

Workshop Title: Covering Climate Change – Crisis, What Crisis?

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Language: (Please mark one) English, French, Spanish, Russian, Arabic

Workshop description:

1. What are the main points you want to raise in the workshop?

The 2007 reports from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) , developed nations were inundated with coverage across all sections of the media. In the developing world, however, where the IPCC reports predicted that impacts would be most severe, coverage was lacklustre. India, Mexico and Russia had no mention of the reports on their evening news broadcasts; Chinese and South African TV mentioned only the IPCC's report on climate change impacts; the South African coverage lasted just 11 seconds.

During the 2008 Bali UN Climate Summit a reporter for TransTV, an Indonesian national TV network, claimed that "global warming happens because many buildings are made of glass."

It is evident that Developed Countries bear historical responsibility for Greenhouse Gas emissions, and that climate change is an inherently complex issue that can challenge all journalists, irrespective of where they are based.

Just how concerned should we be, therefore, about the low quantity and low quality of reporting on this issue in many developing countries?

2. Give some background information to the issue you want to raise.

The Athens GFMD is taking place in parallel with the UN Climate Summit in Poznan, Poland. Europe's media may be swamped by coverage of the Summit , but , if last year's Bali Summit is a good guide, millions across the developing world are likely to remain in the dark about what is being negotiated in their name : of the 1500 journalists who registered for Bali only 9% were from the developing world.

Journalists in the developing world have a mountain to climb when covering climate change – from the ignorance or scepticism of their editors to poor networking opportunities with scientists and policy-makers.

Several government-funded initiatives are currently underway, including an ambitious joint programme by Panos , IIED and the Internews Earth Journalism Network - The Climate Change Media Partnership. However, there are legitimate doubts as to whether such initiatives can be scaled up to facilitate the local media coverage and public debate that is need to prepare populations and governments for the change that climate change is already bringing.

3. List three key questions you want to the workshop to address.

a) What are the key challenges around climate change and media in the developing world, and is it safe to assume that European and North American journalism are immune from them?

b) How do we best encourage and support journalists to engage with climate change issues, particularly in those countries most exposed to climate change impacts?

c) What can we learn from the lessons of other areas of journalism – health journalism, for instance, in developing programmes in this area?

d) Is our own thinking on this issue being conditioned by those most able to dominate the debate - should we not be looking , for instance, journalism and biodiversity issues with equal concern?

4. What would be the main desired outcome of the workshop?

New thinking on the needs of local journalism if it is to influence policy –making and public awareness of climate change. And on the opportunities (and dangers) that inevitable donor interest in this area will bring.