael Hayes, an American who has worked in Cambodia. The printed edition was published twice a month until 2008, when an investment from Australia made it possible to turn it into a daily. In 2009 the online edition was launched, and in 2010 this was followed with an online edition in Khmer.

Today the Khmer edition reaches over 30,000 readers in Phnom Penh and Siem Reap and the English edition reaches 20,000 readers in 40 countries. The newspaper currently has more than 200 employees working under a publisher.

All five editors-in-chief are men, but there are both men and women among the 65 reporters, freelance journalists, correspondents, stringers, camerapersons, video editors, photographers, web developers, administrators, salespersons and other support staff. But of the 70 media workers in the organisation, only 30 per cent are female.

Although more women are working in media than ever before, this development does not seem to have really changed the nature of operations within the workplace, said Chan MuyHong, a reporter with *The Phnom Penh Post*.

“Since the number of female journalists here (at the *Post*) is less than that of males, their number at the decision-making level is also limited,” she said, before going on to state that in spite of this she still felt the organisation was “fair and balanced enough”.

“That does not always help in changing . . . some people’s attitudes – for example, men are more prioritised at work than women,” she added.

She said the *Post* has been trying to provide more opportunities to women, as there aren’t many female journalists in the field. For example, when jobs are advertised, they always mention that “women are encouraged to apply.” A positive sign but does it require a more proactive approach?

As part of the IFJ research, a number of interviews were conducted with ‘bosses’ and editors in the media. These impart some insights into gender equity issues that are obvious in Cambodia’s media.

KOH Santepheap Daily is one of the earliest local newspapers in Cambodia, starting its operations after the Paris Peace Agreement in 1991. KOH covers a diverse range of news: politics, social issues, environment, crimes, entertainment, sports, and world affairs. But it currently employs only one female journalist who is based in Phnom Penh, reporting sports news, lifestyles, and entertainment.

The fact that there is only one women at the publication is not surprising to its editor, Nak Serei (not his real name). He says in the field of journalism, a reporter face many challenges which can be inconvenient for women to do.

“Do you believe it is a good idea to let or assign a female reporter to cover the news at night or at the place where women safety is a concern? No, I can say. It’s more convenient for men to do it.”



Regardless, he says KOH is very open to employ either males or females, whoever dares to work for the assignment required. KOH’s administrative operations, such as news uploading, editing, graphic design, and finance are dominated by women. But there are virtually no females applying for the posts in journalism, he says.

“As I said, it’s based on both condition and realities of the works and people. The importance of men is force and physical energy, but of women is beauty.”

In the television sector, Cambodian News Channel (CNC) is one of the new players on the scene and is just one of two Cambodian television channels that broadcast news 24 hours a day, seven days a week. CNC says it reaches an audience over 2million every single day but hasn’t yet expanded its reach to the provinces.

The network was transformed from a news department of the Cambodian Television Network in 2010. Its broadcasting officially launched in 2013, just months in prior to the general election that gave a big transitional change to Cambodia’s media landscapes. All four core founders of CNC are male, including Mr Huy Vannak.

Vannack says the number of CNC’s staff, including reporters, presenters, technicians, and administrators, is about 200 people. About 30% of them, he says, female though there are none in the channel’s top management.

“I don’t doubt that there are more males than females. Directing CNC, I look on real qualification; no matter if they’re male or female, they will be chosen for the needed posts if they are capable and qualified.”

Gender pay gap a major concern in working conditions

The Constitution of Cambodia (1993) states that “men and women have equal rights before the law... and equal pay for the same work.” However, this is pulled into question when looking at the average income of survey respondents.

Disturbingly, there was wide pay gap between the wages of men and women surveyed, with women earning significantly less in the media than their male counterparts.

What is your monthly professional income? Please use this site to convert currencies if you don't know your currency in dollars.	Total	Female	Male
Less than US \$80	2	0	2
US \$80 - \$250	30	22	8
US \$251 - \$400	23	9	14
US \$401 - \$600	13	6	7
US \$601 - \$800	11	4	7
More than \$800	27	4	23
Grand Total	106	45	61



Overall, more women (48.88 percent) earned between US\$80 to \$250 a month. This compared to most men (37.70 percent) who earned more than US\$800 a month – a pay gap of at least US\$550.

This was followed by another group of men (22.95 percent) who earned between US\$251 to \$400 a month, compared to 20.00 percent of women in that pay bracket.

Only 8.88 percent of women surveyed over US\$800 a month.

The low salaries for women is a disturbing finding, but may be in part that more women are either entering (or remaining) at junior levels while their male counterparts take on the more senior and more lucrative roles.

When asked if they thought men and women received equal wages, 63.93 percent of men said ‘yes’ compared to 44.44 percent of women. A quarter of all respondents said they ‘don’t know’.

Job security and contractualisation is beginning to take an effect on Cambodia’s media. Fortunately, more than half the respondents (68.86 percent) worked as full-time regulars. Another 21.69 percent worked as full-time contract workers. Less than 10 per cent of respondents were freelance, part-time contract or regular or other work.

When it came to opportunities for recruitment and advancement, more men (40.98 percent) considered their chances ‘good’. This compared to more women (28.89 percent) who considered their chances ‘fair’.

Another 22.95 percent of men considered their prospects ‘excellent’. No women felt their prospects were ‘excellent’.

In terms of job satisfaction and respondents overall experience at work, this was almost evenly divided – with a fifth of respondents saying it was ‘challenging but the positives outweigh the negatives’. Another fifth which said their experience was ‘satisfactory’ with ‘room for improvement’.

Six women and two men described their workplace as ‘difficult’ and ‘hostile’. Three women said their experience was ‘frustrating’, ‘felt unappreciated’ or ‘undervalued’.

Allowances and benefits mostly often paid to both women and men included annual pay increases (51.88 percent) and travel allowances (41.50 percent).

Huy Vannak says CNC’s working conditions comply with domestic labour law. Staff get annual special benefits including 5-percent annual wage increase, annual bonuses (in the form of a gift, party, or ‘special offer’), health insurance, phone credit, petrol money, and mission coverage.

In addition, he says all female staff get three months’ maternity leave, a special ‘offer’ of \$100 and ‘a bunch of flowers’. This benefit is also for paternity which male staffs will get the same amount of money, but with shorter period of leave time.

In the survey, health insurance, accident insurance and annual bonuses were available to just over a quarter of all respondents. Pension or superannuation, medical benefits, life insurance and insurance for covering conflict were available to less than 17 percent of respondents. Payments to an employee provident fund were only made to 7.54 percent of respondents.



Interestingly, women were more likely to get annual bonuses, while men were more likely to get accident and life insurance. Otherwise there were no discernable gender gaps on benefits given.

Another finding was that the respondents who were denied benefits were twice as likely to be male than female. Of the respondents that had been denied, they listed some of the following reasons:

- *It's not agreed in a written contract that the employer need to pay us an extra holiday we are working, but then the CEO said you have just been given another day off not in cash* – Female
- *I refused to receive bribe money offered by officers* – Male
- *Because they have no money* - Male

Within the workplace, facilities such as separate toilets and security at the workplace were available to over half of all respondents. Safety equipment was available to 36.79 percent, and staff lounges were only available to 19.81 percent of respondents and transport after late shifts was available to only 13.20 percent of people. More women than men had access to transport after late shifts. Childcare was not available to anyone surveyed.

Annual leave entitlements were available to 40.98 percent of men, compared to only 33.33 percent of women yet more women (35.55 percent) had access to sick leave than men (27.86 percent).

Less than a third of women (31.11 percent) said they had access to maternity leave.

Of the respondents that had been denied paid leave, they listed some of the following reasons:

- *Too much work to take time off* – Female
- *Due to the pay leave policy of our organisation* – Male
- *Corruption* – Male

The majority of respondents (41.51 percent) rated the leave and re-entry for women after childbirth as 'acceptable', another quarter (24.53 percent) rated it as 'good'. The gender breakdown was even for these answers.

MuyHong, from *The Phnom Penh Post*, says her newspaper has promoted ethical codes and policies in 'favour' of gender equality in the media industry. For instance, pregnant women are not expected to work longer hours or kept at work to ensure their health and that of their baby's is not risked.

She says some women continue to work until the birth of their child, but the *Post* is supportive of women taking leave earlier. She says this is viewed as a 'gender equity policy' because it is 'physically understanding of women'. Upon return to work, new mothers have the right to pump breast milk in a safe place at work and she is firm that the *Post* does not discriminate against them for being lactating mothers, she said.

However, MuyHong is not so sure that women have access to the same opportunities after they return to work, because employers tend to assume that they want easier work than before, because they now have children.

"We can see some discrimination in the workplace," she said, giving the example that the organization may hesitate to let women go or report stories in places or on issues that are very dangerous. "Men may have some advantages in specific cases", she said.

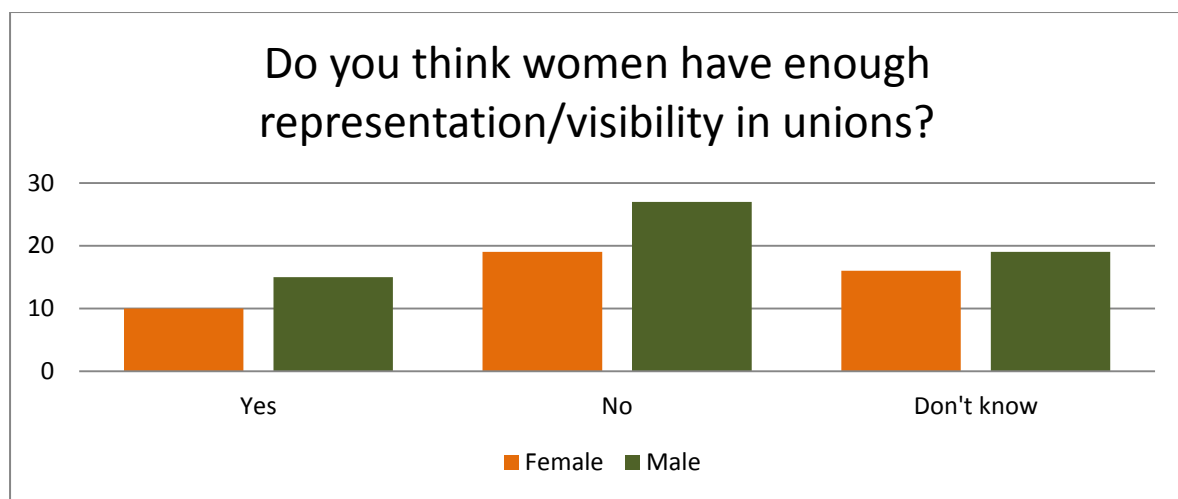


But proving discrimination can be a hard slog. In order to prove it, staff may have to convince management and colleagues that they were treated differently from other employees with similar stipulation and implementation records.

Barriers still affecting professional membership

When it comes to union membership in the media, more than half of respondents (54.72 percent) were not part of a worker union in their media organisation or one did not exist (14.15 percent).

These figures improved at a national level with just under half (49.05 percent) saying they were a member of a national union. However the gender disparity became evident here with proportionately more men (57.37 percent) as members than women (37.77 percent) from the survey respondents.

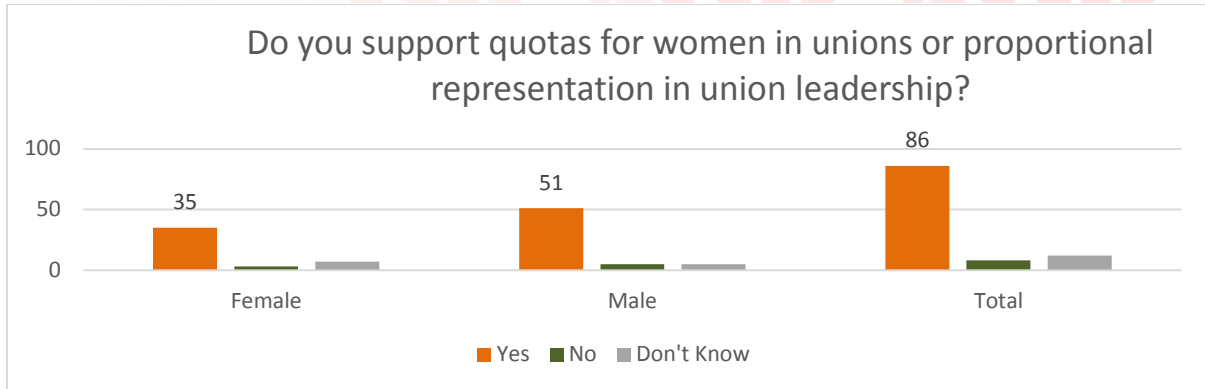


Among women who identified as being union members, interestingly, 41.18 percent were officials or office bearers in house or work unions. 35.29 percent were also officials or office bearers in their national union. Among men, just over a third (37.14 percent) were officials or office bearers in house or work unions, while a quarter (25.71 percent) were officials or office bearers at the national level.

So while unions do seem to have gender equity in decision-making roles among membership, the figures suggest a gap in union ability to attract women to membership in the first place.

Interestingly, over 40 percent of respondents felt that women do not have enough representation or visibility in unions. This applied almost equally between men and women. Interestingly, a third did not know or have an opinion on it, suggesting awareness on the significance of gender equity in representation may be an issue.

A strong majority of all respondents (81.13 percent) said that they supported quotas or proportional representation of women in union leadership. Interestingly, more men (83.60 percent) supported quotes than women (77.77 percent).



The national journalist union, the Committee for the Protection of Journalists (CAPJ), is an IFJ affiliate and one of the unions working to improve the working conditions of journalists in Cambodia. Established in 2001, it caters to print media, as well as radio and television. It has a total of 98 members, 25 of whom are women.

According to union president, Um Sarin, women are increasingly getting involved in the union, now making up more than 25 percent of the organisation, including one female board member. Of the four employed staff members, one is female.

Although CAPJ does not have a gender committee or gender equity policy, they do have an election policy which states that at least one woman must stand as a candidate for the board – a positive step not necessarily reflected in other professional clubs and organisations in Cambodia.

The Cambodian Club of Journalists (CCJ) has one female board member on its 15-member board. Meanwhile, the Cambodian Journalists’ Council for Ethics (CJCE) has no female members.

“Our members in CJCE are male, we don’t have a female member, not even one,” said director Seth Borisoth.

The CJCE, a non-profit organization aimed at improving ethical practices and the professionalism of the media, has the underlying objective it to ultimately reduce potential harm to journalists. It was established following a 2010 United Nations-backed national conference on the ethics of journalism in Cambodia and comprises several veteran journalists and senior members of a number of different media organizations.

In discussion with CJCE, a number of factors were raised regarding the low participation of women in the country’s media. Firstly, the quality of their work and responsibilities in the organisation is affected because of women’s technical and academic limitations. Secondly, CJCE said women’s participation was also related to the cultural and social norms of Cambodian society, which dictate that women need to be responsible for all of the housework for their family, which can’t be done with a job.

“In Cambodia is quite strict for women get in and out at night time,” said CJCE member Puy Kea. “Because their family might have a bad image that she is not a good woman by working after the sunset while others people are sleeping. That is the reason that some women still observe this custom.”



So how are professional associations working to change the gender balance in Cambodia’s media?

Borisoth said the gender situation is definitely better than ten years ago. The CJCE said it does training and workshops with women reporters and is “very open” for female members for improving gender equality (though it doesn’t currently have any). He would like it to be a role model for other organizations by providing opportunities to get women in senior decision-making roles.

Puy Kea acknowledges that the challenge is a complex one for them to address.

“At the moment . . . I don’t have any comments on how to make those women improvement in media fields. But, I am sure that not only organizations where I am working nowadays but also others are encouraging women. Anyways, women themselves have to be strong too.”

“But no matter how many less media women participates, we still have plans to invite them to come join and (get) involved with us. As long as she likes and loves this field, we will give them a chance,” he said.

A media organisation breaking free of the cultural constraints

In the Cambodian culture context, a wife has to take care of her family, her husband, and do the housework. Even with progress in society, technology, and innovation, most people and families maintain this custom, especially in rural areas.

The Women’s Media Centre (WMC) in Cambodia is one of the key institutions working to change the social attitudes that are restricting the involvement of women in the media and journalism.

The director of WMC, Chea Sundaneth, says that in the media, the need is greater than ever to get women to work in the media. But achieving this is a challenge, for a number of reasons in Cambodia because:

- A woman’s family, including her husband, do not value jobs in the media because they think that the work is difficult as well as dangerous, and does not pay well.
- A woman working in the media does not have much time to spend with her family.

The WMC acknowledges the extreme difficulty it has to encourage females to even join the profession, let alone encourage them into decision-making roles.

Since 1995 the non-for-profit NGO has been committed to promote gender equity, women’s empowerment and raising gender awareness in Cambodia, through a number of programs including television and radio. The mission of the Centre is to use the media as a path to achieve women empowerment and gender equity through addressing social issues related to women.

However, they are facing a challenging environment.

“For the last decade, we have seen how modern women work independently compared to the past,” says Sundaneth. “There have been very few women working here in the traditional roles of cameraman, reporters and producers. But I am happy to see women making real progress!”



Women reporters face greater challenges, some you wouldn't expect, even over matters as simple as getting around!

"Sometimes, a woman will ride a motorbike by herself for a long way to interview a source who lives far from town. And, we don't know about her security, safety, and the risks she may face in the field," said reporter Sem Pisey said.

The WMC continues to work hard to overcome these obstacles and encourage women to participate in the media. As one of the leading independent media organisations in Cambodia, with its radio station and television programs, the Centre promotes women's issues, voices and perspectives like no other media outlet in Cambodia.

One of the feature programs of the WMC is Women's Radio FM 102 which produces educational radio programs designed for all sectors of Cambodian society, especially women in rural areas. Across the country the radio is broadcast in Phnom Penh, four provinces, Kampong Thom, Svay Reing, Battambang and Kratie, as well as on a number of partner radios giving them a potential reach of 75% of the population.

Since its first air date in 1999, the station has continuously received positive feedback, rating in the top five radio stations in Cambodia and is more popular with female listeners than males.^{xvii}

Sundaneth knows that although the WMC is making ground in terms of getting the voices of women heard, there are still a number of challenges. They work hard to ensure women are not disheartened.

Through their Women's Community Voices program, they have rolled out a number of training programs for the community radios in Kratie and Stung Treng province. The teams at these stations have been trained technically in radio technique and radio journalism and professionally in gender and the media. During their gender training, participants discuss policies to promote gender equity, women's empowerment in the media and propose gender intervention work plans. Empowering women to be part of the media landscape is one of the ways the WMC is ensuring change.

The WMC also has a different management model to the traditional Cambodian women. Over 60% of the people working there are women, and the by-laws on the centre state that the executive director and directors of the different media divisions all have to be women.

However they do not discriminate when hiring new staff. They stress the importance of equal opportunity and as such encourage male and female journalists to apply. There is also not a gender pay gap – unlike other Cambodian media outlets.

Noeun Sam is one of the male reporters at WMC and says he has never heard complaints of discrimination or bias based on gender, because everyone is treated fairly, both in salary and opportunities.

His work approach on gender equity also extends to his home and family. "I am not censoring my wife or my daughter against working in the media. On the contrary, I usually tell them that they can learn a great deal by working in the media. It is not a bad job at all and it can help develop our society."



While Cambodian women are still under pressure to play an important role as a good mother and wife, and to take proper care of their families, the WMC has become an important media institution in challenging and developing traditional perceptions.

Chea Sundaneth said: “We are trying to promote recruitment of more and more women to help advance gender equality and women’s rights in society. This will help give balance to news coverage because we have both men and women participating. It proves to men that a woman can do more than they ever expected.”

High focus on training in media workforce

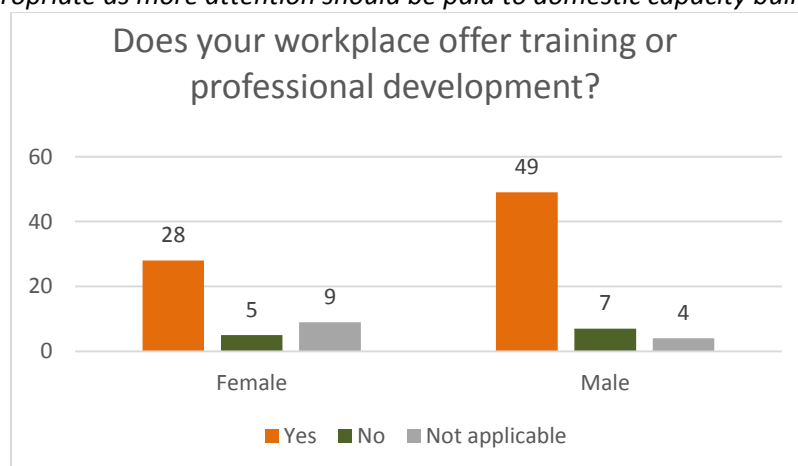
More than 20 years after the 1991 Paris Peace Accords brought an end to communist rule in Cambodia and the beginning of a free press, the country's media institutions still have a way to go.

By 2000, there were many critics of the “millions of dollars spent by the international community to train journalists and encourage free expression” yet meanwhile professional remained sadly lacking, particularly in the Khmer language press^{xviii}.

People like the former American publisher and editor of the bi-weekly English language *Phnom Penh Post*, former Michael Hayes, criticised the training and lack of follow-up by NGO’s which “don’t report failures” in training approaches. But he also suggested that “maybe it takes a generation to achieve real results”.

There is no doubt Cambodia’s media is getting a share of training. A staggering 72.64 percent of respondents said that their workplace offered training or professional development, with an even gender breakdown for this response. Those who hadn’t gave the following reasons:

- *Since working in my organisation, I have never been offered training* – Female
- *Too much work to attend* – Male
- *There are not many opportunities for training of foreign journalists in Cambodia, which I find to be appropriate as more attention should be paid to domestic capacity building* - Male



Most respondents (93.39 percent) had participated in or been offered training through work or other avenues. Of these trainings, 67.68 percent were offered by NGOs, 46.46 percent were offered by employers, and 26.26 percent were offered by the IFJ.

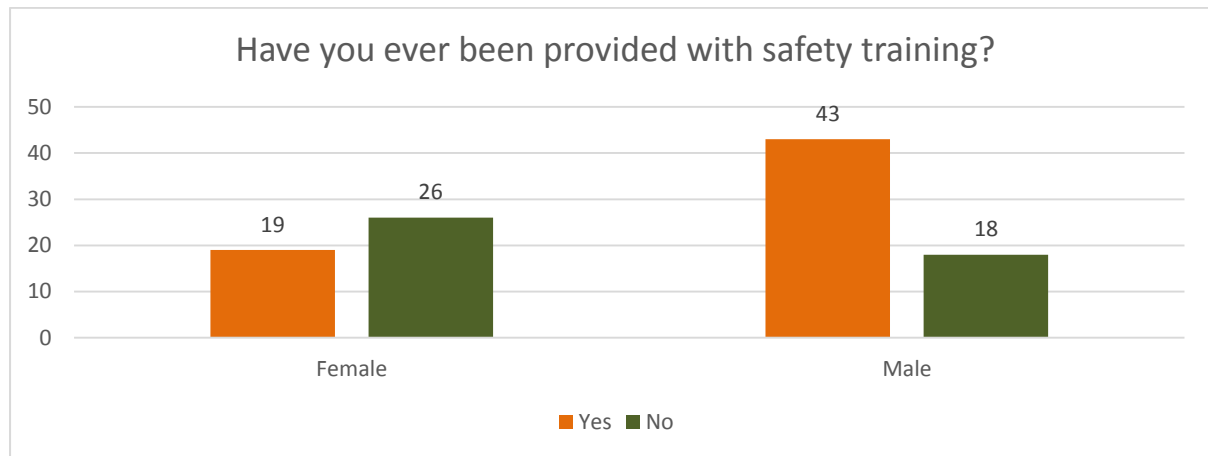


Of those receiving training, the greatest proportions of female respondents (76.74 percent) had been trained by NGOs, followed by work (39.53 percent), unions (13.95 percent) and the IFJ (11.63 percent).

Training of male journalists was more proportionate with men trained by NGOs (60.71 percent) still leading. This was followed by work (51.78 percent), IFJ (37.50 percent) and unions (12.50 percent).

Comparatively, women receive slightly more training than their male counterparts in trainings provided by NGOs and work and union trainings. Men receive more than double the training offered by IFJ than women in Cambodia, an issue that IFJ is increasingly tackling through the imposition of quotas on women attending its workshops.

When asked about the proportion of women in trainings, most respondents (38.67 percent) said the composition of women in these trainings was between 10 to 25 percent of the group.



While women are clearly being trained, the research highlighted that safety trainings are not being equitably delivered with more than half (57.77 percent) not having received any safety training compared to more than 70 percent of men.

Most of those who had undertaken safety training were trained by NGOs, followed by employers and then the IFJ.

MuyHong, of *The Phnom Penh Post* said training was the paper’s top priority, offering trainings in gender and the media, combatting sexual harassment and workplace bullying. The organisation also provides important safety training for employees, as well as brochures and safety information packs.

The silence on sexual harassment

The Labor Law in Cambodia strictly forbids all forms of sexual harassment at the workforce. Section 8, article 172 states:

“All employers and managers of establishments in which child labourers or apprentices less than eighteen years of age or women work, must watch over their good behaviour and maintain their decency before the public. All form of sexual violation (harassment) is strictly forbidden.”

The penal code criminalizes sexual harassment, imposing penalties of six days to three months imprisonment and fines of 100,000 to 500,000 riel (approximately US\$25 to \$125)^{xix}. A US



government report, said prosecutions are rare and there are no real figures collected on the incidence of sexual harassment in Cambodia. This might also suggest public awareness is very low.

Most collective agreements outline the same policy as that set in the law, which forbids all forms of sexual harassment at the workplace. But they do not necessarily specify that employers must solve the complaints related to sexual harassment carefully and conscientiously.

Just 11 of the 106 respondents (10.37 percent) said they had witnessed sexual harassment. Of these, 8 were male and 3 were female. Just four (8.88 percent) of the 45 women surveyed had personally experienced sexual harassment. Five more (11.11 percent) had experienced harassment but said it was not sexual. No men experience either type of harassment.

Three of the four women said the harassment came from a superior at work. One said it had come from a union person. None of the women told anyone about the incident, citing 'shame/embarrassment', 'scared that it would affect my job' or that they 'dealt with it myself'.

Further highlighting this challenging situation, almost half of respondents (46.22 percent) said there was no official complaints cell or sexual harassment policy in their workplace. Just over a fifth of respondents (21.69 percent) said their workplace had a police or complaints cell, while nearly a third (27.35 percent) said they did not know if such a policy existed.

When asked what measures could effectively combat sexual harassment, most (61.32 percent) identified 'stronger laws' as the first priority by a large margin. This was followed by 'punitive measures', 'awareness raising among women', and 'effective complaints mechanism'. Interestingly, 'awareness raising among men' was not considered a high priority, chosen by just 11.32 percent of respondents.

The Phnom Penh Post's MuyHong said that although there is sexual harassment law in Cambodia, the broad nature of it made it easy for perpetrators to go unpunished. *The Post* does not have a workplace sexual harassment policy, but she said that sexual harassment was not a problem there and that even without a policy, sexual harassment is illegal.

The Cambodian Club of Journalists does not have a sexual harassment policy in place, because they have never had any cases brought to their attention. However they do have a Code of Conduct, by the Ministry of Information which is used as a reference by the organisation.

More women needed at every level

According to the World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Report, Cambodia has continued to slip in rank from 89 in 2006 to 108 in 2014 from 142 countries.

When asked about strategies and initiatives that could tackle the issues, interestingly, 43.40 percent of respondents said their workplace had a gender equity policy. Among the entire survey group, nearly three quarters (71.70 percent) thought having such a policy contributed to gender equity.

When asked what strategies could make a difference to gender equity issues such as portrayal of women and career advancement, most (58.49 percent) said 'having more women in the media at every level' – the highest response for both men and women. More than a quarter (33.96 percent) said 'having more women in decision-making roles'.



Women were equally divided (53.33 percent each) in agreement that gender equity training ‘would help people better understand the issue’ and ‘could improve the working environment for men and women’.

Men were in virtually line with this response and 36.06 percent they would participate in gender equity training. Interestingly, 19.67 percent of men said gender equity training is not needed ‘because women already have equal rights’.

In terms of strategies and provisions to improve gender equity in the media or workplace, respondents could choose a selection of responses. Most respondents (41.51 percent) chose an ‘equal opportunity or gender equity policy’, followed by ‘ILO maternity/paternity leave conventions’ (31.13 percent) and a ‘dignity at work’ policy (26.41 percent).

What strategies or provisions do you think would improve gender equality in your media or workplace?	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total
ILO maternity/paternity leave conventions	15	18	33	25%	17.47%	20.24%
Dignity at work policy	8	20	28	13.33%	19.41%	17.17%
Pay audits	6	6	12	10%	11.65%	7.63%
Health and safety audits	4	8	12	6.66%	7.76%	7.63%
Flexible work options	7	11	18	11.66%	10.67%	11.04%
Sexual harassment policy	5	11	16	8.33%	10.67%	9.81%
Equal opportunity or gender equity policy	15	29	44	25%	28.15	26.99%
Total	60	103	163	36.80%	63.19%	100%

Interestingly, given the cultural expectations around family, ‘flexible work options’ was fourth on the list and despite an alarming pay gap identified in the research, only 11.32 percent identified pay audits as a priority – a greater proportion of women, however, considered it a higher priority than men while men rated a dignity at work policy higher than women.

The highest proportion of women, more than a quarter (28.88 percent), felt unions ‘could improve their work on gender equity’.

Men were less unified in their responses with a fifth (21.31 percent) said unions ‘should work with media employers on joint strategies on gender equity’. Another fifth (19.67 percent) said unions ‘already promote diversity and equity’ contrasted to another equally sized group which felt unions ‘could improve their work on gender equity’.

Surprisingly though, only 12.26 percent wanted their union to adopt a gender policy.

Um Sarin, President of the Committee for the Protection of Journalists (CAPJ) said unions had to do more and good policy and training were vital to improving gender equity in the media landscape and should be supported by the government and stakeholders.

CNC’s Huy Vannack is against the notion or recruitment strategies to target women and that CNC only prioritises women when they are qualified. He is adamantly opposed to notions of quotas.



“The training and encouragement is aimed to make everyone qualified,” he said. “Determining quota for how many percentages of your staff are women may only create nepotism and bureaucracy at the workplace, I believe.”

Gender balance in the media

Half of all respondents felt that women comprised of 20-30 percent of people appearing in the news as sources or experts. Another 31.13 percent felt women comprised less than 10 percent of these people.

In terms of depictions in the media and the use of gender stereotypes, the most commonly agreed depiction by both men and women (from a top choice of four) was that of women as ‘family figures’. This was followed by ‘experts/leaders’, ‘victims’ and ‘weak and timid’. The lowest proportion, saw women as ‘defying stereotypes’.

In your opinion, women in news content are most often depicted as:	Total	Male	Female	Male	Female	Total
Family figures	74	24	50	32%	68%	17%
Sexual objects	34	19	15	56%	44%	8%
Experts / leaders	63	24	39	38%	62%	15%
Victims	61	27	34	44%	56%	14%
Survivors	34	15	19	44%	56%	8%
Negatively stereotyped	33	15	18	45%	55%	8%
Defying stereotypes	14	8	6	57%	43%	3%
Equal citizens	42	18	24	43%	57%	10%
Heroes	24	13	11	54%	46%	6%
Weak and timid	45	17	28	38%	62%	11%
Grand Total	424	180	244	42%	58%	100%

Among the measure outlined to promote gender equity in news content, half of respondents felt the answer lay in having more ‘women in decision-making roles’, and ‘more women journalists and editors’.

Women (16.39 percent) also felt strongly about ‘enforcement of guidelines on gender equity’.

Bopha Phorn, of VOA Khmer, says coverage of women’s issues in Cambodia remains at very poor levels and the picture is far from complete.

“I am not sure why,” she said. “Mostly the media report on domestic violence, for example when husbands mistreat their wives. Besides this issue, I’ve not seen much regarding women’s health, family planning, women’s struggle in daily life. We need more journalists to cover and write about these issues.”



Conclusion

Cultural traditions have a strong hold on gender stereotypes in Cambodia. There is no doubt these are still also strongly felt in the media industry, where women are increasingly either not encouraged or actively deterred culturally from joining the profession.

For those who do pursue a career in journalism they face a number of hurdles – primarily being strongly outnumbered in all areas by their male counterparts.

Change in Cambodia’s media in terms of gender equity is going to take time. However institutions such as the Women’s Media Centre have proven that change can be achieved. Without doubt, attitudes towards female journalists have shifted notably in the past decade.

Media organisations must institute policies that are both supportive of female journalists working but also bring them in to the decision-making process, both in determining hiring policies and in the presentation of the news. Without female perspectives, women’s issues cannot be properly covered and rigid and long-held cultural stereotypes cannot be challenged.

Sexual harassment, seen or unseen, remains a challenge. Most importantly, the discussion needs to begin in terms of raising awareness of women’s rights and also determining the best approaches. Educating journalists, media workers and media executives is the first step to ensuring it is taken on board as an issue and so female journalists can feel safe and comfortable to either join the media or continue their work.

While there are many challenges identified in the research, there are positives.

Women are stepping out of traditional roles dictated by society and they are finding other, more unique ways to have their opinions and perspectives heard. They are making major headway in radio journalism and in the online space. Bloggers are the driving force behind this change, which sees them able to freely express themselves and work without many of the challenges facing female journalists in traditional news media.

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