Executive Summary
By Jesse KONANG

Within the framework of promoting responsible investigative journalism, AFRICAphonie-Cameroon, supported by British High Commission, Cameroon, recently launched a call for journalists throughout Cameroon to attend by application-procedure a one-day seminar in Buea on the matter. Of the 46 entries, 16 journalists (eight females and eight males) from all categories of media platform throughout the country were selected based on the strength of their motivational letters (applications) and locations (favouring a wide geographical spread), female journalists’ affirmative actions, media organ diversity, media platform plurality.

AFRICAphonie’s Executive Director, Nwalimu George Ngwane opened and closed the seminar, calling on media practitioners to remain professionally steadfast, team together to build a vibrant advocacy system to promote their cause, and attend subsequent seminars with their products to exhibit. He paid tribute to British High Commission-Cameroon for continuously patronizing AFRICAphonie-Cameroon, adding that the act symbolized the smooth relations existing between the Republic of Cameroon and Great Britain. He reminded the journalists to massively participate in the British-High-Commission-advertised Investigative Journalism Competition whose due deadline was 31st October, 2015.

Four resource persons facilitated the seminar, using relevant universal theories and their personal experiences to update the participants’ skills. The first to mount the rostrum was Chief Foanyi Nkemayang Paul, President of the Commonwealth Union of Journalists-Cameroon Chapter and Publisher of the Limbe-based Star Newspaper. He provided helpful advice that journalists venturing into investigative journalism needed to perform without professional fouls.

The second speaker, Mr. Charly Ndi Chia, President of the Cameroon Union of Journalists, Editor-in-Chief of the Buea-based Post Newspaper and Member of the National Communication Council demonstrated how a journalistic investigation could be conducted and reported with balance and fairness.

Rev. Brother Singfried Sinior, Editor-in-Chief of the Buea-based Cameroon Panorama (Catholic publication), Director of Social Communications, Buea Diocese, PhD Student/Assistant Lecturer, University of Buea, spoke on “Empowering the Journalist through Investigative Reporting.” He gave the participants the skills on how to effectively develop investigative story ideas/angles.

Mme. Tricia Oben, CRTV Douala staffer, former National President of the Cameroon Association of English-speaking Journalists, crowned the day with a paper on “Investigative Reporting - Too Risky for the Female Journalist?” She recognized that “honestly speaking, all journalists face the same problems with investigative journalism. Not just women,” continuing, however, that “dominance of men at the top in (journalistic) decision-making is not helping women (journalists) at all.”

The views expressed by post-seminar-evaluation-procedure indicated that the training was worthwhile. The participants thanked the organizers for the opportunity, praying for more such seminars to be regularly organized.
I am particularly honoured to be here to present this paper on the guidelines of investigative journalism, from a global perspective with very touching case scenarios that will not only tickle you, but expose some stunning revelations.

Before I delve into the nitty-gritty of this very intriguing topic, let me first of all define what the word ‘investigation’ is, before tackling the issue of investigative journalism in a broader spectrum. Investigation, as defined by the Oxford Universal Dictionary is “the action of investigating, inquiry, systematic examination, the tackling of the truth, examine systematically or in detail, to reconnoiter.”

Having said that, it is important to hold the bull by the horns by opening the lead of a successful investigative journalism report! Firstly, you must define the storyline with the essentials put in place. The Five Ws and One H: Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How? This is where you begin: what will turn out to be breaking news, a report that can tumble high profile personalities in a country where bad governance is the rule, not the exception. Your investigation will be incomplete if the principle of using the Five Ws and One H is not applicable.

Investigative journalism cannot be handled by professional lightweights or lackeys. Journalists who venture into investigative journalism must be prepared, courageous, honest, magnanimous, uncompromising, incorruptible, professionally alert, and adorned with the core values of responsible and ethical journalism. Armed with these fundamental factors, the investigative journalist can swing into action, having in mind the particular story he/she is embarking on, that is likely to cause an earthquake. Why an investigative journalism report and not just an ordinary story? If the question of an investigative report is in the affirmative, then it must be something new and big. It is common knowledge that the media is both an influential and inevitable element in the socio-economic, cultural and political development of any nation. The role of the journalist is crucial in disseminating information, educating and sensitizing the public on important societal issues and exposing the wrongs for a better image on the world stage. It is a truism that through the media, the world wakes up every day to face and listen to the ravaging effect of politically motivated mayhem, conflicts, unending wars, economic quagmire and appalling statistics on the rate of corruption, hunger and poverty notwithstanding.

Given the integral role the media plays in shaping our destiny, it is incumbent on its practitioners to ensure the society remains governable, unadulterated and corruption-free with embezzlers who plunder and impoverish nations weeded out from our midst.

We shall discuss three investigative reports below and see how they helped to sanitize the society, or contributed in nipping some nefarious activities in the bud. Who are investigating? What is the storyline? When? Where? Why? How? These questions must be answered courageously, accurately with a professional touch because it is the right of the people to know what the Five Ws and the One H represent in a particular storyline. The investigative journalist must be well armed with the tools of the trade.

Are you ready? Then take up your pen, notebook, camera, recorder and some money and start investigating these stories: (a) Ex-CTE General Manager murdered and burnt to ashes. Some say he committed suicide. (b) Botaland boils over government land allocation – Village chief steals additional four hectares of land after Minister cedes 17.16 hectares of land to the people. Why? (c) Ghana suspends 29 court judges after journalist airs film implicating them of trading court judgments for bribes and sex (story by fearless journalist, Anas Aremeyaw Anas)

The first report was investigated by Chief Foanyi Nkemayang Paul and published in The Star Headlines newspaper of Monday, 10th June, 2006. He ended up with death threats because of the facts he brought out, indicting close friends of killing the
erstwhile General Manager, but the threats soon fizzled out like a bad dream because he refused to bulge by courageously firing back severally.

The second case study was still by the aforementioned journalist and after three reports published by the The Star in 2015, the Minister of State Property, Surveys and Land Tenure dispatched a three-man fact-finding team to Limbe headed by the Technical Adviser No. 2, Suh Aziez Cornelius Fru from 16th-18th September, 2015. The findings of the team ended up with undesirable consequences against the land grabbers or call them land thieves. CONAC and the Supreme State Audit are also on the beat. And who is doing what and why? Do we need to investigate?

Questions: What is the central point of each of the stories? What does the journalist intend to achieve? Why is the story so important? Of what effect will it help the society? Who is behind the story? Any conflict of interests? How long has this problem existed and how is it affecting the population? Who will be helped or hurt by what is happening? What will happen if after your story there is no solution? Will your story help solve the problem?

For the journalist to remain tough and uncompromising, he/she must stand his/her till the end of the investigative report. Do not compromise, no matter what. This is because challenges and tribulations are legion and intimidating. You will be threatened, promised hell if you proceed with the story. They will want to bribe you if you insist on your storyline. But a good journalist will remain undaunted and ensure he/she delivers his assignment without fear or favour.

Investigative journalists are usually incorruptible, stone hearted, and very difficult to compromise for what ever reason. This crop of syndicated journalists account for some of the best in the world! Christiane Amanpour of CNN got the 2014 Queen of England’s Excellence Award for her coverage in investigative journalism over the years. She had hers after the baptism of fire of the venerated Nigerian ace Journalist and her Dele Giwa who was struck down by Ibrahim Babangida’s letter bomb in October 1986. The first of its kind in Africa because the Newswatch magazine owned by Dele Giwa and partners were investigating the involvement of Nigerian first lady in cocaine dealings with Glory Okon, a Nigerian with permanent abode in London. Dele Giwa remains an unforgotten hero till this day.

The Post newspaper’s Editor-in-Chief, Charles Ndi Chia has been on the Fako land grabbing imbroglio for a long time. He published several reports showing how corrupt Administrators and spineless royal fathers disrobe their denizens of land ceded to them by the State. His in-depth investigative reports have never been challenged, yet a government that pretends to preach good governance has blatantly refused to take appropriate action. This is because everyone appears to have a skeleton in his closet in the Fako land grabbing saga. Charly has been threatened severally but like the speaker, we are prepared to lay down our lives for the love of our noble profession without only goal to save the gullible and down trodden, the weak and the poor.

A journalist worth the name must be fearless, magnanimous, honest, accountable, dedicated and be seen talk less and act more by publishing unadulterated facts, the truth and only the truth.

The gains may not be immediate but the honest rewards are enormous in several ways if we remain the people’s watchdog and gatekeepers of surveillance.
Balancing the Act
Between Investigative Reporting
and Reporting Media Norms

by Charlie Ndi Chia

Let us establish one very blistering fact at the very outset of this script. Most of the folk who lay claim to, and pass off for journalists are, in the most part, pawns on the chessboard of politicians, office seekers, power brokers and moneybags. They could be easily likened to those who learned how to smoke, enjoy smoking cigarettes, but who for one reason or the other, forgot to learn smoking habits. You may want to prove the contrary, yet, I make bold to state here that most of us in the practice of journalism in Cameroon today could be likened to the hungry guy out in the Mungo River, with no knowledge of swimming or fishing, with no paddle, no fishing gear; but with only one ambition…to catch fish. Before I am thoroughly mistaken or taken for a spoilsport, let me quickly note that we have some true journalists in this country that can stand their own anywhere in this world. But they are an endangered species.

Many of us that have dabbled into the business of journalism know as a fact, that news is basically what someone, especially if that one is in power is desperate to hide. Most of us know that a journalist’s duty is to dig out such news, even if it is hidden under the bed of the newsmaker and even if the door of this newsmaker’s bedroom is guarded by an untamed famished lion. The danger here is that there is a thin line, a vague difference between an untamed ‘guardian lion’ if you will, and many of those who man our media portals, or better still, those on whom our immediate society depends, to rescue this news, to wrestle it from the clutches of the lion, and render it consumable by the public. In other words, to prepare it, such that as it is said in mass communication, consumers savour it; they imbibe it; they go for it in pleasure as opposed to pain. I think that in this case, news becomes even just more than a lady’s bikini, which exposes everything, but nevertheless conceals what is most essential.

Journalism, not to say the investigative journalism doesn’t merely lie in, nor is it limited to talking big and dishing out lessons on what a reporter ought to do or not; it doesn’t end at weaving elegant prose or talking big and being able to criticize and analyze people, events, topics and issues. The whole concept of journalism lies in the ability to strategize and courageously and safely investigate and publish, with the ultimate goal of effecting social change.

Investigating will not be limited to being “tipped off”, in most of the cases by a disgruntled person or someone with an ambition to displace someone else and occupy his or her position on the power ladder. It will not be limited to stumbling on a handful of facsimiles, piecing them together and substantiating your script with convenient interviews for so-called balance. It goes beyond all of that. And it is often a long, tedious, expensive venture, requiring discreetness, the patience of a
vulture, the sacerdotal humility of a Monk and the devotedness of a mother hen. To succeed as an investigative reporter, one requires more than a nodding knowledge of a Catholic range of subjects; one requires contacts, available and reliable credible sources, resources and time.

You don’t just jump out there to Yagoua, where a disgruntled and drunken soldier informs you of how when, with what and who’s assistance Cameroonian forces are going to be attacking a Boko Haram hide-out; then you hurriedly scribble a few awkward lines which you christen an investigative scoop, slam it on newspaper pages and take it to town, and expect to be hailed all the way.

You don’t get exclusive access to a rape victim, record her on tape and air it on television, expecting to be hailed as a strong investigative journalist, who has published that “scoop that the public had a right to be informed about”.

I don’t exactly know who she is, but I stumbled on this document in which a certain Sarah Rohrs wrote inter alia: “investigative reporters set out to uncover what public figures want to remain hidden from unsuspecting taxpayers and naïve voters. Some issues may involve illegal activities while others may simply be tragic mistakes…” Rohrs, I presume is apparently referring to the American society here; but if we must bring this nearer to us here in Cameroon, then we could be talking of very basic issues that touch on our day to day lives. And that require to be investigated without the idiotic fanfare with which our all knowing journalists scream about their scoops.

Sampler: Right here in Buea, we, as journalists could investigate and report basic issues like absolute bad driving habits, of especially taxi drivers and its long term effects on the township. How are driving licenses obtained and at what cost? Who bribes to be issued with one? How has it impacted on the economy and individual limbs and lives? Why is it that there are practically no cases of poor driving in our courts; no withdrawal of driving licenses even from those known to have killed on the wheel? What does it take to have water connected to one’s house? Who pays utility bills and how? Why the epileptic water and energy supply to the masses who pay for it through their noses? Why does this madness of shutting down the entire public service and other private business enterprises twice every month in the name of keeping the town clean, when it is trite knowledge that no such clean ups are carried out and that local administrators make staggering unaccounted fortunes from this apparent fraud. How do civil servants on starvation salaries come about riding very posh cars and constructing luxurious mansions over Buea and elsewhere?

Why is the Government rather culpably silent on the explosive issue of stolen land from the Bakweri natives? Who is living on the frontiers of decency etc. These issues and many more could be investigated, without exchanging loyalties and taking survival bribes from known crooks and profiteering demagogues.

The press owes society and its own very self a huge debt of credibility. Even restraint, when it so applies. The press, in criticizing, investigating and exposing others must stay credible; must recognize its own faults and also accept criticism. You can’t at all times, lay claim to the right to criticize everything and everyone, yet, reject criticism in return.

And this is to say here that the Cameroonian press is uppity, incorrigibly corrupt and lacks the professional wherewithal and moral authority to investigate and expose those that it often hastily sentences to so called unverifiable ‘Up Scores and Down Scores’.

The long and short is that humility, especially the humility to learn the rudimentary lessons of journalism, which in turn could make for credible investigative journalism is necessary, if we, in Cameroon must compete with our peers elsewhere.

Thank you and I am willing and ready to take any questions as well as share personal and other experiences in investigative journalism with you.
Empowering Journalists
With Investigative Journalism Skills

by Singfried Sinior M’sene (BSM)

Introduction

The ultimate pride of the Journalism profession is Investigative Reporting. Investigative journalism has power that can form values, change attitudes, behaviour and change the World (Kaplan, 2015). The investigative power of the US Press attracted, Thomas Jefferson in 1787, years before he became the US 3rd President to prefer newspapers to government when he wrote to Edward Carrington, his delegate to the Continental Congress that the role of a free press in keeping government power in check is so important that he would prefer “newspapers without government” to “government without newspapers” (Jefferson, 1787). The same power of the investigative press infuriated the 39th US Vice President, Spiro Agnew, to describe the press in 1973 as “nattering nabobs of negativism” when his tax evasion scam was expos ed by the no-nonsense US investigative Press (Altschull, 1984). Hence, good journalists in the real sense of the word have always been and still remain investigators.

The traditional description of the Press as the “watchdog” connotes, a kind of German shepherd, whose glittering eyes are eternally fixed on the executive, legislative and judiciary to make certain that they do not abuse their power (Ndolo, 2011, p.5). Investigative journalists have the mission to sniff out wrongs and report in a way that brings about change. The public service character of Journalism is enshrined in investigative reporting. Investigative reporting demonstrates Journalists’ own power as the bastions of democracy. Investigative reporting is journalism own instrument to restrain the abuse of political and economic power. With the advent of the internet and online journalism some media academics have stated that only investigative reporting would reclaim the pride of the pen profession from extinction (Ali, 2012. Nakazat, 2013. Lawal, 2013).

Division of presentation

I was directed to talk on the topic “Empowering journalists through Investigative Reporting”. I will try to share with you just some meanings about investigative journalism so that we can all be strengthened in our work as journalists. I will do this as follows: After this introduction, I will present the statement of the problem and thereafter attempt to explicate briefly the operational definition of some terms as used in this presentation and then proceed to explicate the concept and dynamics of ‘Investigative Reporting’.

We will then try to bring out and discuss some fundamental basis of investigative reporting as tools for the specialism while punctuating our discussion with some qualities that can rekindle this mission in us.

We will conclude with some examples for us to reflect on and determine whether the projects could qualify as investigative reports or not.

Statement of the problem

Investigative reporting is an expensive form of journalism, as it requires lengthy time frames spanning from months to years with little financial return. Political and often social restrictions put journalists’ lives in danger.

In Cameroon, there have been cases of investigative reporting but such cases are few and far in between. Most Cameroonians newspapers and other media organs function more like chatter boxes and sycophantic megaphones for politicians and business magnets as they avoid scandals that could shame their payers.

Unbridled quest for materialism, unquenchable desire for extravagant living, inadequate material resources to sustained research, unclear legal framework, inaccessibility to public records, the infiltration of the profession by half baked journalists that our universities churn out every year with questionable academic content constitute other factors.

Some journalists are unable to maintain a social distance from the corrupt men (and women) of power. Investigative journalism cannot thrive under a situation where media organisations, proprietors or journalists wine and dine with those in power.

The most dangerous one among all these factors is poverty of the mind or psychological poverty. Psychological poverty, according to Tanjong (2012, p.82) “is the lack of journalistic intellectual capacity which is the outcome of the quality of and quantity of training”. Most university journalism students in Cameroon graduate without understanding how investigative journalism is different from daily news reporting. The bulk of English-Speaking journalists in Cameroon are trained in University of Buea at the Department of Journalism of Journalism and Mass communication. Lack of Lecturers and other issues have not permitted the “the place to be” to offer even a single course in investigative journalism. The specialism is mentioned, if at all, in passing and not even as a sub title under news writing. Hence, nemo dat quod
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A common project that fits most people’s idea of what investigative reporting is or is not. However, tracing the origin of the specialism can help us grasp the fundamental basis of the specialism before trying to appreciate it dynamics with the changing fortunes of time and contexts.

The idea of investigative journalism took root from the Watergate office complex investigation in the USA with two Washington Post newspaper reporters, Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein, in 1972. Woodward and Bernstein followed a tip-off to uncover and painstakingly prove large-scale illegal activities by then US President Richard Nixon and his agents. Nixon was forced to step down, and the book – and later a film – “All The President’s Men”, made Woodward and Bernstein, what they did, and how they did it, the foundation for much popular discussion and imaging of investigative press work (Konrad, Adenauer-Stiftung, 2013, pp3-4).

Although the context and conditions within which the Watergate investigation unfolded greatly differ from what might be obtainable elsewhere, professional journalism groups agree that investigative journalism is: about digging deeply into an issue or topic; the issue or topic has to be of public interest, it is an intellectual process and not an event, it’s original and proactive; it should produce new information or put to use by then US

Empowerment

The Merriam Webster Dictionary provides the following possibilities of the verb ‘empower’—“to give official authority or legal power to”, “to enable”, “to promote self actualization or influence of” (www.merriamwebster.com). Another Lexical definition gives slightly a different slant to it, viz “to give somebody more control over their own life or situation they are in” (www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com).

Deriving from the above, we can synthesis empowerment to mean, concern with making people more capable of maximizing their potentials, vis a vis the environment they find themselves.

Within our own environment, there are many issues but considering the time given to me, I think the very first thing we should start with in order to make ourselves better and more capable of maximizing our potentials in reclaiming the pride of the pen profession is to fight lack of knowledge about what investigative reporting is or is not.

The Concept of Investigative Reporting

A common project that fits most people’s idea of what investigative reporting is all about is that it is a type of journalism that reveals scandals, shame corrupt official individuals and expose secrets somebody may want to keep hidden (Konrad, Adenauer-Stiftung 2013). Reducing investigative reporting to crime and corruption reporting, limit the discipline’s scope (Looney, 2013).

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These descriptions may sound convincing from face value but they do not present the whole picture of the specialism as you will soon discover. The reasons for carrying out an investigation and the way it is done are crucial in determining whether a project is an investigative report or not. However, tracing the origin of the specialism can help us grasp the fundamental basis of the specialism before trying to appreciate it dynamics with the changing fortunes of time and contexts.

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There are many story ideas around us but we tend not to see them because we look for them in the wrong places. We wait for tip-offs, leaks and scandals to put on our front pages as investigative scoops. Nonetheless tip-offs can provide possible good sources but we must guard against letting them use us instead of us using them. “Getting a document leaked by a powerful official and writing it up that day is not investigative reporting,” said Kaplan, director of the Global Investigative Journalism Network (Kaplan, 2013). Investigative journalism sets its own agenda, and uses sources and tips to uncover important truths. When sources and tips use the journalist, this is called ‘leak journalism’, not investigation (Looney, 2015).

Conversely we do not seem to find story ideas because many of us are not critical observers of society. We fail to identify regular trends and question them. An investigative reporter must be a critical observer of society who does not accept everything at face value. Story ideas can develop from, your own experience, the experience of friends, colleagues and neighbours, following up news stories that have already been published, reading, and surfing the web, listening to discussions at street parliaments, what people in your community are discussing or not discussing.

Wherever a story idea comes from, journalists should start with their own and their community’s real concerns: Analyse those concerns; boil the story idea down to a clear ‘headline’ to focus the investigation; source map the story; data map the information as it is uncovered (Konrad, Adenauer-Stiftung, 2013).

Planning the investigation

After you have developed a story idea be it from a tip-off, a leak or whatever, you need to plan the work and the resources that will go into your story. The first written plan will be to turn your story ideas into tightly focused hypotheses or questions that the investigation will prove, disprove or answer. These come after critical thinking and reflections to avoid asking the obvious. Your hypothesis or question helps you to decide what evidence will be relevant and what will count as proof. They can be short or long, one sentence or two sentences but they must aim at collecting measurable indicators to prove or disprove your hypotheses and answer your research questions.

Articulating clear, concise and provocative hypothesis and researchable questions makes the work manageable by giving it boundaries and goals.

It assists in communicating and ‘selling’ the idea to others. It allows you to budget time and resources more accurately. It provides criteria of relevance for the evidence you collect. It lays the foundation for a coherent final story. However, a plan is never set in stone. As you’ll see from what follows, it has to have sufficient flexibility to cope with the new information and new directions your investigation will uncover.

Investigative interviewing

The importance of interviews in investigative reporting cannot be overemphasized. However to get the best out of this tool one must do his/her homework. There is always need to research the interviewee especially if the person is a primary source, the issue and the context before speaking.

Guard against leaving out the important data from the interviewee because this may be your only chance to meet the person. Try to collect as many primary documents as you can before you go into a key interview.

Note that an investigative interview is never complete without adversarial and forensic questions. Adversarial questions are intended, like prosecutor’s questions in a court room, to secure evidence of wrong-doing from the possible wrong-doer. It’s a contest of wits with your interviewee. Against a thoroughly prepared interviewer who has the key facts and a thorough knowledge of the subject, most interviewees will find the going tough. But don’t misunderstand the word adversarial – it does not mean aggressive in terms of your behaviour. Forensic simply refers to relating to an issue or date in order to confirm.

Plan your questions and master them well without memorising them. Your questions must be easily understood, clear and to the point but researchable. Know what you want to get. Ask open ended questions to enable your interviewee to elaborate and closed ended questions only to get confirmation of facts and figures.

Remember that to influence human behaviour to get what you want you must understand human behaviour. You begin first by understanding yourself. People like to be respected, to be loved, to be listened to. People are emotional though they have intellectual faculties. Be a responsible communicator. Try to put yourself in their position and feel your attitude as you plan your interview. You need some Public Relation skills to get some difficult people talk.

Let your questions be seen as driving towards the public interest and remember that you were never democratically elected to carry on this role so you must do it respectfully without insulting people. Remember that your main objective is public interest.

Mastering basic research skills

Since investigative reporting follows the scientific method of forming and testing a hypothesis, along with rigorous
fact-checking, unearthing secrets, a focus on social justice and accountability, heavy use of public records and usually, data, one cannot be an effective investigative reporter without some knowledge of social science research.

There are basically two main approaches in social science research, namely, qualitative and quantitative methodology. Qualitative mapping is about people, events, reasons, motivations, feelings and arguments. Quantitative approaches put the numbers onto the map. Certain issues require collection of quantitative data through survey and qualitative data through interviews, structured or unstructured. The data analysis can bring out startling revelations. There are software packages that can help you in data analyses. Learning to use these packages for data analysis is very important for investigative reporting. Different situations will demand different strategies and approaches.

Social media and investigative Reporting

The growth of the internet and the changing media landscape raise a question for media and journalists: How should we use and integrate new social media technology into investigative reporting? Social media and blogging are very useful tools in the journalists’ toolkit. They can provide very rich data and connect one with sources they would never have met if not of them. With access to the internet and its multifaceted interactive tools, it is now possible to obtain information from almost anywhere in the world without any barrier. ICTs-assisted-reporting has no doubt taken away some of the difficulties reporters encounter in gathering news.

However the obvious challenge is quality control. It is important to consider the authenticity of the materials sourced from the net. We have to consider their legal status. Quality control of content separates journalism from propaganda and gives it credibility.

Investigative Reporting is Team Work

Because of its required multi sources and is research oriented, requiring in-depth digging, selflessness and risk bearing particularly in hostile political environments, investigative journalism thrive in teams. A team has a good chance of working quickly and breaking a story in a timely fashion with different specialization.

Also, a journalist working alone in a hostile political environment can easily be killed without anybody knowing what he was working on or why he was killed. However, DRC investigative journalist, Sage Fidele Gayala cautions against the danger of team work. “But we must also recognize that many newsrooms... are not clean. Even many of our newspapers themselves have dubious origins, having been given start-up funding by one interest group or another. So in many cases, despite the slowness and the risks, a one-person investigation has a better chance of succeeding” (Konrad, Adenauer-Stiftung 2013, p 1-6).

Conclusion

Before we part, I will like you to read the following short descriptions of reporting projects taken from, Konrad, Adenauer-Stiftung 2013, Investigative Reporting Manual and determine which you would qualify as investigative reporting, and which don’t? Why and why not?

1. Your newspaper receives an anonymous fax of pages from an as-yet-unreleased commission of enquiry report, confirming that a senior cabinet minister under investigation for corruption had indeed received bribes and awarded contracts corruptly. You check as best you can that the pages look authentic, and publish the contents, under the headline “He did it, says report.”

2. A man comes into your newspaper office with his hand heavily bandaged. He shows you his injuries and describes how his boss forced him to use unguarded machinery and would not supply protective gloves. You phone the employer, who denies everything. You take pictures of the man’s mangled hand and run a front-page story demanding that the factory be inspected.

3. A reporter comes back from an event at a casino resort with photographs that show a well-known, married, industrialist kissing and cuddling with a woman who is not his wife. You check carefully, and establish from the hotel front desk and room staff that he and the woman were booked in as “Mr & Mrs” and spent three nights together. You manage to identify the woman, and discover that she too is married to someone else: another highly-placed tycoon. You are certain that your sources are reliable, and publish a story about the scandalous misbehaviour of public figures.

4. You notice that what looks – and smells – like untreated sewage is running down the gutter beside the spot where you catch your taxi to work. You take a sample of the stuff in an old jar, and take it to a friend who works in a lab, for analysis. You walk up the road and see that the sewage is flowing from a hole in the pavement. You check with the council and discover from interviews that two different departments are involved in getting such problems fixed, and that there is poor communication between them. You run a story that starts with ‘your’ leak and its risks, but focuses mainly on the lack of coordination in local government.
Investigative Reporting: Too risky for the female journalist?

by Tricia Oben

The idea behind this paper is to inspire, empower and equip participants to understand the dynamics surrounding women and investigative journalism, and to build a purposeful plan that can help female journalists report with more conviction and confidence.

We are all familiar with what investigative journalism is about - mainly uncovering the truth. But that is the daily job of a journalist, right? Honestly speaking all journalists face the same problems with investigative journalism. Not just women.

No one specializes, everyone does everything, it is not encouraged by editors, there is too much pressure for the hot news story. Not enough personnel to do investigative journalism.

Uncover crime agent which means you are not a likeable person or media house. I told the story of the Scottish journalist who spent 15 years investigating Seb Blatter and FIFA.

The situation on the ground

Male dominance in journalism: illusion is that male journalists have more money. The illusion is that investigative reporting requires funding. But what is funding in a place like Douala? Taxis and airtime. So is there a difference in the salaries earned by male and female journalists in Cameroon? Women earn less. I have not done a formal study. But, talking to women in different private media houses, it is obvious that women earn less and the men can therefore finance their investigative reports.

Dominance of men at the top in decision making, which is not helping women at all. Right now there is no editor-in-chief in the private media that is a woman. At CRTV, there is only one at the national level and one at the regional level.

Ijeoma Nwogwugwu, Business Editor of This Day newspaper, Nigeria, says “Many women are hired but they soon marry and drop out of the profession because they can’t combine the rigour with raising a family.

Women in the media

Unconscious, invisible and subtle biases arise from cultural beliefs about gender. It does not happen deliberately or openly. It is gender-bias embedded into the fabric of the social structures of society. It is the way work happens, commonly understood as the roles of men and women. Patterns of behaviour that are replicated in such a way they advantage men and disadvantage women. A study in the US in 2014 concluded that mothers are less likely to be recommended for hard news reporting but fathers are never disadvantaged. Small differences have major consequences. Check the book WHY SO SLOW by Virginia Valian. Closely related to male dominance is male chauvinism. The editors in most of the media houses will first assign serious stories to the men and then the less serious to women. Stories on politics, the economy, sports, crime will go to the male journalists first.

Ambition and female physical realities

Investigative journalism is all about looking into corruption, crime, and the kind of things that make enemies. Editors ask often if women are tough enough.
The human interest stories, the fashion, style, women reports that come at the tail end of the news and that might be cut out are then assigned to women. The editors believe women are physically weaker than men and therefore cannot be given physically taxing assignments. Remember Banga Pongo. KQ 507 IN May 2007. Of course my editor in chief assigned men. When I told him I was going he asked if I was sure I would have the stamina.

In addition, male colleagues are more openly more ambitious and have difficulty accepting the editorship of women. This, they say, impacts on the numbers of female leaders emerging in the newsrooms.

Social and Market realities

Many women are hired but they soon marry and drop out of the profession because they cannot combine the rigour with raising a family. Who sells what? Women sell faces. Men sell information. Professional indoctrination and market realities dictate practice. By their training and socialization, women have been taught that reporting women’s affairs, style, fashion, etc diminishes the stature and impact of a journalist. A professional who wants to be taken seriously goes to mainstream journalism—oil, finance, politics, industry, technology, crime—macho issues that attract the interest and respect of the dominantly male readership. If women’s interests lie elsewhere it means they are not taken seriously.

Marriage

Husbands are a problem too. An investigative journalist does not have much of a private life and husbands are uncomfortable when they know their wives are out in the streets meeting all sorts of people. They don’t mind you in the studio presenting the news but they don’t want you outside of the areas of comfort. They complain of overexposure.

Field realities: Jackie of all trade

Lack of specialization. On the field, women do not specialize. They take on everything. Well my dear ladies, you do not know everything. You are Jackie of all trade and mistress of none.

Sexual harassment. As a public figure the female journalist becomes easy prey to men who think the women are cheap, promiscuous and easy. More than half of them are unmarried.

The tendency therefore for women who cannot handle this kind of pressure is to shy away from reports that take them to places where there are powerful corporations, powerful personalities and overzealous officials. I had a director who told me that if I did not accept him, he would rub something in his hand and I would be at his beck and call. Of course, I stopped going there and abandoned the report.

Lack of mentorship to open doors and guidance/Lack of examples of inspiring women at the top

There are fewer women at the top, therefore fewer mentors and guides for other women. When I was recruiting for CRTV a few years ago I was amazed at the number of young women who took the test. They far outnumbered the men. It seemed more and more young women are entering the profession. Yet at work the reality is that there are more men in the profession than women.

Not only are there so few women at the top, women in leadership positions are a minority. And it is not just in Cameroon. In the United States even though you have a woman at the helm of one of the more enduring newspapers in the world The Herald, the percentage of women in leadership in news media has stood and remained at 30% since 1999. Cameroon Tribune is
headed by a woman, LTM TV is headed by a woman as is Canal 2 International.

Women may not see an entry point or how to start and are not sure of what anything could lead to or what the opportunities are. That is why mentoring is so important. Look for women who have been there and done it.

**The problem is also women**

Woman on woman: Women are their own greatest critics and in my experience they are the toughest on themselves.

Woman to woman: Quite often in the newsroom the greatest challenge against forward women is other women. Other women are often the first to find fault with women who step up to lead looking for a flaws/excuses to negatively criticize their work.

“That’s why it doesn’t seem strange that there are not equal numbers of female and male investigative journalists, even though women seem to outnumber men at journalism schools”, according to Sheila S. Coronel, director of Columbia’s Stabile Center for Investigative Journalism.

**Women’s realities: Social and economic factors; Fear and insecurity**

Once you are doing reports you like you must connect. Connect with people, with institutions both in the private and public sectors connect with authorities and with the common man. Once you join the dots you can integrate, facilitate, report ultimately and demonstrate what you are capable of.

Connect your world. Specialize and do stories recurrently. Be involved in anything that has to do with your chosen area.

Practical advice: Start small. Tackle one story at a time. Be consistent and stick to your guns on your chosen field. Consistency brings specialization, you command respect and you become more confident. Don’t wait to be assigned a story.

Make proposals. Evaluate and understand real risks vs. perceived risks

Create obtainable and achievable goals. Rethink each obstacle and overcome it. Build self-confidence doing more. You are capable

There is no single trajectory of women’s lives. Women rebalance and reshape themselves striving for harmony of the parts, responding to the exigencies of living in society, and creating a whole where pieces best fit. Ruthelen Josselson, Revising Herself

**Our end quote:** “There is no single trajectory of women’s lives. Women rebalance and reshape themselves striving for harmony of the parts, responding to the exigencies of living in society, and creating a whole where pieces best fit (Ruthelen Josselson, Revising Herself)

**Women should be seen and not heard**

The number of female presenters are higher than that of male. The number of male reporters are higher than female reporters. Employers believe the best place for the women is in the section where they can present programmes. Where they can be seen and their beauty admired. In effect they are decorative pieces.

**Professional realities for both sexes: Field Realities, Social and Economic Factors**

**The realities peculiar to women:** Lack of Mentors; male dominance/male chauvinism
The seminar facilitators were relevant: (L-R) Charlie Ndi Chia, Chief Nkemayang, Tricia Oben, Bro’ Singfried Sinior

The participants were all ears and satisfied

The prestige venue of the seminar

Mr. Jesse KONANG recorded the deliberations of the seminar, compiled and designed this report.
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