

Digital technologies and the extractive sector: promoting journalism in resource-rich countries by Anya Schiffrin and Erika Rodrigues

Written for the GIJC in October 2015

Revised in February, 2016

Abstract:

At the GIJN Meeting in Rio in 2013 we presented a paper on data sets, websites and tools now available for journalists who want to cover oil, gas and mining and we discussed the critical role that journalists can play in bridging the power asymmetries that exist between large, well-financed corporations and governments on one side and civil society and NGOs on the others. Since that time we have begun looking at examples of how tech savvy journalists and citizen journalists have been able to promote accountability and corporate governance as well as cases in which journalism about oil, gas and mining has had an impact. This paper argues that the promise of digital technology and data journalism has not yet been fulfilled and looks at why there is still a dearth of indepth reporting on the extractives.

Introduction: digital technology and reporting on the extractive sector

Around the world governments and companies derive vast amounts of revenue from extraction of natural resources including oil, gas, coal and through the mining for minerals. The question of how those revenues are allocated and spent is one that affects citizens of extractive sector countries and so a large transparency movement has arisen in recent years.

It has long been hoped that increased transparency would help solve some of the most intractable problems caused by government and corporate extraction of oil, gas and minerals. For example, it was hoped that corruption, misuse of funds and environmental damage could be stopped or at least lessened by public disclosure. Citizens and NGOs would be able to step in and mobilize and stop some of the worst abuses. Across the continent of Africa, NGOs, activists, citizens have mounted efforts aimed at boosting corporate social responsibility, transparency, creating shared value, and bringing pressure to bear. International organizations like Global

Witness (based in London), The Natural Resource Governance Institute (originally funded by George Soros and the Open Society Foundation and based in New York) and activists from Human Rights Watch such as Arvind Ganesa, Lisa Misol, and Nisha Varia and Ian Gary from Oxfam, to mention a few, also play a major role in supporting local civil society groups that have pushed for greater transparency about the allocation of extractive-sector revenues. These activists hope that transparency will help promote government accountability and prevent misuse and theft of such revenues so they can be shared fairly and help countries develop and benefit ordinary citizens.¹

In this scenario, the media has a role to play in the campaign for transparency. By exposing the activities of corporates and governments and doing investigative reporting that can name and shame wrongdoers, promote accountability and keep pressure on government and corporations to follow the law and behave responsibly. Journalists in Africa are also engaged in this subject, even though they are often outmanned by powerful governments and wealthy companies. Ten years ago the topic was considered a bit obscure. But in 2014, the Forum on African Investigative Reporting, which held its annual conference in Johannesburg, was dedicated to the theme of covering oil, gas and mining – “Power Reporting”. The event brought together journalists from all over the world for a series of panels that showcasing investigative journalism being done on the extractive sector and giving tips on how to do better reporting on the subject.

We’ve been strong advocates of investigative reporting on the extractives and believe that social media, big data and use of the many new websites providing information about the extractives can help journalists do in-depth reporting. Journalists often lack sources in government and industry, ties to NGOs that work on extractives and face pressures of time and space that limit what they are able to do. We have argued that journalists should use digital technology to find sources and information that governments and corporations are often reluctant to share. We’ve recommended a number of

¹ Not just in Africa but in many other parts of the world. In Burma the Alliance for Accountability and Transparency includes Pyoe Pin, a co-funder of the Yangon Journalism School, along with OSF and Omidyar Network. The school collaborates with EITI and does training on extractive industries as part of its investigative journalism training. Even so “very few people are doing investigative journalism in general, much less on extractive industries,” writes Burma expert Jane Mcelhone, a former OSF staffer who works with Burmese journalists.

different websites that can help journalists better cover the extractives. Our findings, however, suggest that the major use journalists make of digital technology is to disseminate their findings. It is less common for journalists to use social media to build and engage with communities and gather tips from whistleblowers or citizen journalists or to carry out ambitious cross-border reporting projects involving many journalists.

Moreover it is clear that there has not been as a dramatic rise in investigative reporting on the extractives, as many transparency activists had hoped, so this paper will discuss why and propose some solutions.

Accordingly, this paper is divided into six sections.

- 1) This introduction
- 2) Short background section on the extractives/resource curse
- 3) The recent push for more transparency
- 4) An explanation of what recent pressures are constraining coverage
- 5) Solutions and trade-offs
- 6) Conclusion

The resource curse

Despite the recent decline in commodity prices, governments around the world depend on revenues from oil, gas and mining in order to finance their budgets. In Africa, eight governments derive more than 50% of their budget revenue from oil, gas and mining, potentially more due to inconsistencies in financial reporting.²

African governments in resource-rich countries have, more often than not, become dependent on the extractives sector for economic revenue if not growth. Findings of the last 10 years of oil and gas fields in Ghana, Uganda, Mozambique, and Tanzania, for example, have led to the raised hopes by local that these countries will prosper and new opportunities created by the sector will raise standards of living for all.

Instead, the reality in resource-rich countries in Africa is usually more aligned with the case of Nigeria where corruption as well as oil theft and sabotage, has led to an estimated loss of 7 billion dollars of oil revenue

² See Economist Intelligence Unit. <http://country.eiu.com/All>.

annually since 1973 (International Energy Agency 2012). Being the 10th largest oil producer in the world, oil revenues make up for 70% of total government revenue in Nigeria. Another example is South Africa. Mining continues to be a key industry to the country, contributing 18% to the GDP and employing more than 1 million people, directly and indirectly (Mining Intelligence Database n.d.). Meanwhile, the overall unemployment rate is still at 24.7% and 31.3% of the population lives below the poverty line, which among other factors, have led to the worse conflicts since the end of apartheid, mining workers, their unions, and their employers, three of the largest platinum producers in the world (CIA World Factbook n.d.).

There are also extreme cases such as that of Congo, Liberia and Sierra Leone, where funding from so-called “blood diamonds” or “conflict minerals” has fueled decades of civil wars. In short, governments often misuse the wealth that comes from the extraction of oil, gas and minerals and even countries that have relatively new discoveries, such as Ghana and Mozambique, are making the same mistakes as those of Guinea, Nigeria and Angola.

The promise of big data and increased transparency

Interest in oil, gas and mining has been accompanied by a global trend towards transparency in the sector, so there is now far more data available than ever before, including data produced by members of the EITI.

There has also been a push from the international community, including from the United Nations and the European Union and the G-20 in the areas of transparency, open contracts and tax evasion. In June 2015, Canada issued a new transparency Act aimed at oil, gas and mining and requiring “affected entities to report any payments made in relation to the commercial development of oil, gas or minerals during a financial year that exceed either the amount prescribed by regulation or, if no amount is prescribed, \$100,000 of the following nature and whether monetary or “in kind”:³

In the Dodd Frank Act in the US that was passed in 2010, Section 1504 requires companies to disclose payments above a certain level to

³ See the website of Stikeman Elliot. June 2.

<http://www.canadiansecuritieslaw.com/2015/06/articles/securities-law-compliance/canada-proclaims-the-extractive-sector-transparency-measures-act-into-force/>

governments for oil, gas and minerals. Section 1502 requires disclosure about conflict minerals. US companies have fought back against these laws but still important for journalists to know about them and can affect what happens in other countries. All of these laws have reach far beyond the countries where they were passed as they will affect corporate activities all over the world.

I. Why the dearth of deep coverage

However, despite the new legislation requiring transparency there has not been an upsurge in quality reporting on oil, gas and mining in the last two years. Indeed, one analyst, Arvind Ganesa from Human Rights Watch says that the amount of in-depth coverage has fallen in many cases.

“Coverage of these issues has declined in the last year or two. There are a number of factors behind this, including what is going on in the world generally. Coverage on industry has declined generally and in Nigeria the bulk of coverage has been about the elections and Boko Haram. Reporting on the Middle East has been about ISIS and the US is emerging as a big oil producer and so interest in foreign oil has lessened.”

There is, of course, a difference between the amount of coverage and the amount of in-depth quality coverage. Many media outlets publish short stories that chronicle short news events such as commodity price movements, the opening and closing of a mine, the signing of a contract, a corporate donation such as funding for a school or hospital in a mining area. There is plenty of coverage of staged events at which corporate executives and government officials visit the location where extraction is taking place. But there is insufficient analytical reporting as to the allocation and spending of revenues and the problems that extraction can bring such as environmental damage, dislocation of large groups of people, corruption, prolonged conflict. A 2007-2009 study done by students at Columbia University analyzed 788 articles about the extractives that appeared in Nigerian, Ghanaian and Ugandan media found that a vast majority of stories used only government or business sources (Behrman, Canonge, Purcell, and Schiffrin). News announcements, press releases, and crisis coverage were the most common and there was virtually no investigative reporting.

The role journalists can play

A comprehensive paper written by published by the World Bank Institute (Stapenhurst, 2000) the author, Rick Stapenhurst, provides a detailed taxonomy of the effect that media coverage can have on anti-corruption efforts. Although the problems caused and exacerbated by the extractive sector are broader and more diverse than simply corruption, much of what Stapenhurst describes can be more broadly applied to investigative and campaigning reporting more generally. Stapenhurst divides media impact into tangible and intangible effects. By covering incidences of official corruption, journalists can act as “scarecrows” and deter corruption by creating a climate in which officials know they may be singled out as being corrupt. Omoyele Sowere, the founder of *SaharaReporters* says that after his site published reports in 2013 about a corrupt official who used government funds to buy herself two bulletproof BMWs, he heard that other officials decided to return their BMWs.⁴ As well, Stapenhurst writes that by calling and asking questions, journalists can “pre-empt” corruption as officials or companies realize that bad publicity is imminent. This may prompt them to change their practices. One of the authors of this paper experienced this in Vietnam when making calls to a company about a factory that paid below minimum wage prompted the company to raise wages even before the story appeared in the *Asian Wall Street Journal* and on Dow Jones Newswires. Economists Alexander Dyck and Luigi Zingales have described the name and shame effect bringing about changes in companies worried about reputational risk. (Dyck and Zingales 2002)

⁴ Author correspondence, April 11, 2014. Email from Sowore: “Yes, we heard from several sources that several ministers that bought BMWs using government funds returned their loot to a particular auto dealer (COSCHARIS) notorious for those backhanded auto deals. We had no means of confirming this, but certainly our reporting brought to focus the fact that Coshcaris engaged in conspiring with government ministers through fraudulent import waivers to buy luxury cars using government funds. We also found out that several aviation agencies bought luxury cars with banks loans at inflated rates. All the aviation's directors have been fired as a result.”

Media coverage can also prompt government investigations or spur regulators to act.

There are also intangible ways that media can help create a climate that is conducive to cleaner government and corporate practices. Depending on how the coverage is framed, it can bolster the legitimacy of government agencies fighting corruption, raise awareness and provoke citizen outrage. However, journalist and journalism trainer Nick Pythian cautions against the practice unless journalists are able to provide evidence and protect themselves in case of push back. “The Name and Shame culture casts the journalist in the role of judge and jury. It can encourage gung-ho, lazy or sloppy reporting that points fingers with no real evidence. Such reports can distort rather than inform. They can form, feed or reinforce prejudice. Journalists steeped in this culture can be oblivious to the libel risk or recklessly ignore it! Defamation can, however, be a calculated risk that journalists and media houses sometimes have to take to move things forward, but anyone encouraging them to do this has a responsibility to ensure that they have the tools to understand and to manage that risk.”

Lack of Impact

There are of course limits to what the media can do. Just providing information is not always enough (Lindstedt and Naurin 2010). Indeed, constant coverage can overload citizens and regulators or make them feel the problem is too big to solve:

“We assumed that transparency would improve accountability and government; that giving people the numbers and details would drive them to action. It has not had that effect so far. The public still feels powerless and certain that the people in power will steal their money and there is little can be done about it. That’s the dilemma for journalists,” says one transparency activist.

“Even countries like Ghana which is fairly open and democratic have not had much better outcomes in resource revenue management despite good laws. Among the mature oil and gas producers, Qatar and the UAE have made big strides in modernizing their countries in recent years. Some like Equatorial Guinea got so little from their oil contracts that it’s embarrassing. The corrupt ruling clique, however, has done very well,” she adds.

Research done by the authors that looked at campaigning journalism over the last 150 years in developing countries, suggests that for media coverage to have an impact several conditions have to be in place: there needs to be repeated and prolonged coverage of institutions and officials that are responsive to criticism and feel some sense of accountability. Closed regimes and media systems in which government is used to suppressing information make it difficult for exposure reporting by the media to have an impact. Similarly, media reporting is most effective when there are other segments of society or organizations working towards change (Schiffrin 2014). In that case, media reporting can reinforce existing campaigns by bolstering public support or targeting officials who are in a position to act. However when power structures are entrenched and there are financial incentives at stake even the most trenchant media coverage may not have much of an effect.

In this context it may be useful to consider a paper published by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social affairs “Role of media in curbing corruption: the case of Uganda under President Yoweri K. Museveni during the “no-party” system (Nogara 2009). Nogara studied media coverage of corruption including corruption in the electoral process, influence peddling and misuse of public funds. In the years 1986 to 2006, Nogara found periods when the media--particularly outlets that were not aligned with the government--reported extensively on corruption. Some of their stories led to institutional changes. *The Monitor*'s exposure on the government's poor handling of its divestiture from the Uganda Central Bank led the establishment of inquiry commission and subsequently to the prosecution of a former bank manager. Ultimately though the government began cracking down on media, some of the senior journalists left the profession and the takeover of *The Monitor* by Kenya's Nation Group “cast some doubts on the capacity of private media to act as a watchdog on corruption in a hostile political environment and in a small media market with few independent sources of financing.”

Within the extractive sector countries, activists and journalists note that there is often a general lack of investigative reporting and on the extractive sector in particular. There are many reasons for this lack of coverage.

It's Hard to find Data

Although more information is available, it's often difficult to understand or use in reporting news stories. When numbers are shared, it's often not in a consistent way. Different institutions, governments and companies publish different data, in different formats. Information is therefore not easily comparable or even complete. They can also disclose overwhelming amounts of unusable data, a strategy well-known as a data dump with the intent to complicate the analysis of information that might shed light on what companies are doing or the terms at which they have been able to obtain the resources.

Nor do journalists find the data easy to use. Legacy media (i.e. newspapers, radio, television) in Africa has generally not been able to take on the large extractive sector companies or investigate their activities and finances in an informed and detailed way. Poorly paid and poorly trained, unfamiliar with the complex and technical information that solid coverage of the extractive sector requires, African journalists have found it difficult to do meaningful reporting on the sector's effects on the environment, economy, and society.

Activists who work on transparency and the extractives say that part of their job is to analyze the numbers and share their findings with journalists. But for many reasons, groups like NRGI, Oxfam and Global Witness, Human Rights Watch have not made full use of the data now available. In other cases, companies and governments have refused to reveal what they spend, the transfers given to government bodies and the contracts that have been signed. US corporates have fought hard against the Cardin-Lugar amendment of the Dodd Frank Law provisions 1502 and 1504: "Disclosure of Payments by Resource Extraction Issuers", which requires them to report their payments country by country and project by project.⁵

New technology, including databases and social media platforms, such as Twitter and Facebook, should theoretically be able to help journalists report on the extractives. By facilitating an unprecedented level of connectivity in real time and enabling a vast range of people (or at least people with Internet access) to communicate, journalists should be able to dramatically broaden the number of sources that they reach, communicate with and cite. This, in turn, should help improve the quality of journalism produced on subjects that require multiple sourcing and access to documents and other secondary sources.

⁵ See Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act, Title XV.

Technology, of course, is not a cure-all; but can help counter the geographical barriers, resource constraints, pressure from government and lack of knowledge and sources that have in the past impeded exposure journalism on the extractives.

Freedom of the press

Another reason that journalists have not always extensively covered oil, gas and mining is that in many countries pressure on journalists has increased dramatically. Azeri journalist Khadija Ismayilova, who has reported extensively on corruption in Azerbaijan was in September 2015 sentenced to seven and a half years in prison following a politically motivated trial. The Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty station where she was worked was raided and closed by the government. Many of her colleagues have fled the country while others work under duress to report online.⁶

Angolan journalist Rafael Marques was arrested in 1999 for a book he wrote that year titled “The Lipstick of the Dictatorship”. After his release he wrote “Blood Diamonds: Corruption and Torture in Angola” in 2011, accusing private security companies and diamond mining companies of routinely killing and terrorizing villagers deemed to have interfered in mining operations in Northern Angola, with the complicity of the government (Marques 2011).

He subsequently filed a criminal complaint with the attorney-general of Angola against nine top Angolan generals, part of the directorship of the two diamond mining companies he accused in his book. He was sued for \$1.2m and faced nine years of jail time in Angola, on nine charges of defamation. He was pardoned in 2015 but then given a six-month suspended sentence of two-years.⁷

⁶ See RFE/RL. <http://www.rferl.org/content/release-azerbaijan-sentences-khadija-ismayilova-seven-and-a-half-years/27220825.html>

One day before Ismayilova’s arrest, Rahmiz Mehtiyev, senior adviser to President Aliyev, [published](#) a 60-page tirade accusing RFE/RL journalists of treason. Three weeks later, on December 26, Azeri state agents [raided and sealed](#) RFE/RL’s Baku bureau, seizing documents, corporate stamps, and equipment. They then [interrogated](#) more than 20 members of its staff. The bureau is [closed](#) and, according to the prosecutor’s office, remains under investigation in connection with RFE/RL’s status as a “foreign agent.”

RFE/RL continues to gather news and report inside Azerbaijan for its website, www.azadliq.org. Several of its employees have fled the country in fear and others work under duress, subject to interrogations, frozen bank accounts, and threats.

⁷ “Journalist Rafael Marques Given Two Year Suspended Sentence In Angolan Defamation Trial”, *Forbes*,

Germain Cyrille Ngota Ngota, a Cameroonian journalist, was arrested along with two other journalists in Yaounde in 2010 for investigating corruption in the state owned oil company SNH. Two months later, Ngota died while in prison. Calls for investigation into his death resulted in the establishment of a government inquiry that many considered inadequate. The official cause of death was reported as complications related to HIV.⁸

“The space for free expression is narrower and narrower and that is having an impact on reporting,” says Lisa Misol from Human Rights Watch.

The arrest of journalists covering oil, gas and mining sends a powerful signal to reporters that this is dangerous terrain and that such investigative reporting should not be attempted. As such it can have a chilling effect on coverage, well beyond the arrest and intimidation of one or two journalists.

Internal pressures

Journalists surveyed say that they simply don't have the time or the resources to research long investigative pieces about the extractive sector. This in part reflects newsroom priorities as owners and editors may feel that news about oil, gas and mining are not of interest to their audiences. As well, writing about the extractives requires well-trained and experienced journalists who are better-paid and may also require travel to areas where extraction takes place.

Anny Osabute, a journalist from Joy FM in Ghana writes that:

“Media owners don't see the need to invest in reporters who will specialise in beats that focus on the extractive sector. They are happy giving airtime to needless political discourse, than discussing the very key issues that affect development. The only time a media organisation will devote a good amount of the airtime or cover pages talking about the extractive sector, is when something terrible happens-for example an illegal or legal miner(s) is trapped in a pit during operations. It will get all the attention it deserves. But even with that, the story, if one is like, will be a sub-headline. The front page will be devoted to a “meet and greet tour” conducted by the president” (Author correspondence September 2015).

As the media faces financial difficulties in many countries due to the lack of advertising and circulation declines, the rise of digital technology has

<http://www.forbes.com/sites/kerryadolan/2015/05/28/journalist-rafael-marques-given-two-year-suspended-sentence-in-angolan-defamation-trial/>

⁸ See Committee to Protect Journalists. <https://www.cpj.org/2012/02/attacks-on-the-press-in-2011-in-africa-a-return-of.php>

not solved the problems of financing even as it has made gathering and dissemination of information easier. Advertising rates are low for online advertising and many independent websites are staffed by volunteers and lack the funds to pay for investigative reporting.

Noted oil reporter Ken Silverstein who has worked for *The Los Angeles Times*, *Harpers* and is author of *The Secret World of Oil* (Verso 2014) turned to crowdsourcing in 2015 in the hope of funding a story of a Bulgarian-born fixer, Alexander Mrtitchev, working with the dictator of the oil-rich country Kazakhstan. In an attempt to raise \$15,555.55, Silverstein advertised on Byline a crowd sourcing website for news reporting.

Says Silverstein: "It's a nightmare asking friends and family for money, but it helps you find out who your real friends are. This is the first time I've done it, I never would have dreamed of doing it before but journalism nowadays is a total disaster. It's an old story -- Craigslist, etc, killed the old model and people just don't want to pay for quality journalism. Partly it's because, perhaps, some people just don't have the money to pay for it but the bigger problem is that people who do have money just can't be bothered to take 5 minutes to support investigative journalism. It's pathetic. So in terms of the wave of the future, in my experience it's too early to tell but the results thus far have not been encouraging." (Author correspondence, September 2015)

The News Cycle

As well as the difficulties finding information and the extreme pressures on journalism freedom news about oil, gas and mining, is being overshadowed by other regional events. Nigerian media has been covering the elections and Boko Haram and the political instability in the Middle East including the war against ISIS and conflicts in Syria, and these important stories have taken a vast amount of space and attention, displacing reporting on the extractives. The US has stepped up oil production and so readers are less interested in news about extractives overseas. The drop in oil prices and China's economic slowdown which will affect their imports of oil, gas and minerals may also make covering the extractives less of newsroom priority although in fact it should give rise to stories about how commodity producing countries will fare as their exports decrease.

Solutions

In short, the perennial pressures of financing, lack of training and soft and hard pressures have all contributed to the dearth of strong, in-depth reporting on the extractives sector. The pressures upon journalists are many and compared to the governments and companies they cover, media houses have little clout.

For this reason we recommend harnessing all the institutions and tools available that can help rectify the power asymmetries. In a globalized and connected world, there are many ways to form cross border alliances that can help reporting continue even when one journalist or media outlet is silenced.

Dissemination

Journalists working in countries with repressive media systems should consider sharing information with foreign reporters based there or abroad who cover the same topics. Interviews we have done show that leaking to foreign journalists can be a way to get a story out which can be re-reported at home. Similarly, journalists who are barred from reporting controversial news can blog about it anonymously or leak it to a website that covers the same subject. This has been done to great effect in many countries including Nigeria and Vietnam.

Teaming up with organizations like the Global Journalism Investigative Network or SCOOP or the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting project, the Global Journalism Investigative Network and the 100 Reporters project is essential because they connect different groups to each other and help journalists report stories across international borders. Large stories like the Wikileaks documents or the Luxembourg Leaks stories about tax evasion which was produced by a consortium led by the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists are best done by groups of journalists in different countries. There is safety in numbers, as the old saying goes. The new emphasis at Berlin-based Transparency International on “Grand Corruption” may provide another avenue for collaboration on stories about the extractives. The new chair, José Ugaz, says that investigative journalists played a key role in exposing the corruption of Peruvian president Fujimori and Ugaz expects that TI will work more closely with journalists in planned efforts to combat Grand Corruption which reaches to the highest levels of government, finance and real estate.

In many repressive regimes there is space for business journalism (think Vietnam, Zimbabwe). Often governments that frown on investigative reporting will give more latitude to journalists who write on business and

foreign investment. Stories about oil, gas and mining are very much in this category and journalists can often get away publishing stories if they are framed as business pieces.

It is clear to us that there is a role for NGOs and civil societies to play in promoting coverage of the extractive sector. There are of course trade-offs as safeguarding editorial independence should remain a priority. Weakened media is not good for society and donors should be careful to be transparent about their actions. However, there is a long tradition of NGO and civil society involvement in investigative reporting. Many of the great labor stories and investigations into human rights abuses such as ED Morel's work on the brutality of conditions in the Congo and the reporting on labor conditions in the cocoa plantations of Sao Tome and Principe were written with the help of missionaries and anti-slavery groups (Schiffrin 2014) (Hochschild). Today too human rights groups write and disseminate news of atrocities around the world (Powers 2015), while companies and governments have long put out data and information that favors their own interests.

NGOs involved in the extractive sector can assist journalists in a number of ways. Experts at organizations like Oxfam and NRGF can retrieve and analyze data available online about corporate spending on oil, gas and mining and transfers to governments and release this information to the media. NGOs can also analyze information that is publicly available about the kinds of contracts that are being signed and make country-by-country comparisons that are of interest to the media. They will need to do more of the analysis and share their findings with journalists in order to disseminate crucial information about the negative effects of extraction and the misuse of revenue that results. Says Nick Pythian who does journalism trainings for Thomson Reuters and has worked with the Natural Resource Governance Institute on trainings in Africa says that "However passionate a journalist might be about the subject, tracking illicit finance or investigating whether a country gets value-for-money from an oil or a mining project takes time and often specialist analytical skills that they just don't have. NGOs can encourage this kind of reporting and stimulate public debate by looking at the available data themselves, crunching the numbers, highlighting inconsistencies, and then releasing their findings to reporters. Any investigative reporter worth their salt will not simply take what the NGO says at face value and will want to dig deeper, and look to explain who did what and why, but at least they can start their investigation with something concrete to go on."

A large proportion of media development assistance is spent on trainings, many of which are short term (Schiffrin) (Colmery, Diaz, et al) In order to make the training more attractive to busy journalists who find it hard to leave their offices, organizations that organize training can make sure that each day results in a newsworthy story that can be filed to an editor back at the media outlet and published.

Groups that organize trainings can also make it easier for journalists to attend by ensuring that journalists have some free time during site visits to work on other stories that their editors are interested in. Journalists in low-income countries often accept press trips because they don't have the opportunity to travel otherwise. Making sure the reporters are free to report independently on the subjects their newsroom prioritizes would help protect journalism independence while making such trips attractive.

MASC in Mozambique has also helped find interns who can substitute for journalists who are away training courses for extended periods of time. This kind of effort can free up experienced journalists to do the training and improve their skills while also giving a chance to a less-experienced person who wants on-the-job experience.

As always, making sure there is mentoring and follow up after the training course--as NRCI and other organizations do--can help ensure that the lessons are not lost and result in improvements in newsroom practices as well as better quality reporting by journalists who have received training.

Navigating dangerous terrain is difficult and intimidating. But history shows us that brave journalists take risks and do often have impact.

It is also clear that the rise of the internet has made dissemination of news far easier. Think of *Sahara Reporters* or the *Premium Times* in Nigeria or the South African website, *Daily Maverick*.

The *Daily Maverick's* coverage of the mining massacre in Marikana scooped the official South African media and exposed the news that 34 striking miners were killed in close range while they were fleeing the police.⁹ Its story was published on August 30, 2012 and was part of hundreds of stories the *Daily Maverick* published on the subject. Editor Branko Brkic says that it was "old fashioned reporting that got the story.

⁹ See Marinovich, *Daily Maverick*, August 30, 2012

<http://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2012-08-30-the-murder-fields-of-marikana-the-cold-murder-fields-of-marikana#.VfQkRhHBzRY>

You had to go there and find out what was happening and ask questions not just sit at a desk or go to a police press conference”.

But although it was traditional reporting done by an experienced journalists who spent two weeks investigating in Marikana, it was the internet that helped that story go viral in South Africa. “You have to believe in the journalism not whether people are reading from a piece of paper or on a screen.”

Says Editor Branco Brkic:

“We published the Greg's breaking story on 30th August 2012, two weeks after the massacre. But we remained in Marikana area for months and years after that - we broke many more stories about the massacre, and subsequent intimidation campaign by the police and army. We covered extensively Farlam Commission and have become a news organization that continues to cover Marikana and the continuing sad state of the affairs there. A very interesting thing happened in the meantime: public interest in Marikana almost died down, but we continue to lead with it - we would be failing in our duty if we follow the public's lead and stop talking about, even as the deployment of our scarce resources on other, sexier issues, may bring more readers. In short, our relationship with Marikana was more of a lifetime connection rather than a two week investigation.” (Author correspondence September 2015)

Briki's comments point to the need for newsroom commitment to these stories. It is not enough to publish once. For journalists to have an impact, they must publish repeatedly about a single topic.

CONCLUSION

Digital technology has not helped journalists overcome all of the obstacles that constrain reporting on the extractives. Corruption, misuse of funding, the distortion of political processes, violence and environmental damage are entrenched problems that underfunded and under trained journalists cannot tackle on their own. But consistent and critical reporting that investigates and analyzes these problems and is not afraid to name names can have an impact.

There is a role that can be played many people and groups in the media ecosystem. NGOs and campaigning organizations have long played a role in helping journalists bring the worst abuses to light. More than 100 years ago E.D. Morel received information from eyewitnesses including missionaries and printed their first-hand accounts in the *West African Mail*,

helping and brought the abuses of King Leopold's management of the Congo to a world stage (Hochschild). Groups like Oxfam, Global Witness, Human Rights Watch and the Natural Governance Resource Institute have partnered with local organizations and journalists to reveal some of the excesses and human rights violations created by inflows of extractive sector wealth. But more needs to be done to make sure this important story is not forgotten.

Acknowledgements:

The authors would like to thank their interviewees: Arvind Ganesa, Karen Lissakers, Lisa Misol, Nick Phythian and others. We are grateful for research assistance provided by Ryan Powell, Katherine Sullivan and Danfeng Wu.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Burgis, Tom. 2015. *The Looting Machine: Warlords, Oligarchs, Corporations, Smugglers, and the Theft of Africa's Wealth*. New York: Public Affairs.

Colmery, Ben, et al. 2009. *There Will Be Ink: A Study of Journalism Training and the Extractive Industries in Ghana, Nigeria and Uganda*. New York: Revenue Watch Institute and Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs. Available: <http://policydialogue.org/images/uploads/There%20Will%20Be%20Ink%281%29.pdf>. Accessed September 15, 2013.

Canonge, James, and Matthew Purcell. "Watchdog or Lapdog: Limits of African Media Coverage of the Extractive Sector." In *Initiative for Policy Dialogue*. Accessed September 14, 2013.

Central Intelligence Agency. *The World Factbook*. Available: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/index.html>

Dyck, Alexander, and Luigi Zingales. 2002. "The Corporate Governance Role of the Media." In *The Right to Tell: The Role of Mass Media in Economic Development*, ed. Roumeen Islam. Washington, D.C.: World Bank.

- Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative. 2011. "Extracting Data: An Overview of EITI Reports Published 2005–2011." In *EITI*. Available: https://eiti.org/files/2012-02-10_Extracting_Data_0.pdf. Accessed April, 2015.
- Hochschild, Adam. 1998. *King Leopold's Ghost*. New York: Houghton Mifflin.
- Lindstedt, Catharina, and Daniel Naurin. 2010. "Transparency is not Enough: Making Transparency Effective in Reducing Corruption." In *International Political Science Review* 31.
- Marques, Rafael. 2011. *Diamantes de Sangue; Corrupção e Tortura em Angola*. Lisbon: Tinta da China: 240.
- Metcalf, Daniel. 2013. *Blue Dahlia, Black Gold: A Journey Into Angola*. London: Hutchinson.
- Nogara, Monica. 2009. "Role of Media in Curbing Corruption: the Case of Uganda under President Yoweri K. Museveni During the 'No-party' System." In *UN/DESA Working Paper*. Available: <http://ssrn.com/abstract=1338167>
- Powers, Matthew. 2015. "The New Boots on the Ground: NGOs in the Changing Landscape of International News." In *Journalism: Theory, Practice and Criticism*.
- Schiffrin, Anya. 2014. *Global Muckracking: 100 Years of Investigative Journalism from around the World*. New York: New Press.
- Silverstein, Ken. 2014. *The Secret World of Oil*. New York: Verso.
- Stapenhurst, Rick. 2000. "The Media's Role in Curbing Corruption." In *World Bank Institute WBI Working Papers*.
- "The Dutch Disease." *The Economist*. 1977. November 26, 1977: 82-88.