‘Pacific journalists training in dealing with psychological trauma when covering climate change’

Post Training Report Submitted September 2017 to

UNESCO/ Government of Malaysia

Submitted by

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Managing Director
Dart Centre Asia Pacific

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Introduction

The safety of journalists is not only about physical wellbeing. Safety extends to protection against impending psychological injury resulting from exposure to violence, conflict, disaster and tragedy. Both psychological safety and physical safety are inextricably linked. Research shows¹ that people who experience psychological trauma may have impaired decision-making processes and take more physical risks than non-trauma affected persons. Further studies show that people who are educated about ‘emotional (trauma) literacy’ are able to change their behaviour and understand the emotional experience of others better². Therefore, education about trauma awareness in times of climate change disasters focuses on the safety of the journalist and also contributes to media professionals understanding the experience of sources better, resulting in more accurate and ethical journalism.


Acknowledgments

We acknowledge the Government of Malaysia and UNESCO Pacific, and thank them for their support in this project.
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Purpose

The purpose of this project was to bring together senior media personnel across all mediums: print, broadcast, visual reporters and management from across the Pacific region to provide specialized training in the negative effects of psychological trauma exposure in relation to climate change disasters and how to deal with it. This was accompanied with training on ethical reporting in the face of traumatic climate change disasters. The project provided participants with specialist skills for reporting in situations where subjects are suffering psychological trauma and its aftermath, whilst developing skills to also protect their emotional wellbeing in the face of climate disasters.

Media professionals in the Pacific region are exposed to high levels of natural disasters. As the only organisation in the region solely dedicated to assisting the media on issues around reporting trauma, Dart Centre Asia Pacific (DCAP) is uniquely placed to utilise its resources, drawing on a global, interdisciplinary network of news professionals, mental health experts, educators and researchers, to assist in raising the awareness of the relationship between trauma, psychological and physical safety and quality ethical reporting.

It is hoped that the group of participants gathered will become a network and peer support group for each other in carrying forward their newly developed skills in psychological safety and trauma reporting.

i. Target Group

The target group was working journalists and senior managers from representative countries across the region to attend six days training. The participants were selected via an application process, which ensured that a diverse group across the Pacific was represented and those with a genuine interest in the topic are chosen. The 15 participants came from Fiji, Samoa, Tonga, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea, Kiribati, Vietnam and Australia, with trainers from Samoa, Australia, Sri Lanka and Fiji/Kiribati.

ii. Developmental and Immediate Objective

The 15 participants were trained in understanding the psychological implications of disasters relating to climate change; trauma awareness and psychological safety techniques to enhance resilience and wellbeing when reporting on tragedy.
Program

A six-day training course for 15 participants from across the region, held on site at Novotel Conference Centre, Nadi, Fiji. Participants both stayed and worked on site at the Novotel. Attendees were from mixed medium, and a combination of staff and freelance journalists brought together to instil essential skills in psychological safety and ethical reporting when covering violence and disaster to do with climate change in the Pacific.

Day 1 – Arrival and introductions. Opening cocktail party provided by Novotel

Day 2 – Creating a safe trauma training environment

- Introducing issues of confidentiality, self-care, emotion regulation
- Resilience strategies

Day 3 – Research on climate reporting in the Pacific

- The latest in climate change science in the Pacific
- Interviewing agricultural climate experts in parallel conference at Novotel

Day 4 – Crafting the trauma story

- Journalism craft and story angles for climate change reporting

Day 5 – The effects of trauma on the source (victims and survivors) – ethical interviewing

- Train-the-trainer for psychological trauma workshops

Day 6 – Taking the message home – where to from here

- Graduation certificates and evaluation

The training was a combination of didactic presentations, presentations by participants of their work and interactive exercises based on actual experiences and scenarios. A mini ‘Train the Trainer’ was included to teach attendees skills to take back a very basic Trauma Safety presentation to their workplace and colleagues.
iv. Output and Achievements

- Participants gained new knowledge never previously discussed amongst their colleagues or newsrooms. Psychological trauma is little identified amongst the media in each of the countries present and this was the first opportunity for all present to begin a conversation around this topic in relation to climate change.

- Participants gained strategies to self-care and maintain resilience in the face of trauma reporting. This will allow the participants to be able to manage their distress, levels of endurance and remain psychologically safe when reporting on disaster and tragedy.

- As the most recent climate change science was presented, participants are more knowledgeable about current climate issues, and therefore more knowledgeable about potential story angles for their communities.

- Participants developed a strong bond over the week-long Fellowship, and left with a feeling of peer support and collegiately both personally and professionally across the region.

v. Challenges

- The major challenges occurred in the planning stages of the Fellowship. Unusually for the Dart Centre the initial applications for the Fellowship program where minimal. However, after an extension of application date and a significant drive for applications a suitable cohort of participants was accepted for the program.

- There is always an attempt to bring an editor/manager and senior journalists together for Dart fellowship programs, however because of the small size of most newsrooms in the Pacific Island nations this was not possible, thus limiting the effectiveness of the message of trauma aware journalism in newsrooms across the region.

vi. Recommendations

That ongoing communication with participants and the Dart Centre should continue, to ensure participants remain supported and maintain their peer support when disaster reporting on climate change issues.

A follow-up training with participants in 18 months occur to build on skills learnt and to refresh knowledge gained. The act of ethical and accurate trauma reporting in the face of disaster is a vital contribution democracy in times of tragedy and vulnerability.
References


Appendix A:

Evaluation and feedback results

ASIA PACIFIC Dart Fellowship 2017 RESULTS

Fellowship Evaluation Questionnaire

We are interested in learning about your opinions after taking part in the Asia Pacific Fellowship programme. We would appreciate your honest input. Please read the following questions carefully. Indicate your level of agreement with each statement by circling the appropriate numbered response to the right, where 1=Strongly Disagree and 7=Strongly Agree. Your name is optional.

As a result of this fellowship:

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<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>I know more about trauma science.</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>I will use resources that I gained at the fellowship.</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>I learned useful ideas or information from my peers’ presentations that I will apply to my work.</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>I will share my trauma-related knowledge and experiences with my professional colleagues and managers.</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>I hope to maintain the community of professional peers from the fellowship.</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>I intend to keep in touch with fellow participants.</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>I feel I will be more comfortable seeking and/or receiving support from my co-workers after dealing with traumatic events.</td>
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12) Giving a presentation during the fellowship was beneficial to me.

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<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Moderately Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Moderately Agree</th>
<th>Agree 4</th>
<th>Strongly agree 8</th>
<th>Not applicable</th>
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13) The most important thing I will take away was:

a) I am going back home with many important learning’s. But most of all is the BDA. I will prepare a plan so that in time I have to report on trauma, I will know where to start, continue on to stop an interview or report.

b) Knowing that peer support is very important to me as a reporter, when it comes to reporting on disasters or tragic events.

c) Knowing how to deal with the victims/survivors of any incidents I know better how to approach them, what to do as a reporter to take care of myself before, during and after the work interviews.

d) Learning about peer support and the BDA preparations.

e) The level of personal care and importance of peer support when I cover tragic & traumatic events

f) The interview technique. The briefing and peer support.

g) Presentation skills. Understanding of trauma in the reporting of news. Techniques to help me deal with trauma reporting.

h) Reading the signs of being traumatic. Self-care.

i) I understood how important it is to take care of yourself when covering traumatic events.

j) Understanding the “red flags” more when the been affected/impacted by reporting on trauma and how to deal with them.
k) **Self-care.** I feel that I now know how to compose myself and to be prepared when covering traumatic events and how to take care of myself after – BDA

l) **The understanding, sharing and support from colleagues and family will be much more possible and effective to a journalist who has to suffer from trauma than a professional assistance in some/many cases.**

14) If there was one topic that I did not learn about/talk about/discuss during the fellowship program that I wish had been covered, that topic would have been:

a) The program has covered all. Thank you.
b) How do I deal with trauma reporting and my personal life/family.
c) None
d) Actually having an audience with a live guest who is a victim/survivor of a traumatic event speak to us.
e) We covered everything important that needed to be covered and it was a holistic approach.
f) **The impact of social media and Facebook on traumatized victims through their bad comments and images which can trigger more trauma.**
g) **Covering traumatic stories from court or court reporting examples: rape cases.**

15) The Fellowship was too long, too short, just right in length (please circle)

a) Absolutely right
b) Just right in length
c) Just right in length
d) I wish it to be a bit longer (2 weeks)
e) Just right in length
f) Just right in length
g) Too long
h) Just right in length
i) Just right in length
j) Perfect length
k) Just right in length
l) Just right in length

16) If I could change one thing about the Fellowship week it would be:

a) No change but to add another week of showing and learning from all you experts.
b) None
c) Make it two weeks
d) The cycle of eating which was too fast and excessive, but my worms were not complaining!
e) Nothing really as everything was executed perfectly.
f) Have my immediate superior – news manager – included on the fellowship.
g) More group discussion

17) Feedback on group facilitators:

a) Group facilitators were excellent facing and talking through groups and one on one exercises gave me a lot of confidence to do job in the future.
b) They were all great. Thanks Dart for choosing this group.
c) Every presentation was very good, informative and interesting and I have learned a lot out of them. Thank you to you all facilitators.
d) All facilitators have been great and I did enjoy their sessions because it was educational and relevant.
e) Excellent. They had a wealth of knowledge and experience to share with us and that just enriched the learning process. Joe
f) They were all amazing.
g) All facilitators were wonderful and insightful
h) Based on their experiences it was a rewarding experience for me to listen to their experiences. They all responded well to answers and questions.
i) They were all excellent and I could relate to some of their experiences.
j) The facilitators were engaging and shared a wealth of information that I will now look forward to utilizing and sharing in my journalistic career.
k) They were all awesome.
l) Their presentations were understandable, concise and practical.

18) Sometimes we like to use quotes by participants to promote our fellowships to potential funders or other journalists – do you have a quote about your experience you would be prepared to make public?
   a) If you gained and are blessed to learn more, share it with other colleagues as they will use it to make the job better and continue sharing’.
   b) This training facilitated a great need in the region and was well over due.
   c) Dart was very useful.
   d) Incredibly enriching experience!
19) Which of the following journalistic areas do you work in? (Please circle whichever answer best applies to you)

Print 1
Camera 3
Online 5
Broadcast 7
Appendix B. Sample of Participants’ certificates

Dart Centre Asia Pacific Climate Change Fellowship 2017

Presented to: Buraieta Toakare

In recognition of being awarded a Dart Centre Fellowship. The fellowship was held in Nadi, Fiji, on August 28 – September 1, 2017.

Dr Cait McMahon OAM
Managing Director
Dart Centre Asia Pacific

Lagipoiva Cherelle Jackson
Climate Change Trainer
Dart Centre Asia Pacific

Presented on: Thursday, August 31, 2017

P. O. Box 580, Elwood, Victoria 3184, AUSTRALIA | caitmcmahon@dartsapac.org | Telephone: (01) 415 131 947
Appendix D. Training Agenda

Dart Centre Asia Pacific Climate Change Fellowship Program

Nadi, Fiji – August 27 – September 1.

2017

Sunday, August 27 – Arrival cocktail and nibbles

8.30am - Monday, August 28 — Start of program –

- Introduction of team
- Housekeeping
- Outline of program
- Safety boundaries
- Why journalism and trauma?

- Appreciative enquiry – interviews
- Appreciative enquiry feedback

- Morning tea break

- Understanding trauma in our own cultures
- Trauma science – what we know from Western research

12.30 – Lunch
1.30 - Fellows presentations –

The impact on trauma and disaster reporting on the journalist – maintaining psychological resilience

- Felipe
- Pham
- Taremon
- Rachael

3.00 - Afternoon tea

- Resilience strategies for in the field

4.30 pm - Finish

6.30pm – Official opening dinner

- M.C – Lagapoiva Cherelle Jackson
- Welcoming remarks – Mr. Amantha Perera – Dart Centre Asia Pacific Regional Coordinator
- Keynote address – H.E. Osnat Lubrani, UN Resident Coordinator, Pacific
- Closing remarks – Dr Cait McMahon PhD, OAM – Managing Director, Dart Centre Asia Pacific

Tuesday, August 29

8.30am – Start

- Psychological self-care in practice
- Climate change reporting in the Pacific – the historical context

10.00 – Morning tea

10.15 – The latest climate science in the Pacific – University of the South Pacific – guest presenter

11.15 – Fellows presentations –

The impact on trauma and disaster reporting on the journalist – maintaining resilience

- Joe
- Buraieta
- Meritiana
- Finau
12.30 – Lunch

1.30 – Resilient communities and climate change – University of the South Pacific - Guest

2.15 – Fellows presentations – Reporting ethically on our communities – the impact on the victim and survivors of our stories

  o Heather
  o Hieu Thao
  o Wame

3.15 – afternoon tea

3.30 – Where is the story in climate change?

4.30 – Finish

6.30 – Senior fellows only dinner with participants – Cherelle, Gary and Amantha

**Wednesday, August 30**

8.30 – Start

  – Self-care in practice

  – Crafting the trauma story in disaster

10.30 – Morning tea

10.45 – The three acts of trauma reporting

12.30 – Lunch

1.30 – Fellows presentations –

Reporting ethically on our communities – the impact on the victim and survivors of our stories

  o Elenoa
  o Gregory
  o Alana
  o Moffat
2.45 – Afternoon tea
3.00 – Ethical interviewing of people affected by trauma
4.30 – Finish

Free night on your own

**Thursday, August 31**

8.30 – Start
– Self-care in practice
– Ethical interviewing – Getting it Right DVD
10.30 – Morning tea
10.45 – Peer Support / Social Support and duty of care
12.30 – Lunch

1.30 - Train the Trainer – facilitating trauma session in the workplace / for others
3.00 – Afternoon tea
3.15 – Train the Trainer continued
4.30 – Finish
6.30 – Final closing dinner

**Friday, September 1**

8.30 – Start
– Self-care in practice
– Where to from here?
  • Taking the message home
- Evaluation
–Presentation of certificates

12.00 – Close of program and lunch
Appendix E. DCAP Training Material (handout topics)

Children in Trauma

1. Age related approach
2. Inform consent
3. Consult experts
4. Identity protected
5. Inform of support available
6. Different approach then adults/many visits maybe
7. Domestic violence – let them come to you
8. Check & recheck the data
9. Avoid sensationalism
Trauma & Ethics

1) Protecting your source (identifying them)
2) Balancing your ethics while covering trauma/victims
3) Be sensitive while covering victims
4) Respect your sources (be polite/let them speak)
5) Be ready to receive reactions of victims
6) Controlling your emotions (shouldn’t effect your efficiency/work)
7) Acting as a source of communication!
8) Peer support
9) Respecting victims privacy
10) B.D.A techniques
11) Check and balance from the news desk
12) Be neutral/unbiased in your stories
13) Do not sensationalise/be transparent
14) Ethical trends bring credibility to your work!!
Tip Sheet – Covering Victims

1. Listen, don’t judge
2. Don’t preach
3. Don’t impose your views
4. Let the stories unfold
5. Show humaneness, compassion
6. Don’t romanticize poverty
7. Show, don’t tell
8. Inform consent/document agreement
9. Be appropriate
10. Leave bread crumbs
11. Take care
Links below of material provided on USB sticks to each participant:

http://www.dartcenter.org/content/best-practices-in-trauma-reporting-23

http://www.dartcenter.org/content/covering-children-trauma

http://www.dartcenter.org/content/reporting-war-0

http://www.dartcenter.org/content/tragedies-journalists-6
Appendix F. Photos
The 2017 Dart Asia Pacific Fellows, who will convene for a week-long programme in Fiji.

--END OF REPORT--