INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF JOURNALISTS

Election Reporting Handbook

A Media for Democracy Handbook

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Introduction

The challenge of objectivity, impartiality and balance in journalism is faced daily by journalists, but there is no test of professionalism greater than that posed in the heat and pressure of a bitterly-fought political election.

The election is also a test of political commitment to democracy. It is a time the impulse to manipulate media and to control information is strongest among ruling parties and political leaders running for office.

And what about voters? The election provides a further challenge to media because it brings into sharp focus the need of media to provide citizens with access to all the facts, opinions and ideas being canvassed in the campaign. And journalists must also provide access to media so that citizen's voices can be heard above the babble of political debate.

How do journalists cope with these pressures? How can they enforce professional guidelines and rules which will help them to put all sides of an argument? What laws and regulations should restrain political interest groups from exercising undue influence?

In countries where media, press and broadcasting, have been traditionally subject to monopoly control and undue political influence, particularly from the state, and sometimes from single-party government, adjusting to multi-party conditions is never easy.

But the questions set out here need to be answered urgently, particularly in the countries which will soon follow in Kenya's and South Africa's footsteps.

This handbook, we hope, will help journalists and media organisations to prepare themselves for the challenges which these elections will pose.

This handbook and the election project which it supports are part of a comprehensive Media For Democracy Programme to assist journalists and media organisations. The programme was developed during 1993 to provide professional assistance to journalists and media organisations to meet the challenge of political and social change.

Aidan White,
General Secretary.

Chapter One

By Jean Paul Marthoz
Director, Media For Democracy

1. WHAT THE HANDBOOK CONTAINS

The handbook draws on resource documents which provide themes and ideas for discussion among journalists. These include:

* Unesco's **Declaration of Windhoek** (1991) and the Council of Europe's decloaration on **Media in a Democratic Society**. (1994)

* the **IFJ Manifesto for a Democratic Media Culture**. This policy Declaration by journalists from 66 countries in 1992 defines clearly the proper role of journalist in a democracy.

* the **IFJ's international Declaration of Principles on the Conduct of Journalists**. This is the most widely recognised ethical statement in the world of journalism.

The handbook also provides **Guidelines for Government and Media** which draws upon existing texts and new studies prepared by Article 19 The International Centre Against Censorship on the principles appropriate to media coverage of election campaigns in transitional democracies.

This handbook starts from the basis that State-owned media exist as a public service, serving all of the people, and not acting as the public relations arm of the government. We recognise that different traditions provide different problems.

> *"Traditionally,"* writes Francis Kasoma (University of Zambia), *"the greatest enemy to freedom of expression in post-independence Africa has been government high-handedness. Those in power have simply not accorded media editors any meaningful leeway to give the populace a voice in the media which they have largely owned and controlled. The African government has literally both paid the piper and called the tune".*

The same can be said for many parts of the world but it need not be so.

We include an agreement reached between the Board of Directors of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation and its journalistic staff guaranteeing journalists editorial freedom.

We insist throughout this handbook that State-owned radio and television networks are not and must not become propaganda weapons. Instead, journalists must be accorded the right to determine news and current affairs content on the basis of professional judgments alone.

Our focus on state-owned media does not mean that journalists working in private media are ever totally free from undue pressures. We are under no illusion that a privately-owned press automatically operates without any restraints to press freedom.

Partisan politics, advertising pressures, publishers' interests and leanings can act as a powerful, even though less visible, influence on freedom of expression. To illustrate this search for editorial independence, we also reproduce a "charter" signed between journalists and their publisher.

We also draw upon the experience of journalists in South Africa to confront the problem of violence against journalists. The struggle for democracy is often turbulent and violent and journalists are almost always in the firing line. The tips in this contribution can help journalists anywhere to survive while getting the stories their media need.

At the end of each section is a checklist of questions relating to your own situation. These are designed to help you apply the ideas and suggestions in the handbook to your own conditions.

2. DEMOCRACY AND THE ROLE OF JOURNALISTS

The IFJ which represents more than 350,000 journalists in 84 countries worldwide, believes strongly that the exercise of free journalism is an essential part of any credible democracy and our unions insist that voters must have access to accurate, timely and informed facts and opinions. Media freedom, according to the IFJ is:

> *That process from restraint which is essential to enable journalists, editors and publishers to advance the public interest by publishing, broadcasting or circulating facts and opinions without which a democratic electorate cannot make responsible judgements.*

Our unions reject attempts to manipulate the media whether through the crude instruments of official censorship or by any mechanism by which journalists are told what to write in their newspapers or what to broadcast on air.

Manipulation comes in many forms: from the heavy hand of the ministry of information to the subtleties of advertising and commercial pressure.

The greatest threat to press freedom is often not in forms of direct control but rather in the creation of an atmosphere in the exercise of journalism whereby self-censorship by journalists and editors prevails.

The IFJ believes in empowering journalists to fight for media freedom. We fully support the definitions of independence and plurality in media provided in the Declaration of Windhoek in 1991 which stated:

> *"By an independent press, we mean a press independent from governmental, political or economic control or from control of materials and infrastructure essential for the production and dissemination of newspapers, magazines and periodicals.*
>
> *"By pluralistic press, we mean the end of monopolies of any kind and the existence of the greatest possible number of newspapers, magazines and periodicals reflecting the widest possible range of opinion within the community".*

The IFJ encourages journalists to organise into effective trade unions and professional associations and to stand up for their rights. Journalists have a key role to play in a democracy, but they can only do so if they work in social and professional conditions which respect the need to be free of intimidation and undue influence.

Therefore, in setting out the professional conditions for free and fair reportage of elections, the IFJ stresses that professionalism in journalism carries with it ethical and moral obligations which journalists have a duty to honour, not just at election time, but in all aspects of their work.

The IFJ exists to help create the unity and solidarity among journalists which they need to make the professional commitment something more than window-dressing for democracy.

3. CONFRONTING THE PROBLEM OF BIAS

Allegations of bias in the news media happen all the time, but they are most evident at election time.

Journalists know that to politicians and public interest groups, the omission of certain news items or issues from newspapers and radio and television news bulletins, the angle given to a story or the choice made about its place in a page or a bulletin, will sometimes be construed as a deliberate act of bias.

More often than not, journalists make these choices on the basis of sound professional judgement. But mistakes are made. When deadlines are tight and pressures are greatest, the weighing of these factors may be less thorough. In general, journalists must strive for fairness and for decisions made solely on the basis of news value.

The "conspiracy theory" of deliberate bias is rejected by most journalists as being based on an inadequate knowledge by outsiders of the editorial process. As insiders we know, too often, that it is lapses of judgement and cock-up rather than conspiracy that is to blame when things go awry in the newsroom.

Rejecting the notion of conspiracy, one senior newspaper editor has written:

> *"We do not conspire with outsiders because we are newspaper people -- not politicians, megalomaniacs or political dilettantes. We do not slant news to favour any political party because -- apart from being a fraud on our readers and bad journalism -- to do so is dishonest. Journalism in its purest form is simply telling the truth, so long as it is in the public interest. We do not conspire with outsiders. We do not write for politicians or parties. We write for people".*

Most journalists might accept that, but we all know, too, that political pressure exists. Often it is based upon the traditional community of support which media appeal too -- liberal newspapers tend to be left of centre in their editorial columns; conservative newspapers will favour right of centre politics.

Partisan journalism can be good journalism. Campaigning journalism has often nurtured the best tradition in the profession but the opinions of the editorial columns should not interfere with the process of news gathering, news selection and placement.

That is something which journalists always try to respect and that is difficult for many outside journalism to understand. Therefore, allegations of deliberate, political bias are easy to make and often difficult to refute.

The choices to be made between different kinds of news and views every day and the omission of some items and the inclusion of others is bound to result in professional judgement which can be defined as bias. A journalist comments:

> *"Of course the press is biased. The gathering, editing and publishing of news involves decisions by people who inevitably bring their own background, values and prejudices to bear on deciding what to select, emphasize and colour as news.*
>
> *"Bias is inevitable; it is lack of balance in the representation of a range of views that is criticised. Lack of balance may characterise not only the way politics is presented in reports, but more generally, the way women, unions, homosexuals and minorities are reported."*

Even media critics, if pressed, would acknowledge that the media cannot be entirely free of bias. They would accept, for instance,that the editorial column, which serves as the institutional voice of newspaper on a wide range of issues, must of necessity be biased because it expresses an opinion, even though such opinion must always be based on confirmed facts. Nor would they object to the right of columnists to express their opinions, even if they disagree with them.

Generally, what is objected to is a lack of balance in news columns, which are supposed to contain objective reportage, as far as that can be achieved. Deliberate bias, sometimes slight, sometimes excessive,is the result of a conscious decision by the reporter, editor or proprietor to be partisan rather than even-handed.

Examples are the suppression of essential or important facts and the deliberate distortion of other facts through wrong or improper emphasis. Bias happens also when, for instance, newsreaders summarize speeches

of the opposition with little or no footage whereas they run long footage of the speech by the ruling party candidate. Bias can also be seen in "camera angles" when TV crews are asked to focus on a campaign rally in such a way that it appears larger than it really is. Or when they are being asked to film the "best" or the "worst" profile of a candidate.

But the fact that a newspaper prints more news about the President or Prime Minister than about the Opposition leader or opposition candidate is not of itself evidence of deliberate bias. It might reflect the fact that the President or Prime Minister does or says more as a result of the duties of his or her office; or that the President or Prime Minister is interesting and the opponent is dull; or that they provide information to meet deadlines.

Many journalists question whether it is the job of the media to go out of their way to polish up the Opposition's image or improve its media skills to account for any such deficiencies. However, it is the media's job to act fairly. Remember that many politicians are skilled at manipulating people, including media.

Some candidates are so obsessed with getting their message across without any journalistic filter that they have resorted to new ways of addressing directly the electorate.

In the 1992 presidential elections in the United States maverick billionaire candidate Ross Perot rented television time to avoid having to talk to free media. He could, and did, buy all the airtime he wanted. The bad news for our profession was that each time he attacked journalists, the switchboard of his headquarters was overwhelmed with calls from people volunteering for his campaign.

Some candidates went on the television talk-show circuit with no journalist present and answered questions fielded directly by the public.
Journalists should carefully listen to the questions asked by the public: they may serve as an excellent barometer of real public concerns and as a warning for journalists as to the way they effectively cover those concerns.

Never forget that you are a link between the event and the reader, listener or viewer and not a veil. News coverage should not become a barrier between the candidates and the voters. It should be a bridge connecting them.

> *"That desire of the people to become more involved in the political process is here to stay,"* says Seymour Topping of the American Society of Newspaper Editors . *"It will have increasing influence on newspapers as well as the electronic media. People will want to be in a position to have their views recorded more often and at greater length in newspapers. This can be done through letters to the editor, it can be done through op-ed pages and in news columns in the sense that reporters are drawn more to talk to the people themselves rather than addressing all their questions to politicians or to the leaders in business and the professions."*

Always be prepared for media bashing. Many candidates, especially lacklustre or losing candidates, think they get unfavourable coverage in the press and try the put the blame on the media. Do not be intimidated. Just do your job.

A final word: bias is also about news priorities. We can choose to focus on a particular issue, or we can join the herd in following a particular controversy, or we can decide to refrain from getting behind the glitz and the glamour of personality or character politics.

Bias occurs when we focus on the internal dynamics of an election campaign, on its "horse race" model instead of digging deep into the most substantive issues of the day.

Beware of allowing a gap to grow between your news values and the nation's real concerns. According to studies in the United States[1] "the voters' concerns are closer to those of the candidates. The Markle Commission's study of the 1988 campaign concluded that voters believe they get their best information about the candidates from debates". And not from journalists!

Bias should be fought by media organisations. A process of checks and balances can be set up within the newsroom itself in order to correct imbalance in reporting. Some media organisations have adopted operating procedures that guide journalists in the day-to-day dilemmas of their work.

Some have devised a reviewing process that closely monitors the performance of the newsroom. Others have even appointed a readers'

[1] Out of Order by Thomas Patterson

representative or ombudsman that is supposed to attend to readers' complaints and to review the way the newspaper has covered a particular story.

Let us not forget that self-regulation and internal control procedures are always better than control by a press council stocked with "wise men" recruited outside of the profession and often endowed with legal or punitive powers.

4. EDITORIAL INDEPENDENCE

The press is in the news business but it is not just in business. Journalists and publishers have a responsibility towards the society as a whole. That means that journalists operate on the edges of the market **and** democracy.

According to the Federazione Nazionale Della Stampa in **Italy**:

> *"The function of the press is not to give support to this or that economic or political potentate, but to unravel the everyday, complex behaviour of society and powerful bodies for the benefit of its readers. Newspapers and journalism were originally intended to be, and must continue to be, useful instruments in the general interest rather than mouthpieces of individual, particular interests".*

Given the fact that Italy's leading media magnate, Sylvio Berlusconi, is now the country's Prime Minister it is a timely reminder that politicians must keep their hands out of the affairs of journalists.

But it also means that journalists cannot be prevented by their publishers from carrying out their professional responsibilities. In order to really empower journalists in this fundamental social function some media have established editorial statutes that tend to guarantee independence from all kinds of pressure.

In **Australia**, for example, an agreement between the Australian Journalists Association and the new publishers on The Age (a broadsheet daily paper published in Melbourne) states:

1. The Board of Directors and its appointed management affirm their commitment to the principles of editorial independence.

2. The Board of Directors, the management, the editors and members of the staff of The Age and The Sunday Age agree to uphold the Australian Journalists Association code of ethics and the principles declared by the Australian Press Council.

3. The Board of Directors acknowledges the responsibility of journalists, artists and photographers to report and comment on the affairs of the city, state, nation and the world fairly and accurately and regardless of any commercial, personal or political interests including those of any share-holder, director, manager, editor or staff member.

4. The right to appoint or dismiss the editors resides with the Board of Directors and its appointed management. Subject to this, full editorial control of the newspapers within agreed budgets shall be vested in the editors. They alone shall determine editorial content and appoint, dismiss, deploy and direct editorial staff.

5. The editors shall be directly responsible to the appointed management and shall at all times carry out their duties in a way that will preserve and ensure the independence and integrity of The Age and The Sunday Age in accordance with this Charter.

In **Germany**, journalists employed on Stern magazine have a detailed agreed statute covering editorial freedoms. Article 1 of the statute states that Stern is a political magazine, but is independent of any of the political parties in Germany, of business corporations, or any other interest groups.

The Article says Stern seeks to inform and entertain its readers and expects its editorial staff to believe in a free, democratic system and to subscribe to progressive liberal principles.

Journalists or employees of Stern cannot be forced to carry out any task, to write anything or to take responsibility for anything against their convictions. They may not suffer any consequences from a refusal.

The interests of editorial workers at Stern are represented by an advisory board, consisting of seven editorial staff members, elected annually by secret ballot. On a petition of 30 editorial staff members, the advisory board must be newly elected.

The editor-in-chief of Stern is appointed by the publisher. The editor-in-chief requires the full confidence of the editorial staff: therefore, the publisher discusses the appointment with the advisory board. The publisher will not appoint or dismiss an editor-in-chief if the advisory board is opposed to such a move with a two-thirds' majority.

Staff decisions within the editorial department are taken by the editor-in-chief. Staff changes at the level of deputy editor-in-chief, department head and political journalist cannot be made against the opposition of two-thirds of the advisory board. The advisory board must give reasons for its position consistent with the principles contained in Article 1 of the statute.

These brief examples here show that where there is recognition of the problems of pressure practical action can be taken to reinforce professionalism and independence in media. We should strive for independence at all times, but it must exist, above all, during the critical period for democracy when a nation or a community is electing to office those charged with defending their liberties and protecting their interests.

Checklist:

How can news media improve coverage to ensure that news reports do not appear to slavishly follow the bias that may appear in editorial columns?

What structures for internal discussion and debate should be established to review the election reporting process as it unfolds to correct any problems of apparent bias that may emerge?

Is there a process of debate and dialogue within a newsroom which can reduce or eliminate personal prejudice?

Chapter Two

1. THE KENYAN EXPERIENCE

By NEAL SWANCOTT
Former IFJ Deputy General Secretary

Kenya is a country with a lively written press. Three major newspaper groups produce daily newspapers in English and in parallel vernacular languages. Some 200 full-time journalists and photographers, and an army of freelance correspondents, work in a fiercely-competitive market to gather and publish information. Kenyan newspapers are well read, although illiteracy in the country is around 30 per cent.

The Kenya Government also controls the two television networks,KBC and KTN, the radio network, Voice of Kenya, and the newsagency, KNA. Many foreign correspondents also have Nairobi as their base for coverage of East Africa and the Horn of Africa.

The relationship between media and government has been poor for many years. Journalists have experienced problems with the authorities in all areas, including the police, and there have been frequent confrontations in which journalists and photographers have been assaulted.

International media and human rights groups have frequently intervened to protest and to defend journalists and editors.

The December 1992 Kenyan election took place, therefore, against a difficult and uncomfortable background: a relatively free, competitive media environment but with the ever-present possibility of official harassment.

The lack of respect within the political establishment for independent values in journalism was reported extensively during an IFJ Nairobi seminar when speakers revealed the extent to which politicians and political aspirants sought to "buy" coverage. Remarkable sums of money were in circulation to bribe journalists. Several journalists "placed themselves outside the profession" and accepted full-time posts as media advisers to politicians.

In some cases, journalists who linked themselves with particular

candidates were quickly transferred to non-election duties. While it was not suggested that the incidence of such clear conflicts of interest had a great impact on the election coverage process, it led to considerable debate after the election period.

Another notable feature of the Kenyan election experience was more widespread: physical intimidation of journalists.

Nevertheless, Kenyan journalists report that there was a widespread feeling of adventure within the profession: journalists were keenly aware of the historic process in which they were involved.

Several newspapers published regularly features in which individual electoral constituencies were profiled. Others published "readers' forum" type columns to make a break with the barrage of "official" comments from parties and spokespersons.

Newspapers also cleared space for election coverage. "Nation", for instance, provided devoted six full, advertisement-free pages each day, and designed a new layout to distinguish election coverage from normal news coverage. But journalists were under a constant barrage of demands. Regular accusations of bias were followed by demands for "equal space".

The Nairobi seminar indicated a significant gap in the protective shield which should protect journalists from undue political pressure. The seminar was told that, during the election period, two senior government officers convened a meeting of journalists to give "advice" on how the election campaigns should be covered.

Needless to say, this "advice" was strongly favoured government candidates. Similar "briefings" were held for radio and television journalists. Arising from this the IFJ regional meeting suggested:

a) that journalists' associations in the region should consider establishing an **"election campaign monitoring group"** comprising experienced, retired journalists, which could receive, investigate and publish details of political pressure on journalists.

b) that a **"charter"** of non-interference in editorial judgements, along the lines of the charter negotiated in Australia for the Australian

Broadcasting Corporation, would strengthen the independence of journalists.

c) that journalists' associations should **campaign on the issue of ethics and corruption**, educating newcomers to the profession on the role of independent journalism and should expose corruption when it is identified.

d) that established journalists should **avoid working as consultants** or advisers to candidates.

e) that **courses for political groups** should be set up giving advice on how to respect media at times of elections and to avoid putting journalists at risk of allegations of bias and unprofessional conduct.

f) that journalists' associations **should issue guidelines on election coverage**, with particular emphasis on the "public service" role of the government-owned electronic media.

Checklist of issues:

Does the Kenyan Experience apply to you?

How can Journalists Resist Political Pressure?

Would an Election Charter defining ethical conduct help?

How Can Editors Defend Their Staff?

2. ELECTION NOTES: OBJECTIVITY AND JOURNALISTS

By ALI HAFIDH
former editor in chief of "The Standard", Kenya

The coverage of elections is an essential part of the freedom of expression. As elections need to be genuinely free to be democratic, so it is with the coverage of elections. An impeded or selective coverage of elections is anathema to democracy. For genuine freedom of expression, media must be totally free and unimpeded.

Election coverage is not just the reporting of election campaign rallies. The

journalist in the exercise of covering the election becomes a messenger of all opinions; including those who advocate democracy, as well as the enemies of democracy. In election rallies, there will always be these two characteristics.

The journalist also becomes an active participant in the election process. They must inform voters about what type of persons are canvassing for votes and what they stand for. A journalist needs to be brave enough to tell the voter through media what is at stake. This is not to say that the journalist becomes a campaigner for a particular candidate.

In Kenya, we do not have a system, applying in the United States and other countries, of media endorsing candidates. In the absence of this system the journalist should be bold to point out the merits and demerits of the contestants and leave it to the voter to decide.

Election analysis should become an integral part of campaign coverage. It is also in the exercise of covering elections that a journalist distinguishes himself or herself as a objective person, and a man or woman of integrity.

3. ELECTION NOTES: GETTING OUT THE MESSAGE

By WANGETHI MWANGI
Managing Editor of "Nation" newspapers

The pursuit of the truth is a great democratic cause. If a journalist fails there, he or she fails in the struggle for democracy. The struggle for democracy must be a call to every journalist.

Honesty, integrity, objectivity, brevity and truth are grandiose and noble ideas, but a journalists should not be embarrassed or reluctant about setting them as standards of their work.

In the run-up phase, we thought it was our duty to inform Nation readers of where the various parties stood on vital issues. This was easier said than done. Kenyan politics is personalised, and defined by tribal interests, to a very great degree and the campaigning, sadly, was dominated by mud-slinging and name-calling, with very little of substance being said.

We **wrote to every party leader** requesting an interview in which they could state their party's case; we offered to provide a list of questions for

them to study. Not one replied.

One feels little sympathy for political leaders when they complain of misrepresentation if they will not permit themselves to be questioned on the basics of party policy.

In the event, we were forced to collect the parties' official manifestos (something they should have been handing out at street corners, but which proved like asking for gold) and from these we ran a series of articles setting out the different attitudes to the economy, regional administration, corruption, health, education, welfare, jobs -- in fact, all of the bread-and-butter things that affect people in their everyday lives.

We also introduced a regular feature entitled "Election Platform", in which non-politicians, ordinary Kenyans, were invited to share their views with readers, either on a general basis, or more likely, on a specific area in which they were expert: human rights, treatment of land, constitutional issues, problems of the farmer, neglected areas.

The standard of these contributions was remarkably high, and in fact we retained the idea when the election ended, retitling it "Weekend Platform" which offered literate Kenyans a chance to express themselves at length on any important topic of their choice. The elections were fraught with many dangers: violence in several places tended to obscure the real objectives, and political thuggery introduced a whole new element of corruption in media.

Chapter Three

1. AN EDITOR'S MODEL FOR ELECTION COVERAGE

By JEAN PAUL MARTHOZ

Planning is essential to effective election coverage. The model below can be used as a checklist by editors or election coverage task forces. It gives also some guidance on special editorial approaches to the campaign.

Be careful, however, to adapt this model to local realities. But do not accept the argument that poorly-funded media do not have the means to really follow those rules. Good journalism can be poor!

* **Check with the electoral commission** all the details of the coming poll: registration date, start and closing day of the campaign period, election day specifics (how the polling will be organized, timetable for election returns, etc).

* **Study the election rules**: voting system, electoral laws, poll watching, laws governing international observation delegations, use of public opinion surveys, political advertising regulations, access to state media, electoral expenses limitations, etc).

* **Join with other media**, unions of journalists, publishers' and broadcasters' associations in order to prepare the profession's guidelines and code of conduct and a charter to be submitted to all political parties committing them to respect journalists and protect them against harassment by their supporters.

  Consideration should be given to setting up a election media monitoring group composed of well known personalities and in charge of investigating any aggression against the press and to promptly act upon them.

* **Explain to your readers** your reporting rules, how you are going to cover the campaign and why.

* **Budget the election reporting**: an election campaign is usually good business for the media but it also costs a lot of money. You will

need extra phone lines, faxes, additional cars and drivers, more overtime. Plan carefully and allocate resources wisely. Low-balling your budget will get you into trouble.

* **Select your task force**: Election coverage is the political desk's golden hour but it should not be its exclusive preserve. All departments can be asked to perform duties according to their skills. Specialised writers will be commissioned to analyze issues in their beat (economics, health, foreign affairs, economics, labour, education), to compare competing political programmes, to scrutinise speeches and position papers, to track inconsistencies and expose propaganda.

  The foreign desk for instance might be assigned to stories related to international observer teams, foreign press coverage, role of international organisations in the campaign, etc.

  Some media choose to set up a special election desk for the last weeks of the campaign. This option should be studied carefully especially in small newspapers. The election campaign should not obfuscate the rest of the news.

* **Appoint an editorial panel**: it will be charged with reviewing delicate questions that may arise as the campaign develops. It should include the editor-in-chief, the relevant department head, and a few distinguished commentators or reporters.

* **Plan technical and operational arrangements**: pin down the advertising department (some pages should be considered ad-free during the campaign, precise guidelines should be given to acceptance and placement of political advertising), the production manager (he must provide for later deadlines on election day and for additional pages), and the distribution manager.

* **Recruit additional personnel**: young journalists to handle the information flow on election day, phone and fax operators, secretaries, drivers, etc.

* **Contact resource persons**: they will be of much help to give expert advice during the election campaign and as soon as the results are public. Election pundits, political scientists, public opinion analysts,

should be on standby and attached to your particular media. Appointments should be arranged in advance with political party leaders for election-night comments on results. But do not overwhelm your readers with excessive punditry. Ordinary citizens should have their say too.

* **Check your photo files**: you should have as many pictures of candidates as possible stored in your photo library.

* **Plan for emergencies**: what do you do if something breaks down on your side (your computer falls dead, your local journalist cannot contact you, one of your reporters is arrested or wounded, etc) and on the side of the government (failure in the collation of results, charges of irregularities, etc).

  Planning is all-important, but never forget that your first responsibility is to the readers, the viewers and listeners.

* **Citizen's groups** which are formed to help voters use the power which elections put at their disposal are very useful. Take, for example, this advice given by Project Vote Smart in the US to American voters:

  1. Remember who is in charge. In our democracy the citizen is the boss. Elected officials are temporary hired help.

  2. View the election campaign as the politician's job application.

  3. Ask yourself if the candidates are giving you, the employer, the information needed to decide who is best for the job.

* **Civic education**: media must carefully and repeatedly explain the principles and techniques of voting and what the election will lead to (a new parliament, separation of powers, transparency, etc).

  Media should introduce an open line to readers so they might ask questions on specific points of the campaign and air their views (note the "Election Platform" idea of Nation Newspapers in Kenya reported earlier).

  Run more interviews with voters not just "vox-pop" and quick quotes

gathered in the street, but meaningful probing of how families are surviving in an economic crisis or how they deeply feel about education opportunities for their children.

* **Public opinion polling**: unprofessional polls are bad news, for voters and for media. Never commission surveys that do not stick to the highest standards and never print them without fully explaining the conditions and the limits of the survey. Expose any fraud in a political party or newspaper survey. Never forget that polls will never replace old-style political reporting.

* **Start well ahead of election day**: prepare profiles of major candidates, close-ups on most electoral districts (economic base, population profile, major problems, party dominance).

* **Cover the issues**: Pile up documentation on campaign issues (official figures, the state of the debate, major players and lobbies, etc.). Cover those issues independently from party positions, report on issues that are neglected by political parties. Too often issues are presented as just a conflict between opposing sides and not as objects of serious debate.

  Always ask: What's missing in the news today? Read everything, remember what the candidates said (and did) over a period of years not just days. Do not confuse lobbying by interest groups or media-generated excitement with a grass-roots political movement.

  Do not be afraid of repeating explanatory studies of difficult issues. The "We've already done it" or "It does not interest anybody" cynicism should never be welcome in a newsroom. At election time is should be banned.

* **Improve your sub-editors' team**: make stories and issues accessible to readers, de-code all political jargon, track down and annihilate all long words that render already difficult concepts totally incomprehensible.

* **Beware of "pack" journalism**: shy away from the tendency to follow candidates like a pack of wolves which leads to concentrate on the same events and interpret them in the same way. This happens particularly when a candidate is seen as rising in the polls:

when a candidate's support increases sharply the coverage of his candidacy becomes more favourable.

* **Keep in Touch with who is behind a party or a candidate**: examine possible conflicts of interest. Look at a candidate's record or promises and commitments: ask who has benefited or would benefit from a candidate's proposals.

  Follow the money: who is financing the campaign, what are the interests of those providing the money, and how will they benefit from the government (new legislation, regulatory power).

* **Use all forms of journalism**: long reportage, analytical pieces, graphs, satire, sketches and cartoons, investigative journalism (who is behind a particular candidate, the role of special interests, etc), photojournalism, profiles, interviews, contradictory debates.

* **Open Space**: Give politicians from different parties the possibility to write columns for your paper on a fair and rotating basis. But stop this process at least two weeks before election day so as not to give undue advantage to one of the candidates and not to overwhelm your readers with party propaganda.

* **Get acquainted with campaign tricks**: Beware of stunts and cooked-up events designed just to grab headlines.

* **Press releases:** Do not just publish political parties' press releases: check them, use them as a source for a more balanced story. Do not run for "photo-opportunities". Do not overhype controversy: a contrived rumour campaign can lead you far away from voters' real interests.

* **Be credible:** Never forget that your long-term credibility is always at stake. Follow closely each candidate's advertising campaign. Some media have columns which scrutinise campaign promises and advertising techniques. Expose falsification and distortion wherever you find it. Clearly identify and attribute any information coming from sources other than obtained from independent reporting.

* **After the election**: review the way your team covered the campaign. Compare your performance with that of the competition.

* **Train your staff in reporting a multiparty parliament or a coalition government**. Follow up the candidates' election campaign promises. Check their records against their commitments. Keep an eye out for conflicts of interest: the type of legislation actively pushed by an MP can give you a tip on the identity of his financial backers.

2. REPORTERS AND THE ELECTION

By JOHN LAWRENCE,
Briefing paper by Training Editor of "The Nation", Kenya

This was the text of a statement prepared for journalists in Kenya facing an historic challenge -- the country first's truly democratic multi-party elections in the early 1990s:

In a few weeks, Kenya will be holding its most exciting general election in nearly 30 years. It will be an election that will be grassroots in every sense. From the humblest village to the biggest towns, Kenyans will be voting in their first truly democratic multi-party elections. Every school hall, sports ground and beer hall will be invaded as an army of sweet-talking, promise-it-all politicians and their campaigners take to the hustings.

To report the promises of these politicians we will need a small army of correspondents. You!

How you report the conduct of the election will largely determine the selling power of the Nation group of newspapers. So, let us start with a warning: covering elections, even in Western society, presents many problems. In Kenya, as with any other fledgling multi-party nation, it will be like walking in a minefield. One false step and your reputation -- and your newspaper's -- could be blown to smithereens. Here are some of the ways you can survive:

Report events exactly as they happen - and not as you would like them to happen. This means that you must be impartial in every way:

* Give equal prominence to all the major candidates. This means attending an equal number of candidate's meetings.

* Be careful not to colour your reports with inflammatory language.

* Report what candidates say and not what interested parties say candidates said.

* Be careful not to be seen to be taking sides in political arguments.

* Do not (in any circumstances whatsoever) accept any inducement from a candidate or his/her supporters. Do not even take a ride in a politician's car.

* Do not promise any politician (or anyone else for that matter) that a report or story will appear in the paper.

* Report what you see without exaggeration.

* Do not use extravagant language in describing crowd scenes. (A Kenya Nation report talked about a crowd of 40,000 at a political rally in an area which had three men, 10 chickens and a dog.)

* Exercise fair play. If a candidate makes an accusation against his opponent, ask that opponent for a comment.

You should listening for:

PROMISES: These are usually part of the party manifesto or platform: lofty pledges to initiate irrigation schemes, build highways, lower taxes waive education fees. Or they could be titbits for village consumption: "Vote for me and I will give you 10 new cattle dips". "Vote for me and no child in the district will go barefoot". "Vote for me and your stomachs will be full of ugali forever". So you've got to be alert. You could get a national story or one for the provincial round up briefs.

HECKLERS: Hecklers, people who like to disrupt meetings with their interjections, can provoke violence or laughter in equal measure. Be alert for humorous, rapid-fire exchanges. You may get a good verbatim quote.

THE UNEXPECTED: Unexpected, quirky things often happen at public meetings. Like the man at the harambee who offered a pig's head (having already eaten the pig!). Or Wilson Leitich's famous order to chop off the

fingers of people flashing the multi-party salute.

CONTRADICTIONS: Be prepared for a sudden departure from the prepared speech, particularly contradictory statements or fundamental shifts in platform policy. Do not rely on the printed text alone. You will need acute powers of observation. You will need to gauge the mood of the meeting. Is it tense, light-hearted, gay? Look around and observe the placards, the expressions on people's faces. Are there trouble-makers?

THE CROWD: How big is the audience? To estimate accurately the size of a crowd is an important skill. But it is wise to quote a variety of sources: yours, the police, the organisers.

CONFRONTATIONS: In a volatile political situation, anything can happen. Certain signs will prepare you. These include the number of infiltrators from the opposition camp. Are they armed? (even with stones). Listen to what people in the crowd are saying. And observe the security presence. Are they armed with shields, batons, machine guns and teargas? Are they expecting trouble? Do they appear nervous? Do not jump to conclusions about how trouble has started if a sudden commotion takes place. Talk to people, you may have missed something or an act of provocation.

If you carry out all the points raised in this rather long list,you will have performed a valuable service for your newspaper group. Remember, you will be in on the ground floor as history is made.

And as a man once said: " History is past politics, and politics is present history". Be part of it.

Checklist of issues: Preparing for an election

a) Organising coverage before the election. The role of media executives and the role of journalists in the field.

b) Forward planning and covering the issues and politicians.

d) Examine the ideas set out here. How does your media and how do your journalists measure up to these guidelines.

Chapter Four

SURVIVING THE ELECTION:
1. How to Detect Potential Election Irregularities

One of the major stakes in any election is its level of fairness and transparency. Even when the poll is being monitored by representatives of political parties, electoral or international observation teams, journalists should attempt to determine by themselves the degree to which any problems affect the quality of the electoral process.

The National Democratic Institute for International Affairs in the United States gives these guidelines to its observer teams. They might be used as an inspiration for journalists: *"Try to observe, research and record the severity, frequency and pattern of any of the following issues and the number of voters influenced.*

* **Unfair attempts to influence voters** or election officials through bribes, employment promises, threats, intimidation, systematic disruption of the election process, unbalanced media access;

* **Disenfranchisement of voters** through: unreasonably restricting the registration process, unreasonably restricting candidate eligibility, failing to properly list registered voters, failing to distribute voter identification cards, requiring unreasonable supplemental voter identification, systematic complication of the election process, incomplete distribution of election materials;

* **Fraud,** such as stealing ballots, stuffing ballots, destroying ballots, misreading, miscounting, providing misleading reports to the media, voting twice, trying to remove indelible ink;

* **Logistical problems**, including insufficient number of ballots, ballots missing for certain parties, insufficient number of envelopes, ink that washes off, inadequate secrecy of the vote, missing officials, missing voter registry, no artificial lights; and

* **Civic education**: voters do not seem to have a reasonable understanding of their right to freely choose a candidate or how to express their choice, and administrators do not have a reasonable understanding of their duties and how to execute them."

SURVIVING THE ELECTION:
2. Safety At Election Time

(Adapted from the IFJ Safety Manual -- Danger! Journalists At Work -- and a manual for journalists in South Africa, produced by the South African Union of Journalists.)

The International Federation of Journalists' Safety Manual states that a story isn't worth your life. And that should be the starting point for everyone -- from the editor to the eager and enthusiastic freelance trying to get the big story that will make his or her name. Journalists must learn to survive, to avoid injury, jail, expulsion or any of the other perils of our profession -- and still get the story.

In August, 1992 - when it was becoming apparent that attacks on journalists were increasing at a frightening rate - the South African Union of Journalists convened a seminar to which representatives of the major political organisations in the country were invited.

This resulted in the **"Declaration of Respect for the Rights of Working Journalists"**.

This was signed by the African National Congress, the Congress of South African Trade Unions, the Democratic Party,the Inkatha Freedom Party, the National Party, the Pan African Congress, and the South African Communist Party. The pledge said:

> *"We share the concern of the SAUJ at recent attacks and threats of attack against journalists, and agree that the rights of working journalists should be respected at all times while they are engaged in news-gathering in South Africa.*
>
> *"We acknowledge that the SAUJ expects its members to work in accordance with the Union's Code of Conduct and the IFJ Declaration of Principles on the Conduct of Journalists.*
>
> *"We undertake within the limits of our influence and abilities to respect and promote the physical safety of journalists, including news photographers and radio and television crews".*

While journalists in the rest of Africa might think the situation in South

Africa could not be repeated in their country, election violence is clearly not a South African invention. Recent events in Nigeria, Equatorial Guinea, and Kenya show that election time is when the heat is most turned on journalists and media.

All journalists' organisations should seek from political parties and national authorities a declaration similar to that obtained in South Africa. It sets the rights tone for the election campaign and provides a point of reference if journalists run into trouble.

Journalists' Rights

Journalists have the right to refuse an assignment they consider too dangerous. It is a right worth using more often. If you start feeling uncomfortable or the situation suddenly turns ugly, turn back. You cannot be fired for refusing a job which puts your life at risk.

Don't hesitate to say no and don't feel guilty. If other journalists take reckless risks, they are foolhardy and should not be encouraged.

If you are covering a dangerous assignment, you have the right to full insurance (life, health, riot, property). If your employer or the organisation commissioning your services refuses to provide basic assurances of support in the event of things getting ugly,consider turning down the assignment.

Freelances are often badly exploited, and should be confident in demanding coverage or to be paid enough (extra) to cover the cost of insurance. If you are attacked, report it to your employer and to your union, even if you are not injured or only slightly injured. If the followers of a particular political organisation or movement are responsible, ask your editor to take it up with that organisation. Make sure that your union does the same.

Publicity also increases public awareness of the problem. If you know of attacks against journalists that have not been published, ask your union to take up the issue with your editor. Information is the only weapon we have in fighting violence against journalists.

Unions cannot, for example, demand that employers provide protective clothing unless they have adequate information about the level of attacks.

Media organisations need an overall picture of what is happening if they are to take up the issue with politicians.

Sometimes it is useful to have an **independent body monitoring elections activities** that can take up cases of threats and intimidation. This body should include representatives from international organisations defending press freedom or persons that know how to get in touche with them. Support from abroad can act as a deterrent on a government tempted to bully the independent media.

Staying out of Trouble

Never carry a gun or a weapon. Get basic first aid training. This does not mean an obligation to provide medical care to every victim you see, but it may assist an injured colleague.

Know your rights. It is useful to have an understanding of the regulations which relate to unrest areas, and to know which areas are affected. This knowledge will allow you to challenge with confidence any member of the security forces who tells you that you may not take photographs, or who orders you to leave an area when you have a right to stay. Remember than an irresponsible or uninformed act may not only put you in danger, but could also have repercussions for colleagues.

Know your destination. Be as prepared as possible before leaving the office. Know what political, racial, religious or any other conflict exists within a region. Information can keep you out of trouble. Talk to other journalists. Networking is important. If you have experienced problems in a particular area, warn other journalists to be careful.

Make Contacts. Get to know the media officers of all the major organisations in the area. Look out for press marshals at rallies and marches.If you have any difficulty, ask a marshall for help. If you are covering a major protest march or political rally,survey the route/venue beforehand. Look for telephones that can be used, vantage points from which you can survey the event without being too close in case of trouble.
Be familiar with the roads and where they lead to in case you have to leave suddenly. Learn and observe local community protocol. This could include who you speak to first when you go into a community, and how you address leaders.

Dress Appropriately. Always dress in comfortable clothing that does not limit your freedom of movement. Especially no heels or narrow skirts. Clothing that attracts attention to you is out of place in a trouble zone. Dress to be inconspicuous. Avoid leather jackets, expensive sun glasses or jewellery. They make you a walking target for criminals. Be aware of the colours of the political movements and parties active in your region, and avoid wearing them in the same combinations.

Some journalists prefer to dress formally, but many believe that it is better not to be too well-dressed for fear of being mistaken for police officers. Avoid t-shirts with political slogans.

There is a debate whether it is better always to be instantly identifiable as a journalist or not. Some journalists think it is a good idea to wear a t-shirt which announces "press" or "media"; others point out that journalists are sometimes targeted precisely because they are from the media. There is no easy or safe answer.

It is clear that there will be times when it is better to be identifiable and others when it is not. Use your judgement.

Before leaving home. The most basic rule of covering conflict is never to travel alone. If there is no-one else from your news organisation available, telephone around to find a colleague to take along.It is worth the time and trouble. And while we might be in competition, we are still colleagues. Watch out for one another. Always tell your editor, colleagues and family where you are going and what time you expect to be back.
Make sure someone at home knows what to do and who to contact if you don't arrive.

In the field. Listen to the locals. Pay attention to advice from people living in a region or an area. They know best. It is essential to carry a press card. Keep it handy. Don't keep it in your wallet - you'll be advertising your money every time you take out your press card.

The breast pocket of your shirt is a good place. Watch out for big crowds. They are a good signal for what is happening. But don't stop your vehicle in front of the crowd, or try to drive through it. And if things are too quiet and there are few or no people on the streets, this could indicate danger.

If there are other journalists about, stick close to them. Never be seen to

be too friendly with the security forces. If a security officer offers his or her hand, don't take it. Apologise and say you don't mean to be offensive, but you cannot afford to be seen shaking hands.

If you are caught in the middle of a disturbance, move away -- but don't run. If you run, you could be seen as a target. Do not attempt to cross directly from one side of a confrontation to the other.

Above all, remember to keep someone -- your office, your home, your union, or the IFJ -- informed about where you are at all times.

Checklist

a) *Examine the potential for irregularity -- the best observers of the quality of an election should be media themselves.*

b) *Seek support from all political parties for a joint declaration on the question of safety of journalists such as that achieved in South Africa.*

c) *A briefing for journalists on safety points taking up some of this points made here? Would all media co-operate in producing such a document?*

d) *Prepare and circulate to all your colleagues a list of numbers -- local and international -- that they can use if they experience difficulties? Use the IFJ "Help Card" as a starting point.*

SURVIVING THE ELECTION:
3. Public Opinion Polling

Public opinion polls are a common feature in most elections. They can be commissioned by the media, by political parties or social organisations.
Most media-commissioned polls are based on the horse race model: who's ahead, who is behind? and often play an excessive role in the campaign coverage.

They are often unconvincing and very much open to manipulation and misjudgments. Of course, they get top billing in news coverage, most poll stories appearing on the front page. But a poll story is entirely manufactured. It is pseudo-news created by media who create it, pay for it, and then report on it.

Journalists should give more prominence to surveys on issues. Public opinion polls should be used as a news gathering tool in order to identify expectations from the electorate.

This form of journalism is called "precision journalism", that is using scientific research methods to collect and report news. Those methods come mainly from the social sciences, sociology, psychology, political science. Some use qualitative techniques (as the case study, the oral history, or participant intervention) that require elaborate preparation for in-depth interviews, others use quantitative techniques, that is essentially the scientific poll.

Generally journalists will be expected to comment on polls commissioned by others. Therefore they will need a basic understanding of polling techniques in order to analyze and interpret accurately the survey data as well as to identify possible manipulation or misinterpretation.

This familiarity with polling techniques can also be extremely valuable when a media commissions its own survey. A journalist should always be assigned to work with the professional pollster and should be knowledgeable about sampling procedures, questionnaire elaboration, and data analysis.

Journalists should carefully review guidelines published by some respected polling organizations like the American Association of Public Opinion Research. Such organisations recommend that news stories

based on public opinion surveys include the following information:

* The date or dates of the interviews;

* The name of the sponsoring organization (e.g. this poll was commissioned by the Democratic Party or by the Trade Union Confederation);

* The quantitative characteristics of the sample: population base, sample size (total number of respondents). For opinion polls, the sampling size tends to range from 400 to 2,500. The larger the sample the lesser the margin of error. However the latter figure is more than adequate, regardless of the size of the population. The information should also mention the number of people in any subsample on which a result is based;

* The manner in which interviewing was done, usually either by telephone, written questionnaire or face-t-face;

* The exact wording of key questions;

* The margin of error

Marta Lagos, a public opinion pollster from Chile gave this advice when assisting in the Namibian transition. Her remarks were designed to political party pollsters but they help understand the importance of public opinion polling for journalists as well:[2]

> "You must have information on what people are thinking: what people want in social, economic and political terms, and how much they expect from what they want. The question of expectations is crucial for the stability of the political process after the election has taken place.
>
> "You have to have information about political parties, the organizations that are taking place in the election. Which are

[2] (From: Padraig O'Malley, Uneven Paths: Advancing Democracy in Southern Africa, National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, Washington, 1993).

partners? Which are your opponents? What are their characteristics? What are their messages? You need information about institutions. For example, what is a role of the church as an institution in the political arena?
"The selection of issues is most important. Among the most important are:

* Information about political parties: which parties the individual likes.

* Voter intention: how the individual voted in the last election and if he or she stays with the same party or whether he or she is changing his or her mind; Whether he or she is undecided;

* The positive traits and the personality of the candidate: what the individual likes the most and the least;

* Confidence in the performance of institutions -parliament, the justice system, the armed forces, the media;

* Political process: is the individual confident that the process is going to be fair?

* Attitudes towards the importance of the vote: does the individual feel that his or her vote counts, that it matters whether he or she votes (this can reveal information about the turnout of the election)?

* Attitudes towards politicians: are they corrupt, are they only looking out for their own interests, are they reliable and trustworthy?

* The reliability of the media: does the individual believe what he or she sees on TV, hears on the radio, reads in the newspapers?"

Chapter Five

GUIDELINES FOR ELECTION COVERAGE

1. Introduction

Conditions vary between transitional democracies and even between different regions within the same country so it is important to note that the proposed guidelines and recommendations set out here should be adapted according to the national context.

However, the foundation for any set of guidelines are treaty obligations and internationally-recognised practise for the conduct of elections.

Before any election can be undertaken in a manner which will satisfy any international scrutiny it is necessary to ensure that legislation which is contrary to freedom of the press should be repealed. Therefore, all laws which are in violation of Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights should be identified and repealed prior to the election process.

All legal conditions need to take account of the predominant vehicle for communicating election information, particularly regarding candidates, discussion of issues and the views of political parties.

The message may be carried primarily by radio, television or print media, or may be transmitted through other information initiatives, such as public meetings. Therefore, the need for plurality and openness in any one or all of these methods is a vital starting point in defining a sound election information strategy.

The IFJ strongly believes that the role of Government is to encourage professionalism in all media and to demonstrate commitment to citizens' rights by ensuring that state-owned media play a leading role in providing the people with the information which they need to take informed decisions. The issue here is to convert government media from official or state media into public service broadcasters.

Fairness and balance in broadcast media is particularly essential since in most countries the reach of print media is seriously limited by high levels of illiteracy, ignorance of national (French, English or Portuguese) languages, price of newspapers, transportation and distribution problems in the

countryside, and by insufficient availability of newsprint and printing presses. Radio and TV are also very often the main channels for communication in local languages. Broadcasters have consequently a high responsibility in assuring that the largest majority of the population gets as much information as possible.

These guidelines apply to government media which have an obligation under international law to fulfil the duties of impartiality and non-discrimination. But they should be an inspiration also for private broadcasters under the principle that balanced coverage and equal access to the airwaves enhance the fairness of the electoral campaign.

We believe that the following guidelines, provided by the International Centre against Censorship Article 19, provide a basic and initial text for governments in establishing an acceptable framework for election coverage. (A more detailed set of guidelines from Article 19 has been published under the title Guidelines for Election Broadcasting in Transitional Democracies. See: Sources).

2. Media Monitoring

Journalists are being observed as much as they observe during election time. In elections in South Africa, for instance, media monitoring projects were set up, often with foreign funding, in order to assess how the media is covering the campaign.

An election cannot be judged to be free and fair if state or private monopolies overwhelm the news scene and do not give citizens a representative and balanced picture of the campaign. Or if journalists do a poor job.

Journalists, editors and publishers sometimes resent this monitoring but media criticism is part of the democratic process which can be used to improve the quality and professionalism of the media. Some media have set up their own media monitoring as part of normal election coverage believing that media play a decisive role in the election and should therefore be reported on. Some even apply these criteria to their own coverage in order to detect and correct any bias in coverage of the election.

The Project Vote Smart in the United States gives an idea of the issues

involved by asking would-be monitors to answer the following questions: Are opposing candidates treated in a like manner?
Who is interviewing the candidate-an ally, an adversary or a non-partisan interviewer?
Are media participating in the creation of soundbites and photo opportunities?
Are media stories giving you the information you need on issues facing your community and your country?

In South Africa, the Media Monitoring Project (MMP) undertook the monitoring of all television news stations, 13 radio stations and 17 daily newspapers. Its reports were sent to news organisations, political parties, embassies, national and international observers, the electoral commission and a selection of personalities and institutions.

The MMP said: "Monitoring the media comprises two different aspects. One is the obvious assessment of whether political parties receive equitable coverage. The other, which is generally overlooked, is assessing the manner in which the media is covering the election processes. This raises questions such as: Is the media exposing instances of intimidation, regardless of the source? Are allegations of electoral fraud or misconduct being reported?"

The fundamental point of departure of the MMP was to assess the role played by South African media in the run-up to the country's first democratic elections. This assessment drew upon internationally accepted standards for the media: of promoting fairness, impartiality and diversity of opinions. The IFJ code of conduct (See Page 50) could be one of these standards.

The European Court, for instance, refers to the right's of citizens to be informed through:

Full information, which covers all sides of a particular issue.

Impartial information, which does not explicitly or implicitly take sides on any issue.

Independent information which does not serve any particular political interest.
Accurate information, which does not exclude or distort issues

which are in the public interest."

The MMP monitored:

1) all stories that deal with the election campaign;

2) all stories that deal with party-political campaigning for the election;

3) all stories that deal with any news about political parties, the government, etc.;

4) all stories that deal with other news (violence, the economy, etc.) and which mention or imply a connection with the government or political parties.

5) all stories that deal with government apparatus (police, security forces, local government, etc.) or with opposition to these apparatuses.

Media monitoring includes basically:

a) **a quantitative study**, the "fairness factor". How much time, how much space is devoted to each contender and/or political party and/or sister organisation) and

b) **a qualitative approach**: the contents of the news, story angles, semantics, nature and context of time and space measured, placement of the measured time or space;

c) **critical events analysis** (comparative analysis of front page news); the "spiral of silence": determining what's and who's missing in the news.

d) **Determining the hierarchy of news**: the priority given to particular parties/election issues; the "flow of approval": examining how a certain mind-set or attitude is cultivated through constant repetition and placement.

GUIDELINES FOR GOVERNMENT

GUIDELINE ONE: *Government Media Must Inform All Citizens*

During the period preceding an election, Government media must provide the public with relevant information so that citizens can make informed choices in the election. In particular, Government media must provide information about:

* *The **political parties** and **candidates** contesting the election;*

* *The **issues** which are the subject of the campaign, including material in **party manifestos**;*

* *The **voting process** itself and all other information which will assist people **to participate** in the election.*

Commentary:

1. Article 25 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights states that governments have an obligation to ensure that **"Every citizen shall have the right and opportunity, without distinction to vote at genuine elections."**

2. Governments in countries where the majority of people have no experience of multi-party elections have a particular responsibility to ensure the widespread dissemination of relevant information about elections.

3. The right to vote is particularly important to people who are illiterate. Governments must ensure that they have access to all information about how to vote.

4. Governments must provide, either through broadcast media or through other information initiatives, an election information service accessible by all voters residing in the country.

GUIDELINE TWO: *Government Media Must Be Impartial*

Government media must be balanced and impartial in reporting of news and information regarding an election. In particular, Government media should ensure that programmes and information services are not biased in favour of one candidate or one party, but should provide equitable access to media for all candidates and parties contesting the election.

Commentary:

1. Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states: **"Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers."**

2. In order to guarantee citizens this right, the state must ensure access to public media of opinions and ideas expressed by all parties and candidates during an election period. Journalists must be free to exercise their professional judgement in election coverage free of guidance or direction from governmental or state authorities.

3. The state-owned media should make a distinction in editorial coverage between official duties of government representative and election campaigning activity they may undertake on behalf of their party and its candidates in the election.

GUIDELINE THREE: *Government Must Protect Media*

The Government is obliged to protect media organisations and media employees from all forms of intimidation, violence or acts of harassment.

The Government should investigate, prosecute and punish illegal actions intended to interfere with media freedom or to

restrict the free exercise of journalism.

Commentary:

1. The United Nations recently appointed a Special Rapporteur, Abid Hussein, on the question of freedom of expression and opinion and to consider, among other issues, safety of journalists.

   This appointment, with other UN declarations on the question, particularly by Unesco and the UN Human Rights Commission, underscores the special importance which the international community attaches to the physical protection of journalists.

2. Effective protection of media personnel, equipment and premises is vital to ensure that the media can satisfactorily carry out the public function of informing the public about matters of public interest. This is particularly important at election time.

GUIDELINE FOUR: *Government Must Not Censor*

The Government must not censor election programmes and must guarantee editorial and professional autonomy of journalists during the period preceding an election.

Governments should create independent commissions to monitor the election process with responsibility to review and to report on media coverage.

Commentary:

1. The Government should issue a clear statement to the public that all media are encouraged to freely publish and broadcast election-related news and information and that media organisations will not be penalized for broadcasting programmes or publishing information because they are critical of the actions or policies of the Government or the ruling party.

2. Government must not review election programmes or articles

and news items prior to broadcast or publication.

GUIDELINE FIVE: *Government Must Open the Airwaves*

Government media must provide opportunities for legal political parties and candidates to air their views, without interference in the content and form of expression of their views, other than in the context of journalistic presentation of information.

Access to election candidates should be granted:

a) directly, through the provision of direct-access programmes allocated without discrimination and on equal terms to all parties and candidates;

b) indirectly, through the exercise of professional journalism in which the right of reply and correction should be granted to any candidates or party that makes a reasonable claim of having been defamed or injured.

Commentary:

1. In the first election of a transitional democracy that media, whether state-owned or private, should be fair and inclusive. In some elections this can appear impractical and difficult (in Namibia 14 political parties equally shared broadcast time in 1989 and in some countries in Eastern Europe dozens of parties contesting the first election were given air time.)

   A particular problem is viewer and listener interest, which can quickly diminish when a multitude of voices clamours for attention. However, the principle of equal time gives all parties a voice, demonstrates variety in content and form of political choice, and promotes confidence in the election process.

2. Inter-party agreement should be established to elaborate the process for obtaining and granting direct access.

3. The process of purchasing election advertising should be regulated to ensure equality of opportunity to limit the advantage of richer parties.

GUIDELINE SIX: *Government Media Must Educate Voters*

The Government must ensure that all potential voters in all regions of the country are able to receive information which will enable them to vote.

Commentary:

1. The Government's obligation of balance and impartiality regarding the fundamental rights of voters also extends to providing voters with such information regarding the election process as they need to exercise their freedom of expression.

2. The election process can be bewildering even in countries with a tradition of parliamentary and multi-party democracy and is much more so in countries where communications are limited and many citizens have had minimal education opportunities.

3. Special election information campaigns, which must be accurate and impartial, carried out in local languages and organised through radio, TV, press and public meetings in district and village centres, are an essential component in any voter education strategy.

4. Any voter education campaign must pay special attention to the needs of women, religious minorities and tribal minorities, many of whom may have been excluded from the political process.

5. Governments should use appropriate expertise, such as that provided by national human rights organisations, in the elaboration of a voter education programme.

GUIDELINE SEVEN: *Government Media Must be Professional*

Government media must demonstrate the highest standards of journalism and must provide balanced, accurate and impartial coverage of news and current affairs and Government must establish a mechanism for regulating and monitoring election broadcasts.

Commentary:

1. Because news reporting provides the most influential information of an election campaign, the election process is the greatest test of professionalism in journalism. State media must provide journalists with the best professional conditions in which to work.

2. Many countries establish systems to monitor the time allocated by news programmes to various parties and issues and make efforts to ensure that corrections take place to try to ensure balance in coverage.

3. It is important to allow journalists to distinguish between editorial coverage of official duties by ministers and government officers and coverage of their activities in as candidates in an election.

4. Journalists should not be subject to pressures or corrupt practices (such as accepting "facilities" for transport or communications provided by candidates or parties in elections);

5. Governments should establish, where possible, a central election communication centre to which journalists have access and which provides a clearing house for information and news regarding the election.

GUIDELINES FOR MEDIA

The following guidelines have been agreed in Australia for journalists working at the Australian Broadcasting Corporation and are similar to those which apply in many other countries, including at the BBC. They emphasise to the need for plurality in public broadcasting.

Guidelines

1. News and current affairs programmes should inform the public of election issues.

2. A range of party spokespersons should be sought for comment and explanation of the issues of the campaign.

3. Coverage of the leaders of the parties should not be at the expense of the main issues.

4. Segments of news bulletins should be set aside for "hustings reports". However, this does not exclude coverage within news bulletins of items about the campaign, chosen on their own merits.

5. As a general rule, ensuring that an equal amount of time is given to the major parties is one method of measuring overall balance, but it is recognised that news value judgments may not always make equality of time either possible or desirable.

   Coverage of minor parties should not be disproportionate to their role in the election.

   It is recognised that some issues before the electorate may not be exclusively identified with policies of any one party. A running total of the time given to each party is to be kept, and provided each week to the Corporation's Executive Directors.

6. The Editorial Charter, as approved by the Board on 7 July, 1984 is to be followed.

Editorial Charter

1. The Australian Broadcasting Corporation takes no editorial stand in its programming.

2. Editorial staff will avoid any conflict of interest in performance of their duties.

3. Every effort must be made to ensure that the content of news and information programmes is accurate and in context. Demonstrable errors will be corrected with minimum delay and in a form most suited to the circumstances.

4. Balance will be sought through the presentation as far as possible of principal relevant viewpoints on matters of importance. This requirement may not always be reached within a single programme or news bulletin, but will be achieved within a reasonable period.

5. Impartiality does not require editorial staff to be unquestioning, or the Corporation to give all sides of an issue the same amount of time. News values and news judgments will prevail in reaching decisions, consistent with these standards.

6. In serving the public's right to know, editorial staff will be enterprising in perceiving, pursuing and presenting issues which affect society and the individual.

7. Editorial staff will respect legitimate rights to privacy of people featured in the news.

8. Authority for editorial directions and decisions will be vested in editorial staff.

9. Editorial staff will ensure that coverage of newsworthy activity within the Australian community is comprehensive and non-discriminatory.

Chapter Six

1. POLICY TEXTS: UNESCO AND COUNCIL OF EUROPE

The Declaration of Windhoek was adopted by General Conference of UNESCO in 1991 and by the IFJ at its World Congress in Montreal in June, 1992, stated that:

"consistent with Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the establishment, maintenance and fostering of an independent, pluralistic and free press is essential to the development and maintenance of democracy in a nation, and for economic development".

The Declaration defined "independent" as meaning "a press independent from governmental, political or economic control or from control of materials and infrastructure essential for the production and dissemination of newspapers, magazines and periodicals".

It defined "pluralistic" as meaning "the end of monopolies of any kind and the existence of the greatest possible number of newspapers, magazines and periodicals reflecting the widest possible range of opinion within the community".

The Declaration called for constitutional guarantees of freedom of the press and freedom of association. It said the establishment of truly independent, representative associations, syndicates or trade unions of journalists, and associations or editors and publishers, was a matter of priority in countries where such bodies do not exist.

It said that national media and labour relations laws should be drafted in such a way as to ensure that such representative associations can exist and fulfil their important role in defence of press freedom.

The Council of Europe adopted a comprehensive statement on journalistic freedom and human rights at the 4th Ministerial Conference on Mass Media Policy held in Prague on December 7-8 1994. The statement -- **Media in a Democratic Society** -- provides support for actions to ensure pluralism and independence of journalists. The text also includes support for public service broadcasting. The full text is set out as an appendix to this handbook.

2. IFJ TEXTS:
a) IFJ Principles on the Conduct of Journalists

The Second World Congress of the International Federation of Journalists, at Bordeaux, April 25-28, 1954, adopted the following declaration; which was amended by the 18th World Congress, Helsingor, June 2-6, 1986.

"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.

1. Respect for truth and for the right of the public to truth is the first duty of the journalist.

2. 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 of fair comment and criticism.

3. 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.

4. The journalist shall use only fair methods to obtain news, photographs and documents.

5. The journalist shall do the utmost to rectify any published information which is found to be harmfully inaccurate.

6. The journalist shall observe professional secrecy regarding the source of information obtained in confidence.

7. The journalist shall be aware of the danger of discrimination being furthered by the media, and shall do the utmost to avoid facilitating such discrimination based on, among other things, race, sex, sexual orientation, language, religion, political or other opinions, and national or social origins.

8. The journalist shall regard as grave professional offences the

following:

- plagiarism;
- malicious misrepresentation;
- calumny, slander, libel, unfounded accusations;
- the acceptance of a bribe in any form in consideration of either publication or suppression.

9. 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 recognise in professional matters the jurisdiction of colleagues only, to the exclusion of every kind of interference by governments or others.

IFJ TEXTS:
b) Manifesto For a Democratic Media Culture

The **International Federation of Journalists** looks to the future with confidence. We believe that professional journalists, organised in free and independent trade unions, play a key role in the creation and maintenance of a democratic media culture.

The **IFJ** believes that democracy depends upon the extension of freedom of expression and social justice worldwide.

The **IFJ** insists that democracy is fully respected when there is an understanding of the special and particular role of the media in democratic society.

The **IFJ** believes that the role of media in democratic society is to apply the principles of press freedom upon which the freedom of expression and opinion relies.

The **IFJ** considers that the treatment of news and information as a commodity must not override or interfere with the duty of journalists to inform their audience.

The **IFJ** believes media freedom can only be achieved when there is recognition that:

1. A free, independent media reflecting diversity of opinion is a

precondition of democratic societies;

2. The free flow of information is the lifeblood of communities whether they be based on geography, ethnic origins, shared values or common language;

3. Freedom of expression and opinion can only exist where citizen's rights to freedom of information and the right to know are guaranteed;

4. The professional integrity and independent role of journalism have to be respected to ensure a democratic and pluralistic press around the world;

5. Information and cultural material of communities must not be threatened for political or economic reasons by technological developments.

The **IFJ** calls upon all governments to provide a legal framework which will ensure the freedom of information, freedom of access to sources of information, and the freedom to practise professional journalism without pressure from either political or economic interests.

The **IFJ** demands full and universal recognition of the right of freedom of association and of the right of journalists' unions to bargain collectively on behalf of their members.

The **IFJ** opposes the use of information media by governments, state authorities or proprietors for their own political or commercial or personal advantage.

The **IFJ** promotes and campaigns for the creation of material conditions for the development of freedom of expression and opinion.

The **IFJ**, therefore, reaffirms its support for the Declaration of Windhoek of May 3rd 1993 which identifies fundamental principles for the establishment, maintenance and fostering of an independent, pluralistic and free press which is essential to the development and maintenance of democracy in a nation, and for economic development.

The **IFJ** supports the Charter of the United Nations and strengthened

international co-operation based upon universal respect for trade union and human rights.

The **IFJ** seeks endorsement at local, regional, national and international level of the IFJ Code of Principles on the Conduct of Journalism which forms the basis for universal standards of ethical conduct for the practice of professional journalism.

The **IFJ** believes media professionals, journalists and editors and publishers, both in the written and audiovisual media, should engage in dialogue internally and with governmental and intergovernmental authorities on the question of media policy. Such structures for dialogue should bring together legitimate representatives of workforce, management and consumers to discuss:

a) the economic and social development of the media, and in particular, the need to limit monopolisation which can threaten diversity of information sources necessary for the practice of democracy at all levels in society;

b) the problems of unemployment and job insecurity whether caused by concentration of mass media ownership or otherwise;

c) the practical implementation of laws, policies and standards designed to assist in the development of free and pluralistic media.

d) professional, economic and social conditions within the media including:

1. The development of openness and transparency in the business and social affairs of all media enterprises.

2. The maintenance of independent and recognised systems of professional training which reflect the need for high quality journalism, independent and distinct from political and commercial imperatives.

3. Legal recognition of mechanisms for the defence of freedom of information and independent journalism such as editorial statutes.

4. The creation of secure working conditions within media enterprises,

based upon equality of opportunity and including limitations on exploitation of freelance and casual labour.

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