

Introduction

Dear Journalist,

This booklet is a compilation of tips to help you navigate the challenges of environment reporting. Climate Women Media Action champions impactful reporting through capacity building and making information resources available. This particular guide will give you practical advice on how to overcome the hurdles you face, from both professionals and experienced journalists.

This booklet was compiled with the generous support of DW Akademie and the German Cooperation.

Enjoy!

About CWMA

Climate Women Media Action (CWMA) is a transformative initiative equipping female journalists to report impactfully on climate change from their communities.

We are dedicated to providing training, advocacy and research

Our mission is to build confidence among female journalists by building their capacity to take on climate science-related reporting and advocacy.

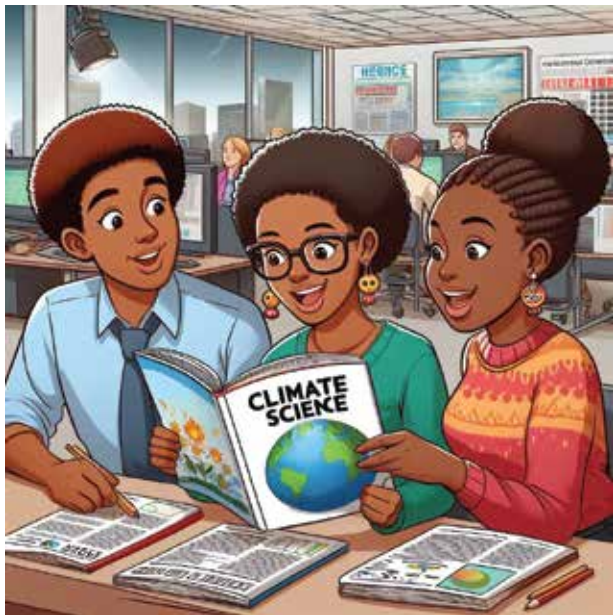
We are available to offer customised budget-friendly training for female journalists and media. For inquiries and consultations, write to climatewomenmediaaction@gmail.com. You can also visit our website at www.climatewomen.org for more resources.



The five common mistakes reporters make.

- ❖ They know the whole story before they report it.
- ❖ They rotate around the same sources.
- ❖ They focus on topics that are complicated for readers to relate with.
- ❖ They use complicated jargons and theories that stress out the audience.
- ❖ They focus on doom and disaster limiting the readers from taking action.

Familiarise with the science



Journalists interested in environment reporting must acquaint themselves with the basics of Climate science. Climate change is majorly caused by burning coal, oil and gas driving heat waves, drought and floods. Such foundational facts should be on your fingertips.

Take note

Make the connection between climate change, the causes, and consequences and how communities can take charge.

How to

Increase your knowledge on climate change and environmental issues. Journalists unlike researchers are tasked with the role to tell stories. Strive to make your audiences understand what your writing about, indulge their minds, hearts and feelings to spark action.

Know your audience.



Many people beyond the borders have come to understand and believe the reality of climate change and environmental issues; however the Ugandan audience is still hesitant to the depth of this knowledge.

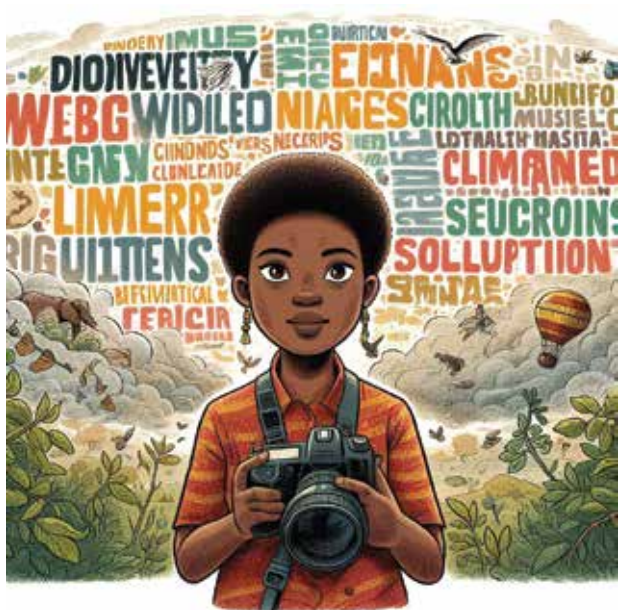
Take note

Understanding your audience's beliefs, knowledge and feelings about a given topic like climate change helps you to deliver stories that are relatable to their circumstances.

How to

Engage your audiences and meet physically, listen to their views, and feedback as their exposure to environmental stories increases. Access how the depth of their knowledge on the issue varies, and tells stories with them in mind.

Localise and Humanise environment stories.



Climate change is a pressing global issue, to report impactfully you must tell it as a story of ordinary people and their daily lives. Big words and complicated theories is not what environment stories should be about.

Take note

Remember climate change manifests differently for people in diverse communities. Audiences are searching for stories that reflect their experiences first hand, perspectives that they easily relate with.

How

Firstly break down big theories and words. Instead of biodiversity, say wildlife and nature. If possible translate the information to the local language that your audience can easily comprehend.

Avoid misinformation



As a journalist you must adhere to the ethics of this wonderful career you chose. The audience depends on you for factual information, and this you must deliver. You can't lose your credibility, because you shared wrong information.

Take note

Climate change being a global problem has plenty of information spread across the web, and there are deniers too. Record public speeches, ask independent experts and don't be afraid to interview authorities.

How

Equip yourself with climate information that relates with audiences in Uganda or (your part of the world). Find valuable, credible sources of this particular information.

Give the data



Climate change is entirely a science beat that involves changing weather and evolving continents. Before any scientific finding is presented to the public, it is thoroughly analysed to ensure it is factual.

Take note

A science story without evidential data and facts can easily be dismissed as wrong. Statistics, quotes and attribution help you gain trust from your audience.

How to

Investigate, analyse and utilise research from credible international organisations whose goal is providing information on the issue. The United Nations portal, World Bank among others has such data.

Use multimedia tools



People are more visual today than ever before. Environment stories are better reported as features, with in-depth narration and sometimes as investigative documentaries. Sometimes an image may tell the story better or even complete it.

Take Note

Ensure to use the storytelling medium that most effectively tells the particular story you're pursuing. Environment stories must have a component of nature and must reflect the realities of communities.

How

Capture images that speak to the audience, spark a sense of interest and a feeling of inclusion. Know your angles and utilise good lighting for usable pictures and videos.

Tell solution stories



I often tell journalists that, a story without a solution is belongs in the drafts. A good climate story includes a solution which is literally the call to action.

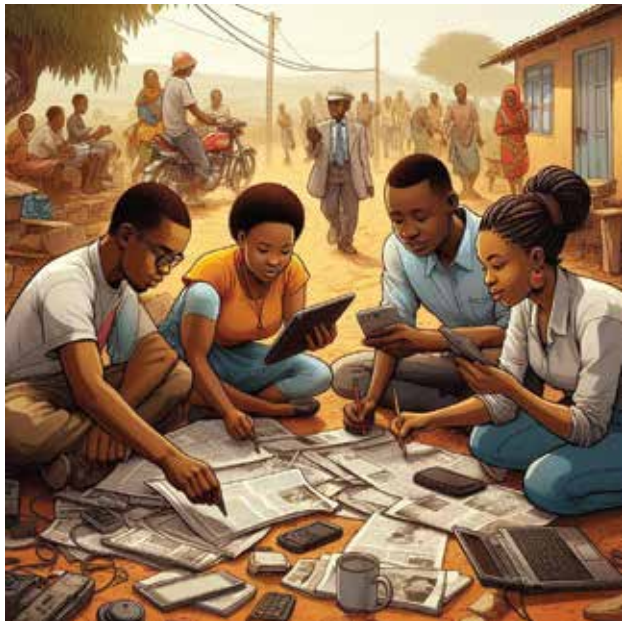
Take note

Negative stories leave the audience overwhelmed, scared and inclined to tune out which can lead to misrepresentation of the reality.

How

Interrogate potential solutions so as to inform the public and policy makers about which are working and can be replicated and what not to advocate for. Climate solutions like solar, wind, gas and tree planting are the common ones, go beyond and present something new.

Collaborate with others



Climate change is a global issue transcending one beat, to report it well. Incorporate other topics like health, law, gender, business among others. Topics like how firewood stoves affect women's health, is a good one for working with other journalists of those beats.

Take note

NO man is an island and you can't learn everything by yourself, combined effort in such reporting produces incredible stories that impact various audiences.

How

Brainstorm important cross border ideas, and engage other journalists for prospective collaboration on environmental stories. Not only will you build connections but increase your visibility and expertise.

Find Individual Characters to tell their stories.



We need to draw the story away from just science and research to reality. The audience is solely interested in what is happening outside their door and how they can be in control.

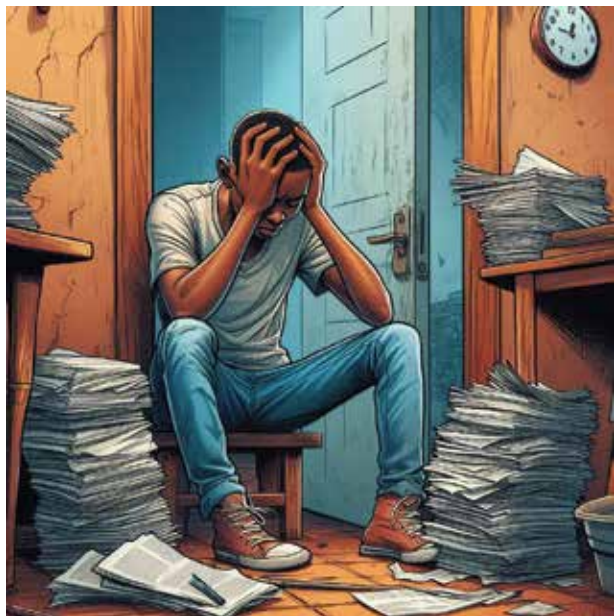
Take note

Concentrating on individuals doesn't limit your ability to make it a global or national story. The secret is people stories are easy to digest by readers because they fit in the shoes of your character.

How

Engage deeply with your subjects; initiate a friendship that allows you to get to the bone of important information. This involves getting them to trust you, however don't limit yourself. And explore local sources too including the village chairman and the boda boda rider.

Take Care of yourself.



Reporting Climate change is one daunting task because of the risks involved but also the suffering of people in disaster struck communities. Bearing witness of scenes like children buried in floods can have long lasting effect on your mental health.

Take Note

You must stay ethical whatever the situation, don't cry along with a victim of climate disasters because their story is too emotional. Keep it professional.

How

Exercise prior meditation before stepping into the field, imitate scenes and act them out so that you're familiar with the situation. Seek therapy if it is beyond your limit.

What Journalists say?

Anita Elash;

“My top tip for young journalists is to always remember that their biggest challenge is making people care about the environment. The human element should always be front of mind. Tell stories your audience can relate to. If you make them feel something, they will listen and remember the facts. If you don’t, the facts will slide off their backs as quickly as the morning rain”.

Radio Journalist & founder at Fancy Pigeons productions.

John Ken Okot;

“Journalists covering environment need learn how to localise their stories by connecting the global or larger trends to their local contexts. That makes it easy for their audience to relate with the stories, along breaking down complicated jargons for audiences”.

Freelance Journalist.

Diana Kibuuka

“Environmental reporting requires a lot of research for one to report accurately for this science related beat. Journalists ought to read and research more to report better”.

Senior Journalists at CBS & Conservation Educator at UWEC.

Cliff Abenaitwe Mungai;

“Invest in accumulating and utilising knowledge on climate-science. You can’t report effectively on something you do not understand”.

Reporting Apes Project.

Atwiine Rhonet

“Focus on solutions and local stories to highlight the impact of environmental issues and inspire community action”.

Journalist at Solutions Now Africa.

Diana Harawa Tsisi

“Despite Africa contributing only 4% of global emissions, scientists have predicted that Africa will warm faster, making the continent vulnerable to harsher droughts and more heat waves. Journalists need to buckle up more than ever, to spread the message of building resilience”.

Founder and eco-feminist at Youth Adapt Zimbabwe.

Arthur Arnold Wadero

“Environment journalism can be knitted with other beats by exploring or shining a light on how players, policies, regulators and other key stakeholders contribute to the detriment or betterment of climate issues”.

Journalist with Daily Monitor

Take some Notes

A series of 20 horizontal lines for taking notes, each consisting of a solid top line, a dashed middle line, and a solid bottom line.

