



PUBLIC POLICY BLOG

Investigative journalism in Papua New Guinea: Are journalists doing enough?

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The role of the media

Media plays an important role in our society. Among others, the role of the media or journalists is to hold those in power accountable. According to UNESCO, investigative journalism is the unveiling of matters that are concealed either deliberately by someone in a position of power, or accidentally, behind a chaotic mass of facts and circumstances – and the analysis and exposure of all relevant facts to the public (UNESCO, n.d.). In this way, investigative journalism contributes to freedom of expression and media development. This paper is based on what have been discussed during the World Press Freedom Day breakfast in Port Moresby on 3 May 2022, which was organised by CAD43 Limited – a group of former Divine Word University students.

Peter Aitsi, chairman of Transparency International Papua New Guinea (PNG) summed up the work of the media with the famous phrases: ‘to comfort the afflicted and to afflict the comfortable’ and ‘the voice of the voiceless’. Media, especially the mainstream media should, in every way possible, uphold its role. Aitsi also stressed on the importance of the media as the ‘fourth estate’ – the role of the media as an independent and an impartial voice on public matters and public issues. The role of the media as the ‘fourth estate’ should keep the other three arm of the government – legislative, executive and judiciary, in check.

Are journalists in PNG doing enough?

During the panel discussion, the question was raised:

“are PNG journalists doing enough in terms of investigative journalism?” The question was answered by Scott Waide, founder and Chief Executive Officer of Lek Mak. He said journalists in PNG are not doing enough and they have a long way to go.

In Mr. Waide’s view, PNG cannot use a western model of journalism to cover and investigate issues that happen in PNG. “You need to flip the reporting model and challenge it from the ground-level up – challenge corruption and investigate from the ground-level up. Mr. Waide also mentioned that, If you try to use the western model of journalism where you go after the ‘big guys’ and try to expose corruption, it has minimal impact on the day”.

Conclusion and the way forward

In conclusion, mainstream media plays a vital role in mass communications, dissemination of information and it is very influential to Papua New Guineans. Media personnel and newsrooms should always uphold their code of conduct and always ensure that what they present are based on facts. The way forward pointed out in the panel discussion are the following:

- **Start from the ground level up**

Mr. Waide, pointed out that corruption can be challenged by reporting on the lack of basic services in the rural communities such as lack of health centers and deteriorating classrooms in schools. “The way to do it is to go to the villages and communities and investigate the impact of corruption there” (Waide). That’s when people

would see and feel the impact of corruption.

- **Boost journalism training in PNG**

Mr. Waide also pointed out that journalism training in the universities are inadequate, it does not cater the needs of PNG. Government and responsible agencies or universities should invest more in the training of journalists in the country. Universities and training institutions should tailor their training materials to train young aspiring journalists to equip themselves with the right skills and knowledge. It is important to boost training for journalist in terms of funding, equipment and teachers. “By investing in training of journalists, you are helping to strengthen an essential pillar of democracy and giving a voice to people who do not have one” (Waide).

About the Author

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