The Centre for Democratic Institutions

SOLOMON ISLANDS MEDIA WORKSHOP
20 -23 JUNE 2003

At the request of the Media Association of the Solomon Islands (MASI), the Media Council of Papua New Guinea (MCPNG), supported by the Centre for Democratic Institutions, developed a workshop to train Solomon Islands media practitioners.

This workshop was significant in that it provided the opportunity for media groups in the Solomon Islands to learn from their neighbours in Papua New Guinea. This workshop helped in promoting closer collaboration and sharing of expertise and information between Pacific media groups in the Solomons and PNG.

The workshop focused on capacity building of the media. The training team from the MCPNG comprised Bob Howarth the Commonwealth Press Union accredited trainer, Di Collins an IT training consultant and John Rei the Manager of the MCPNG Secretariat. The workshop was held over two and a half days at the Kitano Mendana Hotel in Honiara and involved twenty-five media practitioners from the Solomon Islands:

1. Augustine Fox, ZFM
2. Brenda Havli, Link Magazine Solomon Islands Development Trust
3. Catherine Lamani, PAOAFM
4. Ednal Palmer, PAOAFM
5. Ethel Suri, Vois Blong Mere Solomon
6. George Atwn, Prime Minister’s Office
7. Jack Harris, Catholic Communications
8. James Pango, Solomon Islands Broadcasting Corporation
9. Jeff Alexander, ZFM
10. Jennifer Wate, Link Magazine Solomon Islands Development Trust
11. John Lamani, Solomon Star
12. Johnson Honimae, Solomon Islands Broadcasting Corporation
13. Josephine Teakeni, Vois Blong Mere Solomon
14. Julian Makaa, Wantok FM
15. Lorel Leeson, Solomon Star
16. Margerat Babalu, PAOAFM
17. Melvina Qula Tuhaulen, PAOAFM
18. Moddie Nanau, Solomon Islands Broadcasting Corporation
19. Ofani Eremae
20. Preistley Habru, Solomon Star
Training Workshop Program

The training workshop focused on three areas of the media industry. The first area was information technology ethics and ethos. Practitioners received training in the areas of internet and email access, web accounts, excel spreadsheets, word processing and Powerpoint. Due to a lack of media resources, MCPNG brought the necessary IT equipment to Honiara for the training.

The second area of the training workshop was media experiences and the training focused on general news coverage, crisis reporting, credibility and accountability, ethics and conduct; digital photography, layout and design.

The third area of the training workshop was based on PNG experiences, relating to the Pacific Island media. This section focused on the development of skills relating to project identification, proposal writing, presentation, working with spreadsheets, training calendars and working with civil society and their contributions.

Participant Evaluation of the Course

A survey was conducted at the conclusion of the two day workshop. All participants agreed that the workshop content was sufficient and that the workshop provided media practitioners with new information. Most of the media practitioners who attended the workshop lacked formal training and had learned techniques and skills through a ‘hands on’ approach. The workshop was valuable in that the formal training complemented their present knowledge and experiences. Participants were positive about the training team from MCPNG. However, due to the short length of the course, they felt that trainers were unable to spend as much time as the practitioners desired on particular areas. In this sense, a majority of the participants would have preferred the course to run for three days or more.

Breakaway Session

The Manager of the Media Council of PNG held a breakaway session with the executives of MASI to cover the issues of establishing a code of ethics, developing a constitution, training policy and a standards committee. The outcomes of this session are outlined below:

Establishment of a Code of Ethics

In developing a MASI Code of Ethics, the Manager of the MCPNG and Executives of the MASI, discussed the general outline of the MCPNG Code of Ethics. A basic framework was drawn up for the MASI Code of Ethics and a time frame was adopted to ensure completion of the Code before the end of 2003. The
MCPNG will continue to work with MASI over the next couple of months to ensure that the COE is completed and applicable to MASI and more generally the Solomon Islands.

Constitution
The Manager of MCPNG outlined why each section of the MCPNG Constitution was adopted and how it applies to the MCPNG Directors, Board and Secretariat. The MASI executives were provided with assistance in order to establish a draft constitution before the end of 2003. MCPNG will provide a facilitation role in the development and adoption of a MASI Constitution by the end of 2003.

Training Policy & Calendar
The Manager of MCPNG facilitated the planning and development of a MASI draft-training calendar for the 2003/2004 period. The Manager of MCPNG stressed the importance of training as an integral part of strengthening the media industry and that as a result, donor agencies are often keen to support training activities. MASI executives were taken through the process of identifying training needs, developing proposals, developing acquittals and reporting to donors to ensure that funds are properly liquidated and within budget.

Standards Committee
The breakaway session stressed the importance of having an independent watchdog to monitor the performance of the media in a self-regulating approach. The main emphasis was how to prevent government, political or other interest groups from suppressing information through the imposition of rigid regulatory mechanisms on the media’s performance. The Manager of the MCPNG noted that it took PNG Media almost 3 years to develop self regulation in the form of a Code of Ethics and the Independent Media Standards Committee.

Resolutions Adopted from the Workshop
A number of resolutions were adopted as a result of the workshop. These resolutions are:

Training: All parties are to remain committed to training and the development of the Media Industry in Solomon Islands and PNG.

Project: The MASI and MCPNG will continue to work closely to identify and support each other in civil society projects and community projects.

Expertise: The MASI and MCPNG will continue the exchange of views and experiences in the interest of the media industry in PNG.

The response from the Solomon Islands media practitioners was extremely positive. As well as providing much needed training for the Solomon Islands media, the workshop has facilitated the development of a closer relationship between the two media groups in the Pacific. Both MASI and MCPNG hope that the workshop will become an annual event
in the interest of developing the media industry in Solomon Islands. Should this occur, the focus of the training content would be compatible with both print and electronic media to ensure the wide distribution of benefits within the media industry.