



the free lens

The voice of freelancers in newsgathering, current affairs and documentaries

Issue 19, June 2005

Update on Activities

The Trust has grown rapidly in the last 18 months. We are now reaching more beneficiaries in more countries, supporting new training and safety initiatives, undertaking field trips to the developing world to establish frameworks for future activities, and making a significant contribution to the community of international and national NGOs and other organisations that work for free expression, human rights and democracy. None of this could have been achieved without substantial support from The Sigrid Rausing Trust.

With funding from The Open Society Foundation, we are conducting a pilot project to research employment conditions of freelance media workers in Latin America. We hope this will lead to a larger project on good practice, providing a blueprint to support the freelance community in other regions as well.

This summer has seen our first fundraising concert. We are delighted to have welcomed a unique and talented group of young musicians: The Buskaid String Quartet from Soweto, with their singer Teboho Semela. We thank Bloomberg for supporting this event.

We are grateful to those who have shown faith in us by committing to long-term support of our activities. The following have all pledged three year funding: Sony, sponsoring The Rory Peck Awards; CNN, supporting our Training Fund; APTN, supporting our main publication, The Awards Brochure; and The Westminster Foundation, with an annual donation offsetting the rental of our new office near Victoria.

Please don't feel left out - there is still a vacancy for long-term support of "the free lens"! Just ring me.

Tina Carr, Director, The Rory Peck Trust

The Rory Peck Trust Visits Nepal



RPT researcher Elisabet Cantenys with members of MSI in Nepal

Last October, with funding from The Sigrid Rausing Trust, we undertook a fact-finding mission to Nepal where we met with local freelancers, press unions, media outlets and human rights organisations. While the stories we heard were unique, they were also, unfortunately, familiar to us from other countries.

Journalists in Nepal are caught in a cross-fire between the Maoists and government security forces. Many suffer from stress and trauma following arrest and torture. Increasingly, journalists are censoring themselves.

Freelancers are particularly affected by the conflict. Almost all journalists working outside the capital, Kathmandu, are freelancers. Most lack basic equipment - torches and proper shoes to access remote villages, or any means of communication - and have no guarantee of rescue. And they work without any prospect of secured income or insurance.

At the time of my visit a new phenomenon had arisen: Kathmandu was becoming a shelter for freelancers leaving the countryside. With the escalation of threats and increased incidence of kidnapping, torture and murder of journalists, many were choosing to move to the capital. There, they have no employment, while the

villages they reported on grow more isolated. Maoist and government security forces operate with impunity, with nobody reporting on their actions.

The Trust did some good just by visiting. Everyone I met was grateful to see that an organisation from far away cared about the situation of freelancers. But the trip has led to much more. Soon after my return, we identified our first beneficiary case in Nepal: we have covered education costs for the children of Dekendra Raj Thapa, a respected journalist killed by the Maoists.

Another key result of the trip has been the establishment of a pilot project in conjunction with Danish organisation International Media Support (IMS), and Kathmandu-based Media Services International (MSI). The Trust is supporting the creation of a database of journalists affected by the conflict and contributing to an insurance fund. Within the next nine months, the Trust will cover insurance for over 60 freelancers. The Trust has also hired a local researcher to handle beneficiary research on the ground.

The pilot project marks a new step for the Trust, helping us identify further ways in which we can support the freelance community.

*Elisabet Cantenys
Researcher, The Rory Peck Trust*

The Rory Peck Awards 2005 Sponsored by Sony

Tuesday 8 November 2005
The National Film Theatre,
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We are Working With...

Thanks to the continued funding from The Sigrid Rausing Trust, we have been able to expand our geographic reach in terms of beneficiary support, while also forging new relationships with international NGOs, local networks and human rights or journalists' associations. We also continue to work with CPJ, the IFJ, INSI, the NUJ and Reporters Sans Frontières.

Our new partners include:

International Media Support (IMS)

www.i-m-s.dk

IMS, a Copenhagen-based international NGO, provides rapid support to media in conflict and post-conflict situations as well as other locations beset by high levels of insecurity. Support provided includes strengthening the operability, rights and safety of media affected by conflict; and developing skills, resources and opportunities to allow media to play a constructive role in conflict situations. IMS seeks to identify the most pressing needs of the media community in question and then works with its large network of international partners to identify the most suited approach to meet those needs. As a highly flexible organisation with no vested interests in any specific form of media support, IMS seeks to play a catalyst role, promoting collaboration between all relevant organisations, thereby providing the most effective assistance.

MSI Nepal

www.msinepal.com.np
msi@mail.com.np

Media Services International was established by a group of journalists to carry out research on media-related issues and to implement programmes to promote good quality journalism. Over the years it has carried out numerous studies, surveys and polls on contemporary issues related to the media and politics. The documents it has produced on mass media laws and regulations, media and conflict and pro-poor media are widely used as standard texts on the mass media in Nepal.

With the media in Nepal seriously affected by the Maoist conflict, MSI has increasingly turned its attention to finding ways to support journalists most affected by the political situation.

With assistance from like-minded organisations, MSI supports journalists displaced by the conflict by providing them temporary shelter in Kathmandu, insurance against death or accident, medical facilities and travel expenses to return to their reporting posts. MSI has also commenced a series of interaction programmes between the army and the journalists, safety training for journalists working in difficult areas and special orientation sessions on media rights. A range of handbooks covering these themes has also been produced. MSI is now seen as a welcoming refuge for journalists affected by the conflict.

SEENPM

www.seenpm.org
Tel: +4021 335 6297 (secretariat)

The South East European Network for Professionalisation of the Media (SEENPM) was created in February 2000 with the aim of raising journalism standards, improving the media environment on national and regional levels, encouraging cooperation among media professionals, and thus contributing to mutual understanding and stability in the SEE region. It builds on the regional resources and capacities of its members and partners from Europe and USA.

SEENPM and the Peace Institute of Slovenia have published a report on their April conference, *"Freelance journalists: ways out of the grey zones"*. Key findings and recommendations include:

- Across South East Europe (SEE), thousands of freelancers are working in precarious employment conditions, with low salaries and limited or no job security or benefits;
- The term "freelance journalist" can mean different things in different countries. When definitions of the term are set, they should be inclusive; the understanding of the term "freelance journalists" should incorporate all those journalists who are not permanently/regularly employed;
- Journalists' associations and trade unions can and should play a key role in the improvement of conditions for freelancers, from providing legal advice to organising awareness-raising activities;

- Freelancers themselves should establish stronger self-representation, through associations, collective petitioning and advocacy;
- In the SEE region, the IFJ should strengthen its activities aimed at settling the position of freelancers.

The SEENPM intends to continue the work begun at the conference through research, training and capacity building, advocacy around legislation to improve freelancers' rights and awareness-raising campaigns. The full text of the proceedings of the conference is available at <http://www.seenpm.org/index.php?nav=ut.php&p=15>.

UAF

www.urgentactionfund.org

Urgent Action Fund is a small activist-based international human rights funder that provides rapid response grants to support unanticipated and time-urgent interventions by women human rights defenders working in violent conflict or crisis situations. UAF grants also support potentially precedent-setting legal or legislative action and enhance the security and wellbeing of women activists. Grounded in its grantmaking experience, UAF's new research and publications programme produces books and reports that promote women's security and participation in conflict prevention and resolution, peacebuilding, and post-conflict reconstruction. Urgent Action Fund also supported the establishment of its now independent sister organisation, Urgent Action Fund-Africa, located in Nairobi, Kenya.

The Rory Peck Trust works closely with UAF on cases of women journalists in need of assistance.

CHARITABLE GRANTS TO BENEFICIARIES

Since August 2004, The Rory Peck Trust has made a total of 54 grants totalling £60,000 to freelancers, or freelancers' dependents, from over ten countries including Dominican Republic, Iraq, Kenya, the Philippines, Russia, Sri Lanka.

My Friend the Mercenary

By James Brabazon



Freelancer James Brabazon was the winner of the 2003 Sony International Impact Award at the Rory Peck Awards.

On July 13th 2002, a man I hardly knew saved my life: twice. His name is Niek du Toit. Two years later he began serving a thirty-four year prison sentence in Africa's most notorious prison for trying to overthrow the government of Equatorial Guinea, a tiny nation fabulously rich in oil.

The story of my friendship with Niek started back in May 2002, when I arrived clandestinely in the West African country of Liberia to make a documentary film about a vicious civil war raging there. I hired Niek du Toit to help with my security and medical care. As my protector he would carry a rifle, but never use it. As it turned out, his medical skills were employed on a near-daily basis.

My relationship with Niek began because he was a tool to help tell the Liberian story; my friendship with him began when I realised that his essential

humanity had defined his past, and that his background had not created a monster, but a complicated and fundamentally compelling person. Niek had been many things: a lieutenant-colonel in apartheid South Africa's Special Forces; a mercenary, an arms dealer and now my bodyguard. In short, he epitomised the antithesis of everything I had been (well) educated to revere.

By late-July we had witnessed combat almost continuously for a month. All I revered by then was his sheer will to live that pulled us through. I was exhausted, malnourished, and at the edge of my sanity. On July 13th, Niek physically dragged me out of the direct line of fire twice. It was a bad day, like many others on our journey. What was supposed to be a three week trip lasted for nearly three months. Niek was always there at my side, by this time unpaid, and as determined as I was to make the film whatever the personal consequences.

Through a mounting tide of bodies, violence and degradation, a deep friendship formed between us. When I returned to London no one I knew could comprehend what it had been like. It is easy to write off "men like Niek" as unsavoury relics of a barbaric regime. Life is rarely that simple.

©James Brabazon, 2005.

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Book Reviews

The Face of Human Rights

Edited by Walter Kälin, Lars Müller and Judith Wyttenbach. Essays by Alexander Kluge, Susan Sontag, Magrit Sprecher, Slavenka Drakulic, Ryszard Kapuscinski, Sima Samar, Carlos Fuentes, Wole Soyinka.

In *The Face of Human Rights*, editors Walter Kälin, Lars Müller and Judith Wyttenbach offer a rich and in-depth photo and textual account of the celebrations and violations of human rights, revealing the humanity and insanity in the world.

Review from "The Globalist"

Published by Lars Müller Publishers

To order: www.artbook.com

Rising Up In Response

by Jane Barry of Urgent Action Fund (UAF)

Women's rights activists have been responding to conflicts all over the world for hundreds of years, but what is the relationship between international responses to conflict and women activists responding to crises in their own countries? Are international intervention strategies collaborating with and supporting the important and crucial work being performed by women activists?

This new report just released by the Urgent Action Fund for Women's Human Rights (UAF) explores these questions at depth and makes recommendations to develop new strategies for international actors and women activists to work together in conflict situations. The result of a year-long research project initiated in 2003, over 82 women's rights activists were interviewed in three conflict areas: the Balkans (Kosovo and Serbia), Sierra Leone and Sri Lanka. The focus on these three geographical areas draws attention to the different styles of activism occurring, and the prevalence of different types and forms of conflict and international intervention.

Review by Rochelle Jones, Association for Women's Rights in Development

To order: urgentact@urgencionfund.org; free download available at www.urgentactionfund.org

Training Initiatives Supported by the Trust

New short course for freelancers

The Rory Peck Trust and Sony Europe are supporting the Documentary Filmmakers Group Sony Europe to run a 4-day Intensive Multiskill and Hostile Environment Course specifically for Central and East European Freelance Newsgatherers. The course will take place at Film Farm, Kotla, Poland, 27th - 30th July. The aim of the course is to give freelancers an overview of broadcaster and practical operating needs, new technologies and techniques for improving their own safety. Principal Tutor - Award winning freelance newsgatherer Phil Cox. Please email your application to laura@dfglondon.com. For more information see: www.dfglondon.com/training/hostile.php

Safety Training for Iraqi freelancers

The Trust is also supporting an International News Safety Institute (INSI) initiative to provide safety training for at least ten freelance Iraqi cameramen. With donations from news organisations and security groups, INSI is providing a two day course on basic safety precautions and operational procedures as well as battlefield first aid. Tuition is provided by a leading British security company, working with INSI, which has already staged two acclaimed safety training courses inside Iraq for several Iraqi journalists. This will be the first course to focus directly on the safety of cameramen. Any person wishing to participate should contact The Rory Peck Trust or INSI Deputy Director Sarah de Jong at sarah.dejong@newssafety.com

NOTICE BOARD

Information for photojournalists

Fotografia & Informazione, the Association of Italian Photojournalists, formed in 1995, is made up of a group of independent photojournalists concerned about the fate of photojournalism in Italy. The Association's website provides information to both professional photojournalists and the wider public on issues relevant to the field, from both a technical and editorial perspective. Visitors to the site can join discussions groups, subscribe to a newsletter and give feedback. www.fotoinfo.net

Opportunities for freelancers

The Arabic television station **Al Jazeera** is launching an English-language world TV channel which will broadcast from a new television centre in Doha, Qatar, and from studios in London, Washington and Kuala Lumpur. Much of the programming output will be commissioned from independents. Al Jazeera International say that safety in the field, hostile environment training and proper insurance cover for freelancers will be an over-riding concern for them. Enquiries to: commissioning@aljazeera.net

Forum for Journalists

The Frontline Club is a member's club for journalists. The Frontline Forum is one of London's most important news industry venues. The club is based in 13 Norfolk Place, 5 minutes from Paddington Station, London. Facilities include a restaurant on the ground floor, a private clubroom on the first floor and a space on the top floor for exhibitions as well as conferences and meetings. To access a schedule of book launches and other events, visit www.thefrontlineclub.com.

If you have any information you would like us to put on this notice board, please contact us before 19 August 2005

DIARY DATES 2005

2 JULY

Remembering Roddy fundraising event in memory of Roddy Scott with Kate Adie.

There will be strawberries, Wine, Hog Roast, Jazz. (Yorkshire)

19 AUGUST

DEADLINE: Nominations for The Freelancers Choice

2 SEPTEMBER

DEADLINE: Entries for The Rory Peck Awards

8 NOVEMBER

The Rory Peck Awards, National Film Theatre, London SE1

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