

Handbook for Reporting
on
Democracy and Good Governance
Beyond Headlines and Sound-bites

Centre for Civic Education Pakistan
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Democracy, Good Governance and Media: a mutually reinforcing relationship

Information is often regarded oxygen for democracy and transparent governance and it empower the citizens. Societies with media poverty most of the time end up in the quagmire of chaos and crisis characterized by extreme poverty, dysfunctional institutions, political, social and economic exclusions, human rights abuses, and absence of rule of law.

The mass media are often referred to as the fourth estate because of the power they wield and the oversight function they exercise especially in the realm of democracy and governance. The media's key role in democratic governance has been recognized since the late 17th century, and remains a fundamental principle of modern-day democratic theory and practice.

This handbook especially designed for working journalists examines the complex and multi-dimensional linkages among the media, democracy, good governance and peaceful development.

The media shape public opinion, but they are in turn influenced and manipulated by different interest groups in society. The media can promote democracy by among other things, educating voters, protecting human rights, promoting tolerance among various social groups, and ensuring that governments are transparent and accountable. The media, however, can play anti-democratic roles as well. They can sow fear, division and violence. Instead of promoting democracy, they can contribute to democratic decay.

The handbook explains the constraints that hobble the media's ability to play a positive role in new democracies. Monopolistic ownership and stringent government controls are among those constraints. But the market — and the race among media firms for audience and market share — can degrade the quality of media reporting as well. In addition, unethical journalistic practices and the use of media organizations by various vested and sometimes, retrogressive, interests contribute to the media's inability to fulfill their democratic function.

The handbook looks at the variety of ways in which the various media have been used to support democracy and development. The media, for example, have exposed malfeasance in high office, resulting in the enactment of governance reforms. In addition, in many new and restored democracies, the media have contributed to public education and enlightenment, reconciliation among warring social groups, and to initiating much-needed political and social reforms.

What is the situation in Pakistan and what are the prospects for democracy and good governance in the age of media abundance? It will be too early to judge. Center for Civic Education Pakistan with support from European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) invites media professionals to embrace the challenges of new media environment and help promote democracy as a culture, mindset, method of interest articulation, and a mechanism of representation through peoples' will.

Chapter 1:

Understanding Democracy

Democracy is a contested concept. Different definitions and theories emphasize different aspects of democracy. Rational and democratic understanding of democracy is that of a system of political governance whose decision-making power is subject to the controlling influence of citizens who are considered political equals. A democratic political system is inclusive, participatory, representative, accountable, transparent and responsive to citizens' aspirations and expectations.

Democracy is not an all-or-nothing affair. It is a question of the degree to which citizens exercise control over political decision-making and are treated as equals. These values of democracy are realized through political institutions and practices. There is no universal model of democracy. A country's political institutions and practices are often shaped by its history, culture, social and economic factors. Democratization is not a linear process that moves from an authoritarian to a democratic regime. It is a multi-faceted, multi-disciplinary process that moves back and forth, where some institutions are more developed than others. A functioning democracy therefore, requires many interdependent elements and processes that are based on a culture of citizen participation in public affairs.

Democracy may be a word familiar to most, but it is a concept still misunderstood and misused in a time when totalitarian regimes and military dictatorships alike have attempted to claim popular support by pinning democratic labels upon themselves. In the dictionary definition, democracy "is government by the people in which the supreme power is vested in the people and exercised directly by them or by their elected representatives under a free electoral system." In the words of Abraham Lincoln, democracy is a government "of the people, by the people, and for the people."

Freedom and democracy are often used interchangeably, but the two are not synonymous. Democracy is indeed a set of ideas and principles about freedom, but it also consists of a set of practices and procedures that have been molded through a long, often tortuous history. In short, democracy is the institutionalization of freedom. For this reason, it is possible to identify the time-tested fundamentals of constitutional government, human rights, and equality before the law that any society must possess to be properly called democratic.

Democracies fall into two basic categories, direct and representative. In a direct democracy, all citizens, without the intermediary of elected or appointed officials, can participate in making public decisions. Such a system is clearly only practical with relatively small numbers of people — in a community organization or community council, for example, or the local unit of a labor union, where members can meet in a single room to discuss issues and arrive at decisions by consensus or majority vote. Ancient Athens, the world's first democracy, managed to practice direct democracy with an assembly that may have numbered as many as 5,000 to 6,000 persons — perhaps the maximum number that can physically gather in one place and practice direct democracy.

Modern society, with its size and complexity, offers few opportunities for direct democracy. Even in the northeastern United States, where the New England town meeting is a hallowed tradition, most communities have grown too large for all the residents to gather in a single location and vote directly on issues that affect their lives.

Today, the most common form of democracy, whether for a town of 50,000 or nations of 150 million, is representative democracy, in which citizens elect officials to make political decisions, formulate laws, and administer programmes for the public good.

In the name of the people, such officials can deliberate on complex public issues in a thoughtful and systematic manner that requires an investment of time and energy that is often impractical for the vast majority of private citizens. How such officials are elected can vary enormously. On the national level, for example, legislators can be chosen from demarcated single constituency. Alternatively, under a system of proportional representation, each political party is represented in the legislature according to its percentage of the total vote nationwide. Provincial and local elections can mirror these national models, or choose their representatives more informally through group consensus instead of elections. Whatever the method used, public officials in a representative democracy hold office in the name of the people and remain accountable to the people for their actions.

Majority Rule and Minority Rights

All democracies are systems in which citizens freely make political decisions by majority rule. But rule by the majority is not necessarily democratic. No-one, for example, would call a system fair or just that permitted 51 percent of the population to oppress the remaining 49 percent in the name of the majority.

In a democratic society, majority rule must be coupled with guarantees of individual human rights that, in turn, serve to protect the rights of minorities — whether ethnic, religious, or political, or simply the losers in the debate over a piece of controversial legislation. The rights of minorities do not depend upon the goodwill of the majority and cannot be eliminated by majority vote. The rights of minorities are protected because democratic laws and institutions protect the rights of all citizens.

It is an established norm of modern democracy that when a representative democracy operates in accordance with a constitution that limits the powers of the government and guarantees fundamental rights to all citizens, this form of government is a constitutional democracy. In such a society, the majority rules, and the rights of minorities are protected by law and through the institutionalization of law.

These elements define the fundamental elements of all modern democracies, no matter how varied in history, culture, and economy. Despite their enormous differences as nations and societies, the essential elements of constitutional government — majority rule coupled with individual and minority rights, and the rule of law — many societies do enjoy the fruits of the vibrant democratic systems. Pakistan continues to pass through the complex phase of transition to real democracy.

Democratic Society

Democracy is more than a set of constitutional rules and procedures that determine how a government functions. In a democracy, government is only one element coexisting in a social fabric of many and varied institutions, political parties, organizations, and associations. This diversity is called pluralism, and it assumes that the many organized groups and institutions in a democratic society do not depend upon government for their existence, legitimacy, or authority.

Thousands of private organizations operate in a democratic society, some local, and some national. Many of them serve a mediating role between individuals and the complex social and governmental institutions of which they are a part, filling roles not given to the government and offering individuals opportunities to exercise their rights and responsibilities as citizens of a democracy. These groups represent the interests of their members in a variety of ways — by supporting candidates for public office, debating issues, and trying to influence policy decisions. Through such groups, individuals have an avenue for meaningful participation both in government and in their own communities.

In an authoritarian society, virtually all such organizations would be controlled, licensed, watched, or otherwise accountable to the government. In a democracy, the powers of the government are, by law, clearly defined and sharply limited. As a result, private organizations are free of government control; on the contrary, many of them lobby the government and seek to hold it accountable for its actions. Other groups, concerned with the arts, the practice of religious faith, scholarly research, or other interests, may choose to have little or no contact with the government at all. In this busy private realm of democratic society, citizens can explore the possibilities of freedom and the responsibilities of self-government un-pressured by the potentially heavy hand of the state.

The pillars of democracy

- Sovereignty of the people
- Individual freedom with social responsibility
- Government based upon consent of the governed
- Majority rule
- Minority rights
- Guarantee of basic human rights
- Free and fair elections
- Independent judiciary and equality before the law
- Due process of law
- Constitutional limits on government
- Social, economic, and political pluralism
- Values of tolerance, pragmatism, cooperation, and compromise
- Vibrant and responsible civil society based on vigilant citizenry
- Free and responsible media
- Access to information

The role of the media in deepening democracy

Since the 17th century, the role of the press as fourth estate and as a forum for public discussion and debate has been recognized. Today, despite the mass media's propensity for sleaze, sensationalism and superficiality, the notion of the media as watchdog, as guardian of the public interest, and as a conduit between governments and the governed remains deeply ingrained.

The reality, however, is that the media in a democracy do not always live up to the ideal. Stringent laws hobble them and so does monopolistic ownership, and sometimes, the threat of brute force. State controls are not the only constraints. Serious reporting is difficult to sustain in competitive media markets that put a premium on the shallow and sensational. Moreover, the media are sometimes used as proxies in the battle between rival political groups, in the process sowing divisiveness rather than consensus, hate speech instead of sober debate, and suspicion rather than social trust. In these cases, the media contribute to public cynicism and democratic decay. Still, in many fledgling democracies, the media have been able to assert their role in buttressing and deepening democracy.

Investigative reporting, which in some countries has led to the ouster of high public officials and the fall of corrupt governments, has made the media an effective and credible watchdog and boosted its credibility among the public. Investigative reporting has also helped accustom officials to an inquisitive press and helped build a culture of openness and disclosure that has made democratically elected governments more accountable.

Democracy requires the active participation of citizens. Ideally, the media should keep citizens engaged in the business of governance by informing, educating and mobilizing the public. In many new democracies, along with the print and electronic TV media, radio has also become the medium of choice, as it is less expensive and more accessible. FM and community radio have been effective instruments for promoting grassroots democracy by airing local issues, providing an alternative source of information to official channels, and reflecting ethnic and linguistic diversity. The Internet, too, can play such a role, because of its interactivity, relatively low costs of entry and freedom from state control.

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The media can also help build peace and social consensus, without which democracy is threatened. The media can provide warring groups mechanisms for mediation, representation and voice so they can settle their differences peacefully. Unfortunately, the media have sometimes fanned the flames of discord by taking sides, reinforcing prejudices, muddling facts and peddling half-truths. "Peace journalism," which is being promoted by various Non Governmental Organizations and Civil Society Organizations endeavors to promote reconciliation through careful reportage that gives voice to all sides of a conflict and resists explanation for violence in terms of innate enmities.

The media can play a positive role in democracy only if there is an enabling environment that allows them to do so. They need the requisite skills for the kind of in-depth reporting that a vibrant democracy requires. There should also be mechanisms to ensure they are held accountable to the public and that ethical and professional standards are upheld.

Media independence is guaranteed if media organizations are financially viable, free from

In the early 1700s, the French political philosopher Montesquieu, raging against the secret accusations delivered by Palace courtiers to the French king, prescribed publicity as the cure for the abuse of power. English and American thinkers later in that century would agree with Montesquieu, recognizing the importance of the press in making officials aware of the public's discontents and allowing governments to rectify their errors.

Since then, the press has been widely proclaimed as the "Fourth Estate," a coequal pillar of democracy that provides the check and balance without which governments cannot be effective. For this reason, democrats through the centuries have tended to take the Enlightenment's instrumentalist view of the press. Thomas Jefferson, for all his bitterness against journalistic criticism celebrated the press, arguing that only through the exchange of information and opinion through the press would the truth emerge. Thus the famous Jeffersonian declaration: "Were it left to me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers or newspapers without government, I should not hesitate to prefer the latter."

Modern-day democrats are as hyperbolic in their praise of the press. Despite the present-day mass media's propensity for sleaze, sensationalism and superficiality, they are still seen as essential democratic tools. Contemporary democratic theory appreciates the role of media in ensuring governments are held accountable. In both new and old democracies, the notions of the media as watchdog instead of a lapdog and not merely a passive recorder of events are widely accepted.

Governments, it is argued, cannot be held accountable if citizens are ill-informed about the actions of officials and institutions. The watchdog press is guardian of the public interest, warning citizens against those who are doing them harm. A fearless and effective watchdog is critical in fledgling democracies where institutions are weak and pummeled by political pressure. When legislatures, judiciaries and other oversight bodies are powerless against the mighty or are themselves corruptible, the media are often left as the only check against the abuse of power. This requires that they play a heroic role, exposing the excesses of presidents, prime ministers, legislators and executive officials despite the risks.

In new democracies, the expectation is that the media would help build a civic culture and a tradition of discussion and debate, which was not possible during the period of authoritarian rule. Not just journalists, but eminent contemporary thinkers like Nobel laureate Amartya Sen ascribe to the press the same cleansing powers that Enlightenment philosophers had envisioned. Sen outlined the need for "transparency guarantees" such as a free press and the free flow of information. Information and critical public discussion, he said, are "an inescapably important requirement of good public policy."

These guarantees, he wrote, "have a clear instrumental role in preventing corruption, financial irresponsibility and underhanded dealings." Sen sees the media as a watchdog not just against corruption but also against disaster. "There has never been a famine in a functioning multiparty democracy," he said.

Since the late 1990s, donor countries and multilateral organizations have also been preaching the virtues of a free press, not just in ensuring good and accountable governance but also as a tool for poverty reduction, popular empowerment and national reconciliation. The United Nations

Development Program (UNDP) says that addressing poverty requires not just a transfer of economic resources to the needy but also making information available to the poor so that they can participate more meaningfully in political and social life.

After all, the poor cannot assert their rights if they don't know what these are. If they are unaware of the laws and procedures for availing themselves of their entitlements or the mechanisms they can use to remedy their deprivations, they will always remain poor. Democracy cannot take root if the poor and powerless are kept out of the public sphere. The argument is that effective media are the key as they can provide the information poor people need to take part in public life.

Ideally, the media should provide voice to those marginalized because of poverty, gender, or ethnic or religious affiliation. By giving these groups a place in the media, their views — and their afflictions — become part of mainstream public debate and hopefully, contribute to a social consensus that the injustices against them ought to be redressed. In this way, the media also contribute to the easing of social conflicts and to promoting reconciliation among divergent social groups.

All these are extrapolations on the media's role as virtual town hall or public square: by providing information and acting as a forum for public debate, the media play a catalytic role, making reforms possible through the democratic process and, in the end, strengthening democratic institutions and making possible public participation, without which democracy is a mere sham.

Constraints on the media

The reality, however, is that the media in emerging democracies are not always up to the task. For sure, democracy has been a boon to the press. More and more Constitutions are providing guarantees of press freedom and the right to information, allowing journalists to report on areas that were previously taboo. Today, in most countries that have undergone a democratic transition since the 1980s, the press is an important player on the political stage. Corrupt politicians often fear journalists because they have succeeded in uncovering corruption, the abuse of power and assorted malfeasance.

They are also relentlessly wooed because a bad press can mean the end of a political career. Policies have been changed, reforms initiated and corrupt officials — including presidents and prime ministers — ousted partly because of media exposes. In many new democracies, an adversarial press is part of the political process and it is hard to imagine how governments would function without it. Yet, despite constitutional guarantees and in many cases, also wide public support, the media in fledgling democracies have been hobbled by stringent laws, monopolistic ownership and sometimes, brute force. State controls are not the only constraints. Serious reporting is difficult to sustain in media markets that put a premium on the shallow and the sensational. A media explosion often follows the fall of dictatorships.

After Ferdinand Marcos was toppled in 1986, for example, scores of new newspapers and radio stations sprang up in the Philippines, as citizens basked in the novelty of a free press. In Indonesia, hundreds of new newspapers opened after the 32-year reign of President Soeharto ended in 1998. Indonesians called it the 'euphoria press.' Pakistan is one of the case studies. New

emerging dawn of relatively vibrant media emerged after the downfall and demise of dictatorship in 1988.

Euphoria is a wonderful thing, but it does not always give birth to good journalism. The same is the case for Central and Eastern Europe and the newly independent states of the former Soviet Union, where there was a lack of skilled journalists to staff the news organizations created by the media boom. The boom also results in intense competition, which often means racing for the headlines and sacrificing substance and depth.

The competition for the market has meant that the media in most new democracies have succumbed to the global trend of “dumping down” the news. This is especially the case in television, where reports on crime and entertainment drown out the more important news of the day. The stress on glitzy effects and bite-size news reports leaves no time for serious and in-depth discussion of the issues that matter. The result is that public discourse is dumped down as well, as both officials and citizens respond to the “infotainment” type of news they get.

Moreover, in many newsrooms, even in affluent countries, tight budgets do not allow for the investment in time and resources that solid journalism requires. Even as the media in many countries are a profitable enterprise, media managers would rather put their money on technology and effects rather than on reportage. In addition, journalists often do not have the experience and the training to do the kind of contextualized reporting that a vibrant democracy needs. Even if they did, the pecuniary and political interests of media owners limit the freedom of journalists to conduct exposés.

In many countries, a few vested business and political interests control ownership of the media. A 2001 study of 97 countries by the World Bank shows that throughout the world, media monopolies dominate. The study says: “In our sample of 97 countries, only four percent of media enterprises are widely held. Less than two percent have other ownership structures (apart from family or state control), and a mere two percent are employee owned. “On average family-controlled newspapers account for 57 percent of our sample, and families control 34 percent of television stations. State ownership is vast. On average the state controls approximately 29 percent of newspapers and 60 percent of television stations. “The state owns a huge share — 72 percent — of radio stations. The media industry is therefore, owned overwhelmingly by parties most likely to extract private benefits of control.”

Indeed, media owners have not been shy about extracting such private benefits. In the many democracies, media magnates have used their newspapers or broadcast stations to promote their business interests, cut down their rivals, and in other ways advance their political or business agenda. State ownership, meanwhile, allows government functionaries to clamp down on critical reporting and recalcitrant reporters and enables the government to propagate its unchallenged views among the people. The interests of media owners often determine media content and allow the media to be manipulated by vested interests. The result is public apathy and democratic breakdown.

How the media have promoted democracy

In many democracies, market forces, illiberal, challenge the mass media states, and in some cases, a hostile or apathetic citizenry. Yet despite these, news organizations and media NGOs in

many countries have managed to assert the media's role in buttressing and deepening democracy. The following sections describe some of the ways in which media groups have lived up to the democratic ideal of the press as watchdog, public forum, catalyst of social reform, and builder of peace and consensus.

- *Investigative Reporting: The media as watchdog*

Case Studies: Perhaps the most instructive case is that of Latin America, where it is widely acknowledged that sustained investigative reporting on corruption, human rights violations and other forms of wrongdoing has helped build a culture of accountability in government and strengthened the fledgling democracies of the continent. There, media exposure, particularly of corruption in high places, has helped bring down governments. The downfall of four presidents — Fernando Collor de Mello of Brazil in 1992, Carlos Andres Perez of Venezuela in 1993, Abdala Bucaram of Ecuador in 1997 and Alberto Fujimori in 2000 — was due in large measure to investigative reporting on their complicity in corrupt deals. Such reporting has made the press a credible — and prestigious — institution in the region's new democracies. Because it has functioned effectively and independently, the media enjoy the public's support and trust.

In Southeast Asia's new democracies, sustained reporting on malfeasance in public life has resulted in the ouster of corrupt officials and raised public awareness on the need for reform. In the Philippines, investigative reporting provided evidence that led to impeachment charges being filed against President Joseph Estrada in 2000 and fuelled public outrage against his excesses. Estrada was ousted from office in a popular uprising on the streets of Manila in January 2001.

In Thailand, investigative reports unearthed evidence of the shadowy business dealings of Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra. In Indonesia, the press has uncovered wrongdoing that led to the filing of charges against high officials, including the powerful speaker of Parliament, Akbar Tanjung, in 2001.

This success has come at a great cost. The New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists tallied 117 journalists killed in Latin America from 1988 to 1998. In the Philippines, 36 journalists have been slain since the restoration of democracy in 1986. In Thailand and Indonesia, crusading journalists have been beaten up, threatened and killed. Worldwide, 15 of the 68 murdered journalists in 2001 were slain because of investigative work related to corruption. Most of the murders have taken place in countries where the rule of law is weak and the judiciary is unable and unwilling to defend press rights. Because the courts are dishonest and inept, the killers seldom get punished. Those who wish the press ill — whether they are officials, drug cartels or insurgent movements involved in illicit trades or the protection of crime — can operate with impunity.

It is obvious that at the most basic level, a free press — and investigative reporting — are possible only where journalists enjoy some protection. Fledgling democracies have constitutional and legal provisions to defend the press, but these do not always ensure that the media can report without fear or favor. The rights of journalists must be upheld by an independent judiciary and protected by the rule of law. In Latin America and Southeast Asia, many of those murdered were the victims of small-town bosses able to terrorize communities because weak states cannot enforce the law and provide protection to their citizens, journalists included.

That is why the press often seems caught in a chicken-and-egg situation. Its freedoms are not guaranteed unless other democratic institutions perform their functions well; but these institutions are unable to do so because there is no independent check on their performance, in part because the press is threatened and bullied. It is often up to crusading journalists to break this impasse despite the risks. In many places, there is no shortage of journalists willing to take on this task. But many have neither the skills nor the training that investigative reporting requires.

Moreover, news organizations may not be willing to put in the investment in time, resources for research and the development of reportorial talent that investigative journalism needs. Investigative reporting also threatens to upset the cozy relationships between media owners and their friends among the upper crust of business and politics. Press proprietors are wary that hard-hitting exposés might turn off advertisers.

Given these obstacles, the only way that investigative reports can make any headway in the media free market is to show that they can sell newspapers and news programmes and that there is an audience for serious reporting. The truth is that in many countries, investigative reports do sell. They generate a great deal of public reaction and bring recognition to news organizations. The key is to get newsrooms to initiate and invest in investigations despite the costs and the risks.

One way is to convince them of the rewards, in terms of increased audience share, name-brand recognition or professional prestige. Awards for investigative reporting offer one way to encourage this trend. Other, less tangible benefits are perhaps even more important. Carefully researched, high-impact investigative reports help build the media's credibility and support among the public.

The press as an institution is strengthened if journalists have demonstrated that they serve the public interest by uncovering malfeasance and abuse. A credible press is assured of popular backing if it is muzzled or otherwise constrained. Such support may not be forthcoming if journalists squander their freedoms on the superficial and the sensational. Moreover, by constantly digging for information, by forcing government and the private sector to release documents and by subjecting officials and other powerful individuals to rigorous questioning, investigative journalists expand the boundaries of what is possible to print or air.

At the same time, they accustom officials to an inquisitive press. Officials eventually realize that releasing information benefits the government. Without a free flow of official information, journalists will tend to report lies, rumors and speculations, with no-one the better for it. It may take time, but officials must be convinced that informed citizens make better citizens, even if in the process government takes a beating in the press. Any government, no matter how corrupt or autocratic, has reform-minded officials and bureaucrats who appreciate the journalists' role and are willing to co-operate with reporters in the release of information.

In the long term, the constant give-and-take between journalists and officials helps develop a culture — and a tradition — of disclosure. One way to jumpstart investigative journalism is by conducting special training on reporting techniques as well as on reading financial statements, constructing databases and researching on the Internet. Several national and international media

groups are now conducting such training programs. Manuals for investigative reporters, including those that provide tips on where appropriate documents can be found and the procedures for accessing them, arm journalists with the tools they need for conducting research.

- *The press as information tool and forum for discussion*

A truly democratic society requires citizen participation. If they do their jobs well, the media keep citizens engaged in the business of governance and prompt them to take action. As a tool for information dissemination, the media aid the public in making informed choices, such as whom to vote for and which policies should be endorsed and which, opposed.

Ideally newspapers and public affairs programmes on radio and television should inform, educate and engage the public. The media's track record so far in many democracies, however, is uneven. Because of the need to cater to the market or to kowtow to the state, the media often shirk their civic responsibility and contribute to civic illiteracy instead of public enlightenment.

Elections are a key democratic exercise, one where the media can have both positive and negative impacts. As societies become more modernized and the media become ever more pervasive, the influence of traditional patrons, parties and institutions on the electoral process is diminished. Instead, candidates and parties make their appeal and propagate their messages through the media. This is one reason why election campaigns in many countries are now much more expensive. The cost of television and newspaper advertising is huge and now accounts for a substantial chunk of campaign costs.

Well-funded candidates often have a better chance of being voted into office simply because they can buy air time and newspaper space. In some countries, candidates also bribe journalists and editors who endorse their candidacies in various ways. Media-oriented campaigns have not necessarily meant more enlightened electorates. As the example of US elections, which are being mimicked by many new democracies, shows, TV-oriented campaigns tend to put more emphasis on sound bites and glamour, rather than substance and depth. Candidates preen before the electorate, whose choices are often determined by how well the contenders project themselves on the screen. Still, the media in new democracies have contributed to public education on elections.

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In many new democracies, radio has become the medium of choice, taking the place of newspapers in drawing citizens to the town square for discussion and debate. Compared to television, radio is a less expensive and more accessible medium and is especially popular in poor countries where the media infrastructure is not well developed.

- *The media as peace and consensus builder*

Democracy cannot thrive in countries that are in the grip of violence and strife. Ideally, democracy should provide warring groups mechanisms for mediation, representation and voice so that they can settle their differences peacefully. If it is constantly challenged by violence and dissension, the fabric of democracy will become frayed. The experience thus far has shown that the media have not played a neutral role in conflict. In many cases, they have fanned the flames of discord by taking sides, reinforcing prejudices, muddling the facts and peddling half-truths.

The media have also been criticized for sensationalizing violence without explaining the roots of conflict. The media ignore peace-building efforts, critics say, even as they give full coverage

to warmongering. In some cases, they have sowed hate speech and encouraged violence. Recognizing the crucial role that the media play in conflict situations, many NGOs have embarked on training journalists in what is called “peace journalism,” which endeavors to promote reconciliation through careful reportage that gives voice to all sides of a conflict and resists explanations for violence in terms of innate enmities or ancient hatreds.

Peace journalism avoids giving undue attention to violence, focusing instead on the impact of war on communities on both sides of the divide and their efforts to bridge their differences. Peace journalism has been promoted through the training of journalists covering conflict, including journalists who come from the various religious or ethnic groups currently at war.

Useful recommendations and implications for action

The media can make full use of their potential to contribute to the consolidation of democracy if their rights are protected. Moreover, they need to have the requisite skills for the kind of textured and in-depth reporting that democracies require. Because the media are powerful, there should also be mechanisms to ensure they are held accountable to the public and that ethical and professional standards are upheld.

Media independence is guaranteed if media organizations are financially viable, free from the intervention of media owners and operate in a competitive media environment. Finally, the media’s power is enhanced if they have broad reach in, and support from, society.

Democracy suffers if large segments of society are inaccessible to the media and therefore excluded from the arena of public debate. Various initiatives, which have contributed to creating an enabling environment that allows the media to be an effective agent for deepening democracy and which strengthen the media as a democratic institutions include the following:

(a) Protection of journalists

In many fledgling democracies, the media become the target of reprisal from powerful groups and individuals who benefit from the silence of a muzzled press. Journalists need to be protected by laws that guarantee their rights. In many democracies, old laws dating back from the colonial and authoritarian past impose harsh punishments for libel, restrict access to official information and impose strict licensing requirements for media companies.

The repeal of these laws and the enactment of more liberal legislation can have a liberating effect on the media. So will judicial and legal reforms that ensure courts will defend the rights of journalists and punish those guilty of doing them harm?

In many countries, press associations have played an important role in monitoring, protesting and raising public outrage against attacks on journalists. They have helped raise funds for libel defense, provided refuge for journalists in danger of physical attack, and conducted high-level dialogues with officials and relevant interests groups.

(b) Enhancing media accountability

The media’s credibility as a democratic institution is enhanced if they are accountable to the public, acknowledge their mistakes and ensure that ethical and professional standards are upheld. A sensational and trigger-happy press does not contribute to intelligent discussion and debate and soon loses public support.

In many democracies, press and broadcast councils composed of media representatives have taken the lead in enforcing ethical standards and codes of conduct. These councils mediate between the public and the media. Some hear grievances against erring news organizations and impose sanctions. Press associations can play a role not just in defending journalists but also in raising ethical standards. Independent media monitors and journalism reviews contribute to media accountability by assessing media performance, exposing unethical practices and inviting the public to a dialogue about the media's work. Centre for Civic Education Pakistan has embarked on a media monitoring exercise in Pakistan that will have long term consequences for the health of democracy in the country and redefining agenda setting role of media.

Somewhat similar efforts have been undertaken by women's NGOs in various countries, which monitor how the media cover women's issues. Overall, independent efforts to watch the watchdog have contributed to the media being more responsive to public sensitivities and to be more vigilant against lapses in professional conduct. In turn, a professional press is a more effective watchdog and forum for public debate.

(c) Building media capacity.

In nearly all countries that have undergone a democratic transition since the 1980s, it is widely acknowledged that a major factor that hobbles media development is the lack of skills. Newspapers and broadcast stations liberated from the constraints imposed by dictatorship find that reporting on a democracy requires new skills and fresh talent. Freedom alone does not suffice. Journalists have to be weaned away from reliance on press releases, press conferences and information ministries. They must learn how to write with depth and insight and also be adept in a variety of fields.

Newsroom training in many new democracies is sorely lacking. Sometimes, press institutes, universities and media NGOs pick up the slack journalists that a professional press requires and newsrooms too often abdicate their responsibility to ensure the advancement of reportorial talent within their ranks.

(d) Democratizing access

The media can be effective only if they are accessible to a wide section of the population. Otherwise, they only exacerbate the marginalization of social sectors that have access neither to the media nor to the centers of wealth and power. Efforts to democratize access include subsidizing community and local media, especially in poor and remote areas or in places where groups, such as indigenous peoples, have traditionally been at the margins of social life. Subsidies that enable poor communities to have community radios or purchase computers and have Internet access or community centers that provide Internet access at minimal cost help reduce the gap between sections of the population that have can afford the new technology and those who cannot.

Public libraries or reading rooms that allow citizens to read newspapers, especially in places where they cannot afford to buy them, also help make the press more available to a wider audience. Making the media available to a broad segment of society helps redress long-standing social inequities and gives representation and voice to citizens so they can participate more meaningfully in public life.

Chapter 2:

Understanding Good Governance

In contemporary development discourse the terms “governance” and “good governance” are being increasingly used. Bad governance is being increasingly regarded as one of the root causes of all evil within our societies. Major donors and international financial institutions are increasingly basing their aid and loans on the conditions that ensure “good governance.”

In the case of Pakistan, too, international banking and financial institutions publicly pre-condition their aid to “good governance” and “transparency”. This chapter tries to explain, as simply as possible, what “governance” and “good governance” means.

Governance

The concept of “governance” is not new. It is as old as human civilization. Simply put “governance” means the process of decision-making and the process by which decisions are implemented (or not implemented). Governance can be used in several contexts such as corporate governance, international governance, national governance and local governance.

Since governance is the process of decision-making and the process by which decisions are implemented, an analysis of governance focuses on the formal and informal actors involved in decision-making and implementing the decisions made and the formal and informal structures that have been set in place to arrive at and implement the decision.

Government is one of the actors in governance. Other actors involved in governance vary depending on the level of government that is under discussion. In rural areas, for example, other actors may include influential land lords, associations of peasant farmers, cooperatives, NGOs, research institutes, religious leaders, finance institutions political parties, the military etc. The situation in urban areas is much more complex. *Figure 1* provides the interconnections between actors involved in urban governance. At the national level, in addition to the above actors, media, lobbyists, international donors, multi-national corporations, etc. may play a role in decision-making or in influencing the decision-making process.

All actors other than government and the military are grouped together as part of the “civil society.” In some countries, in addition to the civil society, organized crime syndicates also influence decision-making, particularly in urban areas and at the national level. Similarly formal government structures are one means by which decisions are arrived at and implemented. At the national level, informal decision-making structures, such as “kitchen cabinets” or informal advisors may exist.

In urban areas, organized crime syndicates such as the “land mafia” may influence decision-making. In some rural areas, locally powerful families may make or influence decision-making. Such, informal decision-making is often the result of corrupt practices or leads to corrupt practices.

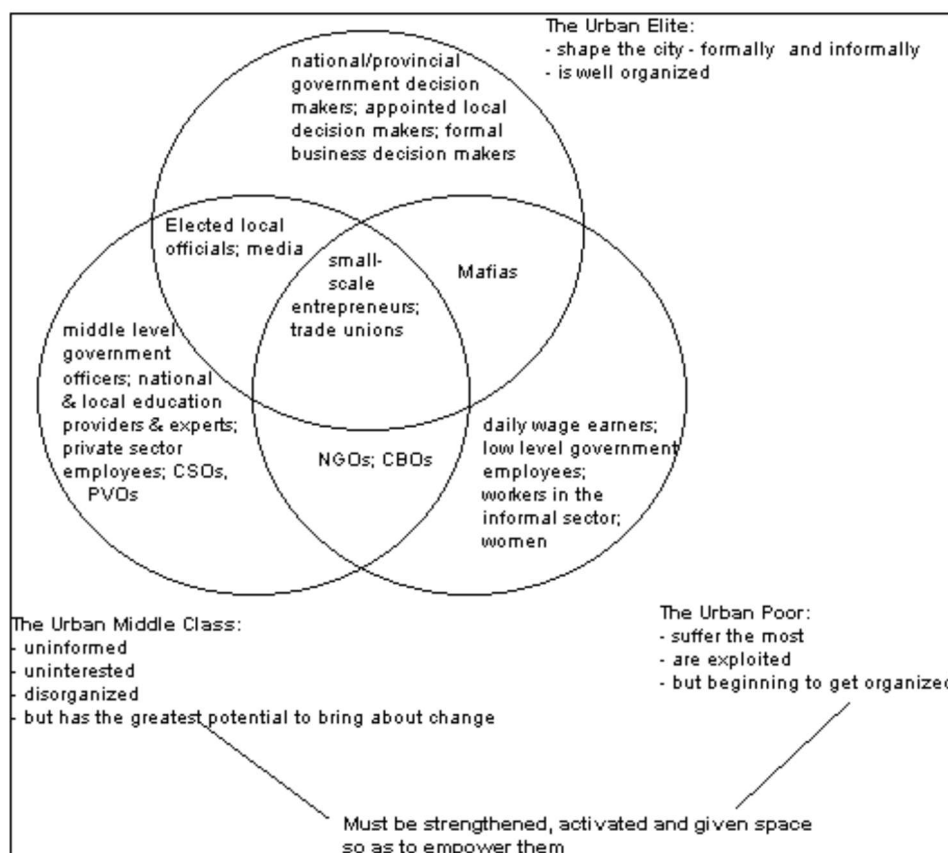


Figure 1: Urban actors

The 3Ps: Polity, politics and policy

A distinction is drawn among the three following dimensions: Polity, politics and policy: First of all, politics has an institutional dimension, which is determined by the constitution, the legal system and tradition. The principles, which serve in forming a political will, are also channelled through institutions: elections, fundamental rights, freedom of opinion, parties and associations. The word used for this institutional dimension of the political process is *polity*.

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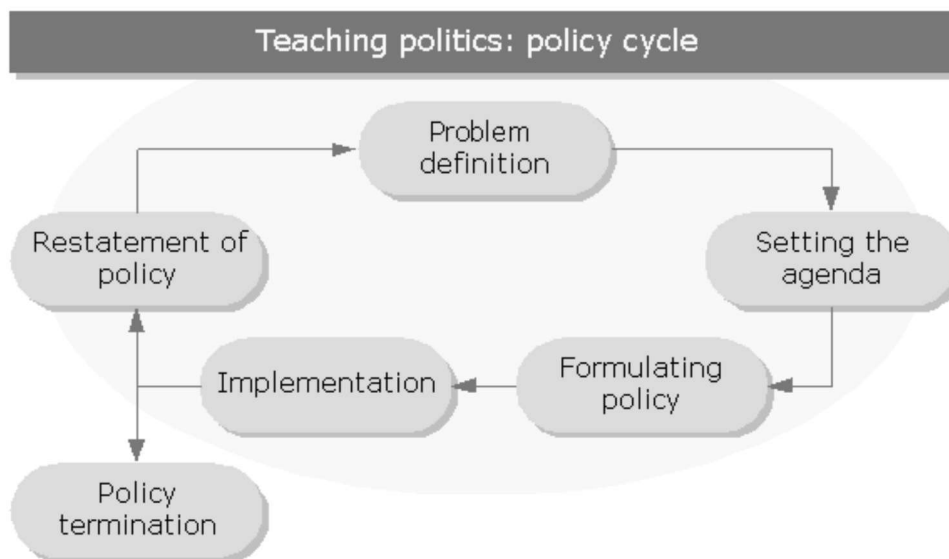
Polity is taken to mean the formal dimension of politics, that is, the structure of norms, the way in which procedures are regulated and the institutions in which politics takes place. The substance-based dimension of politics that refers to the political objectives, tasks and issues is *polity*. The way in which politics is structured and the way in which it sets out to fulfil its tasks is dependent on interests. This aspect offers room for manoeuvre in terms of structuring political substance. Policy as a substance-based dimension of politics refers to solving problems and fulfilling tasks by the administrative system drawing on decisions made by the democratic institutions. The opposition parties fulfil this role by critically analyzing governmental policies and by suggesting the alternatives.

And thirdly, politics has a procedural dimension, which aims to mediate interests through conflict and consensus. Forming a political will or opinion is a continuous process and cannot be understood by studying the institutional or substantive dimensions in isolation. The third dimension

of the political process is known as *politics*. Politics means the procedural dimension, or rather the decision-making processes, the settling of conflicts and the enforcing of goals and interests. When taken together, all three of these dimensions — the institutional, the substance-based and the procedural process — conspire to make up that which can be defined as politics.

Policy cycle

The policy cycle is a concept that has been developed out of the science of analyzing policy and is based on an understanding that, under normal circumstances, a distinction can be made between the different phases (see the schematic illustration) in the policy-making process, that is, the decision-making process that leads to the implementation of what the political parties stand for.



The public becomes aware of an issue as a problem and, because of demands being made by certain groups in society, it is defined as a *problem* for which action needs to be taken to rectify or solve. This problem then becomes a part of the political decision-making agenda, meaning that a decision has to be made as to when and who will deal with the problem and in what form. This is described as agenda-setting.

Then, accompanied by lobbying and political argument, the process of formulating the political position takes place within the set of rules laid down by the individual political system and by the protagonists. This process ends with the laying down of an authoritative assignment of value in the form of a law, a provision or a programme (*policy creation*). This policy is then implemented through sub-ordinate political and administrative institutions (*implementation*). The results and effects of these policy and implementation decisions finally create political reactions of either a positive or negative nature, which, in turn, are also implemented politically and which lead to the continuation, change or end of the policy (*restatement of policy, policy termination*).

Good governance

Good governance has eight major characteristics. It is participatory, consensus-oriented, accountable, transparent, responsive, effective and efficient, equitable and inclusive and follows the rule of law. It assures that corruption is minimized, the views of minorities are taken into account and that the voices of the most vulnerable in society are heard in decision-making. It is also responsive to the present and future needs of society. Let's look at the characteristics in detail.

- *Participation*

Participation by both men and women is a key cornerstone of good governance. Participation could be either direct or through legitimate intermediate institutions or representatives. It is important to point out that representative democracy does not necessarily mean that the concerns of the most vulnerable in society would be taken into consideration in decision-making. Participation needs to be informed and organized. This means freedom of association and expression on the one hand and an organized civil society on the other.

- *Rule of law*

Good governance requires fair legal frameworks that are enforced impartially. It also requires full protection of human rights, particularly those of minorities. Impartial enforcement of laws requires an independent judiciary and an impartial and incorruptible police force.

- *Transparency*

Transparency means that decisions taken and their enforcement are done in a manner that follows rules and regulations. It also means that information is freely available and directly accessible to those who will be affected by such decisions and their enforcement. It also means that enough information is provided and that it is provided in easily understandable forms and media.

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- *Responsiveness*

Good governance requires that institutions and processes try to serve all stakeholders within a reasonable timeframe.

- *Consensus-oriented*

There are several actors and as many view points in a given society. Good governance requires mediation of the different interests in society to reach a broad consensus in society on what is in the best interest of the whole community and how this can be achieved. It also requires a broad and long-term perspective on what is needed for sustainable human development and how to achieve the goals of such development. This can only result from an understanding of the historical, cultural and social contexts of a given society or community.

- *Equity and inclusiveness*

A society's well-being depends on ensuring that all its members feel that they have a stake in it and do not feel excluded from the mainstream of society. This requires all groups, but particularly the most vulnerable, have opportunities to improve or maintain their well-being.

- *Effectiveness and efficiency*

Good governance means that processes and institutions produce results that meet the needs of society while making the best use of resources at their disposal. The concept of efficiency in the context of good governance also covers the sustainable use of natural resources and the protection of the environment.

- *Accountability*

Accountability is a key requirement of good governance. Not only governmental institutions but also the private sector and civil society organizations must be accountable to the public and to their institutional stakeholders. Who is accountable to whom varies depending on whether decisions or actions taken are internal or external to an organization or institution. In general an organization or an institution is accountable to those who will be affected by its decisions or actions. Accountability cannot be enforced without transparency and the rule of law.

It should be clear that good governance is an ideal, which is difficult to achieve in its totality. Very few countries and societies have come close to achieving good governance in its totality. However, to ensure sustainable human development, actions must be taken to work towards this ideal with the aim of making it a reality.

The role of media in good governance

While this media handbook aims to bridge the gaps between the media and all the stakeholders of governance through responsible journalism. To defend the right of freedom of expression, it is appropriate to examine the notion of good governance in the light of this right and its sister right, the right to access to information. Although governments have repeatedly affirmed these rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, many governments infringe upon them through paternalistic censorship, brutal repression of media professionals and refusal to disclose public information. The paradox is clear and invites us to examine both good governance and the role that media can play for governance, as well as the responsibility of those who govern to ensure the conditions for an independent and pluralistic media landscape in their societies.

The United Nations Millennium Declaration represents the strongest unanimous and explicit statement to date of UN Member States in support of democratic and participatory governance.

- The declaration clearly articulates that the Millennium Development Goals must be achieved through good governance within each country and at the international level.

- It also states that Member States, “will spare no effort to promote democracy and strengthen the rule of law” and goes on to resolve “to strengthen the capacity of all countries to implement the principles and practices of democracy and respect of human rights.”
- Reducing poverty through achieving sustainable development is the key objective of UNESCO programme and good governance is central to these efforts.
- Governance implies the ways through which citizens and groups in a society voice their interest, mediate their differences and exercise their legal rights and obligations.
- Good governance includes notions of greater participation by civil society in decision-making, instituting the rule of law, anti-corruption, transparency, accountability, poverty reduction and human rights.
- Good governance links government to the notion of responsibility for and to the citizenry as opposed to the traditional idea of authority over a nation — legitimacy emanating from popular assent to and participation in government, which is concerned with the welfare of its citizens.

The role of the media in promoting good governance is clear

- All aspects of good governance are facilitated by a strong and independent media-scape within a society.
- Only when journalists are free to monitor, investigate and criticize the public administration’s policies and actions can good governance take hold.
- Independent media are like a beacon that should be welcomed when there is nothing to hide and much to improve.
- Indeed, this is the concrete link between the functioning of the media and good governance — the media allow for ongoing checks and assessments by the population of the activities by providing a platform for discussion.
- Instead, all too often governments devise laws and informal means of keeping their activities hidden from public view or only available to media favorable to their viewpoint.
- In recent years, many governments have tried to co-opt journalists by paying part of their salaries.
- If the media are to function in the public interest, governments have to protect the independent functioning of the media and allow various viewpoints to flourish in society.
- Greater participation is crucial for good governance in two ways: greater participation by citizens in the decision-making process allows greater transparency and can help ensure that political decisions are adapted to the needs of the people affected by them.

Second, greater participation is important for democratic legitimacy, which depends on the investment people have as citizens in their own governing.

Participation: The role of independent and pluralistic media in fostering participation is critical, as the media report on aspects of the decision-making process and give stakeholders a voice in that process.

- Freedom of the media allows for the formation of a public sphere in which a wide range of debates can take place and a variety of viewpoints be represented.
- The responsible and vigilant citizenry can thereby use the media to express their assent of dissent or explore aspects of issues not considered through official channels.
- Government has a responsibility to allow the media to contribute to the participation process, especially in arenas where face-to-face participation is not possible.

Human Rights: The Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that all human beings have certain basic inherent, inalienable and unassailable rights to which they are entitled by birth.

- Guaranteeing these rights to citizens is a precondition for a functioning democracy.
- By reporting and denouncing cases of human rights violations, a free and open media can increase awareness among citizens about their rights and act as a reliable source of information on the basis of which civil society organizations and public authorities can work to bring down the incidences of arbitrary abuse. However, many obstacles often face journalists investigating cases of human rights violations: restrictive censorship, lack of fair access to official information, heavy fines or even prison terms.
- Ensuring freedom of expression and press freedom should therefore be regarded as a priority, as they are rights that make it possible to advance and protect other human rights.

The rule of law: The rule of law is implied in the existence of law and other judicial systems within societies and is enshrined in the texts of the law itself.

- The rule of law can be understood both as a set of practices which allow the law to perform a mediating role between various stakeholders in society and as a normative standard invoked by members of society that demonstrate their assent to this principle.
 - The rule of law is fundamental to the stability and smooth functioning of society.
 - Only when the rule of law is respected can citizens have confidence in democratic process over the long term and invest in the sustainable development of their society.
 - When the rule of law is not respected, arbitrariness and impunity dominate the political scene.
 - The rule of law depends heavily on the development of an independent and honest judiciary and the will of any particular government to restrain itself and show respect before the law.
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- The rule of law is best seen not as the given state of affairs of any particular society but as an ideal requiring constant instantiation and vigilance.

The media have a crucial function as the sector of society most able to promote vigilance towards the rule of law, especially through fostering investigative journalism, promoting the openness of court, legislative and administrative proceedings, access to officials and to public documents. The government has a key role here in protecting the independence and pluralism of the media, especially during critical moments of these processes. Corruption is one of the hardest issues states have to face in the governance process. Corrupt practices rob governments of the means to ensure the best life for their people, while many in government may feel that exposure of corruption erodes their legitimacy. Journalists who investigate corruption often face severe reprisals as corrupt officials threaten their place of work, families and reputation.

It is important for governments to take a firm stand against corruption and to protect both whistle-blowers and the media that report on corrupt practices in government.

Legitimacy is only aided by a governance strategy that sees independent investigative media as an ally and not as a threat. A current issue in many governmental reform processes is transparency. As state bureaucracies have grown into large, often opaque entities, practices of secrecy often cover the hidden struggles and interests of particular sectors and civil servants beyond their stated missions.

In some cases, the social networks that link civil servants and the broader society lead to conflicts of interest in the practice of governance that are hidden by the secrecy of administration. Greater transparency in public administration allows for checks on these possible conflicts of interest and ensures greater legitimacy for the government. An independent media that is guaranteed access to public documents and to decision-making processes is able to bring possible conflicts of interest to light and assist the government in maintaining clarity in the execution of its directives.

Positive expressions of an open relationship between the media and democratic governments include judicial protections for the media, inculcated respect for freedom of expression and access to information, support for national independent broadcasters and news agencies in the public service and the lessening of punitive restrictions on journalistic activities.

Closely linked to the issue of transparency is accountability

Where transparency focuses on the practices of public administration, accountability points to the responsibility for judging those practices and their effectiveness by various entities, including the public. Accountability includes a sense of moral accountability to the forms of state government and includes internal regimes of accountability; accountability to the public is critical to the legitimating of a democratic society.

In an atmosphere in which the public is free to examine the transactions of the government and to hold its representatives accountable for their actions, the public simultaneously takes responsibility for the functioning of their government through this form of participation.

Access to information

Ensuring wider access to information, through the enactment of freedom of information legislation, ensures greater citizen participation in governance.

This allows for maximum verifiability of information and allows all stakeholders to come to the table equally on important issues.

Governments should also explore ways to strengthen “e-governance” which provides media and citizens with direct access to administrative information and decision-making processes. Openness and transparency in the electoral process is also critical. Media coverage is a crucial component of elections and it is of vital importance that journalists be trained to cover the election campaigns and the elections themselves in a fair and impartial manner, giving equal coverage to the viewpoints concerned.

Poverty reduction: The Millennium Declaration adopted at the Millennium Summit, New York, September 2000, states as its first goal to reduce the proportion of people living in extreme poverty one half by the year 2015 with a view to eradicating poverty.

The eradication of poverty is indeed today a vital condition for global stability, democracy and peace. As long as the poor are excluded from participation in global growth, sustainable peace and development will remain out of reach. An open and free media can play an important role in the fight against poverty.

Firstly, by increasing the accountability of both businesses and governments, on the one hand and allowing citizens to make better-informed decisions on the other. It promotes and encourages good governance, without which the battle against poverty cannot be won. Secondly, by acting as a watchdog against corruption, it can help ensure that greater importance be attached to development issues in the allocation of resources, while at the same time strengthening the institutions responsible for promoting the overall development of society.

Finally, it can contribute to combating the exclusion and marginalization of the poor. This is important, for poverty is more than just a lack of resources; it is a lack of empowerment. Poor people are generally unable to participate fully in society and earn a living. Simply providing them with additional resources is therefore not enough to lift them from their deprivation. What they need are increased capabilities. Only then can they gain control over their lives and learn how to productively use whatever resources are available. Reducing poverty through achieving sustainable development is thus also the key objective of UNESCO programmes.

Providing the poor with access to the media is an important step in achieving this objective: by supplying them with reliable information, it allows them to take well-informed decisions and make better choices about their lives; it also gives them the opportunity to express their views and have a say in the election of decision-makers, thus increasing the chances of a more efficient allocation of resources. Finally, a free media can contribute to the empowerment of citizens through educational programmes and public health programmes such as HIV-AIDS education campaigns.

Governance of the media

- If we affirm that independence and pluralism in the media are, in fact, preconditions for democracy to flourish, it is possible for key elements in government to be committed to media that do not simply repeat what they would like to hear.
- A positive relationship between the state and media goes beyond pure laissez-faire to nourishing an independent and pluralistic mediascape.
- A current issue in many countries is the monopolization of media by powerful interests, whether private or public, which lessens the plurality of voices in the public sphere.
- Perhaps the most important expression of an open relationship between media and the government is the airing of unpopular viewpoints that may reflect tensions in the society.
- If the media scape is not open and pluralistic, these viewpoints may leave the democratic sphere and foment violence.
- Governance of the media also includes the dimension of governance among the different sectors and interests present in the media themselves.
- The implementation of a legal and regulatory environment that encourages freedom and pluralism in public information is often facilitated when governments and professional associations have access to comparative examples of media legislation, codes, and co-operation strategies for media development.
- Associations dedicated to media accountability such as ombudsmen and press councils also have a key role to play in the governance of media.
- One important role they play is in encouraging discussion within the media sector about ethical practices and their professional responsibilities.
- They can thereby strengthen the media's internal professional standards and increase public confidence in the reliability of the information provided.

In countries with emerging independent mediascapes, professional media industry associations can take the lead in assisting various media outlets to understand their role as independent media and encourage them to find ways to be economically self-sustaining. This should include both media as well as information services such as news agencies, community-based radio, web-based distribution and media production networks. Considering the smaller number of women in the media in most societies and the special situations they may face, professional associations should actively encourage training for women and greater gender equity within the profession.

Media and Governance Cell

A Media and Governance Cell was established on October 1, 2003 by the National Reconstruction Bureau (NRB) to:

- Reduce the knowledge gap on governance issues.
- Build logistical and network capacity between individuals and organization to have an integrated approach.
- Promote investigative and holistic approach to reporting.
- Facilitate free flow of information from official and semi official sources.
- Provide technical inputs in a systematic institutional manner.
- Incentives the demand and supply side of information on governance issues.

Media abundance in a Pakistani milieu

That media abundance in Pakistan is here to stay is borne out by the fact the local elections, the military action in Iraq and Afghanistan, Indo-Pak tensions, nuclear proliferation issues and Pakistan's myriad internal contradictions and conflicts — political, sectarian and nationalist — is under the scrutiny of the ballooning media realm.

But is Pakistani media simultaneously developing its capacity of objectivity, fairness and impartiality? How do we promote the values of peace in an age of media abundance? That will be the main challenge facing the local media in the months and years ahead.

The challenges posed by media abundance and the need to promote peace and liberal values in a country raven by conflicts such as Pakistan can be reconciled by enhancing awareness of issues and reflecting them in their relevant context and by stimulating the civil society in orienting itself to seize the initiative.

To be able to arrive at this desirable possibility, the goal of an informed citizenry is requisite, which is not possible if access to information is not near universal. While timely information is the best bet in pre-empting corruption and circumventing conflicts, the Pakistani media is more comfortable with non-issues — reflected in the prioritization of news where public-interest reportage is relegated behind peripheral political discourse.

Towards the end in October 2002, four media-related laws were promulgated. One of these is the Access to Information Law. Any minor gains this law doles out is neutralized by the Defamation Law — a case of taking away with one hand what is given by the other. Without reconciling these laws — one assuring disclosure and the other guaranteeing privacy — the citizenry in general and media in particular cannot exercise their full right to access information in time to pre-empt the ill consequences of ignorance.

The media will remain powerless unless working journalists — who according to the text of the new media laws will bear the brunt of their perceived violations — ensure input in revisions of the law; true media freedom will be a mirage rather a reality. Why all laws on the media in Pakistan in the last 55 years are oriented towards serving the interests of the Establishment and not empowering the citizens is evident by the fact that all (save for one) have been promulgated as ordinances — mostly unelected regimes — and have never been placed before the parliament!

Both print and electronic media laws are designed to discourage new entrants to the field so as to limit the unsettling influence of a competitive media and to ensure compliance on state terms. An interesting aspect of media abundance in Pakistan is that despite dominance of political coverage in the media, public trust in politics is at an all time low in Pakistan. One reason why political coverage is not evoking interest in Pakistan, especially in the print media, is because of a lack of investigative reporting — something that tells them the inside stories — which is not possible because of the hazards associated with such an undertaking.

Chapter 3:

Investigative Journalism as a Mechanism for Vibrant Democracy and Good Governance

What is investigative journalism?

Investigative reporting is distinctive in that it publicizes information about wrongdoing that affects the public interest. Denunciations result from the work of reporters rather than from information leaked to newsrooms.

While investigative journalism used to be associated with lone reporters working on their own with little, if any, support from their news organizations, recent examples attest that teamwork is fundamental. Differing kinds of expertise are needed to produce well-documented and comprehensive stories. Reporters, editors, legal specialists, statistical analysts, librarians, and news researchers are needed to collaborate on investigations. Knowledge of public information access laws is crucial to find what information is potentially available under “freedom of information” laws, and what legal problems might arise when damaging information is published.

New technologies are extremely valuable to find facts and to make reporters familiar with the complexities of any given story. Thanks to the computerization of government records and the availability of extraordinary amounts of information online, computer-assisted reporting (CAR) is of great assistance.

Democracy and investigative journalism

Investigative journalism matters because of its many contributions to democratic governance. Its role can be understood in keeping with the Fourth Estate model of the press. According to this model, the press should make government accountable by publishing information about matters of public interest even if such information reveals abuses or crimes perpetrated by those in authority.

From this perspective, investigative reporting is one of the most important contributions that the press makes to democracy. It is linked to the logic of check and balances in democratic systems. It provides a valuable mechanism for monitoring the performance of democratic institutions as they are most broadly defined to include governmental bodies, civic organizations and publicly held corporations.

The centrality of the media in contemporary democracies makes political elites sensitive to news, particularly to “bad” news that often causes a public commotion. The publication of news about political and economic wrongdoing can trigger parliamentary and judicial investigations.

In cases when government institutions fail to conduct further inquiries, or investigations

are plagued with problems and suspicions, journalism can contribute to accountability by monitoring the functioning of these institutions. It can examine how well these institutions actually fulfill their constitutional mandate to govern responsibly in the face of press reports that reveal dysfunction, dishonesty, or wrongdoing in government and society.

At minimum, investigative reporting retains important agenda-setting powers to remind citizens and political elites about the existence of certain issues. There are no guarantees, however, that continuous press attention will result in parliamentary and judiciary actions to investigate and prosecute those responsible for wrongdoing. Investigative journalism also contributes to democracy by nurturing an informed citizenry. Information is a vital resource to empower a vigilant public that ultimately holds government accountable through voting and participation.

With the ascent of media-centred politics in contemporary democracies, the media have eclipsed other social institutions as the main source of information about issues and processes that affect citizens' lives.

Public access

Access to public records and laws ensuring that public business will be conducted in open sessions are indispensable to the work of an investigative journalist. When prior censorship or defamation laws loom on the horizon, news organizations are unlikely to take up controversial subjects because of potentially expensive lawsuits.

Consequently, democracies must meet certain requirements for investigative journalism to be effective and to provide diverse and comprehensive information.

Some basic writing tips

- Use examples: Examples put information into a form readers can grasp more easily than abstract terms. If you tell readers that children love their teacher, show how they demonstrate their love.
 - Explain, explain, and explain: Remember that readers don't have the journalist's background knowledge of the subject. Use terms readers understand.
 - Use strong verbs: Writers trying to use strong verbs can start by eliminating "to be" from most of their prose. "Is" and "are" and those other members of to be family do nothing but express existence. Good writers will find verbs that move the action along.
 - Avoid fancy language, slang and jargon: School officials might say a child got "negative reinforcement" rather than saying the child got a spanking. Don't let the language of bureaucrats, lawyers, police officers, teachers or others rub off on you. Paraphrase.
 - Use language strong enough to do the job: You need to give readers a clear picture of the story's events. A good writer can be stylish without writing long, tortuous sentences, or using flowery language.
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- Avoid negatives: For example: “We haven’t failed to notice that an opponent did not attempt to veto the ban on dog racing.” Reporters, who respect readers will paraphrase and cut down on the negatives. They will write “we see that the opponent has not supported dog racing.”
- Use short sentences and concrete and familiar words: Hold most sentences under 25 words, under 20 words if possible. Good writers avoid making every sentence the same length because they need variety. But sentences that run more than 30 words make reading difficult.
- Don’t use extra verbs: Avoid adding unnecessary verbs when nouns can carry some of the meaning. Don’t say: “Everyone interested in participating in the tryouts should attend.” Say: “Everyone interested in trying out should attend.” “Trying out” contains the meaning of participating; the writer can drop a word.
- Don’t use extra nouns: It’s not necessary to use more nouns when verbs can carry some of the meaning. Don’t say: “The police officer ran a routine check, which showed the car was stolen.” Say: “The police officer’s routine check showed the car was stolen.” If the check showed something, we can safely assume the officer ran the check. The reporter does not need to spell it out.
- An editor’s checklist: Media experts’ advice copy editors (sub-editors) to make sure stories are neat, cleaned up and without loose ends. His checklist:
 - How’s the macro (the big picture)?
 - How’s the micro (the details)?
 - Does the math add up?
 - How about transitions?
 - Can the lead (intro) be sharpened?

Minimum standards for writing a story

- State the theme clearly. If you have trouble, ask yourself, “Does the story need to be written?” If the answer is yes then ask yourself, “Have I done enough reporting? Do I have all the facts?”
 - Stick to the theme throughout.
 - Report the consequences of the news to your readers. Readers care very little about government process, but they care very much how the decisions of government will affect their lives.
 - Use anecdotes and quotes for illustration, not decoration. No matter how colorful an anecdote or quote is, leave it out if it is not relevant to the theme of the story.
 - Creativity should be the result of good reporting, not merely the clever use of words. Avoid pretentious prose.
-

- Look for insight, not just the superficial. Looking for insight includes but is not limited to:
 - (a) asking the second “why” question
 - (b) going to the scene
 - (c) drawing conclusions you can back up with facts
 - (d) talking to more than one source
- Don’t just tell the reader, show them. Let them smell, taste, hear, see and feel the story. Describe people and situations so the reader knows what you know. If your story took you to a horrible place, take the reader there by describing the assault on your senses.

Useful tips for professional reporting

- Be honest
- Always ask yourself why someone is telling you something. Evaluating your source can be the most important judgment you have to make on a story.
- Except for the simplest questions, make a habit of asking twice.
- If your subject is excited or afraid, ask not just twice, but four or five times.
- If you are excited or afraid, keep taking notes as fast as you can. Then, trust only your notes, not your memory.
- You can learn something useful from almost everyone.
- With very few exceptions, people want to tell you what they know or think.
- People are the best authority on their own lives.
- To the extent possible, scope out the situation for yourself. Do this even when you think there won’t be anything to see.
- The secret of a good interview is to find something your subject wants to talk about, and letting him/her talk.
- Even if you use a tape recorder, take notes.
- When a story concerns war, a natural disaster, riot or any similar event, first reports will rarely be accurate.
- In any disaster or violent event, casualty reports should be regarded as short fiction. The higher the numbers and the sooner they are reported, the higher the likelihood that they will be inaccurate.

- Be very cautious in describing people's motives.
- If you are writing something critical or expressing a point of view, state the opposing case as strongly and persuasively as you can.
- Always imagine you are writing for someone who disagrees with you, or who will not want to believe that what you write is the truth. Your job is to make that person believe you have accurately and fairly stated the facts.

Useful tips for election reporting

- Stick to the issues

Watch out for candidates who employ clever public relations tactics that have nothing to do with real election issues. Some candidates find they can call more attention to themselves by launching a hate campaign against their opponents (personal family values is a favorite topic) rather than addressing important issues like the economy and jobs.

- Beware of exaggerating controversy

Too often on a day when a story doesn't hit us in the face, some reporters and editors create and then exaggerate a potential conflict. Better to let that day pass without a 20-second sound bite or a byline.

- Equal time for all

Keep a meticulous running score on space and play (front page, inside) given to each candidate. Uneven reporting is the most certain way to lose credibility and readers.

- Don't forget the voter

Reporters should keep up with what the voters are thinking, not only through polls and man-in-the-street quick quotes, but by meaningful probing of how families are surviving. Remember to cover the regions and not just key areas of the country.

- Beware of "poll-itis"

Polls can be useful, but they can be overused and manipulated. A reader will be better served by more old-time regional reports with interviews and predictions from voters and field experts.

- Don't over-analyze

Much of the energy and time devoted to analyzing the candidates' every move would be better utilized telling readers what voters think rather than what a desk-bound dreamer, with a license to sway, wishes would happen.

- Beware of "creeping legitimacy."

Creeping legitimacy occurs when one news organization (usually, a not-so-reliable one) publishes a story based on a rumor or one source and other media houses follow suit out of fear of missing the story.

News organizations should apply the same reporting standards of their own investigative efforts (double-check every fact) to any political campaign rumors and scandals.

The reporter must never serve as a mere conduit for unchecked personal information on a candidate, especially from a questionable source. Stick by your own standard of fact-checking before pulling the trigger.

Five technical steps to high-impact writing

The research says three things make a source credible:

- perceived mastery of the subject
- perceived similarity to the audience
- sheer energy — the enthusiasm and vitality it projects

The same standards apply whether the source is a speaker or a newspaper. And newspapers can enhance their credibility on all three counts.

Thorough and precise reporting convinces readers that we know our stuff.

Fortunately, more energetic writing is the quickest and easiest route to greater credibility. High-impact writing flows from specific techniques. And almost any writer can master five important energizers in relatively short order.

1. Keep average sentence length short

Writers who really demand attention seldom average more than 17 words a sentence. Of course, they vary sentence length to add interest. And they sometimes let clean, well-ordered sentences run on for 30 or 35 words. But then they change gears. A good mix contains some sentences of six words or fewer.

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Bill Blundell, the former *Wall Street Journal* reporter and writing coach, mastered the technique long ago. Note this paragraph from one of his ASNE award-winning stories:

“The 360 Yavapai Indians on this small reservation, the shrunken remnant of thousands who once lived on 10 million Arizona acres, have won their first great victory over the white man. He wanted to stuff some \$33 million into their pockets. They told him to get lost.”

2. Seek strong verbs

Nothing adds energy like action. And only verbs describe action.

Transitive verbs create the most ruckus. They take direct objects, which generate causal flow. “Its lows raked her back.” “He drove two runners home.” “The fire swallowed the first floor.”

Intransitive verbs contain power, too.

“The tanker exploded with volcanic force.” “The skier plunged into empty space.” “A line snapped, and the cargo slid toward the rail.”

But linking verbs contain no motion and therefore weaken writing. They merely state that some things are (or are not) in some way the same as others. “The moon is blue.” “The contract talks were tedious.” “The ground felt spongy.”

At their roots, linking verbs are only definitions. They can convey opinion. But they can’t transmit real news.

Another strategy with verbs is to avoid turning perfectly good action words into nouns. Beware of suffixes, which often gut the energy contained in a word’s root.

Instead of “gained entrance,” write, “entered.” Instead of “since passage of the bond,” write, “since the bond passed.” Prefer “depend” to “dependent” and “treat” to “treatment.” Look for strong verb roots in words such as “intrusive” and “graduation.”

3. Prefer active to passive

Every writing authority agrees that active voice adds power while passive subtracts it. The problem is that hardly anything generates anxiety like writing. And anxiety in turn produces timidity, which often expresses itself in passive voice.

So we write that “the airliner was struck by lightening,” rather than “lightening struck the airliner.” That “more votes were cast for A,” instead of “voters elected A.” Or that “Sukkur was flooded by the overflowing river,” rather than “the river flooded Sukkur.”

4. Be specific

Concrete nouns, verbs and modifiers add energy. Abstractions let it float away. Vibrant writers always ask themselves if they can make each word in the draft more specific without sacrificing essential meaning. So they prefer “audience” to “people who attended.” They say that a shopper “ambled” through the mall, rather than “walked slowly”

They fill their writing with concrete images that readers can visualize. The detail adds weight, and the weight adds impact.

5. Cut the flab

Anything that doesn’t add to a piece of writing, takes away. Unnecessary words deflate impact by padding or replacing the active, precise vocabulary that carries core meaning.

Some flab inevitably creeps into first drafts. So rewriting should focus on cutting anything superfluous. The simplest technique is still the best: Go through the draft word by word, eliminating each one mentally as a test. If the substance remains after removing a word in your imagination, remove it from the screen.

Another tactic is to tighten prepositional phrases by making the object of the preposition modify its antecedent directly. In other words, write, “the preposition’s object,” rather than “object of the preposition.” Replace “the wall of the museum” with “the museum’s wall.” And, if compressing a prepositional phrase downplays an idea you consider important, go back to Technique No. 1. Break the idea out into a separate sentence.

And build it around a strong verb.

Useful questions to ask about your readers include

- Where do you live? Are you employed, unemployed or pensioner? What kind of work do you do? Knowing where clusters of readers live helps you identify neighborhoods that you should write stories about, areas where you could seek advertising or where you could increase distribution efforts. Knowing the employment status of your readers helps you understand the importance of economic issues like the cost of the newspaper, showing prices in ads, and news about basic financial topics such as the cost of electricity, gasoline and other goods and services readers need. Knowing what kind of work most of your readers do is another clue to stories and advertisers to seek.
- How often do you read the newspaper? Almost every day, several times a week, once a week, only occasionally, or this is the first time. If you learn that most of your readers read the newspaper only occasionally, you need to find at least one strong feature to add that will insure that readers absolutely have to read the newspaper at least once a week like a classified search contest that runs for an entire week. If you learn that most of your readers read the newspaper once or several times a week, you need something that brings them back more often like running important stories as a series instead of as one story.

Initially, you may have to offer a small incentive to encourage readers to complete the questionnaire and return it to you. The incentive might be a free copy of the newspaper, a free classified ad, a promotional item like a cigarette lighter with the newspaper’s logo on it, or a coupon for a free item from one of your advertisers. Keep the incentive small so that you can afford it. And when you publish the questionnaire, be sure to tell readers where to mail or drop off the completed questionnaire and get their gift. Make it easy for readers; remember, they’re doing you a favor by answering your questions.

Finally, when you do make a change or addition as a result of information gathered from the questionnaires, introduce the change in the newspaper with an Editor’s Note thanking readers for their help.

Investigative journalism leads to vibrant civil society, sustainable democracy and good governance

Chapter 4:

Good Governance, Codes of Ethics and Media

Basic principles of media ethics promoting democracy and good governance

The code of practice binding on all press institutions and journalists aims to ensure that the print medium is free and responsible and sensitive to the needs and expectations of its readers, while maintaining the highest international standard of journalism.

Those standards require newspapers to strive for accuracy and professional integrity, and to uphold the best traditions of investigative journalism in the public interest, unfettered by distorting commercialism or by improper pressure or by narrow self-interest, which conspires against press freedom.

Newspapers and journalists, while free to hold and express their own strong opinions, should give due consideration to the views of others and endeavor to reflect social responsibility. This code both protects the rights of the individual and upholds the public's right to know. It should be honored not only to the letter but in the spirit — neither interpreted so narrowly as to compromise its commitment to respect the rights of the individual nor so broadly as to prevent publication in the public interest. In this context, it is pertinent to look at the following standard operating procedures:

Accurate reporting

- The media must take all reasonable care to report news and pictures accurately and without distortion.
- Every reasonable attempt should be made by editors and individual journalists to verify the accuracy of reports prior to publication. Where such verification is not practicable, that fact shall be stated in the report.
- Editors and their staff, including external contributors, shall not publish material in such a way as to endorse any matter which they know or have reason to believe to be false or inaccurate.
- Publications are encouraged to engage in investigative journalism in the public interest.

Corrections and apologies

- Where it is recognized by the editor that a report was incorrect in a material respect, it should be corrected promptly and with due prominence and with an apology where appropriate, except where the correction or apology is against the wishes of the aggrieved party.

Opportunity to reply

- A fair and reasonable opportunity to reply should be given to individuals or organizations in

respect of factually incorrect statements endangering their reputation, dignity, honor, feelings, privacy and office. The reply should be confined to the complainant's version of the facts and no longer than necessary to correct the alleged inaccuracy.

- Newspapers or journalists, who respond to a complainant's reply other than to apologize or regret the error, must then, be prepared to offer the aggrieved party a fresh opportunity to reply.

Confidential sources

- Every journalist has a moral obligation to protect confidential sources of information, until that source authorizes otherwise.

General reporting and writing

- In dealing with social issues of a particularly shocking or emotionally painful nature — such as atrocity, violence, drug abuse, brutality, sadism, sexual salacity and obscenity — the press should take special care to present facts, opinions, photographs and graphics with due sensitivity and discretion, subject to its duty to publish in the public interest.
- In reporting accounts of crime or criminal case, publications shall not, unless it is both legally permitted and in the public interest:
 - (a) name victims of sex crimes
 - (b) knowingly name any young person accused of a criminal offence who is below the age of 16 and who has no previous convictions
 - (c) identify without consent relatives of a person accused or convicted of a crime
- A journalist shall not knowingly or willfully promote communal or religious discord or violence.
- The press must avoid prejudicial or pejorative reference to a person's race, colour, and religion, sex or to any physical or mental illness or disability. It must also avoid publishing details of a person's race, caste, religion, sexual orientation, physical or mental illness or disability unless these are directly relevant to the story
- Even where the law does not prohibit it, journalists must not use for their own profit financial information they receive in advance of its general publication, nor should they pass such information for the profit of others.

They must not write about shares or securities in whose performance they know that they or their close families have a significant financial interest, without disclosing the interest to the publisher, editor or financial editor.

Privacy

- The press shall exercise particular care to respect the private and family lives of individuals, their home, health and correspondence. Intrusions on this right to privacy without consent could be justified only by some over-riding public interest.
- The use of long-lens or other cameras to photograph people without consent on private or public property where there is a reasonable expectation of privacy is unacceptable, unless in the public interest.
- Particular care should be taken to ensure that in cases involving grief or shock, inquiries and approaches are handled with sensitivity and discretion.
- Young people should be free to complete their school years without unnecessary intrusion. Publication of material concerning a child's private life would be acceptable only if there was some exceptional public interest other than the fame, notoriety or position of his or her family or guardian.
- The restrictions on intruding into privacy are particularly relevant to inquiries about individuals in hospitals or similar institutions, unless it serves the public interest.

Harassment and subterfuge

- Journalists, including photojournalists, must not seek to obtain information or pictures through intimidation or harassment or by misrepresentation or subterfuge. The use of long-lens cameras or listening devices must also not be used unless this can be justified in the public interest and the material could not have been obtained by other means.

Dignity

- Every journalist shall maintain the dignity of his profession.

Interpretation

The public interest includes:

- Protecting democracy, good governance, freedom of expression and the fundamental rights of the people and of keeping them informed about events that would have a direct or indirect bearing on them, and that of their elected government, and detecting or exposing crime, corruption, misadministration or a serious misdemeanor;
 - Protecting public health and security and social, cultural and educational standards;
 - Protecting the public from being misled by some statement or action of an individual or organization.
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In any case where the public interest is involved, the Press Complaints Commission will be entitled to require a full explanation by the Editor and/or journalist demonstrating how the public interest was served.

Reporting ethnic tensions/conflicts

(The principles below evolved out of a nine-nation journalism conference conducted by the Press Foundation of Asia in Davao City, April 1970.)

- Factual accuracy in a single story is no substitute for the total truth. A single story, which is factually accurate, can nonetheless be misleading.
- Prejudice may sell newspapers but newspapers should resist the temptation to exploit human fears for commercial gains.
- In mixed societies, editors should be aware of the danger of feeding by selective reporting, common prejudicial stereotypes about groups. Generalizations based on the behavior of an individual or a small number of individuals are invariably unjust.
- When there is potential for communal tension, there should be a constant effort to investigate and expose the underlying causes.
- Statistics can be used to excite passion. It should always be checked and interpreted.
- All stories of communal, racial or religious nature should be scrupulously ascribed to their source. The authority of the source should be properly evaluated.
- Advertisement of an unfair discriminating nature should not be accepted.
- Editors have a responsibility for the tone and truth of the letters' column.
- Harm can be done by distortion in translation, especially in areas where several languages are spoken. Words and phrases may have different connotations among different groups.
- It should be recognized that editorial comment, however benign, does not necessarily compensate for the harm done by a misleading news report.
- Journalists should always use cool and moderate language, especially in headlines and also in display. No concession should be made to rhetoric. Lurid and gory details and emotive reference to past history should be avoided.
- In mixed societies where extra-territorial loyalties are often alleged and are a cause of tension, great care should be taken about stories imputing interference by a foreign power unless it is clearly established.

- The traditional newspaper standards of checking for accuracy should be applied with even greater rigor in any stories involving racial, religious or communal groups. Statements should not be accepted at face value from any source, including official ones, and where necessary, these should be accompanied in the news columns by corroboration and interpretation.
- Unverified rumor is not the proper content of news columns especially when there is great danger in speculation about violence.
- When there is violence, particular care should be taken about publication of the first incidents.
- Every effort should be made to portray ethnic groups in other than conflict situations.
- When violence has broken out, the role of government in the supply of information is crucial. There must be a continuous supply of information from this source to prevent rumor, speculation and needless panic. In these circumstances, a close working relationship between the Press and the Government is essential and there should be no division of interest.
- Casualty figures can cause chain reactions, and experience has shown that official figures may be under or over estimated.
- Pictures can distort reality. An unrepresentative picture may lie even more than a news story and add to prejudices.
- Journalists, particularly foreign correspondents, should not report crises without a sufficient understanding of the background of events and trends.
- In newspaper groups publishing in different languages, care should be taken that they speak with the same voice on explosive issues and in times of tension. The cumulative effect of differing coverage and opinion is deadly.
- In mixed societies with underlying causes of tension — social, economic or religious — newspapers and the broadcast media should initiate investigative and interpretative stories with sociological content. These would spread understanding and also help disperse an environment of resentment and suspicion, which can turn a minor incident into a riot.

Journalism ethics and standards

Journalism ethics and standards, include principles of ethics and of good practice to address the specific challenges faced by professional journalists. Historically and currently these principles are most widely known to journalists as their professional “code of ethics” or the “canons of journalism.” The basic codes and canons commonly appear in statements drafted by both professional journalism associations and individual print, broadcast, and online news organizations.

While various existing codes have some differences, most share common elements including the principles of — truthfulness, accuracy, objectivity, impartiality, fairness and public accountability

— as these apply to the acquisition of newsworthy information and its subsequent reportage to the public.

Like many broader ethical systems, journalism ethics include the principle of “limitation of harm.” This often involves the withholding of certain details from reports such as the names of minor children, crime victims’ names or information not materially related to particular news reports release of which might, for example, harm someone’s reputation.

To a large degree, the codes and canons evolved via observation of and response to past ethical lapses by journalists and publishers. Today, it is common for terms of employment to mandate adherence to such codes equally applicable to both staff and freelance journalists; journalists may face dismissal for ethical failures. Upholding professional standards also enhances the reputation of and trust in a news organization, which boosts the size of the audience it serves.

Journalistic codes of ethics are designed as guides though numerous difficulties, such as conflicts of interest, in general, assisting journalists in dealing with any number of ethical dilemmas. The codes and canons provide journalists a framework for self-monitoring and self-correction as they pursue professional assignments.

The principles of good journalism are directed toward bringing the highest quality of news reporting to the public, thus fulfilling the mission of timely distribution of information in service of the public interest.

Common elements

The primary themes common to most codes of journalistic standards and ethics are the following.

Objectivity

- Unequivocal separation between news and opinion. In-house editorials and opinion (Op-Ed) pieces are clearly separated from news pieces. News reporters and editorial staff are distinct.
- Unequivocal separation between advertisements and news. All advertisements must be clearly identifiable as such.
- Reporter must avoid conflicts of interest — incentives to report a story with a given slant. This includes not taking bribes and not reporting on stories which affect the reporter’s personal, economic, or political interests.
- Competing points of view are balanced and fairly characterized.
- Persons who are the subject of adverse news stories are allowed a reasonable opportunity to respond to the adverse information before the story is published or broadcast.
- Interference with reporting by any entity, including censorship, must be disclosed.

Sources

- Confidentiality of anonymous sources
-

- Avoidance of anonymous sources when possible.
- Accurate attribution of statements made by individuals or other news media.
- Pictures, sound, and quotations must not be presented in a misleading context (or lack thereof). Simulations, reenactments, alterations, and artistic imaginings must be clearly labelled as such, if not avoided entirely.
- Plagiarism is strongly stigmatized and in many cases illegal .

Accuracy and standards for factual reporting

- Reporters are expected to be as accurate as possible given the time allotted to story preparation and the space available, and to seek reliable sources.
- Events with a single eyewitness are reported with attribution. Events with two or more independent eyewitnesses may be reported as fact. Controversial facts are reported with attribution.
- Independent fact-checking by another employee of the publisher is desirable
- Corrections are published when errors are discovered
- Defendants at trial are treated only as having “allegedly” committed crimes, until conviction, when their crimes are generally reported as fact (unless, that is, there is serious controversy about wrongful conviction).
- Opinion surveys and statistical information deserve special treatment to communicate in precise terms any conclusions, to contextualize the results, and to specify accuracy, including estimated error and methodological criticism or flaws.

Slander and libel considerations

- Reporting the truth is never libel, which makes accuracy and attribution very important.
- Private persons have privacy rights which must be balanced against the public interest in reporting information about them. Public figures have fewer privacy rights.
- Publishers vigorously defend libel lawsuits filed against their reporters

Harm limitation principle

During the normal course of an assignment a reporter might go about — gathering facts and details, conducting interviews, doing research, background checks, taking photos, video taping, recording sound. Should he or she report everything learned? If so, how should this be done? The principle of limitation of harms means that some weight needs to be given to the negative consequences of full disclosure, creating a practical and ethical dilemma.

The Society of Professional Journalists' code of ethics (3) offers the following advice, which is representative of the practical ideals of most professional journalists. Quoting directly:

- Show compassion for those who may be affected adversely by news coverage. Use special sensitivity when dealing with children and inexperienced sources or subjects.
- Be sensitive when seeking or using interviews or photographs of those affected by tragedy or grief.
- Recognize that gathering and reporting information may cause harm or discomfort. Pursuit of the news is not a licence for arrogance.
- Recognize that private people have a greater right to control information about themselves than do public officials and others who seek power, influence or attention. Only an overriding public need can justify intrusion into anyone's privacy.
- Show good taste. Avoid pandering to lurid curiosity.
- Be cautious about identifying juvenile suspects or victims of sex crimes.
- Be judicious about naming criminal suspects before the formal filing of charges.
- Balance a criminal suspect's fair trial rights with the public's right to be informed.

Presentation

Ethical standards should not be confused with common standards of quality of presentation, including:

- Correctly spoken or written language
- Clarity
- Brevity (or depth, depending on the niche of the publisher)

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Self-regulation

In addition to codes of ethics, many news organizations maintain an in-house Ombudsman whose role is, in part, to keep news organizations honest and accountable to the public. The ombudsman is intended to mediate in conflicts stemming from internal and or external pressures, and to maintain accountability to the public for news reported. Also, to foster self-criticism and to encourage adherence to both codified and uncoded ethics and standards.

Ethics and standards in practice

As with other ethical codes, there is perennial concern that the standards of journalism are being eroded. One of the most controversial issues in modern reporting is media bias, especially on political issues, but also with regard to cultural and other issues. Sensationalism is also a common complaint. Minor factual errors are also extremely common, as almost anyone who is familiar with

the subject of a particular report will quickly realize.

There are also some wider concerns, as the media continue to change, for example that the brevity of news reports and use of soundbites has reduced fidelity to the truth, and may contribute to a lack of needed context for public understanding.

From outside the profession, the rise of news management contributes to the real possibility that news media may be deliberately manipulated. Selective reporting (spiking, double standards) are very commonly alleged against newspapers, and by their nature are forms of bias not easy to establish, or guard against.

This section does not address specifics of such matters, but issues of practical compliance, as well as differences between professional journalists on principles.

Standards and reputation

Among the leading news organizations, who voluntarily adopt and attempt to uphold the common standards of journalism ethics described herein, adherence and general quality varies considerably. The professionalism, reliability and public accountability of a news organization are three of its most valuable assets. An organization earns and maintains a strong reputation, in part, through a consistent implementation of ethical standards, which influence its position with both the public and within the industry.

Among the most respected publications, programmes, and broadcast networks are:

Genres and ethics

Advocacy journalists — a term of some debate even within the field of journalism — by definition tend to reject “objectivity”, while, at the same time, maintaining many other common standards and ethics.

Creative nonfiction and Literary journalism use the power of language and literary devices more akin to fiction to bring insight and depth into often book-length treatment of the subjects about which they write. Such devices as dialogue, metaphor, digression and other such techniques offer the reader insights not usually found in standard news reportage. However, authors in this branch of journalism still maintain ethical criteria such as factual and historical accuracy as found in standard news reporting. Yet, with brilliant prose, they venture outside the boundaries of standard news reporting in offering richly detailed accounts.

New Journalism and Gonzo journalism also reject some of the fundamental ethical traditions and will set aside the technical standards of journalistic prose in order to express themselves and reach a particular audience or market segment.

Tabloid journalists are often accused of sacrificing accuracy and the personal privacy of their subjects in order to boost sales. Supermarket tabloids are often focused on entertainment

rather than news. A few have “news” stories that are so outrageous that they are widely read for entertainment purposes, not for information. Some tabloids do purport to maintain common journalistic standards, but may fall far short in practice. Others make no such claims.

Relationship with freedom of the press

In countries without freedom of the press, the majority of people who report the news may not follow the above-described standards of journalism. Very often non-free media are prohibited from criticizing the national government, and in many cases are required to distribute propaganda as if it were news. Various other forms of censorship may restrict reporting on issues the government deems sensitive.

Variations, violations, and controversies

There are a number of finer points of journalistic procedure which foster disagreements in principle and variation in practice among “mainstream” journalists in the free press. Laws concerning libel and slander vary from country to country, and local journalistic standards may be tailored to fit. Accuracy is important as a core value and to maintain credibility, but especially in broadcast media, audience share often gravitates toward outlets that are reporting new information first.

Different organizations may balance speed and accuracy in different ways. Here, viewers may switch channels at a moment’s notice; with fierce competition for ratings and a large amount of airtime to fill, fresh material is very valuable. Because of the fast turn-around, reporters for these networks may be under considerable time pressure which reduces their ability to verify information.

Laws with regard to personal privacy, official secrets, and media disclosure of names and facts from criminal cases and civil lawsuits differ widely, and journalistic standards may vary accordingly. Different organizations may have different answers to questions about when it is journalistically acceptable to skirt, circumvent, or even break these regulations. Another example of differences surrounding harm reduction is the reporting of preliminary election results.

Some news organizations feel that it is harmful to the democratic process to report exit poll results or preliminary returns while voting is still open. Such reports may influence people who vote later in the day, or who are in western time zones, in their decisions about how and whether or not to vote.

There is also some concern that such preliminary results are often inaccurate and may be misleading to the public. Other outlets feel that this information is a vital part of the transparency of the election process, and see no harm (if not considerable benefit) in reporting it.

Taste, decency and acceptability

Different audiences have different reactions to depictions of violence, nudity, coarse language, or of people in any other situation which is unacceptable to or stigmatized by the local

culture or laws. Even with similar audiences, different organizations and even individual reporters have different standards and practices. These decisions often revolve around what facts are necessary for the audience to know.

When certain distasteful or shocking material is considered important to the story, there are a variety of common methods for mitigating negative audience reaction. Advance warning of explicit or disturbing material may allow listeners or readers to avoid content they would rather not be exposed to.

Offensive words may be partially obscured or bleeped. Potentially offensive images may be blurred or narrowly cropped. Descriptions may be substituted for pictures; graphic detail might be omitted. Disturbing content might be moved from a cover to an inside page, or from daytime to late evening, when children are less likely to be watching.

There is often considerable controversy over these techniques, especially concern that obscuring or not reporting certain facts or details is self-censorship which compromises objectivity and fidelity to the truth, and which does not serve the public interest. For example, images and graphic descriptions of war are often violent, bloody, shocking, and profoundly tragic. This makes certain content disturbing to some audience members, but it is precisely these aspects of war which some consider to be the most important to convey.

Some argue that “sanitizing” the depiction of war influences public opinion about the merits of continuing to fight, and about the policies or circumstances that precipitated the conflict. The amount of explicit violence and mutilation depicted in war coverage varies considerable from time to time, from organization to organization, and from country to country.

Campaigning in the media

Many print publications take advantage of their wide readership and print persuasive pieces in the form of unsigned editorials, which represent the official position of the organization. Despite the ostensible separation between editorial writing and news gathering, this practice may cause some people to doubt the political objectivity of the publication’s news reporting. (Though usually unsigned editorials are accompanied by a diversity of signed opinions from other perspectives.)

Other publications and many broadcast media only publish opinion pieces which are attributed to a particular individual (who may be an in-house analyst) or to an outside entity. One particularly controversial question is whether or not media organizations should endorse political candidates for office. Political endorsements create more opportunities to construe favouritism in reporting, and can create a perceived conflicts of interest.

Investigative methods

Investigative journalism is largely an information-gathering exercise, looking for facts that are not easy to obtain by simple requests and searches, or are actively being concealed, suppressed

or distorted. Where investigative work involves undercover journalism or use of whistleblowers, and even more if it resorts to covert methods more typical of private detectives or even spying, it brings a large extra burden on ethical standards.

Anonymous sources are double-edged — they often provide especially newsworthy information, such as classified or confidential information about current events, information about a previously unreported scandal, or the perspective of a particular group that may fear retribution for expressing certain opinions in the press.

The downside is that the condition of anonymity may make it difficult or impossible for the reporter to verify the source's statements. Sometimes sources hide their identities from the public because their statements would otherwise quickly be discredited. Thus, statements attributed to anonymous sources may carry more weight with the public than they might if they were attributed.

Examples of ethical dilemmas

- One of the primary functions of journalism ethics is to aid journalists in dealing with many ethical dilemmas they may encounter. From highly sensitive issues of national security to everyday questions such as accepting a dinner from a source, putting a bumper sticker on one's car, publishing a personal opinion blog, a journalist must make decisions taking into account things such as the public's right to know, potential threats, reprisals and intimidations of all kinds, personal integrity, conflicts between editors, reporters and publishers or management and many other such conundrums.

It is instructive to the following Ethics Advice Line:

- Is it ethical to make an appointment to interview an arsonist sought by police, without informing police in advance of the interview?
- Is lack of proper attribution plagiarism?
- Is it ethical for a reporter to write a news piece on the same topic on which he or she has written an opinion piece in the same paper?
- Under what circumstances do you identify a person who was arrested as a relative of a public figure, such as a local sports star?
- Freelance journalists and photographers accept cash to write about, or take photos of, events with the promise of attempting to get their work on the AP or other news outlets, from which they also will be paid. Is that ethical?
- Can a journalist reveal a source of information after guaranteeing confidentiality if the source proves to be unreliable?

Declaration of Principles on the Conduct of Journalists by International Federation of Journalists:

This international declaration is proclaimed as a standard of professional conduct for journalists engaged in gathering, transmitting, disseminating and commenting on news and information in describing events.

- Respect for truth and for the right of the public to truth is the first duty of the journalist
- In pursuance of this duty, the journalist shall at all times defend the principles of freedom in the honest collection and publication of news, and of the right to fair comment and criticism.
- The journalist shall report only in accordance with facts of which he/she knows the origin. The journalist shall not suppress essential information or falsify documents.
- The journalist shall only use fair methods to obtain news, photographs and documents.
- The journalist shall do the utmost to rectify any published information, which is found to be harmfully inaccurate.
- The journalist shall observe professional secrecy regarding the source of information obtained in confidence.
- The journalist shall be alert to the danger of discrimination being furthered by media, and shall do the utmost to avoid facilitating such discriminations based on, among other things, race, sex, sexual orientation, language, religion, political or other opinions, and national and social origins.
- The journalist shall regard as grave professional offenses the following: plagiarism; malicious misinterpretation; calumny; libel; slander; unfounded accusations; acceptance of a bribe in any form in consideration of either publication or suppression.
- Journalists worthy of the name shall deem it their duty to observe faithfully the principles stated above. Within the general law of each country the journalist shall recognize in matters of professional matters the jurisdiction of colleagues only, to the exclusion of any kind of interference by governments or others.

(Adopted by 1954 World Congress of the International federation of Journalists (IFJ). Amended by the 1986 World Congress)

Code of Ethics: Newspaper Editors' Council of Pakistan

Declaration of objectives

(From *IPC*: A code of ethics adopted in 1993 by the Newspaper Editors' Council of Pakistan — NECP. The NECP was formed on May 22, 1993. Its aims and objects include safeguarding the

freedom of the press and working ceaselessly for the healthy growth of journalism in the country.)

The Council believes that the duty of editors/journalists is to serve the truth. It also believes that the agencies of mass communication are carriers of public discussion and information, acting on their Constitutional mandate and freedom to learn and report the facts.

Article 19 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, which guarantees the freedom of the press, also places some obligations on it. The article reads

‘Every citizen shall have the right to freedom of speech and expression, and there shall be Freedom of the Press, subject to any reasonable restrictions imposed by law in the interest of the glory of Islam, of the integrity, security or defense of Pakistan or any part thereof, friendly relations with foreign states, public order, decency or morality, or in relation to contempt of court, defamation or incitement to an offence’.

In order to fulfill the afore-mentioned constitutional obligations without inviting government interference and to adhere strictly to the Canons of Journalism, that is, Responsibility; Freedom of the Press; Independence; Sincerity; Accuracy; Impartiality, Fair play and Decency and to realize the goals expounded in the ‘Declaration of Objectives’ adopted by the NECP, the members of the Council declared acceptance of the code of ethics here set forth:

- (1) The following are to be avoided in any form of publication such as news items, editorials, articles, photographs and advertisements:
 - Immorality or obscenity;
 - Vulgar and derogatory expressions against individuals, institutions or groups;
 - Allegations known to be false and malicious against individuals, institutions, groups, newspapers and other publications;
 - Arousing of sectarian, parochial or provincial passions and prejudices and class hatred;
 - Glamorization of crimes and vice;
 - Incitement to violence.
- (2) Editors/journalists must be free of obligation to any interest other than the public’s right to know the truth.
- (3) They will make constant efforts to assure that the public’s business is conducted in public and that public records are open to public inspection.
- (4) The right of the individual to protection of his reputation and integrity must be respected and exposure of, and comment on, the private lives of individuals must be avoided except where it affects the public interest.

- (5) Presentation of news items and comments on events and airing of legitimate grievances should be fair and objective and there should be no willful departure from facts. Headlines should be fully warranted by the contents of the items they accompany and photographs should give an accurate picture of an event and not highlight a minor incident out of context; off the record briefings should not be published and embargoes on release dates of news, articles and pictures should be rigorously observed.
- (6) The journalist should be entitled to protect his source of information revealed in confidence.
- (7) All paid commercial announcements, articles or advertisements should be specified as such.
- (8) No newspaper shall accept in any form or shape any financial and pecuniary advantage or obligation from or on behalf of any foreign country, concern, or agency. This does not apply to paid advertisements appearing as such.
- (9) Gifts, favors, free travel, special treatment or privileges can compromise the integrity of editors and influence their sense of justice and impartiality. Nothing of value should be accepted.
- (10) Secondary employment, political involvement, holding public office, and service in community organizations should be avoided if it compromises the integrity of editors. The editors should conduct their personal lives in a manner, which protects them from conflict of interest, real or apparent.
- (11) Justified corrections or denials sent as a result of any incorrect information published by newspapers, periodicals or news agencies should be published within the shortest possible period of time so as to effectively eliminate the impression created by the original publication, which necessitated the issuance of a correction or denial.
- (12) The Press shall refrain from publishing anything derogatory to religion or which may hurt religious feeling of any sect/ minority.
- (13) The Press shall refrain from publishing anything likely to bring into hatred or contempt the head of any friendly state.
- (14) The Press shall refrain from publishing anything likely to undermine the loyalty and allegiance of the defense forces and the civil armed forces.
- (15) The Press shall refrain from involving the defense forces in politics and offer only fair comment on its performance and conduct.
- (16) In reporting proceedings of Parliament and Provincial Assemblies, such portions of the proceedings as the Chairman/Speaker may have ordered to be expunged from the records of the House shall not be published and every effort shall be made to give the readers a fair report of what has been said by all sections of Parliament and Provincial Assemblies.

- (17) In reporting the proceedings of courts of law, care will be taken not to suppress the version or arguments of the contending parties.

Source: Independent Press Councils

Code of Ethics: Ethical Code of Practice

An Ethical Code of Practice is formulated as under for the press for the purpose of its functioning in accordance with the canons of decency, principles of professional conduct and precepts of freedom and responsibility to serve the public interest by ensuring an unobstructed flow of news and views to the people envisaging that honesty, accuracy, objectivity and fairness shall be the guidelines for the press while serving the public interest in any form of publication such as news items, articles, editorials, features, cartoons, illustrations, photographs and advertisements. The following are the salient features of the code:

- (1) The press shall strive to uphold standards of morality and must avoid plagiarism and publication of slanderous and libelous material.
 - (2) The press shall strive to publish and disclose all essential and relevant facts and ensure that the information it disseminates is fair and accurate.
 - (3) The press shall avoid biased reporting or publication of unverified material, and avoid the expression of comments and conjecture as established fact. Generalization based on the behavior of an individual or a small number of individuals will be termed unethical.
 - (4) The press shall respect the privacy of individuals and shall do nothing which tantamount to an intrusion into private, family life and home.
 - (5) Rumors and unconfirmed reports shall be avoided and if at all published shall be identified as such.
 - 48 (6) The information, including picture, disseminated shall be true and accurate.
 - (7) The press shall avoid originating, printing, publishing and disseminating any material, which encourages or incites discrimination or hatred on grounds of race, religion, caste, sect, nationality, ethnicity, gender, disability, illness, or age, of an individual or group.
 - (8) The press shall not lend itself to the projection of crime as heroic and the criminals as heroes.
 - (9) The press shall not publish or disseminate any material or expression, which is volatile of Article 19 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.
 - (10) The press shall rectify promptly any harmful inaccuracies, ensure that corrections and apologies receive due prominence and afford the right of reply to persons criticized or commented upon when the issue is of sufficient importance.
 - (11) While reporting on medical issues, care must be taken to avoid sensationalism, which could
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arouse baseless fears or false hopes in the readers. Early research finding should not be presented as though they were conclusive or almost conclusive.

- (12) Sensationalism of violence and brutalities shall be avoided. Pill reporting shall be accurate, particularly when court proceedings are covered and an accused person must not be presented as guilty before judgment has been pronounced.
- (13) In the cases of sexual offences and heinous crime against children, juveniles and women, names and identifying photographs shall not be published.
- (14) Confidentiality agreed upon at briefings and background interviews must be observed.
- (15) The press while publishing findings of opinion and surveys shall indicate the matter of people, geographical area on which the polls and surveys were conducted, and the identity of the poll-sponsor.
- (16) Any kind of privilege or inducement, financial or otherwise, which is likely to create conflict of interest and any inducement, offered to influence the performance of professional duties and is not compatible with the concept of a reputable, independent and responsible press must be avoided.

Source: <http://www.internews.net.pk/>

Responsibility

- The good newspaper is fair, accurate, honest, responsible, independent and decent. Truth is its guiding principle.
- It avoids practices that would conflict with the ability to report and present news in a fair, accurate and unbiased manner.
- The newspaper should serve as a constructive critic of all segments of society. It should reasonably reflect, in staffing and coverage, its diverse constituencies. It should vigorously expose wrongdoing, duplicity or misuse of power, public or private. Editorially, it should advocate needed reform and innovation in the public interest. News sources should be disclosed unless there is a clear reason not to do so. When it is necessary to protect the confidentiality of a source, the reason should be explained.
- The newspaper should uphold the right of free speech and freedom of the press and should respect the individual's right to privacy. The newspaper should fight vigorously for public access to news of government through open meetings and records.

Accuracy

- The newspaper should guard against inaccuracies, carelessness, bias or distortion through emphasis, omission or technological manipulation.
 - It should acknowledge substantive errors and correct them promptly and prominently.
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Integrity

- The newspaper should strive for impartial treatment of issues and dispassionate handling of controversial subjects. It should provide a forum for the exchange of comment and criticism, especially when such comment is opposed to its editorial positions. Editorials and expressions of personal opinion by reporters and editors should be clearly labeled. Advertising should be differentiated from news.
- The newspaper should report the news laws without regard for its own interests, mindful of the need to disclose potential conflicts. It should not give favored news treatment to advertisers or special-interest groups.
- It should report matters regarding itself or its personnel with the same vigor and candour as it would other institutions or individuals. Concern for community, business or personal interests should not cause the newspaper to distort or misrepresent the facts.
- The newspaper should deal honestly with readers and newsmakers. It should keep its promises.
- The newspaper should not plagiarize words or images.

Independence

- The newspaper and its staff should be free of obligations to news sources and newsmakers. Even the appearance of obligation or conflict of interest should be avoided.
- Newspapers should accept nothing of value from news sources or others outside the profession. Gifts and free or reduced-rate travel, entertainment, products and lodging should not be accepted. The newspaper should pay expenses in connection with news reporting. Special favors and special treatment for members of the press should be avoided.
- Journalists are encouraged to be involved in their communities, to the extent that such activities do not create conflicts of interest. Involvement in politics, demonstrations and social causes that would cause a conflict of interest, or the appearance of such conflict, should be avoided.
- Work by staff members for the people or institutions they cover also should be avoided.
- Financial investments by staff members or other outside business interests that could create the impression of a conflict of interest should be avoided.
- Stories should not be written or edited primarily for the purpose of winning awards and prizes. Self-serving journalism contests and awards that reflect unfavorably on the newspaper or the profession should be avoided.

Media Work Ethics: Guiding rules

(a) Seek truth and report it

Journalists should be honest, fair and courageous in gathering, reporting and interpreting information.

Journalists should:

- Test the accuracy of information from all sources and exercise care to avoid inadvertent error. Deliberate distortion is never permissible.
- Diligently seek out subjects of news stories to give them the opportunity to respond to allegations of wrongdoing.
- Identify sources whenever feasible. The public is entitled to as much information as possible on sources' reliability.
- Always question sources' motives before promising anonymity. Clarify conditions attached to any promise made in exchange for information. Keep promises.
- Make certain that headlines, news teases and promotional material, photos, video, audio, graphics, sound bites and quotations do not misrepresent. They should not oversimplify or highlight incidents out of context.
- Never distort the content of news photos or video. Image enhancement for technical clarity is always permissible. Label montages and photo illustrations.
- Avoid misleading re-enactments or staged news events. If re-enactment is necessary to tell a story, label it.
- Avoid undercover or other surreptitious methods of gathering information except when traditional open methods will not yield information vital to the public. Use of such methods should be explained as part of the story
- Never plagiarize.
- Tell the story of the diversity and magnitude of the human experience boldly, even when it is unpopular to do so.
- Examine their own cultural values and avoid imposing those values on others.
- Avoid stereotyping by race, gender, age, religion, ethnicity, geography, sexual orientation, disability, physical appearance or social status.
- Support the open exchange of views, even views they find repugnant.
- Give voice to the voiceless; official and unofficial sources of information can be equally valid.
- Distinguish between advocacy and news reporting. Analysis and commentary should be labeled and not misrepresent fact or context.
- Distinguish news from advertising and shun hybrids that blur the lines between the two.
- Recognize a special obligation to ensure that the public's business is conducted in the open and that government records are open to inspection.

(b) Minimize harm

Ethical journalists treat sources, subjects and colleagues as human beings deserving of respect.

Journalists should:

- Show compassion for those who may be affected adversely by news coverage. Use special sensitivity when dealing with children and inexperienced sources or subjects.
- Be sensitive when seeking or using interviews or photographs of those affected by tragedy or grief.
- Recognize that gathering and reporting information may cause harm or discomfort. Pursuit of the news is not a license for arrogance.
- Recognize that private people have a greater right to control information about them than do public officials and others who seek power, influence or attention. Only an overriding public need can justify intrusion into anyone's privacy.
- Show good taste. Avoid pandering to lurid curiosity.
- Be cautious about identifying juvenile suspects or victims of sex crimes.
- Be judicious about naming criminal suspects before the formal filing of charges.
- Balance a criminal suspect's fair trial rights with the public's right to be informed.

(c) Act independently

Journalists should be free of obligation to any interest other than the public's right to know.

Journalists should:

- Avoid conflicts of interest, real or perceived.
- Remain free of associations and activities that may compromise integrity or damage credibility.
- Refuse gifts, favors, fees, free travel and special treatment, and shun secondary employment, political involvement, public office and service in community organizations if they compromise journalistic integrity.
- Disclose unavoidable conflicts.
- Be vigilant and courageous about holding those with power accountable.
- Deny favored treatment to advertisers and special interests and resist their pressure to influence news coverage.
- Be wary of sources offering information for favors or money; avoid bidding for news.

(d) Be accountable

Journalists are accountable to their readers, listeners, viewers and each other.

Journalists should:

- Clarify and explain news coverage and invite dialogue with the public over journalistic conduct.
- Encourage the public to voice grievances against the news media.
- Admit mistakes and correct them promptly.
- Expose unethical practices of journalists and the news media.
- Abide by the same high standards to which they hold others.

Credibility, accuracy and corrections: Recommendations from the Organization of News Ombudsmen

Newspapers can improve their credibility with readers by taking clear steps to guarantee that they are publishing the best information available. Part of that assurance resides in continuous efforts to assure accuracy, precision and fair context. Part resides in a willingness to admit and correct significant errors or omissions. Here is a general corrections policy of some international News Ombudsmen:

- Be aggressive in admitting mistakes and setting the record straight. When you learn of an error of substance, publish a correction.
- Make it easy for readers to point out potential errors in the newspaper. Establish a central phone number and designate a contact person for reporting errors. Publish the contact information every day.
- Assign one member of the staff to follow up on reports of errors and make sure necessary corrections run in a timely fashion. This need not be a full-time job, but it should be someone who can devote time to investigating errors as soon as the need arises.
- Anchor corrections. Make it easy for readers to find them. Some newspapers run corrections in the same location, usually the second page of the front section, every day. Others choose to run corrections in the section in which the error occurred. Others run corrections on section covers, including Page One.
- Make sure news, feature, sports, entertainment and editorial operations apply similar standards of accuracy and follow the same corrections procedures. Reader's notice and question different approaches.
- Develop constructive follow-up procedures for staff members who make errors. Emphasize ongoing staff discussion of the importance of accuracy, clarify verification standards and provide training for staffers who may need it.

Resolutions for Reporters and Editors:

- Do not approach any story or assignment as routine. If you write or edit routinely, you will be average. You should not be average.
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- You should do your part daily to give the news report pizzazz. You should not allow your stories to contribute grayness or dullness.
- You should not, approach any story with a preconceived notion.
- You should do something this about long stories. As a reporter, you should not dump your notebook into the computer. As an editor, you should not give the reader long stories simply because it's always been done that way.
- You should spend more time listening. Wisdom does not begin and end with you. Valuable ideas and insights are available to those who master the art of listening intelligently.
- You should interview everyone. Reporters and editors who know how to ask the right questions help themselves and their news products. Everyone is a news source.
- You should continue to ask why? This is the least asked and the least answered question in most news stories. Readers and viewers want to know.
- You should remember and protect freedom everywhere you go. You should do your part to see that all laws relating to the people's right to know are enforced. You should resist efforts to compromise these laws out of convenience.
- You should get to know your readers or viewers better. You should read and study surveys that explain your community. You should spend time with people outside your usual sphere of associates.
- You should read your newspaper thoroughly every day. You should read beyond your own stories to be informed about your community and to show your interest in the work of your colleagues. Make them feel that you're all in this together.
- Overall, you should read more: More newspapers, more magazines, and more books. You should pay attention to writing style and ideas.