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Women in media face an uphill battle: report

Mon, 9 March 2015 Shaun Turton

Women are making inroads into Cambodia’s “extremely” male-dominated media but still face several hurdles, including cultural attitudes, a pay gap and sexual harassment, according to a report published yesterday by the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) Asia-Pacific.

Released on International Women’s Day, the study *Media and Gender in Cambodia* notes an improvement in attitudes towards women in the industry, suggests more women are pursuing media careers and singles out blogging as a particularly promising vehicle for female journalists. However, the research also highlights some significant challenges underpinning women’s low participation in the sector.

Based on a survey of 61 male and 45 female media workers, as well as interviews, the study finds cultural attitudes pressuring women to be good wives and mothers still hold sway, in part driven by media depictions of women as family figures.

“For women journalists in Cambodia, often the greatest challenge is overcoming cultural barriers and stereotypes that mean many women are not encouraged, or in fact actively deterred, to join the journalism profession,” the report states, adding that, traditionally, journalism is not a respected job in the Kingdom, but that that perception is changing.

Women who made it into the industry mostly inhabit lower-ranking roles in organisations, according to the report, and many respondents noted a pronounced lack of female leadership in the organisations where they work.

Meanwhile, the report labels the gender pay gap disturbing, finding the majority of women surveyed earn between \$80 and \$250 a month, while the majority of men make more than \$800.

Asked what strategies could tackle the issues, almost 59 per cent answered “having more women in the media at every level” while 34 per cent answered “having women in decision-making roles”.

The report highlights blogging as a potential driver for gender equality in the Cambodian media.

“Blogging has opened the eyes of both young female and male Cambodians to more possibilities and a huge sum of knowledge,” said well-known Cambodian blogger Kounila Keo, who was quoted in the report. “Now, more and more women are more open to discussing many issues, including politics and social affairs, beyond the daily topics we see in the traditional media.”

Contact author: Shaun Turton

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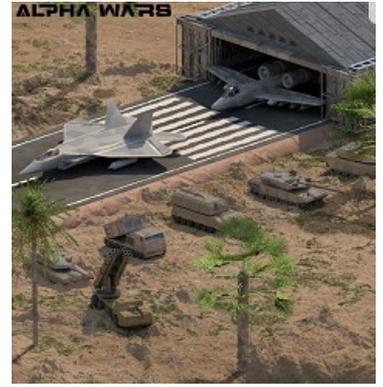
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