Recognising the important role of the media in promoting democracy, CDI delivered a three-week Journalism and Democracy Course for journalists from Cambodia, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines and Thailand. The course comprised three components:

- A five-day workshop delivered by the Australian Centre for Independent Journalism (ACIJ) at Sydney University of Technology;
- A 2-day international Conference on Freedom of the Press and Democracy hosted by CDI and the Research Institute for Asia and the Pacific, Sydney University; and
- Two-week work placements with leading Australian media agencies.

**ACIJ Workshop**

The Director of ACIJ, Associate Professor Chris Nash, presented an overview of historical developments in notions of media democracy. This enabled us to develop a framework in which we could speak about problems with the media such as:

- public power
- private power
- ethics
- accountability, and
- competing notions of free speech across the region.

This framework also proved useful as further sessions developed.

Participants divided into groups to share insights into links and impediments to relationships between democracy and media in their own countries. Group notetakers later contributed general points back to the class.

The emphasis throughout the course was on participants sharing their practical experiences. Through this we were able to make connections between our common experiences but also to become aware of where political and social context presented contrasting problems for journalists.
The ACIJ provided a manual of basic materials at the beginning of the course and added to this throughout the week. The course facilitator summarised some of the discussions so that points generated by the group could also be included in the manual.

The facilitator presented an overview of media regulation in Australia. Participants were particularly interested in the roles of unions and Media/Press Councils in self regulation. There was also interest in the role that defamation law plays in different countries.

We spent nearly a day on ethics. Participants developed case studies and presentations of important issues from each country – The Philippines, Indonesia, Papua and New Guinea, Cambodia and Thailand. These presentations sparked off a lot of discussion. An important issue to emerge was concern about commercial pressures on editorial independence.

The course included several guest speakers:

Sydney Morning Herald journalist David Marr presented a talk on the implications of the recent “cash for comment” scandal - this presentation led to a lively discussion about journalists' ethics, particularly in Indonesia.

Sydney Morning Herald Olympics Editor Matthew Moore talked about issues in reporting the Olympics. There was also a presentation from a SOCOG public relations team member.

Medical Reporter Dr Mark Ragg talked about his experiences in researching in-depth stories on genetically modified food. This raised issues about commercial secrecy, use of scientific experts in journalism and the importance of understanding the social context in which one is publishing.

Press Council member Sandy Symons made a presentation of the work of the Australian Press Council. She used group discussion case studies to demonstrate the work of the Council.

One morning was spent working on stories. For this purpose the Centre employed journalists to assist with contacts as participants were finding it hard to get off first base with their research. Australian issues of interest were:

- Situation (including living conditions and art) of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. There was a lot of interest in mandatory sentencing.
- Immigrant communities in Australia - particularly Thai and Cambodian.
- Social development issues relevant to women, and
- The Olympics.
Extra Activities

A visit to a *Sydney Morning Herald* news conference was organised for four journalists who would not be having a placement at the ABC. A community visit to Cabramatta was organised for the Cambodian journalists, who also met with a UTS academic with extensive experience in Cambodia.

Overall Evaluation

Overall, we judged the course to be a success, and valuable lessons were learned for the future. The evaluations show that participants shared this perception.

The course ended with participants presenting issues of particular relevance that had been raised during the first five days. In some cases participants drew on examples of their own work which by then had been reproduced and included in the course manual.

Strengths of the course

- Participants sharing experiences from different social contexts
- Transmission of information about Australia of use to participants
- Exposure to some aspects of journalism education in Australia
- Discussion of the work of journalists in promoting issues which can enhance the link between media and democracy.

Placements