



**B+HR**  
BUSINESS AND HUMAN RIGHTS



# Reporting Business and Human Rights

**A HANDBOOK FOR JOURNALISTS,  
COMMUNICATORS, AND CAMPAIGNERS**

WITH SUPPORT FROM



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**understanding  
the issue**

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Written by Nick Raistrick. Edited by Kieron Connolly, Amy Sellmyer, Harpreet Kaur, UNDP Business and Human Rights Specialist, and Kevin Lehmann, UNDP Business and Human Rights Analyst.

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# Reporting on business and human rights is a challenge, and not for the faint-hearted:

Perhaps you'll cover fairer conditions in the workplace? Or the environmental impact caused by the production and disposal of profitable consumer goods? Maybe you'll look at the illegal activity in a particular supply chain, or the way in which a company manipulated data or dodged tax?

Either way, you are likely to upset powerful people, and will bring to public attention issues that some people would rather were kept quiet - if you are doing your job properly, that is.

On the one hand, the basic skills which apply to all good, ethical journalism should apply. You have to be accurate, fair, balanced, and to be able to separate fact from opinion. You will need to carry out sensitive as well as challenging interviews, and nurture and protect your sources. And your desk research will be second to none.

But you'll also have advanced skills, as well as specialist knowledge and professional behaviour. To be able to read budgets and spot anomalies, for example, or to be able to understand complex legal issues well enough to write about them in plain language.

You'll have to 'sell' the story to your audience too. It may not be an 'interesting' topic to them: many would prefer to read about the latest showbiz stories, or to hear what cricket or football stars are doing, rather than the people who made their boots. You'll need advanced storytelling skills.

Others may feel that criticism of a particular local industry will put jobs at risk; shareholders in the company whose oil spills you are reporting on might be one of your key advertisers.

Business leaders, investors, and government officials are amongst the people who might not want you to discuss business and human rights issues. In some cases, your editor might be nervous too.

And there are several practical challenges for journalists covering business and human rights issues.

It can be risky reporting on, or communicating about, conditions in factories where clothing is made, and not just for you as a reporter. There is the real risk that the people you interview might get into trouble, or lose their job.

It can be daunting for journalists, programme-makers, and other communicators. It can be all too easy for them to avoid the topic completely.

What we choose to communicate, report on, or make programmes about, can have a real influence on the lives of people: on the factory floor, in the office, and in ships, shops, mines and plantations.

If we ignore labour rights abuses we contribute to a 'culture of impunity' in which, at its most extreme, those guilty of crimes like industrial manslaughter can get away without punishment or censure.

If poor working conditions are not mentioned in the media, we can limit the available information for survivors of industrial accidents who will miss out



negatively influence the way in which judges and juries perceive the issue if we avoid the topic.

We can also make it harder for campaigners to change these conditions if the subject stays off the public and political agenda.

Or to put it another way, the media can play a positive role in making sure that those responsible for industrial accidents are brought to justice. We can help play a role in improving compensation for survivors of accidents, and contribute towards better, fairer conditions in the future. It can be all too easy for journalists

to avoid the topic, or to report it in such a way that no change is ever likely.

And yet we need to make sure this kind of story is in the public domain. The media have a role to play in creating change

Whether legislation is about equal pay for women, safety in the workplace, or compensation for victims of land theft, it is only when these issues are in the public domain that justice can be done.

Harpreet Kaur,  
UNDP, Business and Human Rights  
Specialist, Asia-Pacific Regional Centre.

## FURTHER RESOURCES

Reporting business and human rights is a big topic; suggestions for further research will appear throughout.

For a wider introduction to the subject, the UN's Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights is a good starting point, and a knowledge of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is useful.<sup>2</sup>

## PART ONE

# Understanding the issue

## IN SUMMARY

Business and human rights stories can be complicated. Reporting them will involve both developing your own contacts of people who can talk confidently about specific subjects, and excellent online research, plus an understanding of the law and bodies which deal with it.

### Skills needed

- Strong interview ability
- Nurturing sources and building relationships with subject experts
- Investigative journalism, accurate reporting
- 'Desk' research skills and data journalism
- Understanding and evaluating sources, spotting PR fluff
- Learning acronyms, turning jargon into plain English

### Challenges and opportunities

This is a big and interconnected topic, so you've got some work to do. You might be covering labour law and land rights for one story, and recycling or big data for the next. And you'll need to understand media law. But once you've understood the relevant business and human rights sources for your beat, there will always be plenty of stories.

This handbook has been produced by the United Nations Development Programme Asia-Pacific Regional Hub in Bangkok.

**This handbook is intended to be practical, and aimed at working journalists,** and programme-makers working in any media. Whilst some examples may be specific to a particular medium (such as radio or TV), the core topics and skills (such as media law and interview skills) are relevant to all.

It has been produced with the understanding that not all reporters who cover business and human rights stories will have an extensive background in the topic.

It mentions editorial team meetings and newsrooms, but it is understood that many people will be working alone, or in non-newsroom environments - although, it is likely that journalists can benefit from learning outside of their discipline. Journalists today may start out in newspapers, but end up producing podcasts - and vice versa.

It hoped that it will also be useful for communicators, campaigners, and others who work with the media in order to communicate business and human rights topics.

### About this handbook

This handbook is broadly divided into three sections: this first focuses on **understanding business and human rights**, its themes and topics.

The second part looks at the practicalities of **reporting business and human rights stories**: from finding ideas and spotting stories through to the process of research and carrying out interviews.

The third part looks at how you can **tell business and human rights stories**, and 'sell' them to your audience and editors.

Whilst some media law is discussed, it is as general introductory information only and should not be construed as or relied upon as legal advice.

This handbook was written by Nick Raistrick for UNDP. Art direction and design by Ric Marry.

Infographics were created by Nick Raistrick and Ric Marry. Images have been ethically-sourced and credits can be found on page 116. They are used for illustration and design purposes only; there is no implication that inclusion on these pages implies either endorsement or criticism.



The Asian garment industry employs around 40 million people, 80% of them women<sup>1</sup>

Fast fashion and complex supply chains have been associated with multiple human rights abuses, including child slavery

### KEY FACTS

- Business and human rights stories cover a very wide range of topics, including Covid-19
- This includes the spread of the virus from food markets, to working conditions where face masks are produced
- It also includes the impact on workers and businesses, and the development and distribution of a vaccine

### TERMINOLOGY

**Business and human rights**  
This term can refer to any commercial activity which has an impact, whether positive or negative, on human rights.

**The Guiding Principles**  
The UN endorses a 'protect, respect and remedy' framework; these are also sometimes called the Ruggie Principles, after Professor John Ruggie, who developed them. This will be explained further, including on page 53.

**State / state actor**  
There are 193 sovereign states which make up the UN. A state actor is a person or group acting on behalf of a government. Its opposite, 'non-state actor', is sometimes abbreviated to NSA.

# What is business and human rights?

The story of human rights is often told against the background of a world recovering from the Second World War.

In the aftermath of conflict, the rights of the individual were formally recognised through the Universal Declaration of 1948; but it was up to countries to protect these ‘inalienable’ rights. Countries which were signatories of the Declaration became UN member states.

In recent decades there has been a shift. The benefits and challenges of today’s world are increasingly stories of corporations rather than governments.

During the 1980s and 1990s, there was an increase in the size and scope of multinationals, following mergers and acquisitions, and a trend towards privatisation of state-run enterprise.

It has been estimated that two-thirds of the world’s richest entities are now multinational corporations rather than governments.<sup>1</sup> There are oil companies which are wealthier than many Asian governments; Walmart and McDonald’s are both in the top five private employers in the world; and the revenue of a big firm like Apple is greater than even large countries.<sup>2</sup>

This creeping globalisation led to a growing concern about the role of corporations in human rights issues.

By the 1990s, protesters were as likely to be seen outside a big name retailer, factory or restaurant chain, as a government embassy, with logos, not flags, on their placards.

Therefore it is not surprising that many of the human rights stories which dominate the news headlines have more to do with the actions of commercial activity than governments.

From illegally trafficked workers to the indigenous people whose traditional lands have been lost to industrial scale plantation, many of those who suffer most from business-related human rights abuses receive little protection from state actors. Indeed many have no passport.

When global online retailers or social media giants don’t pay their taxes, this too is a business and human rights story.

The ‘Protect, Respect and Remedy’ framework is the UN’s response to these challenges. It is based on existing international law: states should still be responsible for protecting human rights, and punishing those who do not. Corporations should respect these rights.

The term ‘business and human rights’ is relatively recent; and is sometimes seen as an emerging field in terms of case law, reporting, and policy.

In fact, some of the most significant human rights abuses have always been associated with gaining an economic advantage, as is the recognition that these violations are wrong. Various forms of slavery and indebted labour, have been made illegal or have been regulated at various points around the world, since approximately the sixth century BC. They are discussed in the core texts of all the world’s major religions, and thinkers from Gandhi to Dickens have written on the topic of business and human rights.

It is an unfinished story. Sometimes the news feels relentlessly grim: from habitat loss, species decline, and global warming to the ongoing abuse of children in the workplace, forced labour and trafficking. But reporting the issue, can mean covering positive change too.

We now take it for granted that businesses have a moral and legal obligation to uphold workers’ rights. Now is the time to make sure these rights are really upheld.



## STORY IDEAS

Throughout this handbook there are suggestions for possible stories, treatments, and formats related to business and human rights issues.

It is a wide-ranging subject, including gender inequality and violence, indigenous land rights, and increasingly complex supply chains. It takes in microplastics, recycling, and climate change, as well as tax evasion, corruption, and the growing global influence of the tech giants on the world’s digital economy. Construction, fashion, transport, food? Vaccine distribution? All these topics have a business and human rights angle.





Aceh, Indonesia: World's largest oil company accused of being complicit in human rights abuses starting in the 1970s<sup>1</sup>

**TERMINOLOGY**

**Inalienable rights**

Rights which cannot be taken away. This slightly curious word appears in the preamble (introduction) to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. These 30 rights are described as 'universal', because they belong to everyone. They include rights to life, legal protection, employment.

**Human rights violations**

Occur when these rights are breached in some way.

2020: 'Aceh community shows "best of humanity" in pushing for Rohingya rescue,' according to Amnesty International

**Human rights rely upon our ability to empathise with strangers.**

Source: *Inventing Human Rights: A History*, Lynn Hun

# Business and human rights timeline

The purpose of this timeline is to show that business and human rights issues have a long history, and are truly global.

**Timelines can be misleading. They represent an editorial decision, not a consensus.** Histories are complex, and events may not be linked, and they rarely start and end neatly on a specific date. The Slave Trade Act, in 1807, is considered important in relation to the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade, for example. But the institution of slavery continued in British colonies until the Slavery Abolition Act 1833, and even this had exceptions. Indentured labour continued for decades in its wake, with the divisions it caused still in evidence today.

## c. 3rd Century B.C.

**Ashoka abolishes the slave trade** in the Maurya Empire (roughly, modern India) and encourages people to treat slaves well. "It is my desire that there should be uniformity in law and uniformity in sentencing."

## 539 B.C.

The armies of Cyrus the Great, the first king of ancient Persia, conquers the city of Babylon. Cyrus **frees the slaves, declares that all people have the right to choose their own religion**, and establishes racial equality.

## 1368 A.D.

The Hongwu Emperor in China **abolishes all forms of slavery**.

## 1619

**First enslaved Africans arrive in the Virginia colony, now the USA**, brought by a Dutch ship, one year before the Pilgrim Fathers. Interracial marriage in the United States will not be fully legal until 1967.

## 1856

**May Day March** for eight-hour working day in Melbourne, Australia.

## 1861

Indian Penal Code **effectively abolishes slavery in India**.

## 1933

The Krupp company is amongst the **private firms to bail out the Nazi party**; after the Second World War there will be prosecutions against its directors for forced labour and

crimes against humanity. As of 2020, ThyssenKrupp AG remains one of the world's largest steel companies, with 670 subsidiaries worldwide.

## 1948

The United Nations adopts the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights** in Paris.

## 1967

**Torrey Canyon oil spill**: A supertanker carrying oil from Kuwait, registered in Liberia, and owned by a subsidiary of Union Oil Company of California, chartered to BP (British Petroleum), runs aground off England's Atlantic Coast, receiving widespread media attention. An estimated 15,000 seabirds are killed.

## 1972

**US telecoms firm, ITT conspires with the CIA to support a military coup in Chile**, including funding *El Mercurio*, a Chilean right-wing newspaper. It leads to an examination of the role of private firms in human rights abuses.

## 1977

**Start of baby milk boycott against the Swiss-based Nestlé corporation**. A *New Internationalist* magazine article four years previously claimed that children were dying from infection from unhygienic bottles, and from malnutrition. "The promotion, marketing and distribution of breastmilk substitutes can...contribute to the overall discouragement of breastfeeding and contribute to underfeeding, malnutrition, and vulnerability to infection."

## 1981

**Slavery is formally abolished in Mauritania**, although no criminal laws passed to enforce the ban until 2007.

## 1984

**Bhopal gas disaster**, considered the biggest industrial accident in history. A chemical leak kills at least thousands: 5,295 people, according to official figures, or 25,000 according to Amnesty International. Almost 40 years later, and after multimillion dollar payouts, campaigners are still seeking justice.

## 1992

**The Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro**: treaties on biodiversity, climate change and forest management are agreed. Corporations play an active role and corporate responsibility and self-regulation is stressed. Greenpeace International are amongst those critics who argue in favour of a binding legal framework.

## 1997

**Nike lays off staff following increased protests over working conditions**. "The Nike product has become synonymous with slave wages, forced overtime, and arbitrary abuse," says Phil Knight (Nike's CEO at the time). "I truly believe the American consumer doesn't want to buy products made under abusive conditions."<sup>3</sup>

Media coverage, including a 1992 *Harper's* article about working conditions in Indonesia, had led to boycotts, although accusations of sweatshop labour date back to the 1970s.



## STORY IDEAS

Obviously historical events rarely make front page news, but their anniversaries sometimes do, particularly for features and current affairs items: it will be the tenth anniversary of the 2012 Dhaka garment factory fire in November 2022, for example. Angles might include what happened to survivors, what has changed, and whether such an accident could happen again.

Other news pegs might include diary events, such as May Day, International Day for the Abolition of Slavery, Labour Day. For these you can prepare features and packages well in advance of the date itself.

Nike began auditing its factories for occupational health and safety in 2002, and currently scores 51-60% in the Fashion Transparency Index.<sup>4</sup>

### 2000

**United Nations Global Compact launched.** This is a voluntary United Nations pact to “encourage businesses worldwide to adopt sustainable and socially responsible policies, and to report on their implementation.”

### 2007

The Nisour Square massacre, in Iraq. **Guards working for Blackwater, a private US security firm, shoot seven Iraqi civilians.** Convictions for manslaughter and murder follow, as well as media scrutiny of private security firms. A UN investigation describes those who fired the shots as mercenaries.

### 2011

**Adoption of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights,** after several years in development. It introduces ‘Protect, Respect and Remedy’ as principles of business and human rights affairs.

### 2013

**Rana Plaza collapse.** More than 1,000 people killed in garment factory disaster in Bangladesh. Primark, Benetton and Walmart are amongst the brands whose labels were linked to the case, due to media images of the aftermath.

### 2020

**Garment exporter Bangladesh loses an estimated \$6 billion in revenue** with retailers cancelling orders as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>5</sup>

## TERMINOLOGY

### Diary story

A ‘diary story’ has a fixed date in the future, so provides an opportunity to plan content weeks and months into the future. It wouldn’t normally be the lead item on the news agenda.

### News peg

Newsroom jargon for an item already on the news agenda you can ‘peg’ your story to: for example, you might want to run a feature about a local sportswear factory at the start of the FIFA World Cup.

## Choosing the right words for your audience is vital

### IN SUMMARY

Every industry has its own terminology, and language that may cause confusion; the journalist's job is to understand and interpret this precisely, and where necessary to use accurate alternatives for each specific audience. This requires an understanding of the topic, and the confidence to ask questions when you come across language that is not clear.

#### Skills needed:

- Excellent understanding of business/human rights issues
- Getting academics/experts to explain key terms and concepts
- Ability to shorten longer sentences
- Use of clear language
- Editing, rephrasing, and checking for understanding
- Using or developing a style guide

#### Challenges and opportunities:

It can be easy to repeat words and phrases related to human rights and business.

But once you've mastered the skill of rewriting in plain language, you can reach new audiences. Even specialist audiences appreciate jargon-free storytelling.

The language of business and human rights can be confusing to audiences - and daunting for those reporting on it.

It is rooted in international law and as such reflects the need for precise, detailed language. But certain phrases have very specific meanings within the legal profession, which you may have to explain for general audiences. This is particularly true of Latin phrases.

Business language sometimes presents the opposite problem: official corporate communication is often deliberately vague and euphemistic, as companies communicate in such a way as to defend their 'brand values' with promotional language or trendy jargon used to replace clear language.

Just as some politicians will speak euphemistically, companies will sometimes cloud their meaning through careful language and 'corporatespeak'.

Rather than discuss actual, specific issues which might make them look bad, some corporate communicators resort to metaphor and jargon. Instead of a sacking employees, for example, firms will talk of 'downsizing', 'rationalisation', or 'workforce optimisation'.

Journalists are sometimes guilty of repeating, unquestioningly, this language. Some add idioms of their own. This is particularly true of business and finance journalism, where the slang of the international markets can creep in.

It can be quite poetic: for example the phrase 'dead cat bounce' is used to describe the false recovery after a recession. (Even a dead cat will bounce if it is dropped from high enough, apparently.)

Of course most audiences wouldn't understand this phrasing, and it doesn't translate well from one language to another.

Some terminology and journalistic idioms have been included in this handbook because the ideas are important, and will be used throughout: looking for 'news pegs' is an important skill for features writers covering human rights issues, for example, so the term is explained here. **Terminology is explained throughout as it appears.**

#### Non-binding resolution

Within the UN, when something is described as 'non-binding' it means that it is not intended to become law; it is a recommendation. A non-binding agreement is an example of 'soft law', that is agreements, principles and declarations which are made but not backed up by international legislation.

#### Due diligence

The steps a company must take to become aware of, prevent and address a particular risk. Human rights due diligence involves assessing actual and potential human rights impacts, acting upon findings, tracking responses, and communicating how impacts are addressed.

### SME

Small and medium-sized enterprises: they represent approximately 90% of businesses worldwide, according to the World Bank. For general audiences, 'small businesses' is often a better term.

### Worker

An individual performing work for a company, regardless of the existence or nature of any contractual relationship with that company.

### Supply chain

"The series of processes involved in the production and supply of goods, from when they are first made, grown, etc. until they are bought or used," according to the Oxford English Dictionary. Supply chains for modern consumer goods can be complex: the Apple Supplier List details its top 200 suppliers including firms based in China, Thailand, Japan, Brazil, Germany and Indonesia.

TECHSPEAK  
JARGON  
BUZZWORDS

Drop the Ball OFF-LINE Blue Skies Thinking  
Pushback Out of the Loop Disruptive  
Proactive Facilitate TOUCH BASE  
Paradigm

CONFUSION

## SCENARIO

You are interviewing an environmental professor. He is the top expert in his field, and is talking in detail about recycling low-density polyethylene.

## OPTIONS

1. This sounds like a great subject, ask lots of detailed follow-up questions.
2. This will probably be confusing to my audience.

## TERMINOLOGY

### Style guide

Different media houses develop their own 'house style' to suit their audiences, and these are described in editorial style guides, sometimes called 'manuals of style'. Some issues are technical - such as, do you capitalise 'Prime Minister', or not?

They add clarity and consistency and can be an entertaining and useful resource. Both the *Economist* and *New York Times* style guides are famous in print circles, whilst the BBC's Editorial Guidelines<sup>6</sup> are detailed and useful for broadcasters.

## FEEDBACK

If you are making a specialist podcast for people working in the recycling business, it's probably perfect. But for a general audience, you should get the professor to explain what he means. Many people won't realise that low-density polyethylene is used for plastic bags and electrical cable...

**Ultimately, be guided by your audience in whether this is a suitable topic.**

As with all interviews, briefing helps. You may want to explain to your guest that they should explain technical terms, and that you might jump in with follow-up questions. Some experts aren't great 'talkers', and are good for background rather than live interviews. Great science communicators are a useful addition to any journalist's contacts book, so nurture them as useful sources.

# What does a business and human rights story look like?

## STORY IDEAS

From corruption to collective bargaining, via vaccine distribution, big data, land rights, tax evasion, decent wages, LGBTQI workplace rights, modern slavery, insecure work, illegal drugs, fashion, Big Pharma, sport, health, safety and industrial accidents... the subject is vast.

There's plenty of bad news. Clearly you should hold corporations, governments, and individuals to account; but remember successes. When laws change or working conditions improve through campaigning efforts, that's a story too.

A teenager is arrested in an ordinary-looking house in Britain. He is alone, with few possessions. It's cold outside, but he is wearing summer clothes, and he lacks proper bedding. With the cannabis farm he has been working on now closed, he owes even more to the traffickers who brought him here. It receives little attention in his home country of **Vietnam**, although it receives some local media coverage.

Meanwhile a palm oil firm is expanding its operations. It has cut down forests and the orangutans which lived in the area are in danger of becoming extinct. Despite complaints from environmentalists in some countries, demand is high across Asia.

A fire at a **Delhi** factory leads to the death of 40 people, amongst them a number of children. Several international media outlets link the incident to the ongoing campaign for justice in Bhopal.

After years of undercover reporting in one of **Sri Lanka's** Export Processing Zones, several international brands are implicated in an investigation into gender-based violence. The International Labour Organization argue that a convention on gender-based violence is essential and launch a viral campaign.

This is denied by the company which carries out the manufacturing, who point to the economic benefits of the factories.

Meanwhile, a **Asian** movie is receiving rave reviews around the world.<sup>2</sup> It documents modern slavery in the fishing industry and tells the story of a kidnapping. It is only available on Amazon Prime Video. Amazon has itself been the target of protests following accusations made by an undercover journalist that its warehouse staff were forced to pee in bottles instead of taking breaks in order to meet fulfilment targets.

**There are business and human rights stories everywhere.** They are as connected and international as the supply chains which modern economies rely upon.



## SOURCES

The best journalists get their stories from a wide range of sources. It's often important to feature authoritative, 'expert' sources when reporting a particular business and human rights issue. So it can be useful to be on the mailing lists and Twitter feeds of NGOs, UN bodies, unions, brands accused of violations, campaigners who specialise in this field.

But it's also vital to speak to the ordinary people you should be representing; so interview ordinary workers, market traders (and their customers), businesspeople, farmers...



## SCENARIO

You receive a report from your local university entitled "Investigation into the potential for non-biological outputs of mechanical-biological treatment facilities". What do you do?

## OPTIONS

1. Ignore it, this sounds too boring for my audience.
2. As it's from a university, it can be trusted, so grab a few hundred words and rewrite into simpler language suitable for your audience.
3. Speak to somebody who understands this stuff better than you do before proceeding.

## FEEDBACK

It would be tempting to ignore a report with a title like that. Unless you have a good knowledge of waste management, the subject matter offers no obvious 'top line'.

And it might be that the story isn't worth covering. But it could also be that there is a hidden story here. **Academic and industry reports can be a source of buried news,** but you'll have to be able to understand the issue well.

The urge to tell the story in plain language is a good one. But if you jump straight in, there is a good chance you'll make mistakes or misunderstand the issues.

It's a good idea to have somebody in your contacts book to help you with this kind of story; of course you will need to make sure that your source is reliable and will give you an idea for a news angle. In this case, you could argue that the 'buried story' here is that a local facility will be built in your location. What will the impact be?

## TERMINOLOGY

### Modern slavery

Modern slavery is the severe and illegal exploitation of people for commercial gain. It is estimated by the International Labour Organization that 40 million people are trapped in this way. By its nature, it is often 'out of sight', although it is widespread, and affects construction, factory work, fruit picking and agricultural sectors, as well as domestic work, and forced sexual exploitation.

Victims of trafficking sometimes end up working illegally in nail bars, car washes, and construction in richer countries.

## Protect, Respect and Remedy

### FURTHER RESOURCES

The UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights: Implementing the United Nations 'Protect, Respect and Remedy' Framework, can be found on the UN Human Rights website.<sup>7</sup>

The UN's position on business and human rights issues can be summed up by the 'Protect, Respect and Remedy' framework. This is based on:

1. States' existing obligations to respect, protect and fulfil human rights and fundamental freedoms;
2. The role of business enterprises as specialised organs of society performing specialised functions, required to comply with all applicable laws and to respect human rights;
3. The need for rights and obligations to be matched to appropriate and effective remedies when breached.

The Human Rights Council approved these principles in 2011. It was the first time that the United Nations had taken a formal position on business and human rights. After much examination of the

issue, and despite some calls for new international laws, a framework was developed in which existing rights and obligations would deal with the human rights challenges posed by businesses.

Within this framework, there are several 'guiding principles' which are outlined in detail. They state that 'business enterprises should respect human rights', as defined by existing human rights instruments, such as the International Bill of Human Rights. The UN's interpretive guide explains these in detail, and provides examples of infringements: including child labour, hazardous working conditions, gender barriers, water pollution, data misuse, racial discrimination of customers.

“Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work.”

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights

## SCENARIO

Which of the following might make a good top line for a news bulletin?

## OPTIONS

1. UNDP releases quarterly report on undocumented illegal child labour in the textile industry.
2. 10-year-old children found making Christmas clothes in Gap Kids factory in Delhi.
3. Anomalies found at clothing corporation, affecting stock prices.

## FEEDBACK

The issuing of a report is often a poor top line; reports, papers, and even handbooks are issued all the time. Unless there is a specific news angle or relevance to your audience, they are not inherently interesting to those outside the immediate circle of those who produced them.

That means you, or a well-trained colleague, will have to read the report and work out which sections are most newsworthy or of interest to your audience; sometimes a story is buried in a report.

The third suggestion doesn't have much of a hook either, unless you are targeting a business audience. It's good to remember that share prices are usually the reaction to a story, rather than the story itself. Even then, the story is too vague: the hook for this 2007 story - option two - is that a big brand was using child labour.<sup>8</sup>

In fact, the story was damaging to the Gap brand; even though they blamed a subcontractor in their statement, they still pulled certain products and investigated the incident. It is widely held that recognisable household brand names should be responsible for their suppliers, and that reporting their shortcomings leads to action.

Some NGO reports and academic papers are more useful than others. The short initial summary, or 'abstract', should help. Check the funding: for decades the tobacco industry funded science projects and NGOs with the aim of making people doubt the emerging scientific evidence around cancer from smoking.

## TERMINOLOGY

### Top line

Newsroom expression for a short description of a news item, compelling and simple. 'What's the top line?' is a variation of the question you will hear in any editorial meeting around the world. Experienced editors know that for a story to work, it can be explained in one sentence, and that the best top lines have an active verb.



Small and medium-sized enterprises represent approximately 90% of businesses worldwide, according to the World Bank.<sup>9</sup>

## Nurturing sources

### IN SUMMARY

#### Sources

Business and human rights stories can be complicated, and involve a range of expertise. You will need to develop your own contacts of people who can talk confidently about specific subjects, excellent online research skills, and an understanding of the law and bodies which deal with it.

#### Skills needed:

- Nurturing sources and building relationships with subject experts
- 'Desk' research skills
- Protecting sources
- Spotting PR fluff
- Learning acronyms!

#### Challenges and opportunities:

There's plenty of NGO, government, and corporate spin out there, but by nurturing a wide range of sources for your beat, there will always be plenty of new story ideas. And by making sure you speak to ordinary people as well as expert and senior voices, you can best serve your audiences.

Journalists should put themselves in a position of being trusted and approachable; so a whistleblower should be able to come to them with a story in the knowledge their identity won't be compromised, say, and if a relevant NGO issues a newsworthy report on a topic you report on, you should be amongst the first to hear about it.

But you should also be sufficiently challenging of sources, and seek to corroborate. This is particularly true of official sources – which can mean anything from government spokespeople to public relations teams working on behalf of an industry, company, association, or union.

NGOs are often good sources of information on business and human rights issues. The range can be staggering, and the sheer number means you'll never keep up with them all. Some are multimillion dollar household names, involved in a wide range of activity, from building hospitals to publicity campaigns; most are much smaller.

Some are viewed as well-established human rights defenders, with a provable track record of good governance, and work benefiting communities.

Others have a terrible reputation, and at worst there has been exploitation of the vulnerable people they should have been protecting. Watch out for bogus NGOs, which have been set up with the intention of making money for founders, or supporting an industry, rather than

doing good work. There have been high profile examples of serious misconduct at some well-known NGOs and UN bodies.

Criticism of NGOs has come from all sides of the political spectrum, as well as within the sector. Some view them as an imperialistic tool of Western oppression, forcing liberal values; or destabilising governments. Others see NGOs as an unnecessary market intervention.

But for most business and human rights reporters covering human rights issues, NGOs will be a useful source. Some have developed successful partnerships with media houses, even hiring freelance reporters and photographers.

As with all sources, if you get too cosy, relationships can become clouded and your impartiality can be compromised. You should always be aware of their agenda, and the message they are trying to promote to the outside world. You should always aim to speak to a range of sources when newsgathering and reporting. There's more on creating a balanced contacts book on page 90.

## SCENARIO

You are the features desk editor at a national newspaper. A local NGO sends you a press release about their work in eradicating gender-based violence in the local enterprise zone where there are several garment manufacturers employing tens of thousands of workers. What should you do?

## FEEDBACK

It is not good journalistic practice to reproduce a press release verbatim. It is unlikely to be written in an appropriate style to your audience, for one thing, and also because other news outlets will carry the story.

Just because the NGO thinks it is a big story, the decision as to whether it is of interest to your audience is your editorial decision - you don't owe them coverage.

The claim that gender-based violence (GBV) has been eradicated would seem to be suspicious. It is estimated that 1 in 3 women are subject to direct violence at the workplace, so eradication is unlikely, albeit an admirable goal.

Having said that, it could be a mistake to discount the story completely. Obviously, not all journalists have a newsroom, but it would be a good idea to discuss this with colleagues as a way of getting a second opinion on whether a particular story is right for your audience, and whether it's worth following up.

Any follow-up, like an interview from the organisation or a comment, would mean digging deeper than a press release. You could find out if anybody has experienced gender-based violence: the real story might be that conditions haven't improved for women but people are scared about coming forward when GBV incidents occur.

## OPTIONS

1. Ensure you publish it in detail, to make sure the audience gets the whole story.
2. Avoid reprinting it because NGOs are all corrupt and a bad foreign interference in my country.
3. Ask around in your newsroom to decide whether the story is worth following up.
4. Retweet it to keep the NGO happy, but don't print it in the main edition.

## TERMINOLOGY

### NGO (also CSO)

(an abbreviation of non-government organisation). According to the Oxford English Dictionary "a charity, association, etc. that is independent of government and business", although sometimes NGOs are not truly independent: for example, those which have been funded by the fossil fuel or tobacco industries. There are a number of similar terms, for example, 'CSO' is short for civil society organisation, and roughly synonymous. *Human rights defenders*, *not-for-profit*, and *non-state actor* have slightly different meanings which are worth Googling.

### Features desk

A desk is a department within a media house: the features desk focuses on longer-form items; the news desk focuses on newsgathering. A big news organisation might have several of these: a sports desk, a city desk (specialising in business), a science desk, and so on.

### Desk editor

The person in charge of a section in a media house. Even when people work digitally and remotely the term 'desk editor' is still in fairly common use.

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## STORY IDEAS

Successful journalists are curious, and interested in the world around them. An overheard comment in a taxi, an observation, or a complaint from a market trader can all be sources of ideas for news and features items. Some journalists avoid press releases and news conferences completely; others report extensively on the activities of specific industries, and cover product launches and press events as part of their work.

## Who reports on business and human rights?

### TERMINOLOGY

#### Beat

An area of expertise covered by a journalist. Crime, sports, entertainment are all different 'beats', although the term's origins are geographical. Some journalists don't have a particular specialism, but it can be useful to learn a topic well and gain a reputation.

#### Investigative journalism

A form of public service journalism which involves original reporting, and "exposing to the public matters that are concealed – either deliberately by someone in a position of power, or accidentally, behind a chaotic mass of facts and circumstances that obscure understanding. It requires using both secret and open sources and documents," according to UNESCO.<sup>10</sup> The 'targets' of this kind of reporting can be any kind of individual or institution.

#### Churnalism

Can be seen as the opposite to investigative reporting, in that it involves desk-based hacks 'churning out' copy: copying and pasting or rewriting using internet-based research or material from a press release; closely related to plagiarism and fake news.

Most journalists will have covered a business and human rights story at some point, because these issues affect just about every aspect of life...

**Fashion correspondents** might find story ideas by examining the ethical treatment of workers in the factories where such products are made; and entertainment journalists will often be able to find a celebrity angle to a business and human rights. Big brands, NGOs and UN bodies all approach high profile athletes and entertainers, because they know it can guarantee audience interest.

**Sports reporters** might want to look into the working conditions of the shirt manufacturer or sponsors of a local team, or do a piece on how many migrant workers have been killed in the making of the new stadiums associated with the FIFA World Cup.

**Business and financial reporters** traditionally look into the profitability of companies and how they are doing on the financial markets, but increasingly there is a crossover between corporate affairs and social accountability: human rights violations affect share prices.

Naturally, some journalists will specialise in **human rights or campaign-style journalism**; and within this field there will be specialisms. In the interview with Annie Kelly, a commissioning editor at the *Guardian*, on page 78 she talks about how she developed her own 'beat', and how to pitch to editors.

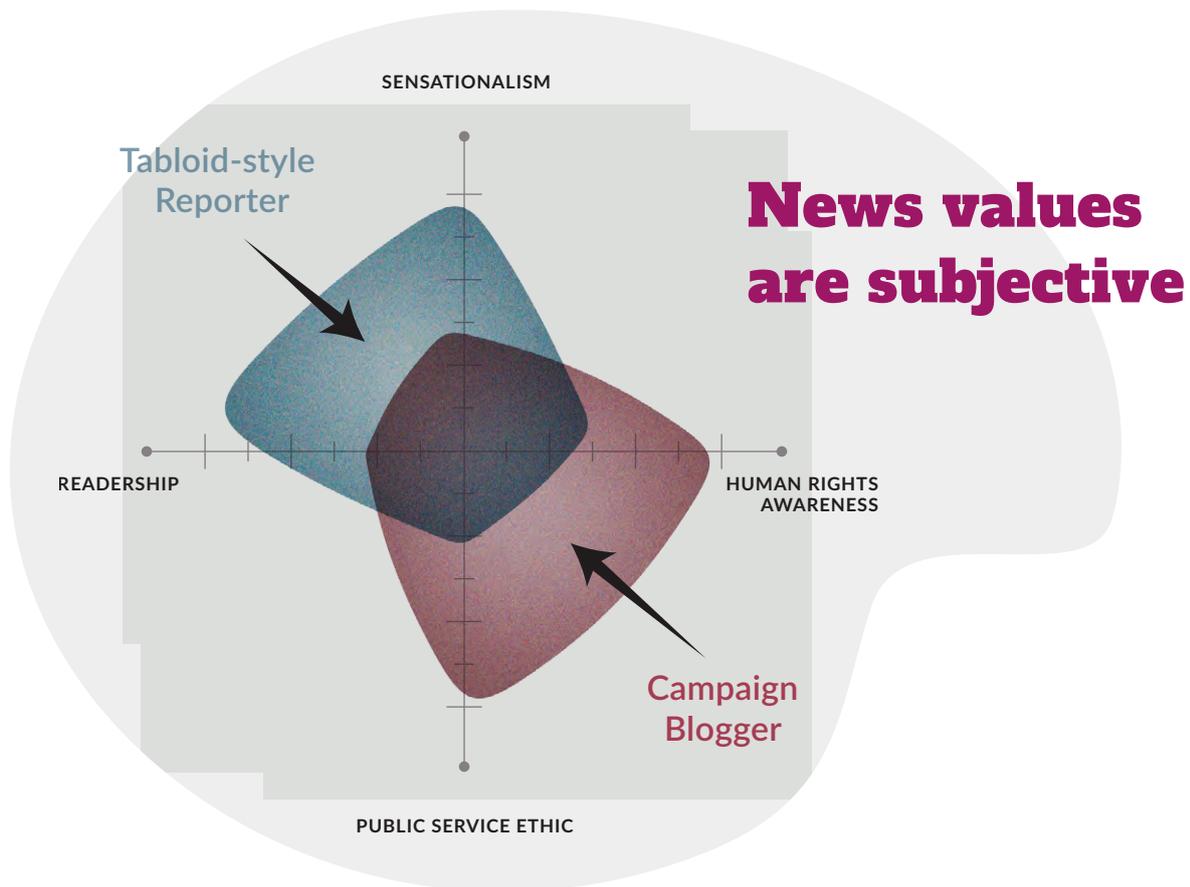
Many media houses hire **specialist reporters covering a particular industry** or sector, like technology. There are magazines for engineers, podcasts for teachers, and regular slots in some newspapers aimed at people interested in global affairs, women's issues, or fair trade.

Whilst some media houses only work with their own in-house reporters, you may find that you can successfully pitch ideas to a range of outlets. **Freelance journalists** do that, and many of them are **features reporters**, specialising in in-depth 'behind-the-news' items.

Budgets for journalism are generally in decline as advertisers have switched to social media; but if you have a strong enough idea, which you can show to be well-sourced, a commissioning editor somewhere might still be interested. There's evidence to suggest that the big international news organisations are increasingly looking to hire freelancers from the geographical area where the story breaks.

**A big business and human rights story is likely to involve news, current affairs, and investigative reporting**; even beat specialists will need to have a good news sense and an understanding of news values and media ethics.





**This handbook assumes there is such a thing as ‘good journalism’;** that is, certain ‘news values’ are important, and worth striving for.

**That accuracy, should be at the heart of journalism. That a range of voices should be represented, and not just those of the most powerful.** That news reporters should aim for impartiality and put aside their own preferences when reporting the news.

**That facts exist, and are different from opinions;** that the media should hold leaders to account, and act on behalf of those who are unable to speak to their leaders. You should be their voice.

Reporting business and human rights is a big area. There are lots of interconnected topics. Sometimes reporters avoid certain subjects, like workplace sexual harassment, because the topic is sensitive and challenging.

You can learn some skills, like how to interview more sensitively, or how to read a budget. At other times it can be useful to know your limitations, and when to build partnerships with experts. A sports reporter may decide to work with a colleague with a background in reporting finance on a big story, say.

Finally, there has been a trend towards online and mobile content during recent years; so print reporters find themselves podcasting or presenting on YouTube. Thinking about how you’ll tell the story is vital. Maybe you’ll take a deep dive into business and human rights topics through an investigative blog: audience figures may be low, but you can still contribute to the way in which the issue is understood, and your stories might get picked up by much larger news outlets.

## FURTHER RESOURCES

### How many NGOs are there?

It has been reported that there are over three million NGOs in India alone,<sup>1</sup> although nobody knows the exact figure. Some fold, and others are replaced.

Are religious groups classed as NGOs?

Not always. Watch out for bogus NGOs, and dodgy think tanks, set up to promote a particular view point or industry, rather than doing good work!

### SCENARIO

You have been investigating a story about the informal waste sector. One of your interviewees, a teenage girl, asks for money to help feed her siblings.

### OPTIONS

1. It is fair to give cash to interviewees, but only at the end of the interview.
2. It's not right to give money, but you can certainly give a small gift to those who have helped you.
3. You should give them nothing.

### FEEDBACK

One of the more challenging aspects of being a reporter covering business and human rights stories is that you will often come into contact with people who are experiencing poverty. It can be tempting to give money in exchange for an interview.

However, it is not generally considered ethical to do so. This is because people who receive payment for interview may embellish facts, and feel they should tailor their statements towards their 'client'. It is also likely to make it harder for other reporters to tell the story honestly, and many news organisations have a no payment policy.

Some reporters who have been deeply affected by issues they cover make discreet donations to charities.

When covering business and human rights stories, you should always be straightforward. If you don't work for an organisation which produces ethical guidelines, there are lots of organisations, such as the International Federation of Journalists, which do. There's more on ethics on page 112.



## Knowing your audience

...is a mantra for all successful media organisations. They are obsessed with them, spending millions on finding out their habits and preferences.

Without an understanding of what makes audiences tick, your time and effort as a reporter or communicator is wasted. The kind of stories you cover, the way in which you tell them, and the media you choose all depend on your target audience.

You can't always commission your own audience research, but you should always be aware of audience behaviours and expectations: you need to know what kind of stories they care about.

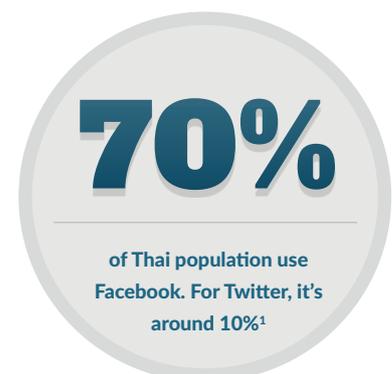
What's trending on social media can be useful, but misleading: only 20% of Indians use Twitter, for example, and around 10% of Thais<sup>1</sup>. Similarly, in most media markets, a majority of people don't read newspapers.

And media consumption patterns are more complex than numbers. Luxury brands will pay for advertising in certain magazines, podcasts, and broadsheet papers with low sales volumes, because

they know that those who read these titles are wealthy customers, perhaps in the market for a \$5,000 watch.

Just as communicators with a human rights agenda know that senior politicians, policy makers, and other 'influencers' are more likely to consume certain media than others - broadsheet newspapers, for example. To achieve a greater 'reach', for a grass roots behaviour change campaign targeting caste-based discrimination, say, you might choose prime-time TV or drive-time radio, which are more widely consumed.

Your audience should give you plenty of ideas for news stories to investigate; if they don't, you need to reach out to them more effectively. Be flexible, and make sure you are using their preferred channels of communication. So reach out via social media, and trail SMS contact details on air. More on selecting media and formats on page 108.



Senior politicians, policy makers, and other 'influencers' are more likely to consume certain media than others.

## SCENARIO

As a magazine journalist, you have interviewed a girl, aged 14. She has been working on a tea plantation in Assam in India. She mentions that she has been sexually harassed by the foreman and wants to talk. She insists on an interview and has strong ideas on how she should be photographed for the feature. What should you do?

## OPTIONS

1. Talk to the girl's mother.
2. Agree to take the interview and photographs, but make the girl anonymous by blurring her face and changing her name.
3. Let her speak, and if she wants to be photographed, all the better because a strong image will improve the story.

## FURTHER RESOURCES

There's more on journalistic ethics on page 112. There are also plenty of useful resources on the web; for example the International Federation of Journalists Asia and Pacific branch produces guidelines, and BBC editorial guidelines are available in several languages.

## FEEDBACK

**This is a tricky editorial challenge.** On the one hand, it's important to represent a wide range of people and to tell their stories. It's certainly true that a strong image will improve the story, and that marginalised groups are often left out of magazines and other media. This includes survivors of gender violence; and young workers.

By blurring her face and changing her name you are denying the girl a chance to tell her story in full. It is deceptive, and possibly against her wishes. Having said that, it is considered ethical to be guided by principles of 'informed consent'; this can only be given when the person giving consent fully understands the consequences of a decision and consents freely and without any force.

In this case there may be severe repercussions if the girl speaks out, including so-called 'honour killings'. There's more on the tea industry on page 66, but people have been known to lose their job and family home for upsetting estate managers.

Minors are not automatically assumed to be able to give consent. Most codes for journalism best practice state that you should normally seek consent from a parent or guardian for this kind of interview: you have a particular duty of care to minors, and you should try and make sure no harm comes to them. In this case you should negotiate a solution based on the potential risks: an agreement to avoid details that could aid identification may be a third way, for example.

This scenario highlights some of the challenges in representing our audiences: there are a billion or so teenagers in the world, and of course they should tell their stories in the media. You, though, also have a duty of care.





Your audience should be giving you plenty of ideas for news stories to investigate; if they aren't, you need to reach out to them more effectively. Be flexible, and make sure you are using their preferred channels of communication.

## TERMINOLOGY

### Audience segmentation

Used by campaigners to divide target audiences and deliver messages more effectively: age, region, media use, and personality type are categories.

### Agenda-setting theory

This is the idea that the media set the agenda for issues they see as important. It is based on the idea of editors as gatekeepers of media, with the power to influence public opinion.

### Citizen journalism

A term which became popular with the advent of the smartphone in the 2010s: rather than editors setting an agenda, bloggers, vloggers, and podcasters can bypass traditional channels.

### Mojo (mobile journalism)

Use of smartphones by journalists to capture video, make packages, etc.

### Reach

The number of people who are exposed to a particular media message. Hard to measure, but still useful for campaigners.

## What is work?

### IN SUMMARY

#### Reporting labour issues

What happens in the workplace is a 'classic' business and human rights topic, and there will always be lots of labour stories. Many are negative: like poor conditions and harassment. But it's important to remember the positive impact of 'decent work' on communities and individuals.

#### Skills needed:

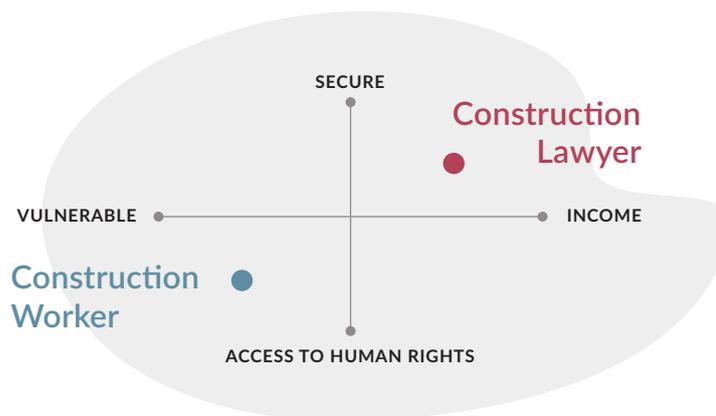
- Understanding news values, labour law, and workplace rights
- Investigative journalism skills
- Staying safe
- Protecting sources

#### Challenges and opportunities:

Both rogue employers and large brands can be secretive about their operations, and it can be a challenging story to report. Having said that, there will always be public interest in stories which affect the way we work.

Many companies have changed their policies and practices after media attention.

The nature of work is changing. Entire industries that didn't exist just a few years ago now employ millions. Others are under threat. We are moving to follow the work: in 2007, the number of people living in urban areas overtook the world's rural population. There are now more than 4 billion people living in urban areas globally, and the trend continues. This pace of migration has accelerated within a generation.<sup>1</sup>



As a result **many of us are less tied to communities, our land, or a single employer.** A job for life is becoming rarer; contracts are becoming shorter, or non-existent.

At worst, **modern slavery describes people in the economy who have no rights at all.** Millions of young people face mass unemployment and the rise of the informal sector.

It's a complex issue. Whilst many of us mourn 'jobs for life', some contractors and freelance workers in the 'gig economy' are happy to be free from restrictive working contracts.

From IT consultants to professional footballers, there are those who benefit from the freedoms of being able to choose their employers.

For employers, too, there are several benefits to the new ways of working. They no longer have to pay into pension funds or for holiday pay.

In practice, many people have no choice, and find it hard to plan financially when they may lose their income. The modern supply chains which are quick to turn around the latest smartphone, sports shirt, or face mask in order to meet customer demand are also quick to shed staff, as many have found following the recent pandemic.

By contrast, organisations such as the UNDP advocate 'decent work' in which prospects, a living wage, security, and protection are guaranteed. Whether these can be delivered in future years is a huge, global story.



Across all sectors illegal work tends to be less safe and less secure

#### KEY FACTS

- Work-related human rights include:
- Freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining
- The elimination of forced compulsory labour
- The elimination of discrimination in the workplace
- The abolition of child labour<sup>1</sup>
- The average pay gap between men and women, globally, is around 20%
- 93% of Indian workers work in the informal or 'disorganised' sector, that's more than 400 million people<sup>2</sup>
- In Japan, there is a word for 'overwork death', Karoshi, first identified in 1969. Causes include strokes, heart attacks.

**“Everyone has the right to rest and leisure, including reasonable limitation of working hours and periodic holidays with pay.”**

Source: Universal Declaration of Human Rights

## The Interview: Charles Autheman, freelance journalist

Charles Autheman is a freelance journalist and consultant who recently developed a toolkit for the International Labour Organization with the aim of supporting journalists reporting on forced labour and fair recruitment.



International Labour Organization (ILO) has been campaigning for fairer workplace conditions since 1919. It is now part of the UN.

“I have been working specifically on the relationship, the media coverage of migration issues for the past 10 years, really looking at how journalists go about it.

“I sit on a jury for competition on these issues. I’ve been doing that for several years, and I’m always just amazed by the diversity and quality of reporting on these topics all around the world.

“The Associated Press work on the Thai fishing industry, slaves and seafood was impressive. It actually got them the Pulitzer Prize for their reporting, but it’s also a story that really led to concrete impact in daily lives of people working in that industry.

“It’s too difficult to say what business is going to look like in the post-Covid environment. We don’t know how long this is going to last, how economies are going to suffer from this crisis.

“But what’s currently happening is interesting.”

“In many cases, where you find the abuse, you find a lot of workers who are not allowed to have a voice collectively.

“In many instances, you will find that a correlation between human rights abuse in supply chains is related to the fact that workers are migrant workers.

“There’s a variety of reasons things are going wrong. There’s the environmental, cultural, and human aspect. Consumers can’t expect the way business is being done in 2020 to suddenly change so that everything that comes to them is 100% clean. But we should make sure that we go in the right direction.

“What should a journalist prioritize? Should we try and call for boycotts? Or should we try and call for freedom of association for workers where it’s being prevented?

“I would rather suggest the latter because I think that can have a more decisive impact.”



## TERMINOLOGY

### Forced labour (also 'unfree labour')

Work that is not performed freely, but with a threat of a penalty of some kind. Threats can include violence, intimidation, and manipulated debt. Forced labour also includes slavery, labour camps, and entrapment of migrant workers.

### Manipulated debt

Often linked to the exploitation of migrant workers and other deceptive recruitment practices. A lender charges a 'fee' rarely paid off due to hidden 'costs' and sudden rises in 'interest'. This leads to debt bondage.

### Debt bondage

A form of unfree labour, which involves workers paying off a debt, sometimes for several years, or real or imagined services carried out by a broker.

### Recruitment fees

Illegal upfront costs charged to jobseekers: one of the tools used to create a situation of forced labour. (Fees charged by agents to hirers are a completely legal part of the recruitment process.)

### Worker

An individual performing work for a company, regardless of the existence or nature of any contractual relationship with that company.

### Zero-hours contracts

Contract in which an employer is not obliged to provide a minimum number of hours, nor an employee to work them. Described as both 'flexible' and 'exploitative'.

### The informal sector

Work that is neither taxed nor monitored: known in some regions as 'unorganised workers'. It is estimated that 1.3 billion people work informally in the Asia-Pacific region.

### Nativism

"The policy of protecting the interests of native-born or established inhabitants against those of immigrants." (Oxford English Dictionary). Can lead to poor treatment of migrant workers.

## FURTHER RESOURCES

The UNDP website is a useful source for information about labour issues, including 'decent work' cases studies from around the world.

Unions, industry organisations, business associations, and ordinary workers and businesspeople are also useful sources for labour stories.

## Policing fashion

### KEY FACTS

- 80% of Bangladesh's export revenue comes from the garment industry
- 85% of workers are women, mostly in the 'ready-made garment' (RMG) sector, producing finished clothing
- It is estimated that 81 million jobs were lost due to the 2020 pandemic in the Asia-Pacific region
- India is now the fifth largest market for fashion
- The Swedish Fashion Council cancelled its fashion week in 2019 over sustainability concerns.

What's happening in the world of fashion?

We are buying more clothes than ever before. In the last 15 years, production of clothing has doubled, according to a Greenpeace survey. We wear them fewer times, and we get rid of them earlier.

The kind of clothes we are buying has changed, too. Organic cotton, recycled fabric, and trendy new materials like bamboo and hemp grab the headlines, alongside 'smart clothes' which link to your mobile devices.

But the fact is that more clothes are being made from oil than ever before. It has been estimated that 65% of all fibres used in the fashion industry are made from a synthetic

material, mainly polyester, and that this figure is likely to rise.

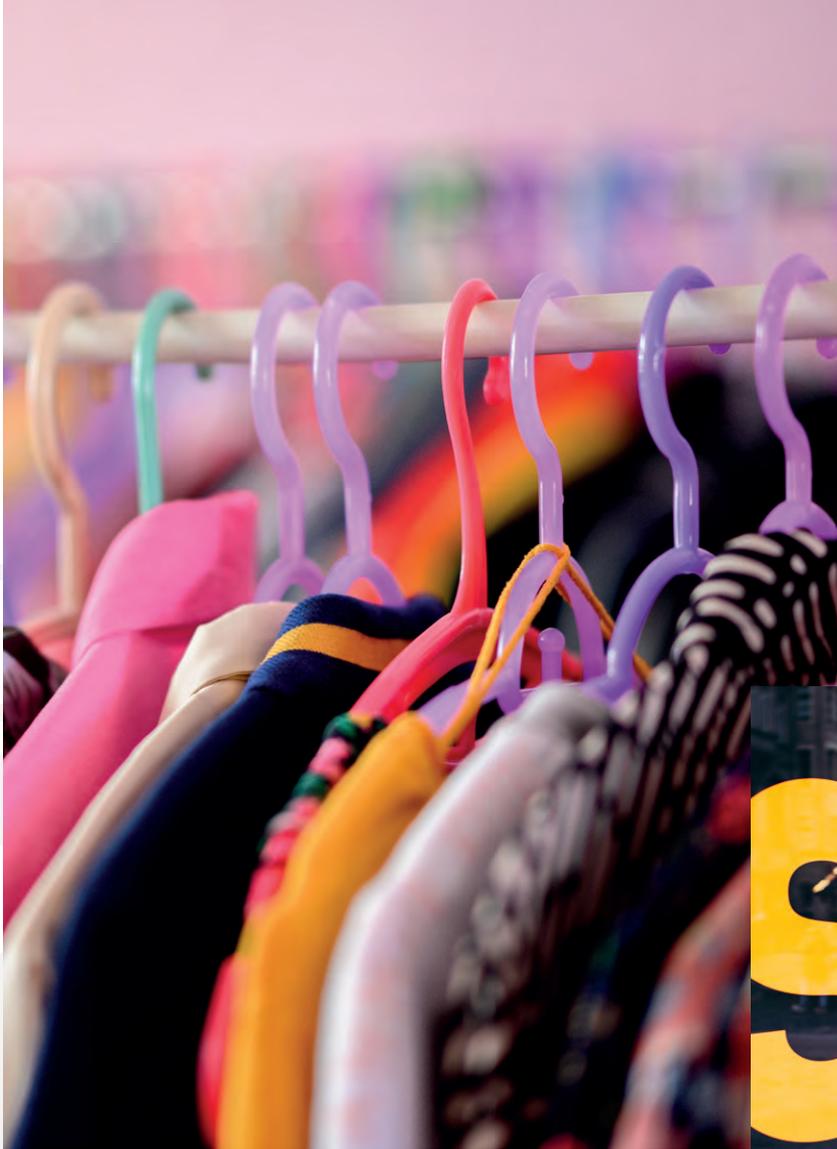
This is a human interest story: the garment industry employed more than 40 million people in Asia at the start of the Covid-19 pandemic. It's also an environment story. Man-made fibres contribute to the microplastic pollution problem and to global warming; but producing a cotton t-shirt can use 2,700 litres of irrigated water.<sup>1</sup>

It's clearly complex. For example, consumer boycotts might lead to fairer conditions, or to further cost-cutting (and therefore worse conditions).



**“We need garments that are easier to mend, reuse and resell. We need to reduce the water, chemicals and fossil fuels that go into making them. We need big fashion brands to stop incinerating millions of perfectly good, unsold clothes.”**

Source: Greenpeace



## TERMINOLOGY

### 'Decent work'

...involves "opportunities for work that is productive and delivers a fair income, security in the workplace and social protection for families, better prospects for personal development and social integration, freedom for people to express their concerns, organise and participate in the decisions that affect their lives and equality of opportunity and treatment for all women and men", according to the ILO.

### Sustainable development goals

Also 'Global Goals', adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015. There are 17 of them, and they aim to "end poverty, protect the planet" and "ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity by 2030". Goal 8 is to "promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all".<sup>1</sup>

### Bonded labour

A form of forced labour, in which 'debts' are paid off through services. Although global, it is most widespread in South Asian countries. Sometimes, the debt can be passed down the generations and children can be held in debt bondage because of a loan their parents had taken decades ago.

### Outsourcing

When a company brings in a third party to carry out work on its behalf: often technical support, IT, or manufacturing is outsourced.

### 'Fast fashion'

Cheap clothing, from as little as \$5 per item, often aimed at fashion-conscious youngsters, and made by workers in poor conditions. See also, 'disposable fashion'.

## FURTHER RESOURCES

### The Clean Clothes Campaign

is one of the organisations which campaigns for fairer conditions in the garment industry. Others include Anti-Slavery International, Ethical Trading Initiative and the Fairtrade Foundation.

**Local Unions** can also be useful sources of information, and help you secure interviews with workers; you should normally offer management the chance to give their side of the story.

## Safety in the workplace

### SOURCES

It can take years for a trial or an official enquiry to reach a conclusion following an accident.

But other sources are available including verifiable first person accounts; pressure groups and official company spokespeople are likely to make statements. Given that supply chains are complex, you may need to do some investigative journalism to find out who is responsible for a particular factory, as well as contacting trade unions and industry associations.

Serious accidents in the workplace, particularly those which cause death and serious injury, tend to generate headlines and news bulletins.

In these cases the traditional newsgathering questions apply. What happened, and to whom? When? How many people were harmed? Why?

Of these, the **why** question is usually hardest to answer.

Take the 1986 Chernobyl nuclear accident. Its fall-out killed thousands, and created 10 times as much radiation as the Hiroshima bomb. It's regarded as the worst nuclear accident in the world.

Who was to blame? According to the Soviet justice system, the answer was quite simple. Anatoly Stepanovich Dyatlov, the engineer in charge of reactor No. 4, was the main culprit and he received a 10-year sentence; two of his colleagues on duty at the time of the incident were also punished.

However, an inquiry into the matter by the International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna found otherwise. They found a number of serious flaws in reactor design. The blame, therefore, lies with the designers of the reactor?

Or perhaps the people who commissioned it? Installed it? Failed to notice its flaws and continued to install it, or noticed the problems with the design and did nothing to fix the problem? Or a wider system which discouraged whistleblowers? And so on.

This 'why' question is important because it effectively deals with the blame issue and any questions of liability; reputation and money are big motivators after an accident. As well as being a human tragedy, a large accident can damage a company's share price.

Whilst some businesses seek to do the right thing and pay the appropriate levels of compensation promptly, others will seek to avoid the blame. It has been argued that one of the reasons for the sometimes complex outsourcing of manufacture to emerging economies is to avoid the potential liability associated with this kind of accident.

Frustratingly for both journalists, campaigners, and others looking for answers, it can take years to find out the answers to these questions.

In the case of the Chernobyl incident there were several similar generators, and there would have been pressure to close them all down, which would have devastated industry and damaged Soviet reputation further. If the company were privately owned, the resulting damage would have been devastating for the company that owned the reactors.

By blaming individuals, the justice system can avoid taking the blame itself. "Communist Party leaders who covered up the scale of the disaster and lied about the number of casualties also have escaped punishment," said the *Washington Post* in 1992.

In some ways, the Chernobyl incident was relatively simple, with one clear business owner; but supply chains are often more complex. This affects liability and compensation. Decades after the Bhopal industrial disaster, for example, the site has new owners; compensation has been paid for the lives of 3,787 victims: but it is claimed that between 15,000 to 20,000 people died.





Various courts in the US and India have examined the case. Some activists believe it has not been dealt with properly, with fairness to those who were affected, despite fines and criminal prosecutions.

In 2012, WikiLeaks revealed that Dow Chemical spied on the public and personal lives of activists involved in the Bhopal disaster.<sup>1</sup>

As reporters on business and human rights affairs, we should cover these developments, but we should also be inclined to think of what next: did the coverage of an accident lead to justice for victims and survivors?

Has legislation changed in the aftermath of a serious incident? Was justice seen to be done? What happened next? What is the bigger picture?

Clearly this topic needs to be handled sensitively, and with respect to the victims. But is there a global trend? Are workplaces safer than they used to be?

Finally, it can be easy to ignore some of the ongoing and everyday business and human rights issues in the workplace. But it's important to look at these: are workers being adequately protected on an ordinary day?

What discrimination is taking place, and how are employers handling these issues?

It's your job to find answers to these difficult questions.

## TERMINOLOGY

### Liability

In this context, liability means the responsibility for something and is usually decided in court. If you falsely attribute blame, you can be sued for libel.

### Occupational safety and health

"The discipline dealing with the prevention of work-related injuries and diseases as well as the protection and promotion of the health of workers." (ILO)

## FURTHER RESOURCES

The World Health Organisation (WHO) is a good resource for occupational health, and the International Labour Organization (ILO) is a useful resource for finding out about labour rights and laws around the world.

Unions can also be useful sources of information. You should always give brands, business associations, and manufacturers the chance to tell their side of the story.

# The world's worst industrial disaster is still unfolding.

Source: Apoorva Mandavilli, writing in *the Atlantic*, describing the Bhopal disaster<sup>2</sup>

## REPORTING HUMAN TRAFFICKING

"When reporting trafficking, it's important to understand three things:

1. The Act (What is done) Recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons
2. The Means (How it is done) Threat or use of force, coercion, abduction, fraud, deception, abuse of power or vulnerability, or giving payments or benefits to a person in control of the victim
3. The Purpose (Why it is done) This includes the prostitution of others, sexual exploitation, forced labour, slavery"

Source: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime Toolkit<sup>1</sup>

# The Interview: Louis Hulland

Louise Hulland is a journalist and broadcaster. Her 2020 book, *Stolen Lives*, explores international human trafficking, modern slavery, and the link between legitimate businesses and criminal activity.

**Nick Raistrick:** How did you get interested in the story of human trafficking and modern slavery?

**Louise Hulland:** I'm freelance. I work as a news producer, and do shifts in newsrooms and in TV, as a radio presenter, covering shows and pitching stories, pitching documentaries, and I write for various outlets [in the UK].

Modern slavery was on my radar because of the build-up to the 2012 Olympics. Whenever there's any kind of big event, good or bad, people will always seek to try and exploit it in some way. So that takes us back to 2010. Because of the research that I was doing around that time, I was looking for stories, trying to get my head around the subject matter. I met some really incredible, passionate people and built on those relationships.

When I met a survivor of human trafficking, it changed into something much more personal. [When you] look into the eyes of a survivor... it's easier as humans to understand the pain of one person than it is the 40 million people around the world who are enslaved.

**NR:** How do you get editors and to audiences to get people talking about this issue? How did the book happen?

**LH:** It was a difficult sell for sure. Because I'd come up with so many different formats. I wanted to spend six weeks following the work of the people on the front line. And to do an investigation into human trafficking. Commissioning editors always wanted to come up with a new idea: what is the headline-grabbing story? What do people not know? What is

the top line? And I was always very passionate about the fact that I don't think people knew about the level of human trafficking and slavery. Nobody really wanted to make an overview.

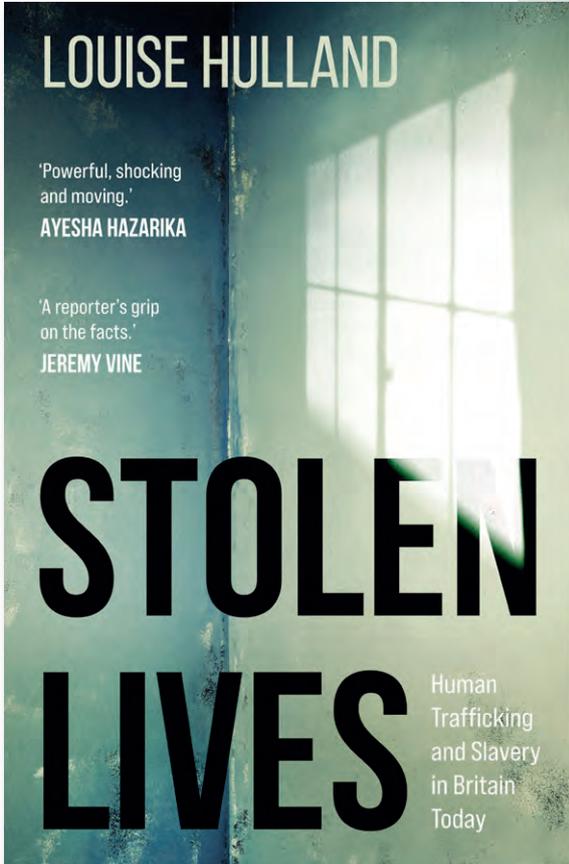
I wanted to do something that was a series of vignettes of survivors, voices, and all anonymous. I was going to do it in my own time, so that I had a channel to feel like I was doing something worthwhile.

I always knew that the tone was going to be conversational and explaining the issue, because there are so many complicated factors.

So I broke it down into the step-by-step process of what people need to know: stripping it all right back. But hopefully, without it being too dry, and like a textbook. I wanted it to be human, walking through the issue together. To say 'this is what happens to survivors, this is what they're up against', with, obviously, the voices of the survivors woven throughout.

**NR:** Let's talk about the Vietnamese connection. Can you tell me what happens in the cannabis supply chain in the UK? How does this link with legitimate businesses? And how did you get that story?

**LH:** It's very secretive, very complex. Essentially, as best we can figure it out, traffickers will target villages in Vietnam, offering 'new lives' to people. The families will then stump up the money to give their child an 'amazing' new, fresh start. The families think they're doing what's best. And that's where the nightmare begins.



They will start on a journey from Vietnam, through Russia. Often people have been exploited on the way, from the accounts that people have managed to put together.

The accounts of survivors can appear to be quite muddled. If you are duped on your journey, you don't really think that you need to remember specific details.

They end up in ordinary-looking suburban houses, alone, stripped pretty much to their underwear, and left to cultivate these cannabis plants.

## TERMINOLOGY

### Human trafficking

Human trafficking is the process of trapping people through the use of violence, deception or coercion and exploiting them for financial or personal gain.

“What trafficking really means is girls groomed and forced into sexual exploitation; men tricked into accepting risky job offers and trapped in forced labour in building sites, farms or factories; and women recruited to work in private homes only to be trapped, exploited and abused behind closed doors with no way out: a serious crime and a grave violation of human rights,” according to Anti-Slavery International.

## FURTHER RESOURCES

The UN supports the World Day against Trafficking in Persons which takes place on 30 July; as well as UN bodies, international NGOs such as Amnesty and Human Rights Watch are also closely involved in combatting this international crime. Local NGOs and law enforcement agencies may also be able to provide useful information on this topic. See page 80 for more information on traumatic and sensitive interviews.

## Business and human rights is a gender justice issue...

### STORY IDEAS

Women in India spend, on average, almost six hours a day managing the home. Why is this not included in GDP?

Recognising the value of women and their work is an important aspect of business and human rights issues. It links closely to a range of education and work inequalities. For more angles and background, the (UN) Gender Dimensions for the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights is a useful startpoint.

...whether it's labour rights or land rights, workplace safety, trafficking or violence, the way in which people are treated due to gender differences is a big story. How can ethical reporters cover this issue?

Interviews are at the heart of journalism; and yet it is easy to find programmes and publications in which few women are featured as guests and interviewees. Sometimes this is because journalists speak only to 'senior' people: politicians, and CEOs, for example, and women are under-represented in these groups.

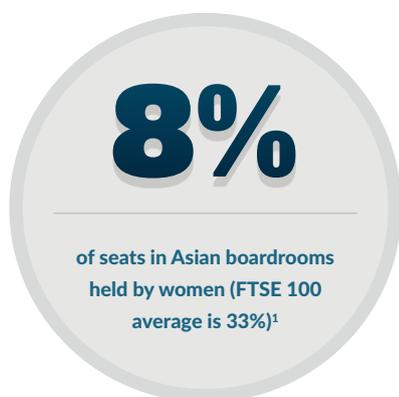
When women are interviewed, it is often about 'gender-specific' issues. And it is certainly true that female workers are frequently paid less than men and treated poorly in the workplace.

Women face harassment and have suffered the effects of the pandemic unequally, both through unpaid care work, and the fact that gendered access to education means women and girls are more likely to work in unskilled sectors. They are also more likely than men to become victims of illegal trafficking.

It is important to discuss these issues; gender-based violence (GBV) thrives in an atmosphere of silence, for example. By discussing GBV openly it is possible to ensure that it receives the attention needed, in order to protect and respect human rights, and to provide remedy. Grievance mechanisms need media attention to be effective.

But ordinary women and girls need their voices heard; and not just describing the challenges. What happens when women are paid living wages, or enjoy equal education and training opportunities? What happens to share prices when women are in boardrooms? How are women part of the solution?

It's your job to tell these stories too.



States should encourage and incentivize business enterprises to contribute to achieving substantive gender equality to enable the enterprises to discharge their responsibility to respect women's human rights.

Source: Gender guidance for the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights



## SCENARIO

You are a business and human rights reporter, covering the convening of a new board of directors for a recently privatised water company. The board of 12 is all men. Do you say anything at the event?

## FEEDBACK

There is no 50:50 gender ratio law for boardrooms. If there were, the majority of boardrooms would be in serious trouble.

Whilst these decisions are indeed commercial, states have a role in the processes of working towards gender equality. The consensus is that mixed gender boards are increasing globally, but that the process is slow. There is some evidence that companies perform better financially when there are mixed gender boards, so it seems like an issue worth covering.

There are a range of gender target ratios, ranging from 20% to 33% to 50% female.<sup>2</sup>

The UNDP position on this topic is that: 'States should encourage business enterprises to appoint a certain percentage of women to their boards and report on the gender pay gap throughout their operation.'

## OPTIONS

1. As this is a commercial decision, the board's gender make up is irrelevant. It's likely that men have the most experience in this case, and other issues are more important.
2. All-male boards should be a thing of the past; how can women ever be represented in business if they don't have a say at boardroom level?
3. By law, all boards of directors should have a 50:50 gender ratio.

## TERMINOLOGY

### Gender-based violence (GBV)

Gender-based violence includes trafficking, rape, harassment, physical violence and stalking; it is usually directed at women and girls.

### KEY FACTS

- The global value of women's unpaid labour is \$10.9 trillion, according to estimates<sup>2</sup>
- India, Pakistan and Germany are amongst countries with legislated quotas for women on corporate boards of publicly listed companies
- In India, the number of women in the workforce decreased to 20.3% percent in 2020 (from 38.8% in 2005)<sup>3</sup>

## The Interview: Salil Tripathi



Salil is an Indian journalist who has written for newspapers and magazines all over the world. He is currently the senior advisor for global issues at the Institute for Human Rights and Business.

**There's something special about a business and human rights story.** As I see it, it's about someone with power and someone without power. And the dynamic of power in-between.

Sometimes the dynamic is positive, where the one with power does good for the people who are without power. And sometimes the dynamic is negative where the person without power is worse off. And I think both of those can be very 'good' stories.

An example; India had laws against same-sex relationships (Section 377), and a court order continued to criminalize same sex relationships; at the time, a lot of businesses took out advertisements celebrating same-sex love. It was an opportunity to empower a community. I see that as a good thing.

**Speaking as a journalist, everything can have a good business and human rights angle.**

**Business and human rights can seem very, very boring to a journalist looking for drama:** minute details about due diligence, of human rights policy and the guiding principles. It can seem like a conversation that only takes place in Geneva and New York and London, and not in the Niger Delta, and so on.

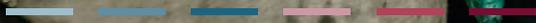
There are some journalists who are pro-market and pro-business who don't see anything wrong in what business does. And there are others who think business can never do anything right. And clearly the truth is in between.

**You should prepare exceptionally well for interviews.** Read up everything you can, and not only from one side. During the preparation phase, before even trying to interview the person, try to find out every little detail. For any big story, anticipate what the responses will be and have the counter-questions ready.

**A lot of large companies are more aware of their human rights responsibilities.** If you walked into the BP headquarters at St. James' [London] and asked 'What are the UN guiding principles for business?' the front office might not know.

But there'll be at least 15 people in the company, who will know them intimately, and they will try to permeate them elsewhere.







PART TWO

# Reporting business and human rights

To cover business and human rights issues as a beat, you'll need investigative journalism skills. This includes staying safe and protecting sources. You'll need creativity and a good news sense to find ideas, and the tenacity to follow up on them. And you'll need to be able to nurture sources and carry out sensitive interviews.

Ethical best practice journalism should be applied. You should strive to be accurate; to do no harm; and to comply with media law. Reporters should maintain balance, deal fairly with contributors, and keep themselves and their sources safe, whilst gathering evidence that may need to be defended in court. Campaigns and partnerships work for some reporters covering big issues which require detailed specific knowledge.

You can have a positive impact on the lives of people affected by human rights abuses who seek justice now, and those who will not have to suffer in the future.

# Who is a journalist?

## DISCUSSION POINT

### PR versus journalism

Journalism is under threat, according to a wide range of media commentators.

Across Asia, and the rest of the world, newsrooms have let go of staff as advertisers switch to social media; it has been estimated that in the US there are six PR people for every journalist.

Is this a bad thing for audiences? Does the quality of news suffer? Or does it represent an opportunity for new kinds of storytelling from outside of a media elite?

## KEY FACTS

- The UN recognises the right to freedom of expression as universal
- Therefore journalists do not receive specific formal recognition, as everybody has the right to expression
- In some countries journalists are protected and have special rights including, for example, permission to be at violent and conflict situations
- In others, they are targeted

What types of journalist are there? Which kind are you? This basic question has got harder to answer. In the digital era, it has become easier to create and share content online. Some audiences access all their information on current affairs via social media, often bypassing 'traditional' journalism entirely.

### Public service reporters

...are guided by certain long-established news values: they strive to achieve accuracy, balance over time, and impartiality, and will cover any story if they believe it is in the public interest. They exist across a range of media and in the private and public sectors; many subscribe to a professional code of conduct.

### Campaigning journalists

...often believe in a particular cause or field of endeavour, for example some reporters cover business issues, human rights or the environment as a specialist 'beat', in the same way that crime or sports reporters are specialists.

### Partisan, pro-government, and pro-opposition media

...encompasses a range of reporters: from those directly working on behalf of the government at state broadcasters and channels, through to journalists who work for a privately-owned media house with a particularly strong allegiance to a particular political party.

### Influencers...

...are motivated by boosting their 'personal brand', for a range of reasons; many would not identify as journalists and do little reporting, but use their profile to cover issues which used to be the preserve of journalists. There is debate over how to regulate this sector: for example, fake Covid-19 science pushed by YouTubers.

### Freelancers and stringers

...will file for a range of media houses and news agencies; most specialise in particular subject areas or geographical regions.

### Sensationalist reporters

...tend to focus on controversial stories and gossip. In some territories this is known as the tabloid or even gutter press. The opposite of a public service reporter.

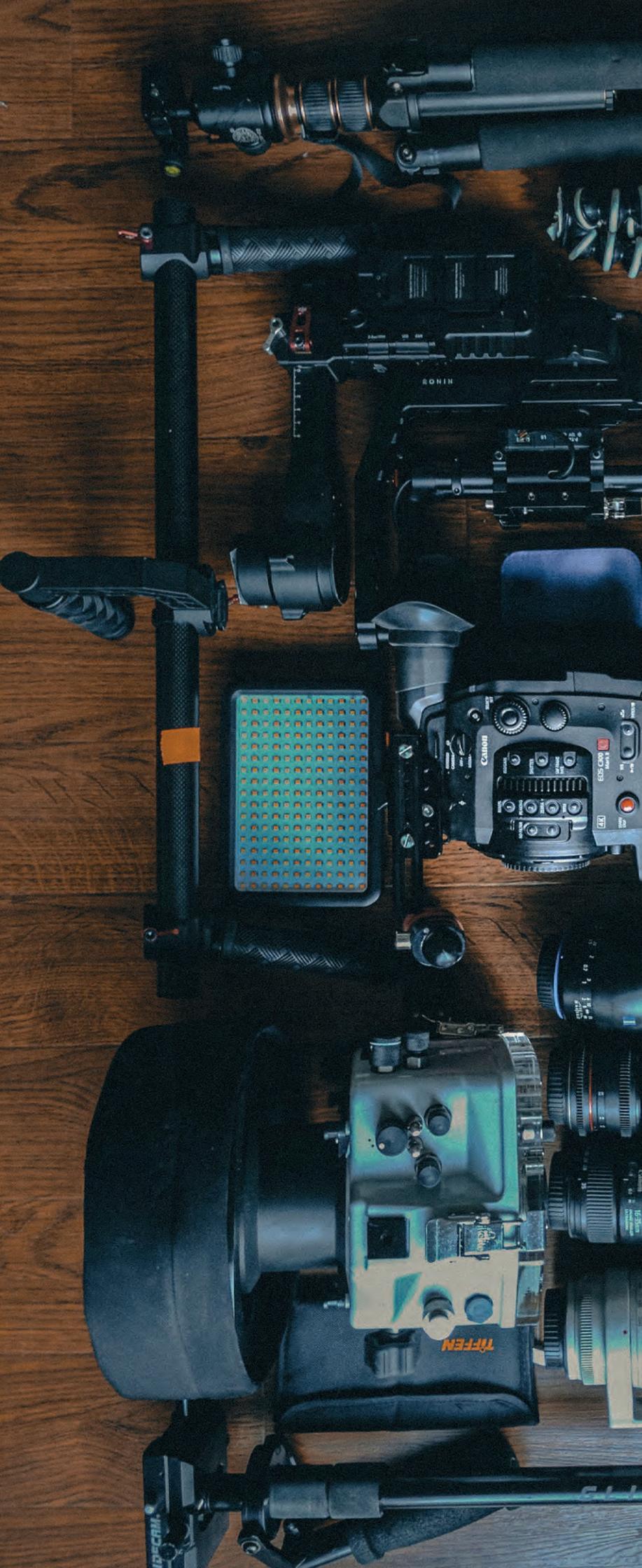
### Investigative journalists

...conduct in-depth and complex research to break stories that the rest of the news media eventually cover. Traditionally investigative journalists have been seen as 'lone wolves', often working as freelancers. Their work can be time-consuming and speculative, and therefore expensive, so investigative partnerships are becoming increasingly common, particularly on big data stories.

### PR teams

...PR (public relations) staff are not considered journalists in most traditional definitions; but many 'PR people' produce content and are themselves ex-journalists. There has been a rise in 'brand journalists', which is another name for PR people who produce a particular kind of 'advertorial' content, blending advertising with longer-form editorial. As with partisan journalists, they do not seek to present a balanced view of the world.





## TERMINOLOGY

### PR (Public Relations)

"The professional maintenance of a favourable public image by a company or other organization or a famous person," according to the Oxford English Dictionary. Traditionally this has involved press releases and events, celebrity endorsements, and lobbying.

### Paid, earned, shared, owned media

Also shortened to PESO, this phrase is sometimes used by people who plan and commission campaigns. 'Paid-for' media is traditional advertising and sponsored advertorial content; 'earned and shared' media is user-generated content and social media about a brand; and 'owned' media might include a company blog, official YouTube channel, or website fully controlled by an organisation.

### 'Dark' PR

Whereas traditionally PR has been seen about positive messaging, 'dark PR' is negative and involves deliberately damaging the reputation of another organisation or individual. It has always existed in one form or another, but it has become much more sophisticated: techniques include false and manipulated content, unauthorised leaks and briefing to news media, as well as 'bots', which generate automated social media messaging against human rights defenders.

## What makes a good story?

What kind of story makes the front page, or a news bulletin? What gets viewed and shared billions of times? What do audiences care about and remember? This is at the heart of journalism; but it can be quite hard to define what makes a 'good' news story.

People sometimes talk about 'news values', although not everyone can agree on what they are. Sometimes change, impact, and proximity are offered as the 'serious' news values.

It's obvious there must be **change** - news must be 'new' - for it to be news. **Impact**, which often overlaps with **proximity**, is vital: nobody cares about the parking restrictions of a town on the other side of the world. For people pitching human rights stories, news values are important and sometimes overlooked. **A 'worthy' story might not be 'newsworthy'.**

**Conflict tends to be at the heart of a news story**, and sadly where there is a high death toll, people do take notice. "If it bleeds, it leads," goes the saying.

### All this bad news can become stressful.

People want a break, and take comfort in less serious news, whether celebrity, sport, 'leftfield', bizarre, or simply funny. Sometimes this is described as the 'and finally', because traditionally these stories would be the last bulletin item.

It's obvious that this is not an exact science: there are different news outlets that cater for different audiences. Not every media house has the same news values. But it's **your** audience who count.

For example, younger people are typically less interested in pensions, and audiences can be segmented further into areas of interest. Potential advertisers can be very specific about which audience they reach. Highbrow

newspapers, for example, have much smaller audiences than the social media giants, and even other newspapers. But their readers tend to be educated, and wealthier, therefore of interest to certain advertisers and campaigners.

When a big story breaks, there is usually agreement across a range of media: editors who might struggle to define what a news story is, tend to agree when they've seen a big story. In 2020 and 2021, Covid-19 dominated the world's media: its aftermath will provide an opportunity for journalists to report the changes and challenges ahead.

## SPOTTING THE STORY

Which of these potential business and human rights news items would make a news bulletin? Are there any you'd want to investigate further? Which would you 'spike'?

### OPTIONS

1. Sportswear firm Adinike release corporate responsibility report
2. The leader of the opposition's Facebook account is hacked, with embarrassing photographs shared
3. Polar bear attacks a man in Canada
4. Donald Trump tweets about his political opponent
5. Fresh evidence from a local NGO about the national water supply being contaminated
6. Amazon paid no tax in your country, according to your accountant
7. Rumour that a local clothing factory is closing with the loss of 500 jobs
8. Leaked plans to phase out petrol cars in your country are tweeted
9. An anonymous call comes in that the local mayor has taken a bribe from a recycling firm
10. Tea prices tumble on the markets
11. A prominent politician criticizes the local mining company for not doing enough for the community
12. A garden gnome, a pair of false teeth, and a *Minions* stuffed toy are amongst the items found in this month's beach clean

*(feedback on the next page)*



## TERMINOLOGY

### **'Slow news day'**

Newsroom jargon for a day when there doesn't seem to be much happening in the world. Sometimes a slow news day coincides with a public holiday, or in some countries, a traditional 'silly season', when parliamentarians, celebrities, and newspaper editors alike are taking a holiday and story ideas that might normally get spiked make the front pages. This can be good news for campaigners and communicators, looking to promote their business and human rights stories!

### **To 'spike' a story**

To reject a story for editorial reasons: best at the earliest stage possible, before you spend time on it. Actual spikes (and paper) are no longer a big feature of most newsrooms.

## FURTHER RESOURCES

Other media can be useful for journalists, particularly if you think outside your usual outlets. Look out for media outlets which hold opposite political viewpoints to your own. Look at both sides of a conflict, and spend time exploring how specialist media tells the stories that you are interested in. For example, the business media is likely to cover fracking in a different way from a liberal newspaper with a track record of 'green' reporting,

## SCENARIO FEEDBACK

Most importantly, in all cases, you should be guided by your specific audience. Some of these stories may be useful topics for a package, discussion programme, or a podcast episode, even if they don't make it as lead item on your bulletin.

## FEEDBACK

1. **Sportswear firm Adinike release their corporate responsibility report** Unless there's something big in the report which is relevant to your audience, this isn't a news event. You might find an angle for the financial pages?
2. **In the run-up to the election, the leader of the opposition's Facebook account is hacked, with embarrassing photographs shared** This would probably make the news agenda in most countries; although how big a story will be based on your organisation's news values. Whilst there is some clear public interest, this could be a political act, designed to embarrass the leader, so a pro government media house is likely to go big on this story, as it calls into question the integrity of the opposition.
3. **A polar bear attacks and kills a man in Canada** At first this story might seem to lack proximity, for a non Canadian audience. But it could be of interest to your audience if there is a link it to global warming, which is one of the reasons there has been an increase in polar bears coming into settlements.
4. **Donald Trump tweets about his political opponent** This would not normally be considered as news; Trump has spent several years tweeting about his political opponents, sometimes several tweets per day, so there is no change here. It would take a significant development, like one of his opponents being assassinated on the day of the tweet, for example, to push the story up the agenda.
5. **Fresh evidence from a local NGO about the main national water supply being contaminated** This has the most 'change, impact, and proximity'. It would likely be your lead item: you might be able to prevent families from getting sick by telling them what precautions they need in order to access safe water.
6. **Amazon pays no tax** In 2018 Amazon made \$11.2 billion profit but paid no federal tax in the US: it was a big story, with similar variations around the world.
7. **A local clothing factory closes, with the loss of 500 jobs** This is another big story. It has 'change, impact and proximity': several lives will be affected by this news.
8. **Leaked plans to phase out petrol cars are tweeted** Work is needed before you can decide whether this story will ever be broadcast. But some of the biggest stories in the history of journalism have started with a leak.
9. **Anonymous call that the local mayor has taken a bribe** This sounds interesting: and something you should certainly investigate. You have to find out if this is true, so a lot of work is needed before you can go live. Some of the biggest stories in the history of journalism started out as anonymous tip-offs. However, many journalists have made the mistake of repeating untrue anonymous allegations.
10. **The price of tea tumbles on the international markets** If you cover this story in a bulletin, you will need to research the issue carefully to make sure that you give enough local context. What does this mean for local tea plantation? Are the markets likely to recover the next day? Do you know someone who can explain these issues well in an interview? This is where your contacts book is useful.
11. **A prominent local politician criticizes the mining company for not doing enough for the community** This is a statement: but nothing new has actually happened. Be very careful about reporting comments by politicians as news. He or she might be trying to distract the audience from something they have done? Maybe the politician's party should be doing something for the community?
12. **A garden gnome, a pair of false teeth, and a 'Minions' stuffed toy were amongst the items found at a beach clean this month** This sounds like a classic 'And finally' story, the kind of which goes last in the news agenda. Many business and human rights stories are, frankly, quite depressing. Sadly, the dumping of items in the sea is ongoing, so there needs to be a new angle to get people to take notice. This might work well as part of a story about people who do voluntary beach cleans. The detail makes the story memorable!



## BE GUIDED BY YOUR EDITORIAL VALUES

Not all media houses cover the same stories. It's possible to find a place for unusual stories that are ignored by other news outlets, and many journalists specialise in in-depth features, documentaries, and long-form journalism.

Even so, you still need a well-developed news sense. To get the interest of editors and audiences, think about your news peg, the angle that will make it timely and relevant.

## TERMINOLOGY

### Opinion piece

A subjective opinion article, which includes op-eds in newspapers, ('opposite the editorial page'), as well as guest and regular columns. Opinion should be clearly separate from hard news.

### Features journalism

Longer-form journalism, typically going deeper into a particular story than would be possible in a short bulletin or news item. Often includes detailed background and creative storytelling.

### Editorial team meetings

Editorial team meetings are a vital part of the editorial process for all news organisations; the timing and format varies, but typically a morning editorial meeting might involve sharing ideas for newsgathering. Further production meetings might take place throughout the day.

### Editorial values (also news values)

What kind of stories should you cover? And how? These questions are guided by your organisation's editorial values. Accuracy, impartiality, and fairness may be relatively common, but others are more specific: some outlets are 'pro free-trade' or represent youth audiences, with news values that reflect this.

### Package

A pre-recorded video or audio report, which mixes edited interviews and a presenter's scripted voice-over, usually with other elements such as vox pops, footage, and sound effects.

## “What’s the top line?”

### STORY IDEAS

It is something of a cliché to say that successful journalists are always on the look out for a story, but it’s true.

By listening to people and observing, you might find ideas in the marketplace, on the school run, at the gym, on the way to work, or at a place of worship....

Of course you can’t ignore other media, but watch out for disinformation and misinformation: there’s been an ‘infodemic’ of false stories in recent years, some widely reported in media outlets whose fact-checking procedures were poor. Don’t repeat mistakes. There are stories in data too, if you know where to look, and employ the right techniques.

This is a variation of the question you will hear in editorial meetings around the world. An experienced editor knows that for a story to work, it can be explained in a simple sentence or two: a short description of the issue: what, when, who, how.

Even if you work as a solo freelance, getting used to being able to summarise a story idea in a compelling but brief way is an important skill. A variant of the top line is likely to be the first paragraph your audience will read, watch, or hear, and will decide whether they are drawn in to the story or not.

If you work in a newsroom, the editor hosting the meeting knows that often the first idea isn’t the best. She will know that before allocating resources on following up an idea, further research is usually required.

Spotting a dead fish in the river may not be much of a story, but if fishermen notice lots of dead fish, and there is a new concrete factory which opened a few miles upriver, there is likely to be more of a news angle.

So-called ‘die-offs’ are, sadly, common news items. To reach international audiences, there needs to be a twist: when CNN reported 35 tons of dead fish in southern China, it was the scale that caught people’s attention. In 2016, 323 reindeer were killed by lightning in Norway: the bizarre nature of the event caught the attention.

“Who can you speak to?” is another likely question, as original interviews are at the heart of good journalism. You need to be creative with this decision.

“Who else is covering it?”, a news editor might also ask. Editorial meetings

inevitably include a round-up of the current news headlines, and your take on a big news story might be the lead item. Although just because the story is covered by other media houses, that doesn’t make it right for your audience.

If the idea involves a rumour, “What’s the source?” is an important question. Usually followed by “Will they speak on record?”

For a news story to work, it will usually include an action verb in the top line, as opposed to somebody saying something. A politician’s statement, an NGO report, or an opposition minister criticising a policy are usually weak top lines: audiences soon get tired of ‘opinion as news’.

So “Oxfam launches report” is not a strong top line, but “Fish killed by pollution, according to report” is. If there isn’t an active verb, or it involves somebody saying something (“The opposition leader claimed”, “the president tweeted”, “the spokesperson denied”) there may not be a story.

Having the confidence to spike an idea at an early stage is an important skill for news editors. Better to refine or ditch the idea than to spend hours gathering interviews for a story that won’t be of interest to your audience.

If the editor spikes your story, don’t take it personally, learn why, and move on to the next one.





## The New Business Watergate: Prosecution of International Corporate Bribery is on the Rise

By Philip Mattera | Tuesday December 18 2007

“Semi-naked climate activists protest BP art sponsorship”

Source: Reuters headline

### TERMINOLOGY

#### tl;dr

A 21st century Internet abbreviation for 'too long, didn't read'. Often used to reject over-long reports. Sometimes also used to describe a summary box in advance of a long Internet article.

#### 'Bury the lede'

The lede (lead) is the most important part of a story, and it should usually come first. To bury it is to ignore this rule.

### FURTHER RESOURCES

- Most big news organisations will explain their 'news values'. Look for their editorial guidelines, 'about us' pages, and Twitter profiles.
- Consume media outside of your comfort zone, and regularly explore media which support different political parties from your own views.

## The Interview: Emma Harbour

### TERMINOLOGY

#### Rainforest Alliance

"The Rainforest Alliance is an international non-profit organization working at the intersection of business, agriculture, and forests to make responsible business the new normal," according to its website.

#### Fairtrade

...has origins in the 1960s 'Trade not Aid' movement, and attempts to provide a decent income for producers in poorer countries via table prices paid to the communities (typically those who grow staples like coffee, tea, and cocoa). Fair Trade Certification can get complex (and there are several similar-sounding schemes which are separate from the Fairtrade Foundation) and such schemes are not without critics.

**25%**

of all drugs used today are  
derived from rainforest plants.  
For cancer drugs, 70%<sup>1</sup>

**Nick Raistrick:** Can you tell me a little bit about who you are and what you do in relation to business and human rights?

**Emma Harbour:** I'm the director of advocacy, themes and partnerships at the Rainforest Alliance, a sustainability organisation. We work at the nexus of business, producers, and the environment, to create and enable systems where the supply chain can help us all protect people in nature.

We have a certification system, where we work with farmers on standards for a sustainable environment, as well as social and economic issues. Then we work through the supply chain to create the enabling environment in order to establish sustainable practices.

**NR:** Can you talk me through the certification process? How does it work?

**EH:** The standards look at the sustainable practices you would need in an agricultural setting to be economically sustainable.

It looks at farm management, crop management, and environmental sustainability. That can be buffer zones, soil management, integrated pest management. We also look at social issues: child and forced labour, living and working conditions.

And we bring all of that together in the farm standard which is implemented by farmers and producers themselves.

After the assurance process, you receive your certification, then you can sell your coffee, cocoa or tea as Rainforest Alliance Certified.

**NR:** What are the kind of challenges that you're looking at in Asia? What are the areas where you think there's been improvement?

**EH:** Across Asia, but particularly India and Sri Lanka, tea is one of the biggest areas. I think one of the big challenges that you see in tea estates is that they are whole communities in themselves: everything is on the plantation.

There are historical reasons for that, but things have changed a lot. Now there's housing for the retired workers and their families [as well as workers]. Now there's schooling and medical care. But tea prices have been going down for a number of years, so you see risks around the quality of housing, the ability to maintain that healthy environment.

In Indonesia, where there's been a move to create larger palm oil plantations, smallholders around the area suffer as a result of not having their rights protected. They get pushed into areas that then they actually shouldn't be in because of forestry protection.

We look at the role of smallholders in palm oil, because palm can be a critical cash crop for these producers. It grows quickly, it has a relatively stable market if farmers can access it.

We do work with the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil, who are looking at a certification system and to ensure rights are protected. So one of their big changes in the recent times is looking at the role of living wages for workers on palm estates. So I think sustainable palm oil is possible. But it requires a change. As with nearly every agricultural product



we work in, it requires a change in how the system works.

**NR:** What's the role of the media, specifically Asian media for Asian markets, in this process?

**EH:** It's an area that we are also in early stages of exploring. Because our model was based so much on connecting with European and North American markets.

[Now] we are really looking at these issues from the perspective of local journalists. It's not so much about what Western consumers are demanding, it's more locally led.

I think Assam is a good example. There has been more campaigning locally, people really starting to unpick the stories of what goes on and what it really means. Where do people live if tea estates go? Because people aren't making money from tea.

It's not so much about Ruggie's guiding principles as it is about people getting typhoid because of flooding and poor housing.

It's about telling those stories and the responsibility that lies with companies, in local and international national supply chains.

“Campaigners will always think they’ve got a good story. And I would say, about 50% of the time, they probably do.”

## Journalists under attack

### IN SUMMARY

The rise in attacks on journalists in recent years has been widely noted. Staying safe means thinking about the risks of your actions: to yourself and others you come into contact with. People may want to silence business and human rights reporters in a range of ways, but you can prepare for these.

#### Skills needed:

- Developing your own risk assessment skills
- Excellent data protection skills
- Trauma sensitive interviewing
- Protecting sources

#### Challenges and opportunities:

Reporting business and human rights issues nearly always means telling a story that somebody, somewhere doesn't want you share with the world. This can be dangerous.

The nature of this risk depends on what kind of supply chain you are covering: criminal gangs which are often involved in human rights abuses are already operating outside the law, for example, and often hostile towards people who expose them. But with an understanding of safety in hostile environments, your reporting can tell untold stories.

In October 2020, Elias Mia was working as a journalist in central Bangladesh, when he was stabbed to death. It is alleged that his attacker had objected to Elias's reporting of criminal gas line distribution.<sup>1</sup>

His death, and those of journalists around the world, is a reminder that carrying out investigative journalism can be a dangerous activity. It can involve upsetting powerful and well-connected people who want to keep your story out of the public domain.<sup>2</sup>

Journalists reporting business and human rights stories have reported experiencing threats, harassment, and direct violence.

As a result, self-censorship is prevalent: not least because some of the very large corporations which own media houses have complicated investment portfolios and political connections. It takes a brave editor to criticise the business interests of the owner of a particular newspaper, website, or TV station.

You should understand the risks of re-traumatizing your interviewees, and be careful around getting people to 'relive'



Both legitimate corporations and illegal 'criminal enterprises' have a range of tools that they use to try and suppress journalists and other communicators. You should develop an awareness of risks associated with your reporting.

Businesses, and those who support them, sometimes use political power and the law to prevent stories appearing in the media. This includes 'strategic' libel, online harassment, blackmail, verbal threats, and the threat of advertising withdrawal.

stressful moments. You should also be aware of the potential for trauma to yourself. Post-traumatic stress disorder can affect journalists and their subjects.

Having said that, storytelling can be part of the therapeutic process. Covering issues like gender violence is vital in ensuring the issue is understood, that perpetrators face justice, and for prevention. Few journalists are killed covering business issues: and there are several things you can do to help stay safe as a journalist, whilst enjoying your right to freedom of expression.



## SCENARIO: PART ONE

You want to cover the peace-building process for a blog, which involves travelling to a province that has recently been unstable. The story is about an oil company that has been funding armed groups. As a lone female traveller, what should you do?

## FEEDBACK

With almost every safety issue, there are different ideas. Some reporters and editors suggest you should work alone, not tell people your movements, and stay 'under the radar' away from other journalists.

But most official advice suggests that it is safer to let people know where you are so that others are looking out for you, and will notice if you are missing. In fact some organisations will have a safety protocol which insists on reporters letting someone at base know their movements; you will be in breach of contract if you travel to a 'hostile environment' without letting your teams know.

Lone female travellers are exposed to specific risks and challenges: as well as different kinds of access. The first accredited female war correspondent was born in 1856, and wrote as 'Kit' (rather than Kathleen) to disguise her gender.<sup>2</sup>

## OPTIONS

1. Avoid travelling, as you could become a target; Skype a colleague instead.
2. You should go, but tell as many people as possible about the trip.
3. You should go, but tell nobody about the trip.

## TERMINOLOGY

### Risk assessment

The process of identifying hazards before setting out on assignment.

### Right to reputation

As well as the right to freedom of expression, and to hold opinions, everybody has the right to reputation. As well as libel laws, this is outlined in:

### Article 12

(of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights): "No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to attacks upon his honour and reputation. Everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks."

### Libel

A false, published statement which damages someone's reputation.

# Safety, conflict, Covid-19, and your rights as a reporter

## FURTHER RESOURCES

There are several organisations which support journalists who are in danger, including UNESCO, the Committee to Protect Journalists, the Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma, Internews, and the International Federation of Journalists.<sup>1</sup>

### Hostile environments training

...often includes travel planning, vehicle maintenance, basic field first aid, and risk assessment. Many courses are aimed at foreign correspondents who specialise in conflict, rather than people who live amongst the stories they cover, and for whom evacuation is impossible.

Disclaimer: both risks and media law vary considerably. You should make yourself familiar with the specific dangers and relevant legal codes and case law in your country. Nothing in this handbook constitutes legal advice.

**Some people want to silence journalists reporting on business and human rights issues.** The level of risk varies considerably. At worst, journalists are killed. Illegal gangs, arms dealers, and oil companies are amongst those who have been found guilty of killing journalists.

**Other threats include confiscation of equipment, online harassment, arbitrary surveillance and detention.** It is still relatively rare for journalists to be killed deliberately in Asia: road traffic accidents in remote areas kill many more people than weapons.

**All journalists, and particularly activists who become campaigning journalists, should have a practical understanding of media law in their country.**

This includes sedition (inciting revolt), anti-terror laws (which can restrict freedom of movement) and more recently 'anti-misinformation' laws (which are supposed to combat 'fake news' but can restrict journalists' freedom to report and protect sources).

Related to this, it is important to understand how balance, accuracy, and fair comment work in their contexts. Being accurate does not guarantee safety, but in many countries if you are provably accurate in your reports, and acting within public interest, you are more likely to be offered some protection from the law.

Every individual has a right to a reputation. For this reason libel laws exist. However legal instruments are sometimes used cynically in order to silence journalists who report on human rights abuses.

**Conflict-sensitive reporting means actively engaging all sides of a debate.** This itself could put you into conflict with many, but you will also find yourself on the right side of international legal norms.

Sometimes the behaviour of journalists can bring themselves into danger: for example when reporters are pictured in military uniform, or holding weapons, as a handful have been, this reinforces the perception that they are a 'fair target'.

It is a cliché amongst seasoned reporters that dead reporters can't file copy; it takes confidence to put yourself in danger, but also to make the decision that an assignment is too risky. Do not feel pressured into assignments that you don't feel are safe.

Migrant workers, including illegal workers, are subject to higher levels of exploitation, often in dangerous and difficult conditions. Covering this issue can put reporters in the 'line of fire'; take extra precautions covering this kind of story, and take the relevant health advice relating to areas you travel to.

Covid-19 brought extra challenges for both workers and journalists in 2020: job losses, homeworking, factories working overtime to make masks...

In fact, in some countries, it was reported masks were being made using forced labour and the exploitation of people. Clearly this is illegal, and the states and companies involved do not want this in the public domain. So getting this kind of story out into the world involves brave, risky, reporting, often in hostile environments.

## SCENARIO: PART TWO

A few months later, you are asked to record a piece to camera in the same area for a big TV station. They will arrange travel for you and the crew, and have asked that you should wear a flak jacket because there has been small arms fire in the area.

## FEEDBACK

Most news organisations around the world don't have the budget to provide you and your crew with a flak jacket: they are fairly expensive. So the question is hypothetical for most reporters. But it is a good introduction to the challenge of thinking about journalists' safety, and making your own risk assessments.

A flak jacket, incidentally, isn't the same thing as a bulletproof vest. They are designed to protect you from shrapnel, fragments caused by heavy artillery fire. You should do your safety research with as much diligence as researching a news story, before taking personal safety risks and making choices.

Flak jackets are fairly heavy, and some journalists argue that they make you look like a combatant, so more of a target. If you are being filmed with a crew, you are already quite conspicuous. If you don't know the area well, you will be less able to assess the risks. If you are broadcasting 'live', people will be able to work out your current location.

The decision as to whether to take the trip, and indeed wear body armour of any type, should be based on further research. Do you trust the transport arrangements being made on your behalf? Is the filming location safe? Have you read recent intelligence reports about the area?

Finally, posing in a military uniform, and carrying weapons, are generally seen as bad practice for journalists. Those who do this make it more dangerous for others.

## OPTIONS

1. You should always wear a flak jacket in areas of conflict, because they prevent serious injury.
2. Journalists should never wear a flak jacket because it slows you down, and makes you stand out as a target.
3. Turn the trip down, it's too dangerous.



Annual military expenditure is estimated at just under \$2 trillion,<sup>1</sup> or \$250 per year for every person in the world. However, it is impossible to work out the exact figures because deals are often complex and secretive. Often there is a secondary illegal 'grey market' for weapons, making it harder still to work out the true size of the arms trade.<sup>2</sup>

## Digital security

### TERMINOLOGY

#### Cyberattack

Malicious digital assault. Carried out by individuals, hacker groups, and even businesses. There has been a recent rise in nation-state attacks.

#### Zero-click attack

A kind of cyberattack that doesn't involve the target clicking on anything: phones are often targeted this way with spyware.

#### Spyware

Malicious software (AKA malware) that accesses personal data, and tracks user behaviour.

#### Doxing

Sharing personal information (documents = dox) in order to reveal the identity of an Internet user.

#### Burner phone

Cheap mobile phone, using prepaid minutes. As well as being secure, if you lose a cheap Nokia on an assignment, you've lost a \$30 phone, not a \$1,000 smartphone with all your contacts on it.

Many journalists would not describe themselves as 'technical'. This is no excuse not to learn some basic techniques to keep yourself and the people you interview safe. Digital security is an important part of the modern journalist's skillset, particularly since the Covid-19 pandemic, when so much work is happening online.

Risks are changing all the time, so you will need to keep both your knowledge and your software up to date.

Online services and risks vary from one country to another, and reporting some beats will require more security than others. The more investigative your journalism is, the higher level of security you need. Many reporters switch between an ultra secure temporary email service, but at other times use their regular, publicly available, email address.

Many of these tips are good IT security practice, for example installing anti virus software and keeping it up to date, and using encrypted email services. Just about every type of software has a 'more secure' version.

Choose your video sharing and messaging apps carefully; Zoom, Microsoft Skype and Teams have all been accused of security breaches. Many people have left WhatsApp and joined Signal because of privacy issues: it currently seems secure, but like all software you'll need to monitor whether this remains safe.

Manage your passwords, and don't share them. Some people use a password manager, like LastPass or 1Password. And check in your region for the best 'ultra secure' file-sharing services, and web browsers which don't store information about you that can be used by hostile actors.

Think about your 'digital footprint' generally. Some news reporters are told to stay neutral on social media so as to be impartial. Whereas some reporters

are actively encouraged to support a particular political party, or even make inflammatory comments. Whatever your choice, beware of cyberbullying.

Taking a stance on certain topics via social media, even one that may seem quite neutral, may result in threats. As well as violence, journalists have experienced (and been threatened with) cyberattacks, hacking, online blackmail, trolling, and personal details and information maliciously shared online.

It's difficult to remain anonymous using a smartphone so some reporters will use a 'burner' phone on assignment in certain areas, much in the way that a drug dealer carries a spare phone. However, this itself can look suspicious: if an official looks through your contacts and finds no numbers, you might draw attention.

In fact, anything you do to conceal your identity as a reporter has the potential to make you look like a spy or a criminal, and attract greater risks. So use common sense, and think, 'How might this look?'

Digital security means protecting anonymous sources, for example. You have a duty of care towards all the people you interview. But you also need to keep an audit trail of emails that might be used as evidence in court.

And you need to keep up-to-date with the threats in your area of activity. Any digital security advice soon becomes obsolete, as malevolent actors find new and inventive ways of extracting data from your phone, laptop, smartwatch, or virtual assistant....

45

countries attacked  
via Israeli 'Pegasus'  
smartphone spyware<sup>1</sup>



## SCENARIO: PART ONE

As a journalist with a reputation for covering business and human rights stories, you receive many tip-offs for stories via a trade union. One is about a bullying manager who has forced staff to work unpaid overtime at a factory in Cambodia in order to fulfil an order for facemasks. The individual is wary about going on the record, but the union is pushing for it.

## OPTIONS

1. Persuade them to change their mind, your editor will reject a story from an anonymous source.
2. Get a quote from the union.
3. Get a quote from the factory.
4. Drop the story, it's too complex.
5. Write it up, but be vague about details.

## FEEDBACK

There's more on sources on page 92. It's good to nurture sources and that people trust you enough to get in touch. But this means that you also have a duty of care, so persuading them to go on the record in this case might not be ethical.

It can be good to take union advice, incidentally, and the best unions will look out for their members and give the best advice accordingly. But the consequences in this case might be felt by the whistleblower who may lose their job for speaking out.

Getting a quote from a union instead of the worker has potential. You should make sure they don't reveal any information about the individual, taking care to avoid 'jigsaw identification'. But of course you should balance this with a quote from management, and if you do this you might identify the person involved.

Being vague about other details sounds tempting, and you sometimes see this happen, but it's not good journalism: in this case, you should find out if the story is accurate. Further investigation needed, not repeating half-hearted allegations.

# Staying safe checklist

## TERMINOLOGY

### Source protection

AKA source confidentiality and reporter's privilege, this means protecting the identity of your sources: journalists have gone to prison for refusing to reveal their sources.

### Jigsaw identification

"We should be careful not to reveal several pieces of information in words or images that, when pieced together, could lead to revealing the identity of the individual," according to the BBC's Editorial Guidelines. In other words, if you say "a pregnant 23-year-old mother of two, who has been working at a Tân Bình garment factory since July last year", it would be fairly easy to piece together the information to confirm the identity of the worker. Better to say "a worker in Hanoi Chí Minh City".

The phrase "Time spent in reconnaissance is seldom wasted" has been attributed to a range of people from Rommel to Sun Tzu. Whoever got there first, it's applicable for anyone planning to visit a hostile environment as a journalist.

### 1. Plan, prepare, and take precaution

Have you researched the risks with the same diligence that you would investigate a story? Have you made an adequate risk assessment? Have you made (discreet) enquiries with colleagues and others as to the potential dangers of your reporting?

### 2. Double check your travel plans

When journalists are killed or kidnapped it tends to happen in a war zone, or other specific hostile environment. Have you found out where these places are? Also, more than a million people a year are killed on in traffic accidents. Steps like checking your vehicle is safe, wearing a seatbelt, and making sure your driver isn't drunk, can be life saving. Get recent local knowledge on whether it's safe to travel on a particular road, especially at night-time.

### 3. Be digitally secure

Have you made sure that nothing you carry can incriminate you or your sources? (see previous page) Some people carry a disposable 'burner' phone, and remove data from their drives and devices when on assignment, in case they are detained.

### 4. Dress appropriately

It sounds strange, but wearing the right footwear at a demonstration is important advice for young journalists. Have you chosen clothes which are practical, help you blend in, and are appropriate for the assignment?

### 5. Assess the situation

Demonstrations are newsworthy events, and reporters will want to cover them; but remember that both protesters and authorities see you as a target. Have you assessed where stampedes may occur and identified your escape route? Have you made sure an accident site is safe?

### 6. Carry accreditation (usually)

In most circumstances it's important to identify yourself as a reporter. Have you brought ID to show people at a crime scene, for example? Undercover reporting requires exceptional editorial reasons, plus risks if you are caught.

### 7. Stay healthy

Are you fit enough to travel? Do you have water, food, and medication? Do you need a first aid kit for your trip? Have you considered mental health impacts?

### 8. Consider a buddy system

Filming can mean you lose peripheral focus and put yourself at risk. If you don't have the luxury of working as part of a crew, can you work with other journalists to support each other?

### 9. Tell people where you are

Have you made sure that somebody knows when you are due back? So that if you are kidnapped or illegally detained, someone will be looking for you?

### 10. No story is worth your life...

...and sometimes you have to walk away from a situation to stay safe.



## SCENARIO PART TWO

The union persuades the woman to speak on condition of anonymity, and the story appears as part of a podcast you produce, but voiced by an actor. The management company that owns the factory gets in touch to say that they are going to sue you unless you hand over the original interview.

## OPTIONS

1. Hand the original recording over.
2. Hand over a transcript and change your passwords.
3. Ignore the request.

## FURTHER RESOURCES

If you are operating in hostile environments or covering high-risk topics, you may want to create your own checklist.<sup>1</sup> Mix the best advice from Reporters Without Borders, Committee to Protect Journalists, and the Institute for War and Peace Reporting, and others.

## FEEDBACK

**“A journalist should always protect their sources”** has long been an important tradition, particularly within Western media houses. In democratic countries with a history of a free media, protecting sources and their confidentiality is one of the most important aspects of media ethics. If not universal, to many it has come to be seen as international best practice and a cornerstone of how journalists carry out their business in much of the world. So what does that mean in practice?

Handing the original recording over is likely to reveal the identity of your source. They may come to harm as a result of your actions. Supplying the ‘anonymous’ transcript might be a sensible option if the company threatens legal action: in this way you can show that you’ve acted in good faith and produced an accurate report, and it’s in the public domain already. Get legal advice on this, if you can. Ignoring the request might land you in further trouble, although it very much depends on the firm involved.

Anonymity comes with a warning. It can be the tool of lazy journalists, and particularly in the context of briefings against a political opponent. Many audiences get frustrated by phrases like “sources close to the prime minister accused the MP of X”, and sometimes the journalist is being used in off-the-record briefings.

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**Reporting business and human rights can be quite dangerous. You uncover profitable illegal businesses; you have to be incredibly aware of your duty of care to the victims and survivors.**

Source: original interview with Annie Kelly. (See page 76)

## Food, and human rights...

### IN SUMMARY

Food production provides an income for millions of people and is sometimes described as the biggest employer in the world. It has also been associated with modern slavery and forced labour: on plantations, farms, in processing plants, and in the fishing industry.

#### Skills needed:

- Understanding news values
- Understanding of labour law
- Investigative journalism skills (including staying safe and protecting sources)
- Spotting PR and spin

#### Challenges and opportunities:

There will always be lots of food and drink stories, and everybody can relate to what's on their plate; but finding a compelling news angle can be a challenge. There's plenty of bad news and PR fluff, but there are genuinely positive stories too, often featuring smaller producers, innovative farming techniques, and food production techniques that do not permanently harm the environment.

...have always been linked. The transatlantic slave trade was born out of the quest for spices and sugar, for example, and plantation economics is the result of a European demand for tea, coffee and spices. Current evidence suggests that the biggest news story of the century is a virus outbreak linked to a live food market: elsewhere, both hunger and obesity are in the headlines.

The man-made human rights problems caused by the food supply chain seem to be limitless. Our taste for meat and dairy products is a significant contributor to global warming: up to 15% of greenhouse gas emissions are associated with livestock farming.<sup>1</sup>

Deforestation of tropical forests isn't just bad for the charismatic megafauna that it displaces, but the local people too. The relative inefficiency of cattle farming places a strain on water supply and causes soil erosion; palm oil plantations have replaced some of the most diverse primary forests in Asia; and in both cases indigenous populations living sustainable and low impact lifestyles have suffered.

We are worried about food miles and packaging, and we know that processed food has too much salt, sugar and protein than is healthy, contributing to the obesity epidemic. Or else we are worried about the treatment of workers in the supply chain: like the allegations

of modern slavery associated with the Asian fishing industry, or fruit-picking in some European countries.

So what are the good news stories? Certification has led to improved conditions for many workers, and organisations like the Rainforest

660

gallons of water to make one hamburger<sup>2</sup>

Foundation and the Fairtrade Foundation work with growers and suppliers to guarantee prices and improve conditions for workers. Certain bad food and drink practices have died out as a result of campaigning: eating shark fin soup, trapping birds, and the mass hunting of whales for food are all in decline. Others, like factory farming and sea floor trawling, are the subject of awareness campaigns.

What next? Perhaps we'll be eating insects for protein, growing our own synthetic meat, or embracing digitally-enhanced multi-storey market farming in cities. The future will partly depend on how these stories are told.





## TERMINOLOGY

### Charismatic megafauna

Large and popular animals with a symbolic value to environmental campaigners: polar bears, pandas, rhinos, and lions capture the public's imagination, and seem to draw attention to habitat loss more than worms, fungi, or insects. Orangutan and palm oil are linked in many environmental campaigns, for example.

## Tea's dark secrets

### KEY FACTS

- Large-scale tea production in India started in the 19th Century
- Indentured labour officially abolished by the British government in 1917
- It is estimated that there are 3 million dependants of tea garden workers
- Many still live in areas where their ancestors worked, including what is now Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka
- Minority tribal and indigenous groups make up a high proportion of workers
- Allegations of human rights abuses include child labour, violence against staff, and poor health/education access<sup>1</sup>

Chai is seen as a symbol of Indian identity, and it's also closely associated with British, Iranian, Turkish, Armenian, Arabic, Sri Lankan, and Japanese cultures.

But drinking tea originated in China, where for years a near-monopoly was held on production. Large-scale growth of the crop in Assam started with an early act of industrial espionage, with seeds and plants smuggled from China by an Englishman who crossed them with a wild Assamese variety. This expansion relied on what has been described as a 'Coolie' workforce system.<sup>2</sup>

This meant using indentured labour to replace the recently abolished practice of slavery. In some countries the word 'coolie' became associated with unskilled Chinese labourers, and with sugar and cotton plantations as well as tea. 'Coolie' was sometimes used pejoratively and is today considered offensive.

Through the testimonies of migrants on tea plantations, we now know that many workers were recruited to tea plantations from rural India and cities like Calcutta, and as far away as Trinidad, Fiji and Uganda, on journeys where death rates were often shockingly high: dysentery, cholera and measles were common. Needless to say, these can be considered early examples of human rights violations by businesses.

The poor living conditions and lack of access to basic human rights in some of the areas where these were grown reflects a grim colonial legacy. Things have not improved significantly in some areas, and many picking tea today do so in conditions which would have been familiar to their great grandparents.

Tea estates are communities in themselves. So the housing, schooling, medical care: everything is on a plantation.

Source: Emma Harbour,  
Director of Global Advocacy, Rainforest Alliance. (Full interview on page 52)

## **FURTHER RESOURCES**

Other commodities which are affected by market price fluctuations include cocoa, chocolate and sugar. As raw materials aren't branded, consumer boycotts are impossible. 'Fair trade' labelling is seen as a potential way to improve conditions for those who work in these industries.



## The Interview: Margie Mason

Margie Mason is a reporter on AP's global investigative team. In 2016 they won a Pulitzer Prize "...for an investigation of severe labour abuses tied to the supply of seafood to American supermarkets and restaurants, reporting that freed 2,000 slaves, brought perpetrators to justice and inspired reforms."

**We'd been aware of the [seafood industry labour abuses] issue for at least 18 months.** But it wasn't the main subject I was reporting on. I was covering the Rohingya exodus. This was a side project.

**It's good to have a side project.** Your editor doesn't have to know, so long as you get your main stories covered. Lots of journalists don't do this, but the pay-off can be great. At Associated Press we are lucky. I've got great editors who have always been supportive. And there's an incredible reach, with reporters all over the world.

**We go to great lengths to protect the people we interview.** This has to be at the forefront. The story is secondary, we didn't put the names of people or plantations on video, and we didn't use datelines that could expose the identity of sources. You have to be willing to protect people, and if you feel they are in genuine danger, you have to abandon the story. It's difficult.

**When you start poking at multimillion dollar industries, it can get dangerous.** Shoestring NGOs are vulnerable. We don't want to draw attention to them unless they want it.

**We keep in touch with people.** It's important to follow up stories. It keeps the topic swirling around. The problem isn't always fixed.

**We just followed up on the Thai fishing story,** and there's been a lot of reform. Changes have been made, but the fishing industry is still broken. We still see this in other countries.

Some of the people involved are still unemployed, or have gone back out to boats. It's been hard for them.

**I've just finished a story about palm oil. It took two years.** We named names [of firms involved]. We found girls of 10 years old working on plantations. We linked the fruit to popular brands, like Kit Kat.

**We had over 100 sources for the palm oil story,** many from NGOs. We worked with people like the International Organization for Migration and the Rainforest Action Network

**You could spend years just covering trafficking stories.** It has become normal. It's our job to shine a light on it, and to keep on shining it.

It's a team effort. Esther Htusan and Martha Mendoza also worked on the fish slaves project. Robin McDowell and I did all of the lead-up work, but they came in when we found the island.



Esther was a young reporter with little experience, from Myanmar – a country that certainly does not have a strong recent history with independent journalism!

Esther came to the AP in our newly established Yangon bureau and was doing mostly translating in the beginning. But she started working on Rohingya issues in Rakhine State and learned quickly what it took to do harder stories, especially those involving risk.

In a short period of time at AP, Esther became very deft at finding information, nailing it down and getting interviews while also being mindful of everyone's safety. She also soaked up everything she could learn from veteran journalists in all formats, learning how to shoot photos and videos as well as working as a text journalist.

**The advice I have is just go for it.** It's hard; it takes a special kind of person.

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“We go to great lengths to protect people. We didn’t use people’s real names, or put them on video. If it’s clear this person you interviewed is in genuine danger you have to abandon the story. It’s difficult to do this.”

## What is the 'news cycle'? Why is it important?

### IN SUMMARY

Understanding the best time to print, 'publish', or broadcast your story is an important skill for journalists and communicators. This is particularly true of business and human rights stories requiring long periods of investigative research.

#### Skills needed:

- A good news sense
- In-depth knowledge of other media cycles around the world
- A good understanding of social media consumption and 'peak times'
- Learning from when stories 'land', (and a thick skin when they don't)

#### Challenges and opportunities:

For all your hard work to pay off you need an audience: learning both the 'life cycle' of a particular news story and audience habits is important, as is the production cycles for different media: long-form documentary makers and magazine journalists pitch stories months in advance.

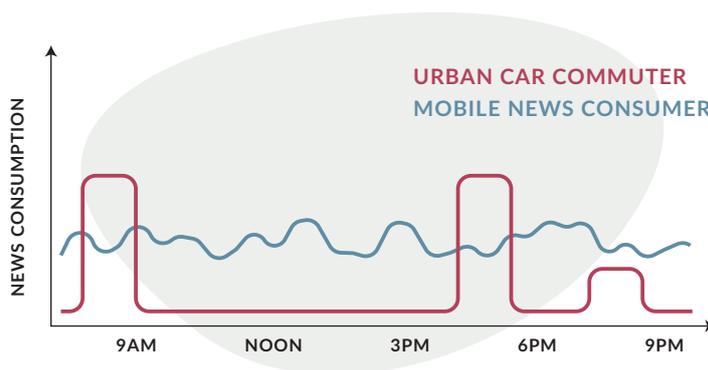
### KEY FACTS

- The breakfast show is traditionally considered peaktime for radio: and once you've got listeners tuned in, hopefully they'll stay
- TV peaktime is the evening
- Twitter and other social media have their own 'peak times': the best time to post depends on your audience, and gets complex, but it's often weekday mornings

And how do you schedule news? These used to be issues for the commercial, rather than the editorial team. But an understanding of news cycles, and the media consumption patterns which affect them, can define the type of business and human rights journalism you do, and the results you can achieve.

In reality, there are several news cycles to understand. 'Traditional' media cycles were limited by newspapers, then TV and radio bulletins. This meant a handful of stories, updated throughout the day, on-the-hour. A big nightly bulletin, when audiences would be at their peak, would be the time to 'break' a story: or else the main morning edition of a newspaper. The dilemma for reporters and editors

A revival in 'slow journalism', including feature length documentaries and podcasts, has allowed for in-depth exploration of issues over a much longer period. It's partly a reaction to the fact that some users are addicted to their smartphones, and find themselves stressed by the constant drip of bad, and sometimes even fake, news.



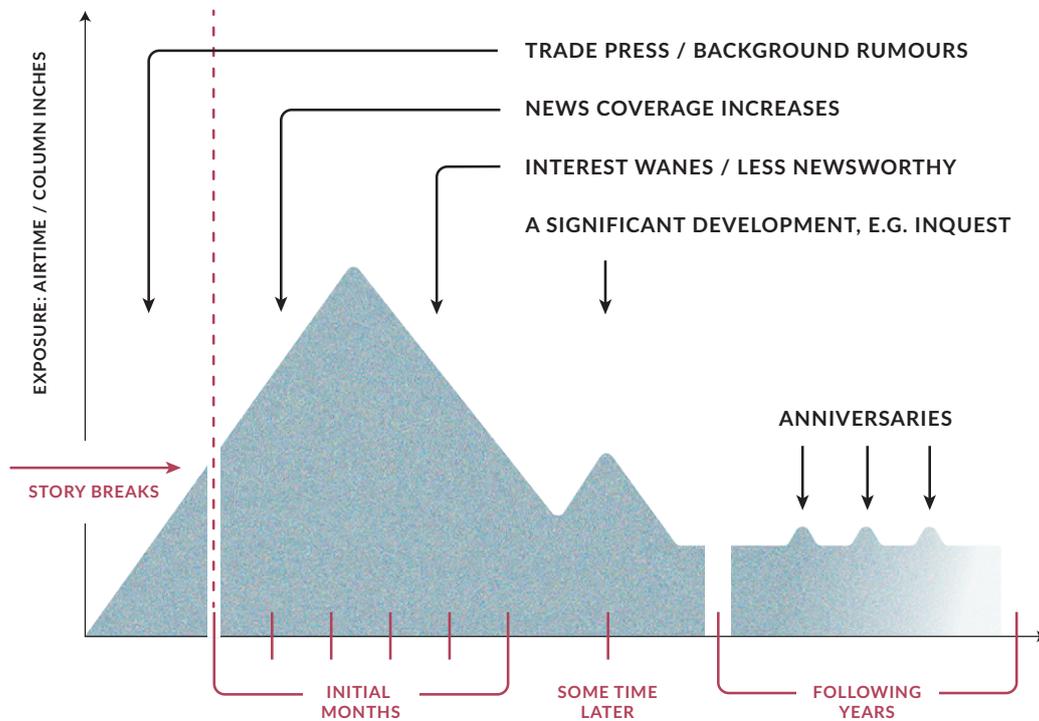
would be when to go public with a story in progress: Sunday papers might have the biggest circulation, but wait too long and your competitors could get there first with the scoop.

Some people still get their news this way, but for other audiences this cycle has been replaced by on-demand news. Big stories, and rumours, spread quickly via social media. Some users bypass 'traditional' journalism and get their news almost entirely from social media.

At the other extreme, for some media houses, there is less emphasis on breaking stories and scoops, and more on commentary, insight, and analysis.

And there are much longer lead times for some media: TV and magazines have always planned their schedules months in advance. This gives you plenty of time to plan, research, and source material for your story. Experienced editors are good at spotting the 'long tail' of a story: how long it will take for the public to move on and get bored. Similarly, digital natives are good at knowing when the best time to tweet to get the most views.

Some governments and corporations will bury bad news (such as publishing poor results) during a particularly busy news period: similarly, smart campaigners send press releases on slower news days for maximum impact.



## TERMINOLOGY

### Soft news

Human interest stories, which blur the line between information and entertainment. Often described in contrast to 'hard news', which is seen as more serious developments. The distinction has become less relevant, as pop culture increasingly appears in 'respectable' news outlets.

### 24/7 news cycle

Sometimes called the 'rolling' news cycle. Its origins are in TV, but these days it's more likely to be mobile: some users might check their phone for updates every few minutes as they consume social media updates.

### Slow news day

Newsroom jargon for a day when there doesn't seem to be much happening in the world. Sometimes a slow news day coincides with a public holiday, or in some countries, a traditional 'silly season', when parliamentarians, celebrities, and newspaper editors alike are taking a holiday and story ideas that might normally get spiked make the front pages. This can be good news for campaigners and communicators, looking to promote their business and human rights stories!

### Twitterstorm

A surge in Twitter activity around a particular #subject. This can equally indicate a genuine emerging story, or a false rumour.

## How can journalists be more accurate?

On a superficial level, this is pretty easy stuff. Most journalists are trained in the 'W' questions: Who, What, When, Where, Why? But the nature of reporting human rights abuses means that your proof has to be strong: lives are at stake. Where does this information come from? Why is this person telling me this thing now? How can you cross-check this information?

**Some media houses will only go live with a story when it has been corroborated by two sources**, unless one of those sources is particularly trustworthy, such as a staff reporter witnessing something, or if a story has appeared on a trusted newswire.

These issues are particularly important when it comes to breaking news. These days it is rare that the first on the scene is a professional journalist. Citizen journalists are likely to break the story with their smartphones.

**First-hand sources are good, but remember that eyewitnesses can be unreliable.** For example, in the heat of the moment people often get things like crowd size or casualty numbers wrong, assuming that people recovering on stretchers are actual fatalities.

In such incidents, **official sources should normally be quoted**; although if there is a major incident, these numbers are likely to change and wordings of reports should reflect this. It is better to say that "five people are believed to have been killed, according to source X, although this number could rise."

**The verification process involves speaking to other experts, and cross-referencing.** In the case of a major incident, the most difficult question is usually: why? This is a huge question: proving liability in a major incident can involve multimillion dollar lawsuits.

**Rumours can spread rapidly.**

Misinformation is sometimes based on innocent mistakes as people fill the information vacuum with their own theories. Perhaps the wiring at the site of a factory fire was bad; but did it actually cause the fire? Was it deliberate? A cigarette? A spark from machinery? Could better escape routes and procedures have prevented death?

**It gets complex. Sometimes there are quite sophisticated campaigns of misinformation** to create doubt about causes. There have been cases since the 19th century of factory owners trying to shift blame for workplace accidents onto its victims, accusing workers of ignoring safety policy.

And it is true that carelessness and negligence can cause accidents. But there should also be adequate health and safety process. Management share the duty of care to implement this.

**Your job as a journalist is to avoid contributing to the misinformation;** neither to ignore, nor repeat as fact, information that turns out to be false. Rather, to act as a trusted guide; and to help your audience understand the facts. **The best business and human rights reporters understand that they report on multi-sided stories,** and go out of their way to provide context.

## SCENARIO

A fellow reporter shares a video explaining that masks don't have any impact in preventing the spread of Covid-19, and testing kits don't work. It's from a former medical doctor. You've checked his credentials: he's been endorsed by celebrities. Your colleague is wondering whether the pills for sale on his site will work. What do you do?

## OPTIONS

1. Get the pills lab tested before exposing the fraudulent work of the doctor.
2. Ignore it, until the drug becomes official.
3. Do a phone-in show on fake medicine.

## TERMINOLOGY

### The Wires, news agencies

AKA 'newswires': the term originates from the Victorian era of telegraph wires, when agencies like Reuters and Associated Press would transmit 'objective' information to newspaper offices around the world. They still exist, albeit digitally, and are usually considered trustworthy sources of news. However, beware 'fake' wires services, sometimes tools of government propaganda.

### Primary source

An original object, document, diary, recording, or any other source of information. Your own original interview is a primary source, a quote grabbed from elsewhere else, isn't.

## FEEDBACK

"You are entitled to your opinion. But you are not entitled to your own facts," said Daniel Patrick Moynihan.<sup>1</sup> A bit rich, coming from a politician, you might think, but the point is serious: as journalists we have the sometimes awkward, but always important, duty of correcting false claims put forward by friends and colleagues.

Whereas there have been some well-documented faults with a number of Covid-19 testing kits, the idea that they are all flawed is a theory which has gained traction amongst some conspiracy theorists. If true, it would have been a fraud involving billions of dollars, and most of the medical profession, and a huge story. It isn't true.

Rather than celebrity endorsements you should be looking for scientists writing in peer-reviewed journals. For general reporters, it's a good idea to have a few medics in your contacts book: because most public broadcasters would think that the benefits of correcting fake and dangerous rumours outweigh the risks of giving false theories further publicity. **You should have the confidence to publicly challenge false stories.**



**To achieve impartiality, you do not need to include outright deniers of climate change in BBC coverage, in the same way you would not have someone denying that Manchester United won 2-0 last Saturday. The referee has spoken.<sup>2</sup>**

Source: BBC editorial policy briefing, following 'mistakes'

# Spotting fake news has never been more important

## TERMINOLOGY

### Verification

The process of finding out whether something is true; arguably the most important task for all journalists.

### 'Paper trail'

Useful in the verification process. If you have documentary evidence, it is easier to prove your story is accurate. As well as receipts, certificates, and other documents, emails are seen as written evidence that can be used in court proceedings.

### Deepfakes

Manipulated audio, image and video content: for example videos in which public figures are made to say things they didn't.

### Reverse image tools

Online image search software, which makes it easier for users to find the original source of an image or video.

### Freedom of information acts

Laws to grant public access to certain data held by national governments. More than 100 countries have 'FOI' laws, including Thailand, Indonesia, and Bangladesh. Investigative journalists should understand and use these.

### Peer-reviewed science

Research which has been published in a journal and reviewed by scientists working in a similar field (peers). Whilst no science claims to be definitive, the process filters out 'junk science'.

It feels like there has been a spectacular rise in conspiracy theories and false narratives in recent years, influencing mainstream politics in many countries.



These include false slurs about individuals and ethnic groups; inaccurate scientific claims, as well as fabricated stories about health, technology; and hoaxes.

And there is an increasing body of evidence suggesting that governments, corporations, NGOs, and, yes, journalists, have all been guilty of both creating, and sharing, 'fake news'.

As a journalist, it is your duty to your audience to develop a fact-checking mindset and methodology. To not spread fake news, and to explain why.

To help, there is a wide range of technical tools that you should make yourself

familiar with. For example, looking at the exif- and metadata on an image, or using reverse image searches.

But more important than any software is **asking the right questions**. Most obviously: what is the original source of this information? What is their motivation? Understanding this is a key skill for journalists, for whom a curious and healthy scepticism should not become a permanent cynicism.

Of course, there is a long history of false, pseudoscientific, and otherwise provably untrue explanations for both man-made and natural phenomena. The ease with which these can spread makes this a topical challenge for all reporters.

## SCENARIO

You receive an image via a direct tweet from someone you don't know. It shows the awful aftermath of a factory fire, and some badly burnt bodies. What should you do?

## OPTIONS

1. Find out who sent it before doing anything.
2. Ignore it as it's probably fake.
3. Speak to somebody who understands this stuff better than you do before proceeding.

## FEEDBACK

This is a fairly common newsroom scenario, and experienced staff will carry out some fairly rapid verification without spending too much time on the job.

Big newsrooms can receive thousands of pictures daily, and just looking at the image is the first filter: most you can ignore. There are a few familiar images which reappear and are circulated after an accident, but which depict older events.

The next question is usually: Who actually sent this? If it isn't the person who took the photograph, the next questions are: 'Where did they get it from?', 'Why are they sharing it?' and 'Does it show what it claims to show?' Some people's motives are obvious, like making political opponents look bad. Some people just enjoy hoaxes. Very occasionally you might land a scoop this way, but you'll have to be the kind of outlet that welcomes user-generated content - and have the resources to process it.

## TERMINOLOGY (CONT.)

### Misinformation, disinformation, and malinformation

Rather than the potentially vague term 'fake news', many data journalists tend to distinguish between misinformation (false, but shared 'innocently'), disinformation (false and deliberately created to cause someone harm) and malinformation (based on reality, but taken out of context).

### Further Resources

Fact-checking sites like Snopes, Full Fact, AFP Fact Check (English) can be a good first filter. And there are plenty of online verification tools for images and video, like TinEye and Google Images.<sup>1</sup>

Open source intelligence (Osint) tools for journalists are changing all the time: the Columbia Journalism Review has a useful guide to many of these.<sup>2</sup>





 This claim about election fraud is disputed

## SCENARIO

A state news agency explains that Covid-19 originated in a secret laboratory in Wuhan, China,

## OPTIONS

1. State news agencies are important voices in the public debate: include in a bulletin.
2. Ignore the rumour; state broadcasters like the BBC have an agenda.
3. Make a package about the rumours.

## FEEDBACK

The persistent false rumour that Covid-19 was man-made has been thoroughly debunked: by scientists, doctors, and medical researchers. As early as February 2020 *the Lancet* medical journal, made a detailed statement on the topic, for example. To include it in a bulletin, would potentially lend it credibility and so 'amplify' a false narrative.

There's not enough time in a bulletin to challenge rumours, whereas a package about misinformation might give you time to explore the issues in more detail, such as why state news agencies might make false statements for political or strategic reasons, or the fake science behind the allegations, and the ease with which such disinformation spreads.

Incidentally, the BBC is publicly-funded, but not a government-controlled state-broadcaster, and is considered a generally reliable source of news. It often critical of the government of the day.

“You’re  
fake news”

Donald Trump, 2017, to CNN reporter Jim Acosta.

# How to spot fake news in 10 seconds

Almost instant 'deverification' skills can be learnt:

1. **What's the story? And is it too good to be true?** For example, if it were possible to gargle away the Coronavirus with warm water, or that all tests for Covid-19 were fake, this would be the story of the century! There'd be no need for vaccines. Both were amongst the fake rumours put out during the pandemic.
2. **Or too bad to be true?** Also early on in the Corona outbreak, Twitter was full of stories about a wave of people attacking doctors to steal their ID. An awful story; it seemed unlikely, and to tap into our worst fears.
3. **What's the source? No, the actual source...** Where did this information come from? Not the sharer, your friend or colleague, who is a trustworthy, reliable, person. But the original source whom you don't know at this stage. The 'attacking doctors' story came from a Russia Today (RT) reporter who had not seen the incident and who could provide no evidence. He was a superspreader of fake news with a strong bias, who showed little concern when his story turned out to be false.
4. **Why is this person telling me this thing now?** Specifically RT sets out to portray a negative picture of British life, and is not considered trustworthy. Rather, its aim is to sow chaos and misinformation in 'rival' countries, whilst promoting a specific national agenda. At other times, it can be hard to tell why people are generating fake news.
5. **Discard the truth wrapper** in any new information you receive. People who spread fake news and generate conspiracy theories often mix fact and fiction. So yes, there is a 5G phone network in Wuhan, like many other cities. But it doesn't have anything to do with Covid-19.
6. **Fact-check the fact-checker** Use a fact-checking site: but also look out for peer-reviewed science in a relevant field. People with a PhD in engineering, for example, aren't best qualified to talk about immunology. It won't stop them, and in fact people with an academic background in a different subject can be quite effective at convincing non academics that their theories are correct.
7. **Check the medium (or Medium)** If you read something in *Science* or *Nature* magazine, you can be sure that it's been fact-checked by an actual scientist. In contrast, an article in an online publication like *Medium*, or a YouTube video, Facebook, or a news outlet you haven't heard of, might have had little editorial filter. Outlets which are effectively self-published are often less accurate than those which have been rigorously edited.
8. **'Beware the stable lad'** who gives you a racing tip. Watch out for suspiciously vague insider knowledge. Plenty of false stories start with 'this is from an internal email for staff in x', or 'So and so works in the hospital and they heard y'. It's relatively rare that junior staff provide newsworthy information on social media that isn't already in the public domain.
9. **'Shhh, the mainstream media are too scared/biased/dumb to cover this,'** reads the caption. The story it describes has either been covered extensively already, isn't newsworthy enough, or isn't true. The mainstream media are in competition for stories, and do not work together to shut down stories that might make a profit.
10. **'Look, they are so scared of this story, they finally had to cover it'** is the Part Two of this. The problem is sometimes that the buzz about a fake news item the mainstream media is 'forced to deny' something. Or, to put it another way, to disprove.
11. **Does this picture really show the Loch Ness Monster? Or Big Foot?** And was it really taken yesterday? The second question is easy to answer using a reverse image tool like Tin Eye (Google it) or Google Images. Finding out who originally took the photo and when is usually all you need as a first stage of verification. To date, neither monster has been captured to the satisfaction of most observers.
12. **Check the grammar and spelling of purportedly official documents.** Not everyone can speak good English and write well: but major organisations tend not to make several mistakes in their communication. Many fake Covid rumours were supposed to be from doctors, but riddled with basic language errors (as opposed to the poor handwriting for which they are allegedly famous). Curiously, it seems some scammers deliberately include spelling mistakes not just to avoid spam filters, but to target only people who don't have good English.

## The Interview: Annie Kelly

Annie Kelly, is a journalist and editor at *The Guardian* and *The Observer* newspapers, where she has worked for around 15 years. She was a freelance foreign correspondent for five years, and a reporter with a focus on human rights, the environment and health systems.

**NR:** Could you introduce yourself?

**AK:** I head up a team of journalists looking at human rights and labour exploitation issues across the world. We're about to expand that team over the next two years, and we're going to be having a big focus on human rights in the time of Covid-19.

We are looking at all related issues, but with a focus on covering under-reported human rights stories around the world. We will be looking at global health systems and supply chains, as well as reproductive rights, health rights, and gender rights.

We're about to launch a big human rights reporting project, and built into the kind of reporting strategy is now an understanding that the idea of sending foreign correspondents around the world and parachuting them into countries to do one or two stories is just not going to happen for at least another couple of years. It might never happen again.

I think there'll be a completely different way of reporting stories from within countries and from within communities from now on. So I think that the opportunity for human rights journalists in Asia is really big. There's going to be a huge appetite for their stories.

**NR:** How do you find ideas?

**AK:** I've always been really interested in trying to find stories that are not being reported anywhere else. When I was a freelancer, that was

how I carved out a niche for myself. I knew that I couldn't compete on the big news stories, like I was never interested in going to war zones.

**NR:** What makes a good pitch?

**AK:** It has to be short and to explain the story that you're pitching in two or three sentences.

The best advice I was ever given as a freelancer is that you have to grow the skin of a rhino, you will have to knock on 50 doors before one cracks open for you.

But if you have purpose and you're diligent, you're doing your reporting and you're honing your craft, then it will happen for you, but you just have to keep going. It can be really demoralising, but just keep going.

**NR:** What are the challenges in reporting modern slavery, a topic which you've worked on a lot?

**AK:** You are reporting on an illegal criminal activity. So it's something that's very difficult to go and actually report on. It can often be quite dangerous. Nobody wants to be seen as exploiting someone else's labour. You are uncovering it and ruining their very profitable business.

You have to be incredibly aware of your duty of care to the people that you're talking to on the ground, the victims and survivors, and anyone else related to them, such as family members and people in their community. You have to be extremely aware of the risk of stigmatising people through thinking



25

million people involved  
in forced labour,  
according to ILO

Human rights in focus Boohoo

• This article is more than 1 month old

## Boohoo selling clothes made by Pakistani workers 'who earned 29p an hour'

Guardian investigation finds claims of safety issues, with workers saying they sometimes work 24-hour shifts

Archie Bland, Shah Meer Baloch in Faisalabad, and Annie Kelly

Tue 22 Dec 2020 15:00 GMT



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that you're doing a marvellous thing by telling their story and getting their story out to the world, when you have no idea what the impact that it will have on them and their lives and their families back home.

You have a massive duty of care when you're interviewing traumatized people to make sure that you're not re-triggering that trauma, that you're not making them relive things that will then really affect their recovery.

One of the most difficult things I've had to learn is how you do 'trauma-informed reporting', in a way that you are still doing your job as a journalist, but you're also not adversely affecting or impacting somebody else's recovery process.



## ... continued

### TERMINOLOGY

#### 'Trauma-informed reporting'

The phrase 'trauma-informed' comes from healthcare services, where an awareness that retraumatisation is a real risk during sensitive interviews. The idea that ethical journalists should feel a duty of care to those they interact with, and adopt a 'do-no-harm' approach to treating interviewees, is hopefully gaining momentum.

#### Duty of care

The responsibility to do no to harm to the people you interact with: for reporters, this could be the people you interview, or who help you with a story in any way. More recently this discussion has included audiences: for example warning of graphic images of casualties. Note that there are slightly different legal meanings of this phrase in health and social care settings.

#### Informed consent

When the person giving consent fully understands the consequences of a decision and consents freely and without any force: in the context of journalism, this might be explaining fully the repercussions of going 'on-the-record'.

**NR:** Is it a challenge to get editors and audiences interested in business and human rights stories?

**AK:** When I was a freelancer, and I was trying to get editors interested in human rights stories, I would never go to them saying "This is a great human rights story" because I knew that it was a bit of a turn-off... some kind of really worthy, difficult, complicated story, which is going to make people really depressed.

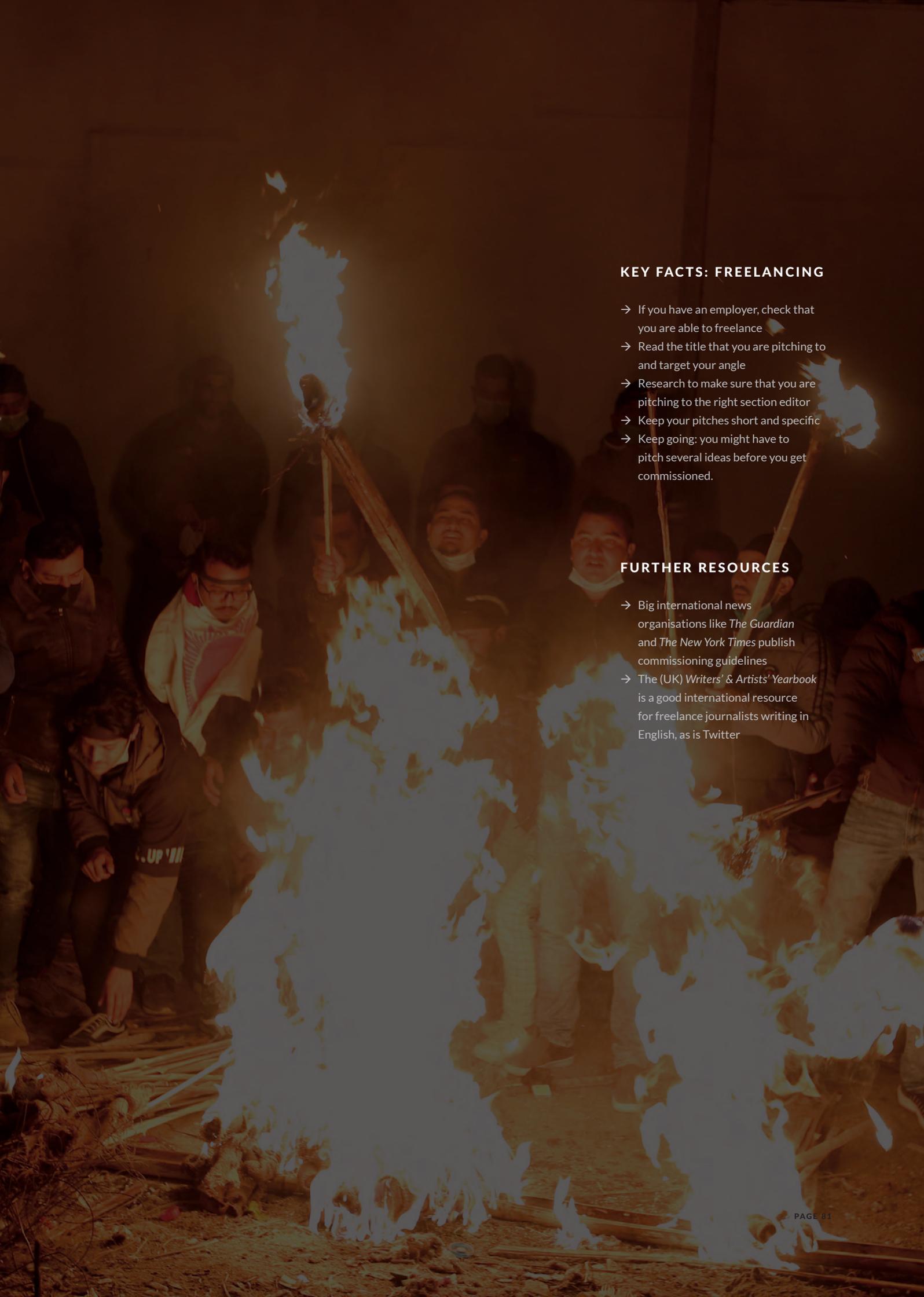
So the challenge with getting editors engaged with human rights stories is making sure that you are always keeping the humanity in the stories first and foremost. Making a story about people or about a situation in which individual people are being adversely unfairly and unjustly affected.

Or you could be looking at kind of big human rights crises that are developing. Often, if you've got a big news event going on, there will be a human rights element that you will be able to take out of a huge kind of breaking news event. And if you can tie it to something that is very timely and is happening right now, where readers will be widely interested in that event.

In the beginning I focused on human rights and health. And so I made sure that I was doing a lot of research, talking to as many people as I could, and putting in the time to try to gain a thorough understanding of what the issues were around human rights and health.

That then led me on to looking at the environment, and on to looking at issues related to women and children, which then became the main focus of my reporting. You can't just say, "I'm going to be a human rights journalist", because that could be so broad.

"You have a massive duty of care when you're interviewing traumatised people to make sure that you're not re-triggering that trauma, that you're not making them relive things that will then really affect their recovery."



## KEY FACTS: FREELANCING

- If you have an employer, check that you are able to freelance
- Read the title that you are pitching to and target your angle
- Research to make sure that you are pitching to the right section editor
- Keep your pitches short and specific
- Keep going: you might have to pitch several ideas before you get commissioned.

## FURTHER RESOURCES

- Big international news organisations like *The Guardian* and *The New York Times* publish commissioning guidelines
- The (UK) *Writers' & Artists' Yearbook* is a good international resource for freelance journalists writing in English, as is Twitter

## A butterfly flaps its wings...

### IN SUMMARY

Reporting the impact of business activity on the environment could not be more important: at a time when species decline, habitat loss, and global warming are the biggest issues of the day. We all need to understand the impact of human activity on our planet's resources, as well as what can be done by businesses, governments, and individuals to create positive and lasting change.

#### Skills needed:

- Investigative reporting skills
- Interviewing academics and building relationships with experts
- Science and natural history knowledge
- Turning complex information into simple stories
- Understanding and reporting numbers
- Sensitive interview skills and working with vulnerable groups

#### Challenges and opportunities:

Getting editors and audiences fired up by waste management and emissions targets can be a challenge; and explaining complex, delicate, interconnected ecosystems to general audiences will test your storytelling skills.

Waste sites can be hazardous. But the stakes for our home planet are high, and there are many under-reported topics where your stories can make a huge difference.

..and a seal claps its flippers. A dolphin jumps in the air against a spectacular sunset. Beethoven's Ode to Joy, a rousing piece of orchestral music, plays in the background. There are cutaways to penguins and flamingos, whilst a ship glides by across the horizon.

It's a little cheesy, but you certainly feel good about the world. You might think the advert is for an environmental charity, but the voice-over describes a double-hulled oil tanker, and explains why they are good for the planet. DuPont, the chemical company who made the commercial, must really care about the environment, you would think.

Except that, at the time of the commercial, DuPont was the single largest corporate polluter in the United States, according to a Friends of the Earth report which goes on to list the various ways in which the firm carried out chemical and waste pollution across the country. This included the Gulf of Mexico where some of the film was shot - not the penguins, obviously. It would later pay out \$670.7 million in compensation for water pollution.<sup>1</sup>

It is a useful illustration of how firms seek to position themselves. And exactly the kind of corporate spin that journalists have to see through in order to get to the story of what companies are doing to the environment.

The 1991 commercial became famous in certain circles as a particularly spectacular example of 'greenwashing.' Even though more people saw the initial commercial than ever read the report, the difference between how a company sells itself and their actions can become part of the story.

Car manufacturers, the nuclear power industry, and firms that market and distribute bottled water have all been accused of using the environment as part

of their brand, whilst simultaneously causing terrible damage to it.

Natural historian Sir David Attenborough recently said that "saving our planet is now a communications challenge."

There are well-documented, unprecedented pressures on the Earth's resources, caused by the unsustainable way in which we are consuming them. We have experienced rapid human population growth, whilst consuming an increasing amount of fossil fuel as a resource across almost every area of business endeavour.

It is a huge challenge to tell the story of how several million years of trapped oxygen stored in dead trees increases global temperatures, reducing viable habitats for both wildlife and people. Particularly as the global advertising industry (worth more than half a trillion dollars a year) is so good at their job of making us consume more, not less.

We want to fly, or buy new cars and cheap new clothes; advertisers make us feel good about the purchasing decisions we make. "Because you're worth it", ran one famous advertising slogan. "You deserve it," is another.

Climate communicators have a much starker message. The production and disposal of these products is disastrous for our habitats, and leads to enforced migration. Our right to life, health, and food, are under threat, they say. "Life as we know it is on the brink of collapse", says Extinction Rebellion.

The best brushes have  
**DU PONT NYLON  
BRISTLES**



## TERMINOLOGY

### Greenwashing

"Disinformation disseminated by an organisation so as to present an environmentally responsible public image," according to the Oxford English Dictionary. (It's a play on the term 'whitewashing', which means to paint over, and which has long been a metaphor for covering something up.) See also 'sportswashing'.

## KEY FACTS

- 66% of global consumers are willing to pay more for environmentally sustainable products, according to Nielsen research.
- If we stopped cutting down trees, we would reduce our annual CO<sup>2</sup> emissions by about 10%.
- 100 energy companies have been responsible for 71% of all industrial emissions since human-driven climate change was officially recognised.<sup>1</sup>
- The fossil fuel industry and its products accounted for 91% of global industrial greenhouse gasses
- 73% of clothes end up in landfill<sup>2</sup>

## The circular economy?

### TERMINOLOGY

#### Circular economy

The idea that we can eliminate waste and restore the Earth's resources by 're-using, and recycling' resources, not 'taking, making, and disposing' as we do now.

#### 'Waste pickers'

Informal waste collection workers. It is estimated there are between 1.5 and 4 million in India alone; many are children and enjoy limited human rights.

#### Spin

A form of propaganda: typically involves wordplay to influence opinion. Politicians, businesses, and military use spin to ~~cover up bad news~~, sorry, I mean, "mitigate limited positivity impact potential in key audiences via targeted verbal messaging".

**"Waste is a design flaw."**

Source: Kate Krebs

When discussing business, globalisation and human rights, journalists and campaigners have often focused on production and its impacts.

How workers are treated in the factories where sports shoes are manufactured, for example. Is the mining of minerals used in your mobile phone battery funding conflict or labour rights abuses?

In addition, there has often been less focus on what happens to products after their natural life. The linear economy describes a 'take-make-dispose' model, in which raw materials are transformed into products which are then disposed of at the end of their natural life.<sup>1</sup>

But there is a whole other sphere of business and human rights to do with the removal, recycling and disposal of consumer goods and industrial waste after they have been discarded. In some places this is well regulated, and those carrying out the recycling are adequately protected with equipment, clothing, and conditions.

This is not always the case, however, particularly in poorer countries, where people who handle waste are often marginalised. Waste pickers live shorter lives and have higher rates of infant mortality.

"People working in the informal waste sector are some of the poorest people in the world, and they are often stigmatised," explains Ed Cook, Research Fellow in Circular Economy Systems for Waste Plastics at Leeds University. "And yet this huge workforce is propping up the world economy. They need to be recognised."<sup>2</sup>

This business and human rights issue is often under-reported. 'Pickers' are a vital part of the economy, although often ignored: multinational companies could not exist without their input.

There are so many brands involved, it's hard to have a targeted focus for campaigning. People who work in the informal waste collection sector are often 'illegal' and face harassment from authorities. There is often a lack of record-keeping. It's an inherently challenging story.

The science gets complicated, too. There are industry-specific media resources but these can be difficult to understand if you don't have a science background. Recycling can involve discussion of the molecular properties of certain plastics, and what happens to them as they are re-used. You may need help from science communicators to make the story easy for your audience to understand.

Watch out for 'greenwashing'. Brands know how much people want to buy recycled products, for example, and highlight this with 'eco' imagery in their advertising. Sometimes this is a small proportion of the actual product. Whereas experts tell us that we should buy less, use it for longer, and fix and mend things to prolong their life, rather than buying more in the first place.

Watch out for empty spin: terms like 'earth-friendly', and 'all-natural' mean little, so challenge such claims.



The old economy was about extraction, disposal.

The circular economy is about sharing, reusing, repairing, refurbishing, recycling.

## SCENARIO

Your national Football Association proudly announces, via a press release, that it is using the latest generation Astroturf playing surfaces for all its football pitches: it uses recycled tyres for the ‘crumb rubber’ that cover the pitch. What do you do?

## OPTIONS

1. Cover it as an example of how the circular economy is working well in practice.
2. Ignore it, it’s only a press release.
3. Cover it as a scandal: grass pitches are better for the environment.

## KEY FACTS

- It is estimated that renewable energy can only eliminate 55% of greenhouse gases<sup>1</sup>
- Therefore we need to consume less
- So repair cafés, ‘Buy Nothing Day’, and an end to ‘fast fashion’ are all important

## FEEDBACK

It’s important for journalists to cover success stories, as well as criticising organisations which fall short. We need solutions, as well as problems.

But the circular economy is a complicated topic, and you will often need to dig deep into the story. Recycling tyres sounds like a good thing, but the ‘crumbs’ used in sports pitches are classed as microplastics. So when it rains, these can enter the water supply.

90% of the world’s sea birds have fragments of plastic in their stomach, according to the World Wildlife Fund.<sup>2</sup> And the problem of tyre particles is a large, and under-reported, part of this problem. More than a third of plastic in the ocean comes from tyres. Whilst the rubber crumbs used in sports grounds and playgrounds around the world is only a small proportion of this total, you could use the press release as a ‘hook’ to get people interested in the issue.

Incidentally, natural grass pitches aren’t a simple solution: pesticides, herbicides, and fertilizers are often used on them. They often flood in wet areas, whilst using precious water in dry areas. So people are currently experimenting with artificial pitches but with organic material instead of microplastics.

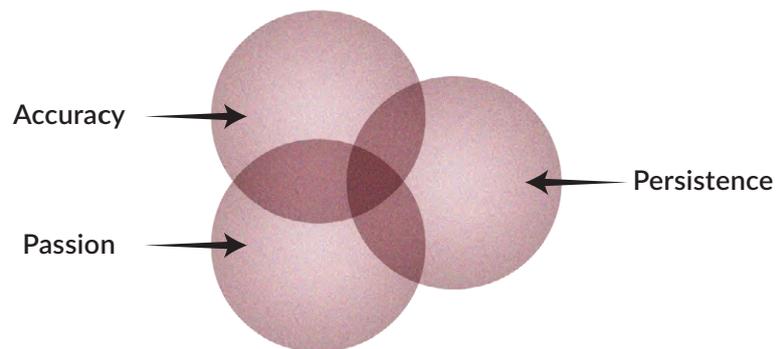
## FURTHER RESOURCES

- Academics can help explain research, and environmental NGOs can tell you about the human impact of recycling
- Usually you should give the brands themselves the right to reply

## People who report on business and human rights issues are often passionate about their work...

### KEY FACTS

- There are usually several sides to a story, and you should represent all of them
- It is normally considered good practice to offer 'right to reply'
- Sometimes journalists are threatened with libel at this stage
- You need evidence of accuracy
- Get legal advice as required



They are driven by a desire for justice, and for a better world in which people are treated more fairly. Some will focus on a particular area, such as reporting environmental issues, or covering child labour.

Having developed expertise in this topic, they may feel that they have a good idea as to who is guilty of human rights abuses, and those whose rights need defending.

However, public service journalists strive for balance. In order to be accurate and credible, it is seen as good practice to speak to 'both sides'. This applies to all kinds of reporting.

So rather than endorse a specific leader during an election period, for example, it is seen as more important to make sure that major parties receive equal airtime.

Some media regulators around the world define this, and broadcasters are obliged by statute to speak to a range of political

voices in their coverage.

Some media outlets clearly make no attempt to balance, and others are obviously in favour of a particular political group: some are 'pro-business', or 'anti-capitalist' in their reporting.

It has recently been argued that the quest for balance has given undue profile to people who promote fringe conspiracy theories in mainstream media.

Also, in some countries, senior figures refuse to speak to the media in the knowledge that reporters are less likely to cover a story without a quote. Remember: it is ethical to give right to reply, but not to kill a story because you can't get a comment from an official.

### FURTHER RESOURCES

Make yourself familiar with the ethical codes of conduct for journalists in your country and organisation: the International Federation of Journalists, the BBC, and UNESCO all produce guidelines, too. Make sure that you understand international media law, particularly libel.

## SCENARIO

A climate change think tank gets in touch; their press release reports that some of the calculations on a Greenpeace report are wrong and that global warming is a hoax. They have offered a guest to appear on your current affairs programme to discuss the issue. What would you expect a public service broadcaster to do?

## FEEDBACK

The urge to provide balance is good; but there is a consensus on global heating within the scientific community that man-made global warming is causing serious damage to habitats.

Just as the tobacco industry funded science projects with the aim of making people doubt the connection between cancer and smoking, there has been a rearguard action from sections of the fossil fuel industry to make people doubt climate science.

Members of the Flat Earth Society believe that the Earth is not roughly spherical. But their views are so far outside of mainstream science that is not considered necessary to 'balance' a news reports that includes references to our home planet's shape!

You could match the think tank with a mainstream scientist, but this might give 'false balance' to a climate change denier, which happened when people first became aware of man-made climate change and before there was a huge body of data and peer-reviewed science on the topic. Plus, the serious debate has moved on. Now the question isn't whether human-induced climate change exists, but how to fix it.

It's important to get calculations right, of course. But within science, complex data sets are constantly being corrected, and new evidence emerges: this is at the heart of the peer-review process. But this is sometimes offered as proof that scientists 'always get it wrong,' by people who don't understand science.

## OPTIONS

1. Get them on your programme; it would show balance, because most climate scientists accept man-made global warming is an urgent threat.
2. Decline politely.
3. Invite the guest to appear on the programme, but match them with a more mainstream scientist.
4. Check your government's line on climate change before making a decision.

## TERMINOLOGY

### Corrections policy

Obviously you should aim for accuracy. But it is inevitable that at some point mistakes will be made. In general you should correct quickly, particularly minor points. But you should always take legal advice on big issues: for example, by issuing a correction you could potentially be admitting to a libel. Some prominent businesses and businesspeople use the libel law to silence media reporting of their actions.

### Right to reply

It is ethical and fair to give a right to reply. Sometimes those involved in a story won't provide a comment in order to kill a story.

### 'False balance' AKA 'bothsidesism'

The misleading presentation of a false theory (e.g. "the Earth is flat") to 'balance' a fact ("the Earth is roughly spherical").

### 'Tobacco industry playbook'

A set of techniques used by PR teams to discredit the link between smoking and lung cancer. The idea was not to refute scientific studies, but to confuse and disorientate consumers. 'Big Tobacco' also funded several scientific studies in other areas, ensuring that for decades after the link was discovered, there were no successful legal actions against tobacco companies.

## Will journalists be replaced by robots? It feels like it.

### SURVIVAL IDEAS

#### Content partnerships

Range from sponsored content, clearly labelled as such ("brought to you by Adinike"), through to joint ventures between media houses: initial WikiLeaks stories were a joint effort by *The Guardian*, *New York Times*, *El Pais*, *Der Spiegel* and *Le Monde*.

#### Subscription models

The Internet has traditionally been a free space, but in order to pay journalists' salaries, some online media houses, like *The Washington Post*, have added paywalls for access to online content.

#### Crowdfunding

Others, like Wikipedia, have been funded by voluntary subscriptions and donations.

#### 'Osint' journalism

From 'open source intelligence', this describes the use of publicly available material and online tools in order to carry out investigative journalism. Google 'Bellingcat' to find out how armchair verification led to a successful global news company.

In almost every country in the world, people are buying fewer newspapers. Even in India, where circulation is increasing, advertising revenue has shifted to the social media giants, rather than traditional media houses. And people are getting their news for free via the Web. What does this mean for reporters covering business and human rights as a beat?

The first and most obvious answer is that newsrooms in traditional media houses are shedding staff, because journalists cost money. The same goes for television, magazines, and radio.

This has led to an increase in syndicated national items at the expense of genuinely local news, and an increase in churnalism, showbiz, and PR-led stories.

In many countries these money-saving measures have led to a closure of titles, and a further drift towards social media: as a result the media environment has become more segmented, with less balanced journalism.

This itself is a business and human rights story, particularly as so many of the content producers which are in competition with the mainstream press avoid media regulation (and paying tax).

And yes, there are already robot journalists, of sorts. AI (artificial intelligence) scripts have been writing simple news stories since 2014 for organisations like Bloomberg and the BBC.<sup>1</sup> They can extract data and turn it into a 'natural language narrative story', cheaper than real journalists, without demanding coffee or going on strike.

But the humans are fighting back, by focusing on what they do best. This might mean opinion and analysis, or longer-form journalism. Subscription models have challenged the idea that news is free. And there is evidence that some people at least are happy to pay for journalists to fact-check.

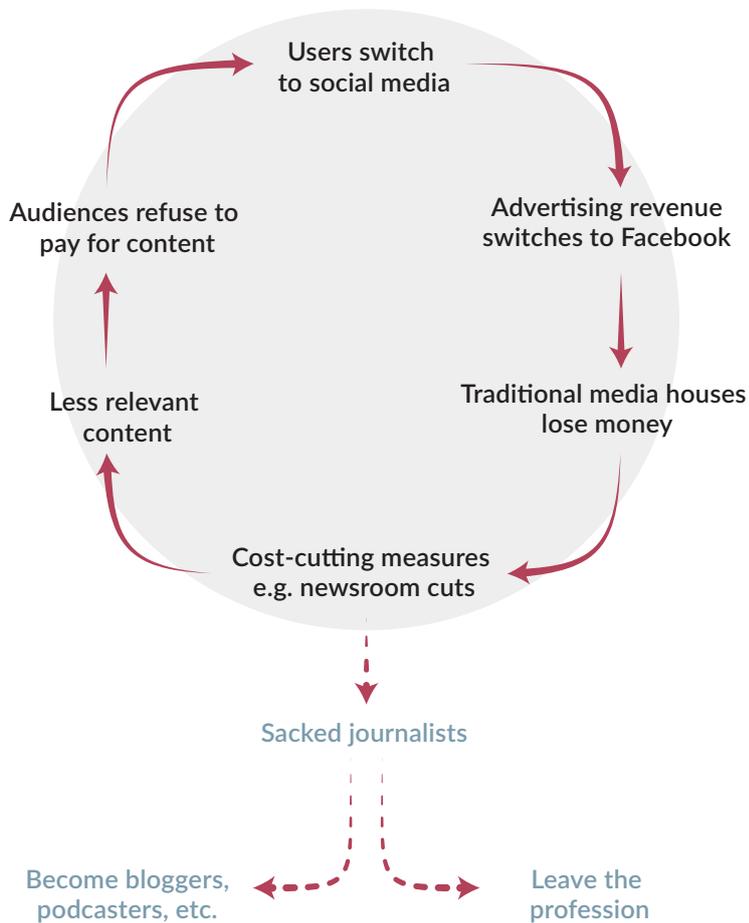
Whereas algorithms might currently provide audiences with news (and fake news) that matches their existing preferences and prejudices, there still appears to be a demand for quality reporting: fact-checked, with expert knowledge. Many realise that it is a good idea to have health correspondents with a science background, for example.

And there are new opportunities for journalists outside of the mainstream 'elite media', which can have a tendency to recruit from a limited pool: typically well-educated, urban, often male, and from certain ethnic groups,

The low barriers to entry for online dissemination has the increased potential for wider range of 'outsider' voices, as well as providing opportunities for some of those journalists who can bypass the traditional media houses.

In 2019, Facebook's revenue was \$70.7 billion. The global value of the newspaper industry was \$41 billion.<sup>2</sup>





## TERMINOLOGY

### Automated journalism

Sometimes known as algorithmic or 'robot' journalism, this involves using artificial intelligence and machine learning in order to trawl data, and produce simple 'articles'. The idea is that AI performs basic, repetitive tasks, allowing journalists to focus on more creative endeavours, rather than replace humans.

### Big data journalism

This involves examining masses of digital information and presenting it in a way that is meaningful to audiences. Because of the sheer volume of data, these stories can involve several journalists: WikiLeaks, the controversial international non-profit organisation, claims to have released 10 million documents which came from international sources. To crunch that data and turn it into meaningful stories, journalists from media outlets across the world have frequently collaborated.

### Advertorial

A combination of 'advertisement' and 'editorial'. Advertising features in newspapers, for example. Should be clearly marked as paid-for content.

**Whistleblowers reveal misconduct at great personal and professional risk. They are routinely subject to harassment, job termination, arrest, and even physical attacks for exposing wrongdoing.**

Source: UN Human Rights Committee

## Yes, minister?

### TERMINOLOGY

#### Media elite (and elite media)

The elite media is newspapers, radio stations, TV channels, and other media that influence the political agenda of other mass media. According to Noam Chomsky, "The elite media set a framework within which others operate." Conservatives and populists have used the term 'media elite' in a negative way, to describe the idea that media agendas are out of touch with ordinary people.

#### Contacts book

Expression for the network of people whose contact details you have (even if they are stored digitally).

#### 'Good talkers'

Guests who are happy to be interviewed, including those who can explain complex topics well, and speak confidently. Useful for your contacts book.

#### Crony Capitalism (Index)

The idea that rather than rewarding innovation, billionaires get rich as a result of close links between tycoons and government. An 'index' was created by *The Economist* magazine, featuring many Asia-Pacific countries: although 'creative accounting' made it hard to compile.

#### Off-the-record

Be careful with this one: to some it is "a background statement which cannot be used at all", to others, "comments that can be quoted, but whose source must remain anonymous."

Some job adverts for reporters still specify that candidates should have a 'excellent contacts book'. What does this mean, and why is it important?

The first and most obvious point, is that contacts are likely to be stored electronically these days, and on a range of platforms. A direct line is worth more than a Twitter connection.

Over time, you will nurture contacts. Experienced reporters are likely to gain a useful network of sources, and a new investigation might start with background calls.

For example, when a story breaks about a fire in a clothing factory, you will already know a business analyst who can confidently explain the complicated supply chains involved in the garment industry, as well as somebody who has worked on the factory floor, an ex fire-fighter...

Business and human rights is a big and interconnected beat, so your contacts book this will depend on your exact specialism.

It should include experts in a range of topics, including 'industry insiders'. It's likely to include academics, scientists, union leaders, land rights experts.

People who are 'good talkers' are particularly important for audio and visual media: some people just don't have presence.

It's normally useful to have a lawyer in your contacts book, as well as a range of people in the medical profession, teachers and lecturers, somebody who can explain a complex budget story or the farming news...

You should nurture your contacts: call them up on a slow news day to see if they have any gossip that could lead to a story. One of the satisfying aspects of being a journalist is the chance to speak to a wide range of people.

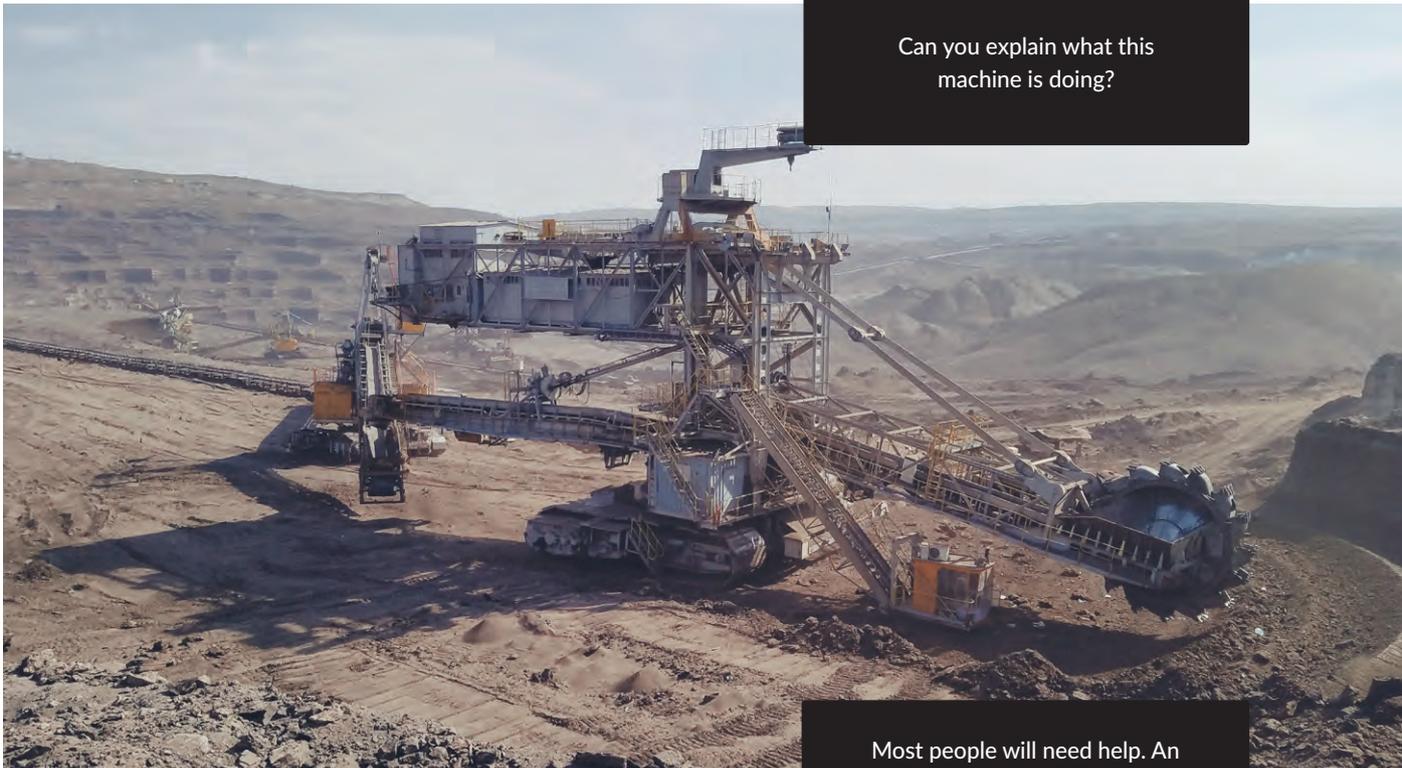
Journalists should have contacts from across the political spectrum, although this comes with a caution: as with all contacts, ask "Why is this person telling me this now? Am I being used?"

At its worst, contacts book journalism leads to reporters who become chummy with important figures. Whilst some politicians are genuine public servants disseminating innocent information, there can be a tendency to brief against political rivals, both inside and outside of their party.

Note that it's also useful to get an audit trail of interactions: so email addresses are useful, as are recorded video chats. Although it is not considered ethical (and is often illegal) to record conversations without permission.

**"Why is this person telling me this now?"**

(Remember this guiding question to stay balanced and avoid being used as a mouthpiece for PR interests)



Can you explain what this machine is doing?

Most people will need help. An engineer? An extractive industries analyst? Environmental campaigner? Your contacts book should help...

## Building a contacts book

1. **Protect your sources** and take all precautions to make sure that both your digital and paper records are not compromised. More on digital security on page 60.
2. **Everybody's contacts book will be different.** In some countries the emergency services will be a go-to source of information for stories, for example; and other government and civil service agencies will have helpful 'comms' teams who are happy to be contacted.
3. **Remember to be balanced.** A journalists' contact book shouldn't just be people you already know. Reach beyond your immediate circle, actively seek out people from outsider groups and with different perspectives from your own.
4. **Watch out for 'off-the-record' briefings.** Although these have a place in journalism, be careful: are

you being used by a politician or their representative to criticise a rival or promote an idea?

5. **Make a note of 'good talkers.'** Experts who can simplify, talk passionately, and be entertaining within their topic will liven up your broadcasts...
6. **Remember the 'little people,'** and don't just include the most senior spokespeople. The tendency for some reporters to seek out only the most senior staff inevitably reduces the diversity of voices.
7. **Finally, don't rely solely on your contacts book,** and remember that both the business and pleasure of reporting involves discovering new people, and finding fresh perspectives on the world.

## FURTHER RESOURCES

- A general reporter's contacts book is likely to include people from a range of industries
- Farmers, mining experts, and people working in the legal and medical fields
- Community leaders, spokespeople, academics, union reps

## How to be an investigative journalist

### STORY IDEAS

Successful investigative journalists draw their ideas from a wide range of sources, and often do so independently: many are freelancers.

An understanding of public records, legal issues, and freedom of information laws is vital. Specialist knowledge of a particular industry is vital for investigative reporters; whistleblowers and 'industry insiders' are often a useful source of stories.

The 2015 'dieselgate' story is a good example. Volkswagen cheated emissions tests in a scandal which cost them over \$30 billion, after engineers noticed discrepancies in test data. Other big manufacturers were also involved.

### KEY SKILLS\*

- ratlike cunning
- a plausible manner
- a little literary ability
- a knack with trains and petty officials
- a good digestion
- a steady head
- well-placed relatives
- good luck
- an implacable hatred of spokesmen, administrators, lawyers, PR men
- the strength of character to lead a disrupted life without going absolutely haywire

\* according to journalist Nick Tomalin

The money isn't great, and there is no guaranteed career path. It involves cold-calling people who don't really want to speak to you, and upsetting people who might just want to do you harm.



This is to say nothing of the unsociable hours, and the time wasted following leads that go nowhere. People might try and sue you, if you are doing your job well, and you'll be unpopular.

Despite this, business and human rights journalism desperately needs investigative reporters: and very few people make it in the profession.

Perhaps this is because it is inherently, time-consuming and speculative - you may spend hours investigating a story only for key evidence to fall through.

Maybe the Hollywood image that it is a mysterious, lone wolf activity

carried out by tough guys in trench coats might have something to do with it. Or that it cannot be taught.

And whilst it's true that you'll have to spend a lot of time on your own, often late at night, it's understood that to be an investigative journalist, as well as being resourceful and observant, you'll need people skills too.

Not just to listen for leads, and to get people to trust you, and talk. But also because, these days, big stories, often about big data, can mean collaboration, whistleblowers, and subject experts. And you can't do it all yourself.

“We've totally screwed up”

Source: VW America boss Michael Horn, in 2015



## SCENARIO

Which of these skills are the least useful for an investigative journalist covering business and human rights stories?

## OPTIONS

1. Writing flowery, descriptive sentences which can place the reader in the story.
2. The ability to read a spreadsheet.
3. IT, data filtering and collaboration.

## FEEDBACK

It is a well-kept secret that some journalists don't write well; for an investigative reporter, getting the story is important. Obviously it helps if you can provide polished copy, particularly as news budgets are cut.

An article you write may well be subedited; it will certainly be reviewed by senior editorial colleagues who can fix dodgy sentences. (And flowery prose, of course, is not good journalism practice anyway.)

There are two correct answers here. Firstly, it is more important that an investigative journalist can provide new and relevant facts. In order to do this the ability to crunch data, and work with others to do so, can be important: think WikiLeaks.<sup>1</sup>

Also, the ability to read a spreadsheet is also useful: how much tax does a corporation pay, and to which countries? What's the difference between the highest and lowest paid members of staff? Are there mysterious payments to officials that can indicate corruption?

## TERMINOLOGY

### Investigative journalism

"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." (UNESCO)<sup>3</sup>

### Subeditor (also sub-editor, 'sub')

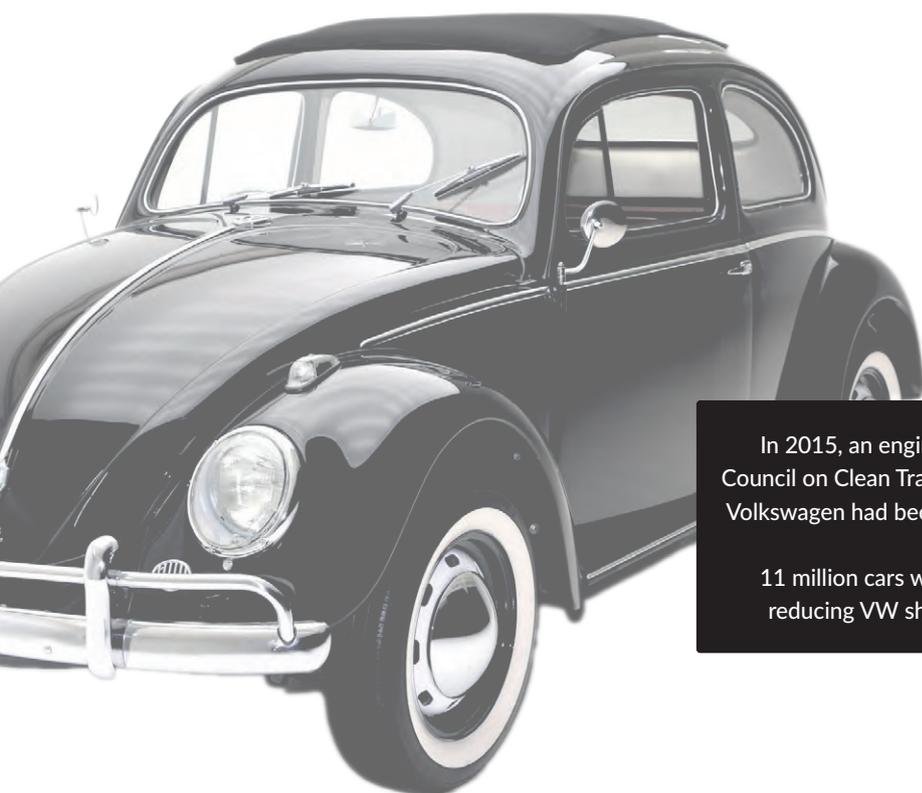
The person on the editorial team of a website, magazine, or newspaper who turns incoming material from journalists into a page ready for public consumption. They check spelling, grammar, and facts, and shorten copy (written material) to fit the page. You rarely see their byline.

### Byline

The name next to a feature: 'by Nick Raistrick'. Good bylines are an important status symbol for working journalists.

## FURTHER RESOURCES

- Clearly, there is no single simple resource where you can learn to be an investigative journalist. If there was, it would be immediately out-of-date
- But there are lots of areas in which you can teach yourself vital skills
- These will depend on your 'beat' but learning how to read a budget, understanding big data, and advanced analytical skills are all useful



In 2015, an engineer at the International Council on Clean Transportation discovered that Volkswagen had been cheating emissions tests.

11 million cars worldwide were affected, reducing VW share value by a quarter.<sup>2</sup>

## Planning a campaign

### TERMINOLOGY

#### Nudge theory

An idea in behavioural science, which suggests that encouraging small and easy changes in behaviour may be more effective than telling people what to do: a famous example being targets in urinals to encourage accuracy.

#### Digital natives

A somewhat vague term used to describe those who grew up with computers.

#### Gen Xers

US term to describe the generation born between 1965 and 1980s, roughly speaking the children of 'baby boomers'.

#### Digital divide

The gap between those who access the Internet and those who don't; even in middle income countries, many people do not have regular access to the Internet. Factors can include age, income levels, and access to WiFi. Not all 'millennials' actually access the Internet.

#### Content

Anything from a magazine article or radio programme to a social media post or poster design.

#### #MeToo movement<sup>1</sup>

The movement (and hashtag) originate from a 2006 grass roots campaign, started by US social activist Tarana Burke, with the aim of 'empowerment through empathy'. It became a global phenomenon a decade later, after a number of sexual assault survivors named their attacker: from Lahore to Jakarta, many others shared their stories.

Do you smoke? Put on a seatbelt when you're in a car? Wear a facemask on public transport? Whether you do or not has a great deal to do with behaviour change communications.

For campaigning journalists with an interest in business and human rights issues this is important: **if you want to change people's minds, you need to understand how this process happens.**

Clearly this is a big subject in itself, and linked with law, public policy and psychology. There are several theories about how we change our behaviour, and the role that the media plays in this.

**One key idea is that people need to work through stages of change**, which they do at different paces; and that we all have different motivations. Some people don't like being bombarded with facts, however accurate. It can be counterproductive. You might need to appeal to their emotions, their sense of history, or community, for example. To be successful, campaigners often identify and target audience types.

Successful big firms do this, and spend millions identifying different audience types based on their age, education, and media habits. Digital natives, gen Xers, and baby boomers, are examples of these.

Audience research is vital: find out what motivates your audience rather than making assumptions. **Think about your 'call to action'. What do you want people to do differently?**

Finally, some campaigns seem to have a life of their own. The #MeToo movement became a global phenomenon due to a human rights story that many industry insiders wanted to suppress. Many within the media, legal, and the movie industries protected Harvey Weinstein because he was so powerful. Both survivors and journalists were harassed, before the story broke.

“I want you to act as if the house is on fire, because it is.”

Source: Greta Thunberg, environmental campaigner

# Behaviour Change Theory

STAGES OF CHANGE

Knowledge

I'M AWARE OF THIS ISSUE

Approval

I UNDERSTAND THIS CHANGE IS GOOD, BUT I'M NOT READY TO MAKE IT

Intention

I ACTIVELY WANT TO MAKE THE CHANGE; IT WILL HAPPEN AT SOME POINT.

Practice

I'VE DONE IT!

Advocacy

I'VE DONE IT AND I WANT TO TELL OTHER PEOPLE ALL ABOUT IT.

## SCENARIO

You are a communications manager for an NGO concerned with microplastics in the ocean, caused by artificial and synthetic fibres in clothes. Your research partnership with a university has revealed that the average person ingests more than 5,800 particles of synthetic debris per year, and that these particles are in 73% of fish.

## OPTIONS

1. Get these facts to as many people as possible.
2. Think of a catchy Twitter hashtag.
3. Spend some time thinking about audiences.

## KEY FACTS

- Successful campaign teams usually have a mix of skills
- Creativity and storytelling is important, as is digital production
- Audience analysis is vital
- It's also about organisation: who will plan the editorial calendar? Manage workflow? Control budgets?
- As well as defining strategy, measure success and review

## FEEDBACK

Sometimes journalists are often told to "stick to the facts, ma'am". But in this case the facts might not resonate. The numbers are hard to visualise, and similar stats relating to the issue are already in the public domain. So it's not really a 'news' story.

You might think about a hashtag later down the line, but there are other things to do first, like looking at your target audience (who may not use Twitter) and developing a call to action ("what do you want people to do differently?")

An example 'call to action' might be 'buy fewer clothes,' or 'wash clothes only when necessary'. Your purpose and target audience will define this: do you want policy makers to push through legislation, consumers to make different purchasing decisions, or manufacturers to do things differently?

## TERMINOLOGY

### Workplace discrimination

"Treating people differently or less favourably because of characteristics that are not related to their merit or the inherent requirements of the job." (UN)

### LGBTQI

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and intersex: LGBTQI communities often suffer workplace discrimination. Business action to respect and support LGBTQI rights is an example of the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and the UN Global Compact human rights principles in practice.

### Owner interference

Interference in editorial matters by owners: it occurs in the smallest radio station to the largest media conglomerate, and can be direct or implied (self-censorship).

### Technological convergence

The tendency for previously unrelated technologies to become integrated: so a phone becomes a TV, radio, newspaper...

## Editorial independence?

It's a truth universally acknowledged by journalism professors that editorial independence is the lifeblood of journalism, and very important; but nobody seems to know how to go about achieving it, or whether it can truly exist.

Back in the real world where journalism takes place, achieving editorial independence is a big issue for business and human rights reporting. What is it?

Editorial independence is usually noticed when it is absent. At its crudest, owner interference might involve keeping the proprietor's infidelities/tax affairs/etc. out of the news. This challenge dates from the time when the only people who could afford to own the news channels (newspapers) were the kind of wealthy individuals who wanted to directly control the flow of information about them.

Most media houses are still privately owned, but the interference today is often more subtle. A media corporation might plug the blockbuster movie it also funded, or the sports league it sponsors. A particular media group may rely on advertising dollars from technology companies, in which it also happens to own shares: so it would be a brave editor who suggests replacing technology reviews with stories about child labour in the supply chain.

It's also clear that state-controlled media will show a bias towards those who pay the salaries of its journalists: whilst there may be a public service ethos, self-censorship is prevalent.

In fact, it's hard to think of a situation where pure editorial independence exists. In some cases editorial boards guide decisions; the BBC famously has a board of cross-party governors whose job it is to uphold impartiality and investigate complaints (even though people on both sides of the political spectrum complain that it is biased against them).

Independence is closely related to balance. Clearly you cannot be editorially independent if you only speak to one side in a controversial issue. Be aware of your own media biases; take your own news from a wide range of sources; and think about your own credibility when working with advertisers.

**45%**

of Covid-19 related tweets  
written by bots<sup>1</sup>

**"It was taking an American-style media approach. What they said early on was 'Facts don't work', and that's it. The Remain campaign featured fact, fact, fact, fact, fact. It just doesn't work. You have got to connect with people emotionally. It's the Trump success."**

Source: Arron Banks, co founder of Leave.EU campaign (Brexit) campaign



## SCENARIO

Your media house has been approached to produce some 'advertorial' content for a major food brand. They want a feature about improvements to their cocoa production facilities.

You remember that when you were a junior reporter, the brand was implicated in a scandal involving powdered milk. But now you are editor, and aware newsroom budgets are tight.

## OPTIONS

1. Tell them that you will be editorially compromised by any association with a toxic brand.
2. Take the money.
3. Carry the feature but make sure you balance the story with a comment from an NGO.

## FEEDBACK

This is at the heart of the dilemma facing many media houses today, and the 'right' answer depends on your news values. On the one hand, accepting the cash makes it hard to report on a particular business and their human rights violations. It leads to self-censorship. This can damage your news values, particularly if you are selling yourself as an 'ethical' news brand.

On the other hand, in 2019 the top 25 food companies generated \$815 billion and owned most of the food brands you've heard of. Turning away this advertising revenue could mean slimming down your newsroom.<sup>1</sup>

The most successful media organisations, in terms of revenue, have accepted some kind of advertising from businesses with a less-than-perfect human rights record, and in the case of social media giants, misusing user data in such a way as to attract fines of up to \$5 billion. It takes brave management to turn this down! Some would suggest the third way: that you should be clear that your editorial line will not be compromised, and that your reporting will be fearless.

# Telling the business and human rights story

## TERMINOLOGY

### Format

In this context, a format is a type of programme or output; so a phone-in programme, column, or news magazine are all examples of formats.

### Legacy media

'Old media', including radio, television, and especially newspapers, are sometimes referred to (with some derision?) as legacy media, usually in contrast with participatory 'social' media.

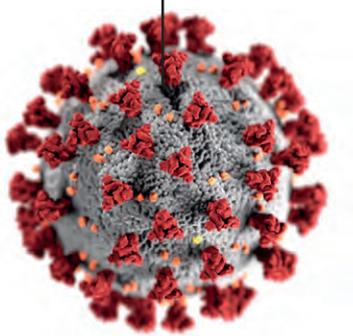
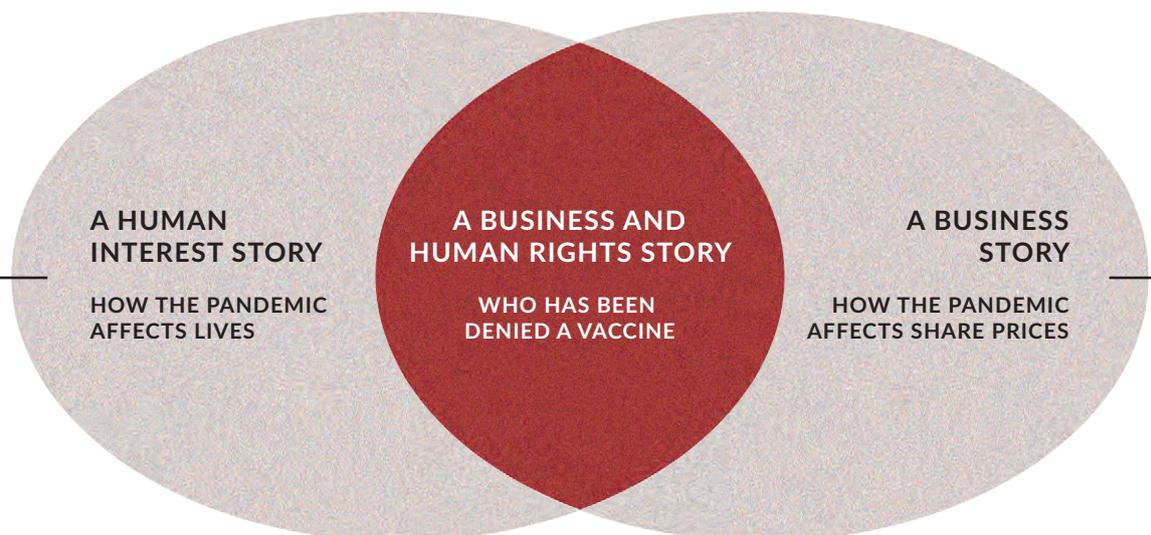
You understand relevant business and human rights issues well. You can spot a decent top line a mile away, and you know the difference between a committee, a convention and a non-binding treaty.

Your interview skills are second to none and you are in tune with the kind of issues that affect your audience and can make a difference.

But can you produce a package that will keep people gripped, or write a headline that will lure people in? Will your podcast be listened to by millions or just your family?

These days, it's not always enough to file a good story.

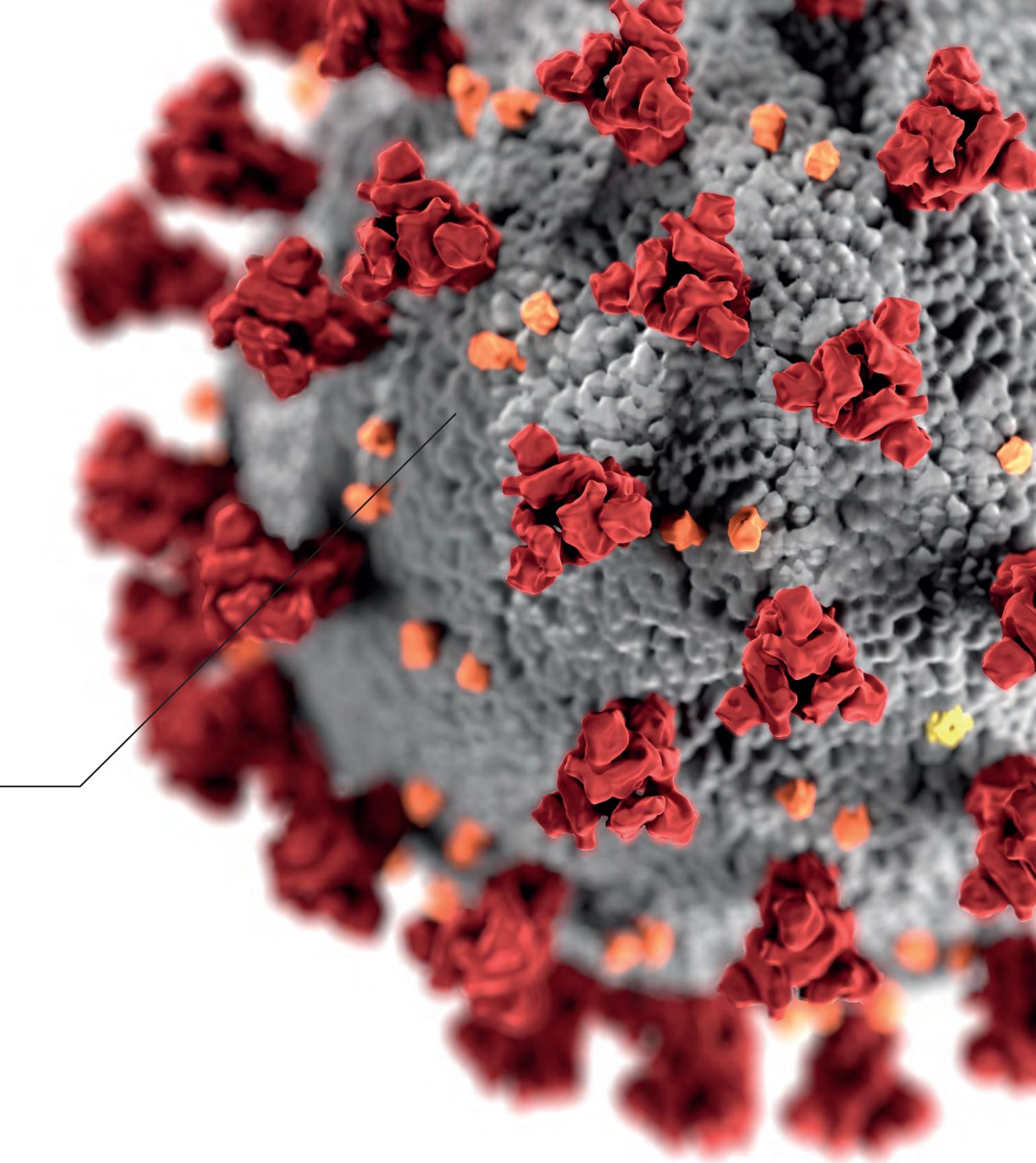
This section looks at selecting the right format, medium, and creative storytelling techniques to keep people interested.



“...relentless effort and team work, bold source cultivation, over-research of every detail, and then constant condensing of essential facts.”

Source: Reuters obituary of Sir Harold Evans, on what makes an effective newsroom. He was a Fleet Street editor, famous for his tenacious public service journalism whilst editor of *The Sunday Times* newspaper.<sup>1</sup>





## Creative storytelling: choosing a medium

### TERMINOLOGY

#### Multimedia journalist

This term for journalists working across a range of media - audio, video, written word - is possibly obsolete as it is assumed that most journalists will work across a range of media.

#### Drama-for-development

Using drama, whether theatre, radio, or video, for specific development goals such as to promote civic dialogue, or to teach better farming techniques; sometimes used by communicators to promote human rights issues.

#### Podcasts

Audio files shared on the Internet to be listened to by consumers on a computer or mobile device, usually as part of a series. The barrier to entry is low: recording audio is much cheaper and easier than producing high quality TV. It's easy to upload podcasts. A handful of serious journalism podcasts are downloaded in their millions, and are globally popular.

There aren't many jobs for life these days, and it is taken for granted that most journalists will switch media at some point. This provides opportunities and challenges for business and human rights reporters.

On the one hand it can be challenging to learn new production skills. Freelancers find that self-funding their kit soon gets expensive, for example, and payments can be late or irregular. On the other, there are opportunities to reach new audiences: armed with a smartphone, a newspaper journalist can record video and audio packages, too.

Each medium comes with its own opportunities and constraints. TikTok has more than half a billion users worldwide, and counting, and a youthful demographic. Content is limited to three to 60-second clips. This hasn't stopped a genre of TikTok journalism, made by both established media houses and student journalists in their bedrooms alike.

And if explaining complex topics in a short time is a challenge, podcasts provide the opposite opportunity: the

chance for a detailed 'deep dive' into a subject, over several hours.

Some human rights defenders prefer social media over traditional broadcasting for its potential to circumvent censorship and editorial interference. An organisation can tell its story directly. There is no guarantee that people will be interested in your story, however, and there are ethical questions, not least about the activities of the tech giants themselves.

Whereas mainstream media tends to be closely regulated by existing media law, there has been some confusion as to how to regulate the activity of social media giants.

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### STORY IDEAS: SWITCHING MEDIA

In the past, journalists tended to specialise in a particular media; but as technologies have changed, so too has the profession. Print journalists might be asked to record and edit audio, for example. Most journalists will need to update their skills accordingly, and consume a wide range of media.

This provides opportunities: if you carry out original interviews as part of your investigation, your audio can be used by a local media house, your images might illustrate a feature you write for an international news outlet with a slightly different angle, and your research might end up as part of an NGO report into the human rights issue that you are covering.



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### Introducing the Walkman Pro.

Don't judge our cassette deck by its size. Judge it by something a lot more meaningful.

Our specs: Dolby® noise reduction. Manual record level. LED recording meter. Playback speed control. Signal-to-noise ratio of 88dB with metal tape. Sendust and Ferrite head for frequency response of 40-15,000Hz, ±3dB. Disc

drive system for wow and flutter of less than 0.04%. And quartz-locked capstan servo, for speed accuracy of ±0.3%.

As you can see from our list of specifications, the Sony Walkman Pro offers you more than many cassette decks ten times its size. So when you connect it to a full-size stereo system, you can expect full-size sound.

In fact, it sounds so good you'll want to take it with you everywhere you go.

Which you can easily do. (Remember, it happens to be a Sony Walkman.)

With our featherweight stereo headphones, you'll be able to enjoy the same incredible sound outdoors that you do in your favorite easy chair.

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## The podcast effect...

### TERMINOLOGY

#### Creative industries

The umbrella term given to people involved in content making; as media convergence continues, so does the crossover in techniques,

#### Copywriter

Person who writes for a living, often in advertising: can be creative, instructional, or persuasive. Senior copywriters will work with audience insights, to draft messages with impact.

#### Audience insights

The perceptions, motivations and needs of your audience. Increasingly associated with social media. Audience Insights is also the name of a Facebook tool.

#### Social media manager

This person will communicate with an organisation or individual's customers, clients and fans. The job involves strategy, content creation, and marketing as well as managing social media teams.

#### Sidebar

Sometimes there's too much information in the main part of the text. You can use a sidebar (like this) to break up the page or add extra information.

#### Body copy

Another word for the main part of the text. Too much body copy and some readers will zone out.

The sound of seagulls and Nikole Hannah-Jones's reflective voice introduces the *1619* podcast. She talks about how people must have felt as they arrived on the shores where she made her recording. Within seconds the audio puts you in a place in time, and you are gently drawn into the story.

The *New Yorker* podcast won a Pulitzer Prize, and drew millions into a story of slavery and the birth of America as a nation state.

Another podcast, *Brave New Planet*, kicks off with a bit of alternative computer-generated history.

Instead of telling you that artificial intelligence is a dystopian, confusing and deeply troubling subject, and that it can be used to replicate and distort voices, it shows you: a news package, featuring a speech 'by' President Richard Nixon declaring the failure of the 1969 American moon landing, hooks the listener in immediately.

Both podcasts are excellent examples of creative storytelling; they might not work for your audience, or even your medium. But they show that creative storytelling can be incredibly powerful, and that complex and dark topics can be engrossing when the maxim of 'show, not tell' is applied.

Podcasts have boomed in recent years, in Asia and elsewhere, bypassing the need for audio producers to spend money on transmission equipment.

Incidentally, *1619* is narrated by a historian, and *Brave New Planet* by a scientist. People used to writing long academic papers, in other words. But to reach wider audiences, they changed their medium and storytelling: you might want to call it 'the podcast effect'.

There hasn't been a big breakout business and human rights podcast yet, although both of these examples cover associated topics - like slavery and data theft, deep fakes, along with the effects of climate change and what we can do about it.

Best estimates as to the total number of podcast series vary wildly, although the consensus is that there are literally millions; in certain sectors, like true crime, sport, and comedy, very high profile podcasters attract large, loyal listeners.

But the range of topics is huge, including both journalism, business affairs, and specific industry sectors. Needless to say, the United Nations has a podcast, as do many NGOs and corporations.

Even if you don't plan on podcasting, the ability to listen to world experts take a deep dive into challenging topics like climate change and human rights law is useful, as well as seeing how other journalists have answered the sometimes overlooked question: "what is the best way to tell this complex story?"

## SCENARIO

You've made the switch from journalism to PR and are organising a campaign which aims to challenge climate change in the workplace. Who should you invite to your brainstorming event?

## OPTIONS

1. Experienced newspaper journalists who cover the environment will understand it best and be able to promote it effectively.
2. Young people and influencers.
3. Scriptwriters, advertising copywriters, and cartoonists.
4. Academics with a PhD in the subject and several academic papers.

## KEY FACTS

- Podcasts have been around since 2005
- But there is currently a worldwide boom in audience figures and output
- 58% of South Koreans have listened to a podcast in the past month
- The most popular S. Korean podcast has been downloaded by 6 million people
- Globally, 67% of listeners are 18-44
- The global podcasting industry is worth more than \$10 billion<sup>1</sup>

## FEEDBACK

Some journalists are naturally brilliant creative storytellers, so definitely ask them to come, although some reporters don't go to press events at all.

Young people and social media influencers will definitely need to be part of the change so you need to have them on your side. What can you learn from people outside the discipline?

It's very hard to teach creativity; and many of the best ideas come from creative collaboration, people challenging ideas (because your first idea usually isn't the best); And think about the whole breadth of the creative industries: maybe advertising copywriters, graphic designers, podcasters, scriptwriters, podcasters, actors, cartoonists, SEO experts, and social media managers?

Maybe bring in all of the people suggested? And ask them to bring a colleague, too.

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## CREATIVE STORYTELLING IDEAS

**Your first idea is rarely the best.** Some of the best creative media comes from a process of collaboration: an atmosphere where ideas are interrogated in a supportive, but critical manner. The best time to realise your idea needs more work, or should be abandoned completely, is before you make a significant investment of time on it.

The best campaigns are creative but focused. If you bring together different groups to try and tell a story in a memorable way, you still need to measure impact, refine ideas, and deliver to a brief.

# You probably need a style guide...

## TERMINOLOGY

### Jargon and 'industry language'

Language which is hard for general audiences to understand: avoid, unless you explain it or write for a publication aimed at a specific industry,

### Acronyms and abbreviations

Unless very familiar, it's better to explain acronyms (like NATO or RADAR) or abbreviations (like UNDP or CSR) rather than assume your audience knows what the letters mean. Even explaining that GDP stands for 'gross domestic product' may not help your audience, so you can add an explanation "...commonly used to refer the overall size of a country's economy". The clearest writing usually has very few acronyms or abbreviations.

### Newsspeak

"Ambiguous euphemistic language used chiefly in political propaganda," according to the Oxford English Dictionary. The term was invented by George Orwell in his novel, 1984.

### 'Read-through'

A theatrical term, for the final check through of a script, and which is good practice for podcasters and broadcasters: check things like pronunciations, rhythm, and repetitions, by reading out loud before making a recording or 'going live'.

### Soundbite

Short, pithy, and often meaningless statement, often made by politicians to get repeated airtime. "Ask not what your country can do for you but rather what you can do for your country," is a frequently quoted example.

Should you capitalise Prime Minister? Do you write UNDP or spell out the acronym? Is the word 'xxxxx' offensive? Do you write 'one' or '1'?

These answers are all to do with your house style, which should be defined in your style guide.

Most journalists will be aware that a news bulletin by convention, and with good reason, should aim for a neutral tone. So avoid language of judgement ('innocent victims', or 'brave firefighters').

Lower case 'prime minister' is more modern and in wide general use, reflecting a decades-long shift away from capitalising Important Words. But 'Prime Minister' is acceptable if your audience expects it. (It's fine to start a sentence with 'But...!', incidentally.) Terminology is more contentious. Many argue that 'climate emergency' is more descriptive than 'climate change', and 'abuse survivor' is more acceptable than 'abuse victim'.

Should you explain abbreviations? Again it depends on your audience, but usually yes. Sometimes we are told to explain the first time, then use the abbreviation thereafter. So the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights will become the GPBHR or UNGPs. But that's ugly, and research suggests that acronyms make it harder for us to read. So why not refer to the guiding principles, or even Guiding Principles?

~~Readability-wise, at this moment in time, however, on the basis of the average user experience of the editorial process as it stands, it is seen to be a consensus view that the most efficacious written words are those in which post-completion deletions of extraneous words occur. Or to put it another way: "Delete unnecessary words when you've finished writing."~~

- (i) Never use a metaphor, simile, or other figure of speech which you are used to seeing in print.
- (ii) Never use a long word where a short one will do.
- (iii) If it is possible to cut a word out, always cut it out.
- (iv) Never use the passive where you can use the active.
- (v) Never use a foreign phrase, a scientific word, or a jargon word if you can think of an everyday English equivalent.
- (vi) Break any of these rules sooner than say anything outright barbarous.

Source: George Orwell, *Politics and the English Language*; most work in other languages too.



The Economist Style Guide published as a book in English: some style guides are available online.

## SCENARIO

What kind of language is best for people covering business and human rights stories?

## OPTIONS

1. Informal and as simple to understand as possible.
2. Formal and credible.
3. You should target ministers and opinion formers, so you don't need to explain.
4. Memorable and persuasive; use catchphrases.

## FURTHER RESOURCES

If your organisation doesn't have a style guide, it can be a useful (and humbling) exercise to put your written work through a readability assessment.

The Flesch-Kincaid readability test is probably the most famous of these, although other online tools are available.<sup>2</sup>

## FEEDBACK

Frustratingly, it depends. You should use the language appropriate for your audience, and adjust your tone accordingly.

~~For example,~~ you are working for a highbrow newspaper, specialist blog, or TV show which targets a well-educated audience who already has an interest in business issues, they might expect in-depth analysis: a more formal style.

~~Having said that,~~ some of the best business reporters are those who manage to keep multiple audiences engaged. *The Economist*, for example, does this well, as does *Bloomberg* where the style guide explains that writing should be "clear enough for a dope to understand and substantial enough for a professional to appreciate".

Short, active sentences are good. ~~Whereas in general, longer, often rambling sentences, with different clauses, separated by commas – or even a dash – though they have their place in the world certainly, are harder, generally, for the audience to read, especially on screens so avoid sentences like this one which is pretty bad.~~

## KEY FACTS

- If you can, get someone to edit your work before you publish or go live
- Make sure that they understand and embrace your 'house style'
- Many writers find reading sentences out loud to be useful
- Your brain can get used to mistakes
- So you may find it useful to change the font size and colour when forced to self-edit on screen. Others, print.

## “Has this been legalised?”

### TERMINOLOGY

#### Newsroom management

The series of processes involved in the production of news; essentially, gathering news, editing and signing it off, and ‘dissemination’. Please note: job titles vary considerably, and broadcasters and print journalists use different terminology. Further confusion is caused when people give themselves and others job titles which look good on a business card but are essentially meaningless.

#### Duty editor (or output editor)

Within a news organisation, there needs to be a boss ‘in the moment’: somebody who takes ultimate responsibility for decisions on output. This person will change from day to day, and from shift to shift: a night editor may be duty editor.

#### Editor-in-chief

The editor in overall charge of a title or programme. They define editorial tone and output. This person might act as the duty editor: sometimes just ‘editor’.

#### Sign-off procedure

Before you print, publish, or broadcast a news item in a big organisation, somebody should review it: is it accurate? legally-safe? Suitable for the audience?

#### Embargo

“Do not publish this item until 12 noon on 17 May” is an embargo. Often related to product or policy launches and essentially a ‘goodwill agreement’.

#### McLibel Case

The 1997 case in which McDonald’s successfully sued environmental campaigners (for £40,000 libel damages) over inaccuracies in a leaflet. The trial lasted over two years, with 40,000 pages of documentary evidence. It is estimated to have cost the firm £10 million.<sup>1</sup>

This phrase, or similar, is usually a note from a concerned editor. It means “check with the legal team,” about a story that seems less than watertight.



Libel is often a key concern. Payouts can be massive. It has often been said that the best defence against libel is accuracy. In other words, if you can prove in a court of law that everything you have ‘disseminated’ (whether online or in traditional media) is provably true, then you cannot be successfully sued.

This is great in theory, but defending a libel action can be very expensive, particularly given the rise of ‘libel tourism,’ the practice of launching legal actions across international borders. It has been argued that the threat of libel has been used to silence criticism, and create a culture of self-censorship.

Beware of the false idea that adding the phrase ‘allegedly’ to an unproven rumour makes you legally safe: innuendo is no defence.

It’s not just libel: sedition, counter-terror laws, and copyright laws affect journalists. Most responsible reporters should easily be able to avoid inciting riots, hatred and violence, and would not steal images, but laws can be used to silence reporters. Most journalists don’t have the luxury of an in-house lawyer, so you’ll have to teach yourself some media law, in order to report on these issues confidently.

## SCENARIO

You are working for small environmental NGO in Malaysia. You've been asked to write a blog post about rumours of child labour and malpractice relating to the local palm oil plantation, which supplies some well-known food brands.

## OPTIONS

1. Name the brands, but be vague about the allegations, unless you have firm evidence.
2. It's just a blog, so write some opinions about the incident.
3. Write a think piece about the issue.
4. Wait until you have firm evidence.

## FEEDBACK

In this case, you are effectively acting as the duty editor; so you should understand libel law in practice, and the reality of editorial decision making comes into place. Cynics argue that journalists and editors often calculate that many people can't afford to defend libel actions, which might cost \$50,000 - \$100,000. So poorer people are libelled more.

NGOs, scientists, journalists, publishers, comedians, as well as bloggers are amongst those who have been sued and struggled to defend themselves in court. But major food brands will fiercely protect their reputation, and the onus is on you to provide evidence, not opinion.

Vague allegations are no defence, and can make you look malicious. And having a small audience in country X does not mean that you can't be sued in another country. A think piece about child labour could work: but if you name brands, or even imply or hint at a brand, you might face legal action. Waiting till you have firm evidence might kill the story, as claimants well know.

## DISCLAIMER

Nothing in this handbook constitutes legal advice; and media law varies from country to country. As well as learning relevant media law in such areas as libel, copyright, and fair comment, you should seek informed advice as part of your work as a journalist and communicator covering business and human rights.



## News versus features

### KEY FACTS

- Features = long form journalism, often using creative storytelling techniques
- Often a 'news peg' will link a feature to news and current events
- The 'voice' in features is different; it's okay to have personality and opinions, and use non-newsroom language
- Specialist business reporters often cover both business news and business features for a general audience

Format selection is closely linked with the medium, and the kind of story you want to tell. You need to understand both audience expectations and limits.



**In an hourly news bulletin, you might have five minutes to tell several stories.** Your writing must be short and clear; a news story can usually be summed up in a single sentence.

Other rules apply. By convention, the tone in newswriting appeals less to emotions: it is good practice to remove adjectives where possible - so firefighters aren't 'brave', nor victims 'innocent'.

Features and long-form journalism should be grounded in ethical, accurate reporting. They can also be persuasive, and give an insight into, for example, the human costs of business decisions.

For specialist business correspondents, it's a mix: people expect the big market stories, but features and insight, too. Your challenge is appealing to both general and specific audiences.

**In a podcast you might have 12 episodes, of more than half an hour each.** The script lengths might run to thousands of words; there may be multiple viewpoints, and you'll need complex storytelling structures to keep people interested: like cliffhangers to keep people tuned in.

## SCENARIO

Your prime minister announces that she is going to look into taxing the big tech giants like Facebook. As a public service broadcaster, what format would work?

## OPTIONS

1. A lead item on a news bulletin
2. A 12-part TV series
3. A phone-in programme

## FEEDBACK

Experienced news editors develop a good news sense for when a news story 'has legs', and a cynicism for when leaders are making statements designed to make themselves look good in the media without having to do anything except generate a 'soundbite'. In this case nothing new has actually happened. There is no 'action' verb.

So it's definitely not a lead item, even on a slow news day. Of course, the tech firms should pay taxes as other companies do. But a 12-part TV series is obviously unrealistic! The story isn't big enough in terms of news values to merit a 12-part series, which, of course, would be incredibly expensive to produce. There's no change, impact, proximity. By the time the series launched the story would be stale.

Which isn't to say that the story isn't worth covering. Phone-in programmes and panel discussions can be a good way to bring in audiences. They certainly need to have the right contributors, to be well-researched, and feature accurate journalism. But they can also be immediate, impactful, and contribute to good governance.

**“The death of one man is a tragedy, the death of millions is a statistic.”**

Source: Often attributed to Joseph Stalin, although there's no evidence he said this. It illustrates a good point, whoever made it, about the impact of personal stories.

## TERMINOLOGY

### Buried intro

It was a stormy night, and the writer's long, dark hair blew in the wind. She was thinking. How could she explain? That a buried intro is a way of starting a certain type of feature? Where you don't go straight in with the top line, but slowly tease out details to get the audience interested, in a way that wouldn't work well for a news bulletin, but does for certain kinds of features? (That was a buried intro, exaggerated for illustration. Often the best quote from an interview is the lead, 'hook' sentence.)

### Narrative arc

This term, to describe a story structure, is borrowed from drama and literature, but relevant to some kinds of long-form journalism. The 'three act structure' is one of the most commonly quoted story arcs: set up, confrontation, resolution.

### Narrative podcasting

Longer-form serial podcasts which can run for several episodes; typically in-depth and long form, incredibly popular in some countries.

### Cliffhanger

Technique used in serial podcasting, in which loose ends are not tied up at the end of an episode, to get you to listen to the next one, encouraging 'binge listening'.

### Current affairs

In-depth analysis and discussion around the news, in longer format than bulletins and headlines.

# Audiences don't care about business and human rights stories...

## KEY FACTS

- Creative storytelling is needed to sell business and human rights stories
- A memorable statistic or a killer quote can draw in some audiences
- Other demographics might be interested in particular celebrities. Use audience data to find out who...
- Know your audience: a high-brow audience might be alienated if you 'dumb down' too much

## CREATIVITY IDEAS

Stuck for ideas? Find out what people are searching for in your region; you might get some story ideas and news pegs.

Still desperate? Google 'oblique strategies'; based on a card game developed by artists, it gives you semi-random advice to help in your creative process. "Take a break", the cards might say, or "Listen to the quiet voice".

Do you know how many people google the term 'business and human rights'?

Almost none; instead they search for the names of video games, sports stars, and actors. People are more likely to search for 'best exfoliator' or 'bucket hat' than 'human rights'.<sup>1</sup> This means that you will have to be creative with your storytelling.

One obvious technique is to link to what people are already interested in. So you could add a celebrity angle to your story in order to increase the audience appeal, in the way brands bring in famous faces to garner publicity. Padma Lakshmi is a UNDP goodwill ambassador because people are interested in her; people will listen to what she has to say about an issue.

Another technique is the opposite: feature the lives of ordinary and overlooked voices. Writers like Charles Dickens knew that a string of statistics wouldn't get an audience interested in a social issue. So he focused on the individual stories instead, and in doing so he made sure his audience learnt about human rights issues.

You can draw audiences in with some creative storytelling or a provocative headline, but you need to keep them engaged. Appeal to emotions: make them laugh, cry, smile. Just don't be boring.

If you are a commissioning editor, try hiring 'outside the box'. The British TV series *Blood, Sweat and T-shirts* didn't send established journalists into sweatshops: they sent fashion-obsessed Western youngsters who knew little about the subject to work in an Indian garment factory.<sup>2</sup>

The impact was huge, and the show reached new audiences, with no previous interest in the topic. It reached young people who would never, in a million years, have searched for 'business and human rights' on their smartphones, in other words. But, thanks to creative storytelling, and the willingness to take risks, the show had an impact on a generation of consumers.

This is an ethical bag, from a brand with an exceptional track record in ensuring its supply chains are 'pure'.



The problem is that it costs more than \$1,000.



“Women’s unpaid labour is worth \$10.9 trillion. That’s more than the money made by the 50 biggest companies in the world.”

Source: *The New York Times*: original research by Oxfam. This figure was widely quoted in the media worldwide, thus generating a great deal of discussion about gender inequality.

## TERMINOLOGY

### ‘Freakanomics’

Mixing pop culture with economics, the term is also a title of a book by Steven Levitt and Stephen J. Dubner, mixing data mining, economics, and sociology.

### Economic growth

This term describes the increase in the production of goods and services, usually of a particular region over a specific time period. Most mainstream politicians use increased growth as an important measure for a successful economy, although this has been challenged by a wide range of commentators.

### Gross domestic product (GDP)

The final value of the goods and services produced by a particular economy: calculated in slightly different ways, but always using market value as a measurement. Things like unpaid work, distribution of income, and environmental impacts are not measured. There are alternatives: Bhutan got there first, introducing a Gross National Happiness index in 1972.<sup>2</sup>

### Dark money

...used to covertly fund politicians. The original context was American politics: often billionaires and corporations supporting conservative candidates via charitable foundations, although the term has been used around the world.

### Infodemic

A combination of ‘information’ and ‘epidemic’: describes the flood of information about the Covid pandemic.

## Making ethical media

Un sourced speculation presented as fact, rumours retweeted; conspiracy theories and misunderstandings presented as mainstream science; sensationalist and damaging coverage of gender issues; the blaming of minority groups for problems for which they could not be responsible; and lobbying on behalf of some of the richest and most powerful interests.



**There is a barrage of media noise out there.** But it is possible to make better media.

**This means actively representing the genuine diversity of your audiences,** not just the kind of people you already know. Hire, interview, and feature people outside of your age, religious or ethnic group; talk to people in LGBTQI communities who face discrimination, and migrant workers. Are there marginalised outsider groups who never appear in your output?

**Managers and senior editors will need to develop fair selection processes.** How will you implement training in this area? How will you communicate this?

**You should usually try and get your own quote for an interview.** When it comes to editing or writing them up, it is clearly not ethical to quote people out of context: but it is up to you to edit down interviews.

Most people tend to ramble and ‘er and um’ a bit; for audio interviews you need to select the most important sections, and keep them in. Most listeners are

comfortable with interviewees who pause, and it can sound unnatural to edit these out too much.

Written transcriptions do not need to be word for word. And it’s perfectly acceptable to remove the unnecessary verbal ticks that people use. It’s fine in some languages to edit out minor grammatical errors, so long as you are careful not to change the meaning of a sentence.

Only use images for which you have permission. Credit the source.

Question everything; look through the PR and the spin. Are you being used?

**Be sceptical not cynical. Responsible companies welcome better human rights reporting,** as it provides a level playing field, and they won’t be undercut by those who cut corners.

Finally, this is an issue of quality control. Larger media houses should have a style guide. Can you develop your own? News language should be neutral in tone. Simplify numbers and explain job titles; make sure language isn’t discriminatory or offensive.

## SCENARIO

You are interviewing a whistleblower at a call centre who claims to have been forced out of their job because of their gender orientation. How should you interview and edit them?

## OPTIONS

1. If your audience is traditional and disapproving, then make sure that you ask difficult, hostile questions on their behalf.
2. Present them in the best light, because they are brave and have been through a lot.
3. Try to be objective, and get details.

## FEEDBACK

There are many different interview styles. A confrontational interview is usually more appropriate for someone who is in a position of responsibility, who you are holding to account; an informational interview would be best for an 'expert witness' and would be neutral in tone. Some stories are inherently emotional, and challenging. Remember in this case to be wary of retraumatising, and take into account the concept of 'informed consent'. Will they suffer as a result of the interview, even if they don't realise it? Have you made them aware of this risk?

**“Stop using the term ‘child prostitute’. I was a victim and survivor of child rape.”**

Source: Withelma “T” Ortiz Walker Pettigrew, campaigner, in *Time* magazine

# Reporting business and human rights checklist

Obviously, a 12-part podcast, a TV news bulletin item and a newspaper feature are very different, so not every item on this list will apply to you. You may want to produce your own checklist for the kinds of stories you and your colleagues cover most frequently.

## Is there a strong top line?

Can the story be easily described in a sentence or two that will be of interest to your audience? Has this topic been extensively covered elsewhere? If it has, what's your new angle?

## Have you written a 'killer intro'?

Will people be hooked into the story from the start and continue reading/listening/watching? If not, all your work will be wasted.

## Is this accurate?

Have you checked the basic facts? Are all names, job titles, organisations, and dates correct? If you include opinions about those facts, have you separated them very clearly? Above all else, you need to be provably accurate in your work.

## Is this well-sourced?

Do you have strong evidence for everything you claim? Normally two sources is a minimum. To make your story stand up, you will generally need hard evidence: documents, emails, images as well as testimony and accounts.

## Have I spoken to both sides (and beyond)?

Have you shown balance? It is fair to give the right to reply to the people you report on.

## Have you represented ordinary people?

Have you spoken to the 'ordinary people' affected by the story, as well as the CEOs, celebrities, and senior politicians who already receive so much media

attention? Have you made an effort to avoid confirmation bias, and actively looked for counter-arguments to statements you strongly agree with?

## Have you reported independently?

Did you go the extra mile to verify official statements? Have you avoided spin, PR, and bias? Have you been pressured to cover certain stories, or to avoid reporting on certain issues? You risk damaging your editorial credibility if you ignore certain topics, or choose not to report on the human rights abuses of certain powerful countries or organisations.

## Have you \*really\* understood complex issues?

Did you get 'expert' interviewees to explain the issue in clear language? Did you get someone else to give background? In your desk research, have you really 'read into' the story from all sides? Have you understood relevant laws which have been broken, and the human rights issues involved? Do you understand the underlying trends and issues behind the news event you are covering?

## Is this topic right for your audience?

Have you thought specifically about the kind of stories they care about? Have you avoided repeating news items that are only relevant to minority audiences? Have you represented their interests? For example, a rural audience might find a weather report more useful than a rundown of share prices at the end of a news bulletin.



### **Is my language right for my audience?**

For news items, have you used a 'neutral' tone? Have you avoided jargon? You should be careful about negative stereotyping with your language. Have you filed your copy to the relevant house style?

### **Have you told the story well?**

Have you thought about structure, and a 'narrative arc'? Have you employed the best possible storytelling techniques throughout? Have you answered the 'W' questions? Have you put the newest, most important details first?

### **Have you avoided amplification of false narratives and 'fake news'?**

Even if you are rebutting a false rumour, beware of amplifying inaccurate claims, or giving 'false equivalence' to disinformation. Frustratingly, conspiracy theorists and climate science deniers will go to great lengths to get their disinformation into 'mainstream media', even in the form of a rebuttal.

### **Is this respectful?**

Have you avoided sensationalism? Have you used respectful language? With your image selection, have you avoided stereotyping? Have you avoided blaming 'outsider' groups, like marginalised minorities and illegal workers?

### **Have I done no harm?**

Have you made sure the people you have spoken to will not suffer? Where necessary, have you negotiated whether to disguise identity to protect your sources?

### **Did your story idea come from a press release or report?**

If it has, other journalists have the story too, so you'll have to work harder to come up with a relevant angle. Many journalists avoid press releases completely.

### **Have you 'sold' your story well?**

Have you trailed and promoted your reporting? If you are a freelance have you thought of different angles and outlets?

Original investigative research is time-consuming, so make sure your effort reaches the biggest possible audience.

### **Has this been legalised?**

Has your editor or a senior colleague reviewed your piece? On certain stories, you may need to get a specialist lawyer involved.



### **Have you got the numbers right?**

Have you understood very big and small numbers? Have you understood statistical variation, probability, and sample size? Have you simplified numbers, and explained figures? Most style guides will ask you to write certain numbers, in most circumstances. It's easier for audiences to take in 'just over a thousand' than it is '1004.76', for example.



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\* indicates that images are used under Unsplash creative commons licensing terms.

# Endnotes

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