



## AFRICA CLIMATE INDUCED WATER STRESS: ROLE OF MEDIA

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# THE WATER STRESS MANIFESTATIONS

- ▶ **Too little:** Drought – Famine/hunger, deaths, poverty, human/wildlife conflict economic stagnation, migration, split families ...
- ▶ **Too much:** Flooding – (Landslides, cyclones...) migration, displacement, diseases, social disruptions – loss of dignity (women and children even walking naked, people reduced to beggars, and living in tents...not fun), HIV/Aids, Early/teen pregnancies, land degradation...
- ▶ **Enough but polluted:** Diseases
- ▶ **Unpredictable:** We cannot plan. Wrong timing by farmers – Famine, poor nutrition, destruction of forests to make money...

These have a further direct effect on Health, Nutrition, Education, Infrastructure development and maintenance, technology advancement....

# MORE EFFECTS OF WATER STRESSES



- Cross-border conflicts
- Destruction and disruptions
- Deaths
- Reduced agricultural productivity – food insecurity
- Diseases due to extreme weather and poor nutrition
- Stunted economic growth
- Social disruptions
- Biodiversity loss
- Disability – worsened and newly created
- Sex and gender issues (responsibilities, return to source of livelihood).

## ... THE SITUATION

- ▶ Africa is the second hottest continent after Australia
- ▶ It suffers drought, flooding, unpredictable rains, unevenly distributed rainfall and pollution of water
- ▶ Global warming, to which Africa is the least contributor (4% Carbon Emission) is largely to blame for water stresses
- ▶ Despite being the least contributor to the global warming, Africa is one of the worst hit by the climate crisis
- ▶ Clean water and sanitation for all is the sixth Sustainable Development Goal expected to be achieved by 2030, but projections are that the Sub-Saharan Africa is still far much behind
- ▶ Climate induced water stresses are not an instance but develop over time, as a result of human activities in small and large scales

# WHY IT IS IMPORTANT TO INVOLVE MEDIA

- Journalists are not passive players on matters climate and water stress. They are affected, directly...They are here.
- People need to know what is happening for them to be part of the solution
- Information is key in push for change for policy on climate matters
- It is through published work that the water and climate situation in Africa will be able to reach the world pedestals and be included in the global climate discourse
- Journalists need to know better to pass the right information, even when putting to task the relevant authorities
- Journalists can help bridge the gap between research findings, policy formulation and implementation by interpreting, relaying and interrogating information, civic education on the climate induced water stresses as well as putting relevant authorities to task and on their toes for action
- We are the true and genuine voice of the people...the trust in media is huge



## THE SITUATION IN NEWSROOMS

Climate change is hard to sell in the newsroom...it is not always the sexiest issue

It is impossible to confine climate change to science/environment desk. Every editor and writer should have a grasp of what is happening

Despite stagnated growth in trust in the media, there is increased consumption of trusted brands (Content is king)

The shift to digital platforms has accelerated, and paywalls are a good source of income for media houses

Social media is still key as not just alternative source of news, but the less censored

## OBSTACLES TO WATER STRESS REPORTING

- ▶ Science (Science-related) desks are not equipped enough to tackle climate change. In some cases there is no science desk
- ▶ Water and climate change are not always likely to hit the headlines, unless a deadly disaster strikes. Even then, focus is usually more on the event than the analysis of underlying issue
- ▶ At the school of journalism, focus is more on students excelling in languages than those specialising in science
- ▶ Scientists rarely walk with the journalists through their research, a lot of the time leaving the latter to rely on published journals
- ▶ Summarising piles of research work into short stories is a challenge to journalists, especially the non-specialising ones

## ... OBSTACLES TO WATER STRESS REPORTING

- ▶ Environment and climate change-related stories are rarely a priority for many in the newsrooms. Conflicting individuals', media owners or specific editors' interests – Many prioritize politics, it is where the money is...fast moving news
- ▶ There is little debriefing even when journalists are sent to tackling climate
- ▶ Limited perspectives to see the human activity contributing to landslides, for instance. The gods must be unhappy!
- ▶ Lack of finances to sponsor newsrooms to publish well researched climate related stories
- ▶ Government bureaucracies and legislations that limit access to information

## ...OBSTACLES TO WATER STRESS REPORTING

Pitching water and climate change related stories may be difficult sometimes. Skill necessary to sell the story idea, then when it is rendered, ensure you bring out what you promised

Our consumers are demanding more when newsrooms are so stretched they cannot retain the best talents

Seeking second opinion to balance climate stories, especially where research is involved, may be counter-productive

<https://blog.hootsuite.com/social-media-users-pass-4-billion/>

# HOW TO APPEAL TO EDITORS/BEAT THE SYSTEM

In your story, always try to answer the question 'So What?'

You can do a climate induced water stress story without mentioning the word "climate" if it irritates some of your editors.

Pitch and do stories that sell. Do not make water and climate change stories too technical. Simplify

Get a new interesting angle: Climate induced water stress can be linked to nearly all aspects of life, from health, economy, agriculture, culture, tourism, infrastructure development, politics, waste management, energy, food security. .... Perspectives.

Offer data for graphics and always have good images to accompany your story. Leave no room for rejection

Research or be topical. Find stories to link research to happenings locally. Leave desk, minimise arm chair journalism

Tell the story....do not be a mouth piece (He said/she said)

Be conversant with the on-goings on matters water and climate change to counter baseless rejection of story ideas by editors who might not understand the issues deeply



## ... HOW TO APPEAL TO EDITORS

Be guided by code of ethics. Do not receive money to kill an environment, water or climate change story. Believe that you are doing the right thing and acknowledge your responsibility in tackling the issue. What goes around...

Fact check. You always need to be credible.

Plan for the big climate and water related events like the COPs, and grab every opportunity to attend them so you can understand how matters affecting us locally are negotiated at the global level. Find where you fit. No action is small.

Know where your company lies on certain matters and choose wisely if you want to stay and toe the line or be robust and be shown the door

Remember that the power has shifted from producer to user...Content is king

Make use of new media and technology. Mobile journalism is instant and key. Also know how helpful a tool social media can be.

Have good rapport with contacts and peers in the field of climate change and water; they can always come in handy



## ... HOW TO APPEAL TO EDITORS

Lobby to penetrate editors, media owners or editorial interests that prevent visibility of climate change and water stories

Be part of a network such as MESH. Such are good for alerting you on new ideas or learning. No competition, but good for new ways of thinking and brainstorming plus for opportunities

Explore positive issues that come with climate change and development as opposed to just highlighting negative areas

Explore stories that give hope, and not always highlighting and creating anxiety. Focus on new findings and success stories sometimes

Apply satire – Cartoons and satirical writing (Read Peter Theuri articles) Who said water and climate change stories must be serious. There are several ways to kill a cat

# More recommendations

- Break down scientific jargon for easier understanding of climate change and water issue
- It is not always doom, there are success stories out there. (As climate change ravages Southern Africa, two Zimbabwean farmers turn to drone irrigation - Tatira Zwinoira, Zimbabwe)
- Write/report stories with target audience in mind
- Grab every training opportunity and grants
- Push for specialised reporting and creation of environment and climate change desks. Ask your media house how they plan to tackle the climate crisis
- Investigation: Cite existing laws, or circumvent state bureaucracies by building networks outside the official ones for comment and insights...for investigative stories, ... while at the same time guarding against litigation
- Use the language you are most comfortable in, publish

# Confused? Equip yourself

## Simple task – Be clear about these

- Weather/Climate
- Climate change/climate variability
- Mitigation/Adaptation
- Ozone layer/Atmosphere
- Carbon emission/GHG
- Types of green house gas and (Carbon Dioxide, Methane, Nitrous Oxide. Fluorinated) their sources... etc
- Is it UNFCCC or (**UNFCC**- common in texts and TV stories, yet it is wrong)? – What is it all about actually?
- Paris Agreement
- COP- From 1-26...what are the discussions, the politics.
- Know what happens at the COPs....at least have a grasp...relate, localize/link with happenings locally (The issues...Agenda 16, Loss and damage, Technology transfer...)
- Pick a struggle, you cannot be all knowing....but be willing to learn.

# ... Equip yourself

Know the gender dimensions of climate change...link to existing and foreseeable water stress

The 17 SDGs – Sustainable Development Goals – Link them

NDCs – Nationally Determined Goals and the timelines

## **More Resources**

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change – IPCC- Reports-authentic

UN Websites – UNEP, FAO, WFP, ReliefWeb...

# SOME INTERESTING STORIES

## Kenya

- ▶ We Can't Breathe: The plight of Syokimau residents in the face of air pollution
- ▶ We Can't Breathe: Slum dwellers suffering respiratory illnesses [Part 2] – Enock Sikolia – Kenya
- ▶ **How retaliatory poisoning rapidly drives vultures, predators to extinction**

## Ghana

Coexisting with toxics – Ridwan Karim Dini – Osman


## Interesting bylines in African newsrooms

Kenya's Zeynab Wandati, Beldine Waliaula, Sheilla Sendeyo, Nigeria's Taiwo Adebulu (fact checking), and Kelechukwu Iruoma, Zimbabwe's Peter Makwanya,



WATER IS THE DRIVING FORCE  
OF ALL NATURE.

Leonardo da Vinci



If there is going to be another  
world war...it will be about  
water

Everyone has a role to slow this, if not reverse.



THANK YOU