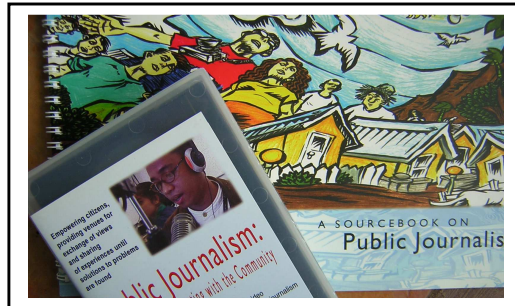




CENTER FOR COMMUNITY JOURNALISM AND DEVELOPMENT

Engaged Journalism for Better Communities

# STRENGTHENING MEDIA-COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP STRATEGIES FOR GOOD GOVERNANCE THROUGH PUBLIC JOURNALISM



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**CENTER FOR COMMUNITY JOURNALISM  
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**STRENGTHENING MEDIA-COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP STRATEGIES  
FOR GOOD GOVERNANCE  
THROUGH PUBLIC JOURNALISM  
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**TERMINAL NARRATIVE REPORT**  
Reporting Period: January 01, 2004 to September 30, 2004

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*This report covers the project extension period from January 01, 2004 to September 30, 2004 and builds on earlier narrative reports submitted to The Ford Foundation.*

The modest experiments on public journalism conducted through the project by the Center for Community Journalism and Development (CCJD) together with its local media partners over a period of three years demonstrate only too well that given space and opportunity, journalists can work with citizens in developing a news agenda from a community perspective.

In the areas where these experiments took place, news organizations that have been involved in the process have moved beyond mere agenda setting to actually begin engagement with citizens in pursuing critical issues that impact on their lives. The journalists have moved away from the flitting coverage of events to more focused and sustained reporting. They have, in a sense, debunked what Daniel Yankelovich said in the book *Coming to Public Judgment* that “journalists are expert at agenda setting. We have so much fun with it that we dash around raising consciousness here, raising consciousness there, then rush on to raise consciousness somewhere else, leaving all crises unattended.”

As the project Strengthening Media-Community Partnership Strategies for Good Governance through Public Journalism wound down, the areas it covered showed varying levels of capacity to sustain local public journalism initiatives involving multi-sector and citizens groups. Some of these have evolved into approaches and mechanisms that impact on community efforts to address issues ranging from low awareness of human rights, access to health services, public sector corruption, threatened peace-building initiatives to environmental degradation.

Several cases of media-community partnership strategies have already evolved over time such as in Bicol where the PBN Broadcasting Network has taken radio journalism beyond day-to-day reporting to facilitating community discussion about a cement plant and its effects on health and the environment. In Kidapawan City in North Cotabato, DXCA-FM’s “Tinig ng Bayan,” a radio program run by volunteers from various sectors has proven skeptics wrong by ratcheting high ratings simply by getting more citizen voices into the discussion of local issues. In Iloilo City the weekly *The Visayas Examiner* continues to invigorate citizen debates over a range of issues by looking at these from a community perspective and providing roadmaps on how people can participate. One concrete result of this journalistic effort was the adoption by the City Council of local residents’ suggestions printed in the paper on what can be done about the traffic situation in the city.

These are but some examples of the kind of impact, no matter how small when ranged against the problems of governance and media in the Philippines, that the project has contributed within its life span. But there are others still that, though not easily quantifiable, nonetheless reflect a growing movement, at least at the local area level, to adopt the principles and shared vision of public journalism because it reconnects the media with the public that is the intended outcome of journalism rather than simply its intended audience.

By converging several of its activities with other media NGOs and institutions both at the national and local levels, the project was also able to maximize resources and develop better integrated strategies aimed at enhancing and strengthening the media and citizens’ groups to work for better governance. One of the newest initiatives that will be pursued after project life is a media and multi-sector strategy adopting public journalism approaches for ensuring transparency and accountability in the island of Samar.

Its work with the Philippine Press Institute (PPI) in expanding the scope and coverage of the project has also given new impetus for public journalism to take root in a media environment hobbled by cynicism and a press media hounded by accusations of sensationalism and corruption. From the original pilot areas in Aklan, Bacolod, Iloilo in Region 6; Samar and Leyte in Region 8; Dumaguete and Cebu in Region 7; Cotabato, North Cotabato, the SOCKSARGEN area, and Davao in Mindanao; Palawan, Cordillera Administrative Region and Bicol in Luzon, the project has now reached out to other areas.

For the 2005-2007 period the CCJD will be working out another agreement with the PPI for a follow-up phase for the public journalism program that will take into consideration field applications, testing and validation.

The project has likewise contributed to the institutional development of the CCJD by providing opportunities for networking and link-ups with international and regional organizations resulting in continuing exchanges of information and developments in governance and journalism. This also made it possible for CCJD to influence the thinking of media development organizations in Southeast Asia to also explore the possibilities offered by public journalism in promoting good governance and encouraging citizens to participate more meaningfully in public life. A book recently published by The Urban Governance Initiative (TUGI) a UNDP regional program based in Kuala Lumpur and the Asian Media Information and Communication Centre (AMIC) in Singapore details the contributions of public journalism in the Philippines in the development of a new media culture. The book, titled *Cities, Chaos and Creativity*, closely examines the role of journalists in development and governance and provides insightful commentaries citing Philippine experiences in doing public journalism.

Relative to this, the CCJD was able to access funding support from the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for the publication of the book *Breaking the Norms: Philippine Community Media Initiatives in Public Journalism Go beyond Mere Agenda Setting* set to be launched in December 2004.

Although initial funding support for the Certificate Course on Public Journalism developed by the project as a sustaining strategy has yet to materialize, donor agency interest is keen and academic institutions have begun discussions with the CCJD. At least one school, the University of San Agustin in Iloilo City has already signed a Memorandum of Agreement with the CCJD.

## KEY AREAS/ACCOMPLISHMENTS

### A. Monitoring and Evaluation

Series of roundtables and focus group discussions were conducted in Metro Manila, Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao to draft and validate the survey instruments (see Annex A) and to conduct rapid field assessments in public journalism pilot areas. The assessments were intended to determine the level of public journalism project implementation by media partners in their respective news organizations and local community.



*Covenant signing with LGUs, other sectors during workshop "Living Democracy: The Role of Media in Promoting Participatory Governance Through a Rights-Based Approach to Development" in Iloilo City August 6-7, 2004*

The assessment results provided critical inputs to the sustainability plans drafted in partnership with at least three media partners during this period. *The Visayas Examiner* in Iloilo prepared a marketing plan using its public journalism thrust and community link-up as a strategy. In Kidapawan City, the Tinig ng Bayan developed an SMS-based marketing tool to draw in better audience share to support its Saturday edition. PBN

Broadcasting Network in the Bicol region sent its staff to a series of skills building training workshops and market development seminars to better present and support the public journalism initiatives of its stations in Legazpi, Sorsogon, Naga and Daet.

This phase also enabled the implementing organization to determine milestones vis-à-vis gaps that would have an impact on the overall objective of the project. Gaps and issues will be discussed in a subsequent section of this report.

## **B. Follow-Through Activities**

### ***Partnership Meetings and Workshops with Multi-Sector Groups***

Discussions and dialogues with multi-sector groups like the Forum on Democratic Options (FDO) resulted in the formulation of strategies on how to engage media and other sectors through public journalism in popularizing the research findings on the performance of the 12<sup>th</sup> Congress (see annex B) and in the promotion of the rights-based approach to development as mechanisms for partnership and participation.

The findings were later presented and discussed in two conferences with media, civil society groups, and other governance stakeholders.

The FDO was formed as an informal discussion group composed of media NGOs, civil society organizations, human rights advocates, party list representatives, urban poor groups to tackle issues that threaten Philippine democracy. The CCJD is a founding member of the FDO.

This phase also included the holding of a forum with the Institute for Political and Electoral Reforms (IPER) on media's role in the elections and how public journalism can contribute to better coverage and the promotion of free, clean, and honest elections. It has also opened participation in the UNDP-supported Right to Development program with the Commission on Human Rights, Task Force Detainees of the Philippines, Forum on Democratic Options, and the Philippine Information Agency in tackling rights-based issues both by citizens and media using public journalism approaches.

### ***Re-Orientation and 'How-To' Workshops***

The CCJD and the Philippine Press Institute consolidated their partnership on the conduct of a series of training workshops on "building better communities through public journalism" with the holding of a planning workshop. The planning session focused on design fine-tuning and realignment of roles among the trainers and resource persons from the CCJD and PPI. Given its extensive experience in public journalism, the CCJD was assigned to manage and conduct the workshops, provide trainers and resource persons, and design future activities of the project.

Through the conduct of two "re-orientation" workshops, a total of 78 journalists from Luzon were trained on the basic principles of public journalism. These workshops were held in Batangas and Pangasinan for both print and broadcast journalists.

This was followed by a tutorial session held in Baguio City on the "how-tos" of public journalism. The tutorial allowed the "enrolled" journalists and news organization to test with the local community their initial batch of stories using public journalism approaches. It also enabled them to validate some of the public journalism tools like community conversations and focus group discussions in generating public discourse on critical community issues.

## C. Sustaining Mechanisms for Public Journalism Projects

### *Supporting Initiatives through Technical Assistance*

The shift from the experimental stage to sustained field application was demonstrated most concretely by two media partners, *The Visayas Examiner* in Iloilo and the *Bandillo ng Palawan*.

Starting with a two-page public journalism section called “Examined,” *The Visayas Examiner* expanded its thrust and revolutionized its news and editorial process by devoting the entire paper to public journalism. From page make-up to opinion columns, from “soft” features to issue-based reportage, *The Visayas Examiner* reformatted the paper “to be more in tune with the needs of the community...a kind of journalism that educates, informs and offers possibilities.”

The change was welcomed by readers who felt that the news weekly was reflecting and articulating their own views rather than the other way around. The first few issues generated good advertising revenue but this eventually dipped in succeeding months as “media-buying” by advertisers again centered on Manila-based papers. Readership remained at encouraging levels, however.

In Puerto Princesa City, the *Bandillo ng Palawan* used a section of the paper to present community issues ranging from citizen views on street crime, a proposed palm oil plantation to the hardship and rewards of fish drying as a small scale industry. Called “Tuturan” (noteworthy), the section struck a chord with the public who could relate their daily lives with the issues presented in the paper. By facilitating community discussions through the paper, *Bandillo* also enabled local folk to actually become part of the news-making process and not simply as sources of information for the next day’s story.

## D. Replicating and Showcasing Public Journalism Model Mechanisms/Strategies



*Induction of officers of the Palawan Community-Media Council after the Candidates’ Forum*

### **Cross-Visits**

The president of the Iloilo City Hall Press Corps observed in Palawan the conduct of a Candidates’ Forum for the elections and held a series of meetings with counterparts in the province. The Candidates’ Forum is part of the *Bandillo ng Palawan*’s public journalism project to strengthen media-community partnerships for good governance. It was designed to bring media into the electoral process not only as reporters but as community stakeholders. The Forum was a springboard for the *Ulat sa Bayan/Ulat ng Bayan* reporting and feedback mechanism between elected officials and citizens that is now being strengthened with the help of multi-sector groups like the Palawan Community-Media Council, Palawan Network of NGOs, Inc., local government units, and the different media organizations.

The Iloilo City Hall Press Corps is composed of young reporters covering governance issues. The members have all undergone training on the basic principles of public journalism and are scheduled for higher-level training including fellowship grants to the Certificate Course on Public Journalism that the CCJD hopes to launch with the University of San Agustin in 2005.

### ***Developing Media-LGU-Multisectoral Outreach Strategies***

This phase included the conduct of familiarization and sharing tours incorporating “how-tos” in writing development-focused stories. Four workshops on the rights based approach through public journalism were held:

“Back to Basics – The Role of the Community Media in Promoting Better Governance through a Rights-Based Development Agenda” initiated by the *Bandillo ng Palawan* with other media and civil society groups.

“Living Democracy: The Role of Media in Promoting Participatory Governance through a Rights-Based Approach to Development” conducted by the Iloilo City Hall Press Corps, *The Visayas Examiner* and civil society groups.

“Media and Multi-Sector Interface: Better Governance through the Rights-Based Approach to Development” initiated by the Social Action Center-Legazpi in partnership with the Philippine Information Agency, different media organizations and civil society groups.

“The Role of PBN Broadcasting Network, Inc. in Mainstreaming the Rights-Based Approach through Public Journalism,” a hands-on training on programming concepts using public journalism tools and techniques to help monitor the execution of the Bicol provincial development plan organized by PBN for its radio stations around the region.

Strategies for ensuring and monitoring good governance through public journalism approaches were also developed. This included the strengthening and replication of the Candidates’ Forum series, a partnership between media groups, business, church, civil society organizations and local governments. *(Please refer to earlier discussion on Cross Visits)*

### **GAPS/ISSUES**

Threats, intimidation, harassment and accusations of sensationalism and corruption continue to hound media both at the national and local levels and impact to a lesser or greater degree on some of the gains of the project especially on the ground. With media still largely driven by market forces rather than by a sense of mission, editorial policies are shaped by ratings and the dictates of competition.

The successive killings of community journalists also serve as a disincentive for reporters who would want to probe deeply into critical issues and challenge many of the norms of good journalism. While the killings can be viewed as a failure of law enforcement rather than a targeted attack against a particular sector, these can also be construed as derogating the people’s right to know.

While public journalism as an avenue for increasing citizen participation has taken root in a number of areas, this is threatened still by the larger problem of economics and security.

Support for good journalism remains wanting. Advertising budgets still go to media outlets that are often thinly disguised scandal sheets (especially in the local communities) or TV programs peddling entertainment in the guise of news. In the provinces, politicians and businessmen owning media outfits dictate both editorial policy and the track of the news.



## **LESSONS/IMPACT**

The project recognizes that training journalists is not enough but creating and sustaining environments for good journalism to flourish could contribute to influencing attitudes and behavior among practitioners of the craft, media owners and the public that journalism purportedly serves. But this environment should also engage citizens and governance stakeholders.

At the local level, the project contributed to strengthening continuing interfaces between media and other sectors in relation to community issues and challenges by establishing community dialogue mechanisms like the *Ulat Sa Bayan*, People's Forum for Sound Governance, and similar approaches involving media.

While public journalism as an evolving philosophy has made significant, if not tremendous, strides in the Philippines in terms of providing a fulcrum for further discussion of the craft as practiced by media, it has yet to be adopted as an overriding framework. Much work still needs to be done in this area although public journalism has already been recognized as a pioneering effort at bridging the divide between media and other sectors.

Through this recognition, the project opened new possibilities for public journalism by linking up with regional and international institutions for partnerships to develop in pursuing other related initiatives. These include a Media and Governance program that will build on the gains of the Ford Foundation-supported project. The program situates the media as a governance stakeholder and provides avenues for journalists to reflect on their roles in governance especially in promoting and supporting public sector reforms.

By early 2005 the Center for Community Journalism and Development together with the University of San Agustin hopes to finally launch the Certificate Course on Public Journalism with the objective of expanding it later on to other areas. Initial communications have also been made with regional media communication organizations to introduce the course in Southeast and South Asia.

## **CHRONOLOGY OF ACTIVITIES**

**January 8** – Interface with the Forum on Democratic Options on engaging media and other sectors in popularizing findings of research on the performance of the 12<sup>th</sup> Philippine Congress

**January 30** -- Forum with Institute for Political and Electoral Reforms on media's role in the 2004 elections and public journalism approaches to ensure clean, honest and free elections

**February 18-21** – Multi-Sector Forum and Media Interface on Promoting the Rights-Based Approach to Governance

**February 23-24** – Planning workshop with the Philippine Press Institute on fine-tuning the partnership for the conduct of the basic public journalism training

**March 10** – Basic Orientation on Human Rights and Public Journalism with the Task Force Detainees, Caritas Manila and members of the Forum on Democratic Options

**March 21-23** – Interfacing with Media Partners and Other Sectors in Developing RBA Materials for Popularization through Public Journalism

**March 28-31** -- Tutorial on Public Journalism, Baguio City

**April 3** – Iloilo Candidates' Forum initiated by the Iloilo City Hall Press Corps, The Visayas Examiner, I-CODE and local government units

**April 17** – Palawan Candidates' Forum with the Bandillo ng Palawan, Palawan Network of NGOs, Inc., and local government units.

**May 12** – RBA Materials for Public Journalism Writeshop

**June 8-9** – Basic Orientation on Public Journalism for Batangas Media with the PPI

**June 22-23** – Basic Orientation on Public Journalism for Pangasinan Media with the PPI

**June 25-26** – Back to Basics: The Role of the Community Media in Promoting Better Governance through a Rights-Based Development Agenda (Palawan)

**August 6-7** – Living Democracy: The Role of Media in Promoting Participatory Governance through a Rights-Based Approach to Development (Iloilo)

**September 15-16** – Media and Multi-Sector Interface: Better Governance through the Rights-Based Approach to Development (Bicol)

**September 17-18** – The Role of PBN Broadcasting Network, Inc. in Mainstreaming the Rights-Based Approach through Public Journalism (Legazpi, Albay)