

# Climate Crisis Toolkit for Media in Tanzania



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## Introduction

On September 15th 2025, marathon runner Alphonse Felix Simbu entered the history books. Crossing the finishing line in Tokyo, he became the first Tanzanian athlete to win a World Championship gold medal in any track and field event. What makes his achievement even more impressive is the revelation he gave in an interview a year prior to the race where he's quoted saying: "Ten years ago the weather used to be very cool, but now it is difficult to train during the day because of the heat. I now train in the evenings, but this means training sessions are short."<sup>1</sup>

Climate change isn't a topic confined to scientists and politicians: it's affecting elite athletes too. If you look closely enough, you'll find the climate crisis impacting every beat in the newsroom, from sport to health, from education to local government and beyond.

### **The aim of this Toolkit is to enable you as journalists and editors to:**

- **Empower audiences.** Find the climate link in everyday stories to engage and empower audiences with the information they need to help safeguard their livelihoods and futures against weather extremes
- **Promote accountability.** Hold authorities accountable for decisions and choices they make that relate to or impact climate change
- **Widen your skillset** and increase your employability by being able to translate climate change issues to build, engage and retain audiences

The Toolkit is divided into four sections containing expert advice, case studies and exercises.

### **By the end of the Toolkit, you will:**

- Be able to craft compelling climate stories through a range of storytelling techniques
- Recognise how journalists can tackle the spread of climate change mis- and disinformation and why it matters
- Know how to make the language of climate science accessible to audiences in Tanzania
- Appreciate the importance of risk assessment to stay safe both physically and online
- Know more about the legal framework as it impacts journalists working in Tanzania

## Spotlight on climate change in Tanzania

You are a journalist and therefore a storyteller but before you can tell a story you need to understand and know what it is you are talking about.

That means you need to recognise and be able to communicate the impact climate change is having on the lives and livelihoods of people in Tanzania now and potentially in the future.

The World Bank calls Tanzania East Africa's most flood-affected country and warns: ***“Climate change disproportionately impacts those least able to cope, and without action, it could push an additional 2.6 million Tanzanians into poverty by 2050.”***<sup>2</sup>

You might think as extreme weather events become more frequent knowledge about climate change would be widespread. But a 2025 survey by Afrobarometer claims that only 38 per cent of Tanzanians have heard of the term 'climate change'<sup>3</sup>. It matters because more knowledge empowers people to have more control over their lives: by recognising the risk they face and what they can do to better protect their homes and livelihoods.

This Climate Change Toolkit provides you with an opportunity to fill that knowledge gap and create informed communities across Tanzania.

This Toolkit is designed by Thomson Foundation in partnership with the Tanzanian Media Foundation (TMF), Climate Action Network Tanzania (CAN TZ), Tanzania Development Information Organization (TADIO), the Network of Online Media Practitioners (JUMIKITA) and the Journalists' Environmental Association of Tanzania (JET). Legal advice provided by the Media Council of Tanzania. It is part of the Wajibika programme in Tanzania led by Oxford Policy Management (OPM) and funded by the UK's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) and the Embassy of Switzerland in Tanzania. The programme is designed to strengthen climate journalism, enhance media capacity, and ensure sustained, high-quality coverage of climate change.



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**Embassy of Switzerland in Tanzania**



**UK International  
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<sup>2</sup> [www.worldbank.org/en/country/tanzania/publication/ccdr](https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/tanzania/publication/ccdr)

<sup>3</sup> <https://disinfo.africa/ignorance-and-faith-blur-tanzanias-climate-facts-3944ec758ecb>

## Contributors

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## Section 1 - Climate change coverage: Where to start?

### 1.1 – Understanding climate change

Climate change as a topic for journalists can be daunting. It can be hard to know where to start when faced with an existential threat that is steeped in science, jargon and disinformation. Yet it impacts many aspects of our lives: from water shortages to food insecurity created by intense flooding and drought. This section is your starting point. You'll learn what climate change means, why that matters for journalists and how you can share that knowledge with your audiences.

### 1.2 - What is the 'climate crisis'?

The earth's climate has changed naturally over millennia but the difference now according to the vast majority of climate scientists, is the speed at which it is happening and the impact from human behaviour. They warn that if the earth continues to heat up it could lead to more severe heatwaves, droughts and floods.<sup>1</sup>

It's given rise to the term '**climate crisis**' which has been around since the 1980s but is being used more frequently including in a speech by the UN Secretary-General at a Climate Action Summit in 2019.<sup>2</sup>

Climate change affects different countries to different degrees so it's worth familiarising yourself with the positions being taken by big business and government in Tanzania and any specific programmes they are engaged in. You can find links to resources at the end of the section to help you build your knowledge. That knowledge can also help you hold those in power accountable for acting on past, present or future promises.

### Five steps to understanding climate change

**Step one** - There are far more of us on the planet than ever before: over 8 billion.

**Step two** - Our lives depend on fossil fuels: oil, coal, gas.

**Step three** - Burning fossil fuels releases gases that trap heat from the sun. They're called greenhouse gases.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.un.org/en/climatechange/science/key-findings>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statements/2019-09-23/secretary-generals-remarks-closing-of-climate-action-summit-delivered>

**Step four** - Carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) is one of the biggest offenders. Deforestation makes it worse because trees absorb carbon.

**Step five** - The consequences of climate change include intense droughts, water scarcity, severe fires, rising sea levels and flooding.<sup>3</sup>

### 1.3 – Weather or climate change?

Consider this question. You're a reporter on shift and heavy rain is causing flooding. Is this a story simply about the weather or could there be a link to climate change? What would make it a story potentially about climate change?

Here's a quick way: **THINK TIMESCALE**

**Weather** relates to *short-term* atmospheric conditions, over hours or days.

**Climate** relates to *long-term* atmospheric conditions (e.g., average temperature, rainfall, frequency and intensity of storms), over years or decades.

Let's return to that earlier scenario. You're a reporter on shift and heavy rain is causing flooding. In your story do you consider angles around:

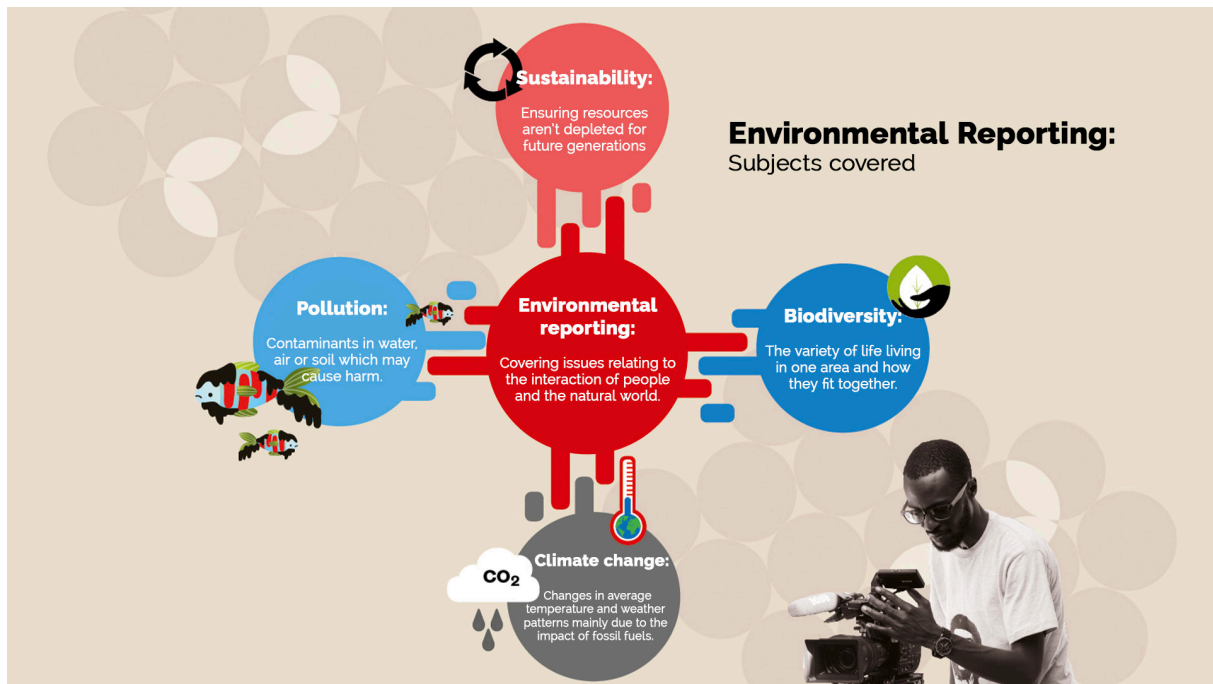
- A. The weather
- B. Climate change
- C. Maybe both

You can find the answer at the end of the section.

### 1.4 – Is my story about the environment or climate change?

At first glance the words environment and climate change might seem interchangeable and in many news reports are used together. But there are subtle differences. Climate change is just one part of the environmental news beat and not every environmental story relates to climate change.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.un.org/en/climatechange/science/key-findings>



For example, environmental journalism can also include stories about biodiversity or issues around pollution and toxic waste caused by economic growth. The graphic above illustrates the areas covered by environmental reporting.

It matters because as a journalist your reports need to be accurate if you hope to build trust with audiences.

### 1.5 - Who am I talking to?

Every journalist wants an audience for their story. To ensure your climate change story stands out in the crowded news market you need to know your audience in order to produce content that will engage and inform them about who and what is affecting their lives, enabling them to make decisions.

It means understanding who you are talking to. You may work for a community radio station or a rural news outlet. The starting point wherever you are is to find out if the news outlet you work for collects detailed audience analytics such as:

- Age
- Gender
- Location
- Socioeconomic status (income and education level)
- Consumption habits (e.g. when they click, watch, tune in or where they get their information from)

Your audience can change depending on your story or publication. Knowing who you are talking to, what they're interested in and when they're engaging with your news platform is a key part of your climate change storytelling strategy which we will explore more in Section 2. It will help you create, pitch and adapt your stories to suit the audience, if you don't you may be just writing or broadcasting for yourself.

**Sylvester Domasa** is the digital media service manager at Tanzania Standard Newspapers. He's also an experienced science and environmental reporter. He says:



*"I have to think of my audience every time and I have to reset and reset my approach almost all the time. Why? Because we are in a time where people are looking for information. They are not looking for news...so how do you package that information to ensure the person who is searching on the Internet gets that information?"*

**Example:** Extensive audience research was carried out before and after the launch of Niambie, an interactive radio show and social media platform before its launch in 2013. It was made by and for young people and after 10 years had grown to more than five million listeners.



Copyright: BBC Media Action

Find more here: <https://www.bbc.com/mediaaction/where-we-work/africa/tanzania/celebrating-niambie>

**Exercise:** Your starting point is knowing which questions to ask your audience. A list of suggested survey questions to help you learn more about them can be found in the Appendix.

You can use the suggested questions to create your own survey for your news outlet or specifically for news programmes you work on. There are websites to help you build your survey such as Google Forms and SurveyMonkey. These can be disseminated online or through physical copies distributed in the local community.

Talk to your editor too and others at your organisation to find out more and maybe even work with a colleague to carry out a street survey in the area you cover or post a question or two on your social media pages.

This will also help you start to build a better image of your audience.

## 1.6 - Getting the language right for your audience

One of the challenges facing you as a journalist reporting on climate change is the jargon. Words and phrases like...

- **Anthropogenic climate change** *meaning* climate change caused by human activity
- **Biofuel** *meaning* a fuel derived from renewable, biological sources such as crops like maize and sugar cane and some forms of waste
- **Carbon footprint** *meaning* the amount of carbon emitted by an individual or organisation in any period of time or the amount of carbon emitted during the manufacture of a product
- **Ocean acidification** *meaning* a term used to describe the change in the chemistry of the world's seas. At least a quarter of the carbon dioxide produced dissolves into the ocean which is making seawater more acidic. This can affect sea life, kill off coral reefs and impact communities reliant on fishing

The examples above come from the BBC's Climate Change glossary. A link to that and other similar glossaries can be found at the end of the section.

The first step to avoiding jargon is being able to recognise it. Whether you are talking in Swahili, English or a regional dialect, don't use words and phrases that you don't understand because the chances are your audience won't either. Use language your audience recognises to make the story relevant and promote understanding.

### Example: Climate Change from Scratch

**Evalilian Massawe** who's a journalist and radio presenter with Tanzania Broadcasting Corporation, interviewed a climate expert to explain the basics. Called *Climate Change from Scratch*, it was a segment in her series called Eco Tales. The programme informed listeners on how their daily activities contribute to climate change.



Evalilian Massawe

You can find it here: <https://creators.spotify.com/pod/profile/evalilian-massawe/episodes/CLIMATE-CHANGE-FROM-SCRATCH-e29n1hv>

Evalilian is also a member of the Oxford Climate Journalism Network, a programme set up to support journalists worldwide in improving the quality and understanding of climate change. Her advice is to try to speak to audiences in a way that relates to their lives.

*"I believe it is very important to know your audience so that you know what to give them or what language to use... I was like, okay, these people are already not as interested in climate change... I thought, OK how can I meet them where they are? How about addressing climate change as if I'm talking to each one of them directly?" (Evalilian Massawe)*

## 1.7 – Challenges

There are challenges facing journalists covering the climate crisis. Some are more difficult than others to overcome. We will look in more detail at some of those challenges which you may recognise:

- How do I deal with data?
- How do I access data?
- How do I find experts to help inform my storytelling?
- How can I hold those in power to account?
- What are my legal rights and responsibilities?
- How can I stay safe?

### How do I deal with data?

Data is a highly effective way to verify information and tell a story in a different way. But the idea of it being 'too complicated' may deter you from seeking it out. So:

- Think of database as another interviewee
- Ask it the same questions you would ask a human being
- It can be a highly effective way to verify information and tell a story in a different way.

### How do I access data?

The first step is knowing where to find data. Accessing data can be challenging as it can depend on how much the national and local governments, health and environmental agencies are prepared to release.

'Open data' is official data which has been shared on the internet. Sites where you can access data information about Tanzania include:

- Africa Data Hub: <https://www.africadatahub.org/>
- Open Data Inception – 2600+ Open Data Portals Around the World: <https://data-hub.io/collections/climate-change>
- World Bank: <https://data.worldbank.org/country/tanzania>

There is more on using data in storytelling, in Section 2.

### **How do I find experts to help inform my storytelling? (Sourcing stories)**

Understanding financial, political and scientific jargon as well as deciphering data is an important part of reporting the climate crisis. You might be reporting on a United Nations (UN) Climate change conference such as COP or trying to translate how the latest climate change findings in a UN paper on climate affects your audience. It's crucial you get it right and understand the nuances in, for example, the difference between net zero commitment and pledging total decarbonisation.

The solution is simple. **Ask for help!**

- Check with the United Nations Climate Action website for the latest facts, figures and resources or contact their press office directly.
- Talk to and build a relationship with climate experts in Tanzania (in universities, NGOs, government bodies and research institutions)
- Follow environmental journalists and those specialising in climate change issues on social media to learn their approach

To help get you started, there is a list of places in Tanzania and beyond where you can connect with climate change experts at the end of this section.

### **How can I hold those in power to account?**

Covering the environment is one of the most dangerous beats you can cover as a journalist and climate change is part of that. The reason can be summed up in three words: politics and money. The vested interests of politicians and business (particularly international) can make it dangerous and difficult to cover some climate-related stories.

It's important to ask the right questions to find out who is in the driving seat: asking WHY something is happening and WHO will benefit, can be a starting point.

### **What are my legal rights and responsibilities?**

For journalists covering climate change stories the law can work for or against you. You can use national or international laws to inform your investigation and help hold those in power to account. But those in power can and do use the law against journalists to try to silence them and prevent them accessing information. Section 4 will outline the main issues and help you know more about your legal rights and responsibilities as a journalist.

### **How can I stay safe?**

This may be the biggest challenge you face: trying to keep both yourself and your sources safe. There is the obvious issue of physical safety but there's also digital safety and trying to make sure you have legal protection. Section 4 will guide you through these challenges in more detail.

## **1.8 - Exercise: Severe storms cause havoc**

Imagine yourself in this scenario and then answer the questions.

*Torrential rain is sweeping across Tanzania killing a number of people and devastating crops and homes where you live. As a reporter you can expect to be working on this story and the longer-term impact for days, weeks and even months.*

Using what you have learned in this section, read through the questions and decide how you might approach it. The answers can be found at the end of this section.

**Question 1.** What sort of questions might you ask to try to determine if this is weather or if the storms are linked to climate change? *Hint:* there is more than one right answer.

- A. How do these storms compare to previous ones in terms of the amount of rainfall?
- B. Why are they happening now?
- C. How many people have been killed or made homeless?

**Question 2.** Who might you ask to help you answer those questions so you can report accurately if the storms are being linked to climate change? *Hint:* there is more than one right answer.

- A. An AI chatbot
- B. A colleague
- C. A climate scientist
- D. A government agency
- E. Someone whose home has been destroyed by flooding

**Question 3.** A colleague who covers sport stories says that as the storms have been linked to climate change it's not a story for them to cover. Are they right?

- A. Yes
- B. No

**Question 4.** You see a report from a UN agency warning of further devastating storms for Tanzania which it links to climate change. The report uses words and acronyms like *NDCs*, *adaptation*, and *mitigation* without explaining what they are. What do you do?

- A. Repeat the words and acronyms but explain what they mean in your story
- B. Repeat the words and acronyms without explanation in your story
- C. Ignore the words and acronyms completely

## 1.9 - Key takeaways.

You've reached the end of this section. Here's a reminder of three key things you have learned.

**Takeaway 1:** Reporting on climate change is a job for every reporter

**Takeaway 2:** Avoid jargon and explain the story in language your audience will understand

**Takeaway 3:** Ask for expert advice to help ensure your reports are accurate and fair

## Resources:

### General

- Drought resilient profiles - Tanzania: [https://www.ciwaprogram.org/wp-content/uploads/SADRI\\_Drought\\_Resilience\\_Profile\\_Tanzania.pdf](https://www.ciwaprogram.org/wp-content/uploads/SADRI_Drought_Resilience_Profile_Tanzania.pdf)
- World Meteorological organization: <https://wmo.int/news/media-centre/extreme-weather-and-climate-change-impacts-hit-africa-hard>
- IPCC: <https://www.ipcc.ch/>
- BBC Climate Change Glossary: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-11833685>

### Tanzania: Climate policies

- Tanzania National Climate Change Response Strategy 2021-2026: <https://www.ncmc.go.tz/wp-content/uploads//2022/10/National-Climate-Change-Response-Strategy.pdf>
- Tanzania National Adaptation Plan 2025-2035: [https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/NAP\\_UNITED%20REPUBLIC%20OF%20TANZANIA.pdf](https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/NAP_UNITED%20REPUBLIC%20OF%20TANZANIA.pdf)
- Climate Action Network: <https://cantz.or.tz/programmes>

### Tanzania: Legal framework

- International center for not-for-profit law: <https://www.icnl.org/wp-content/uploads/Tanzania-Understanding-Your-Right-to-Information.pdf>
- Tanzania Media Laws: A handbook for practitioners: <https://www.icnl.org/wp-content/uploads/Tanzania-practical-manual-final-with-FHI360-covers.pdf>

### Find expert help:

- Climate Action Network Tanzania: <https://cantz.or.tz/who>
- CLARE Climate Adaptation and Resilience: [https://clareprogramme.org/clare\\_countries/tanzania/](https://clareprogramme.org/clare_countries/tanzania/)
- Climate-U Transforming Universities for a Changing Climate: <https://www.climate-uni.com/tanzania-team>
- Centers for Natural Resources and Development: <https://cnrd.info/cnrd-network-partner/institute-for-environment-and-development-sustainability/>
- Institute for Environment and Development Sustainability: <https://www.ieds.or.tz/index.php/about-us/>
- African Climate Change Experts (UNECA): <https://uneca.org/african-climate-policy-centre/african-climate-change-experts>
- Tanzania Meteorological Authority: <https://www.meteo.go.tz/>

## Answers to the exercises

**1.3** - The correct answer is c, maybe both. Flooding is a normal part of the ecosystem. Rivers flood all of the time and heavy rain is a normal part of the weather cycle. It happens when warm moist air rises to form clouds which then falls as rain. However, if heavy rain is happening more often, is more intense and lasting for longer periods, then it may be linked to climate change. Warmer air can hold more moisture, resulting in heavier rain.

### 1.8 - Severe storms cause havoc

**Question 1.** The correct answers are a and b. Knowing the number of people who have been killed or made homeless is an important part of the story but won't point to whether the storms are linked to climate change. However, if the storms are linked to climate change, the numbers being killed or made homeless illustrate the devastating impact that climate change is having on your community.

**Question 2.** The correct answers are c and d. To establish if there is a possible link between the storms you need to speak to an expert like a climate scientist. Ask the government too if they are connecting it to climate change. Someone whose home has been destroyed is worth talking to, to illustrate the impact climate change is having on your audience (we'll look at storytelling in Section 3) but they are not a climate expert and neither is a colleague. Regarding an AI bot, it can't be relied on to provide accurate information.

**Question 3.** The correct answer is b. Flooded sports pitches may well be a detail you include in your news story but it's also a story for a sports reporter. What will be the impact on training and fixtures? Who will clean up the pitches and who will pay for it? There are countless questions that a sports reporter can ask to make climate change relevant to their audience and empower them to ask the right questions to those in authority who may be able to provide some answers.

**Question 4.** The correct answer is a. The report is using jargon and it's your job to explain that jargon to your audience. Ignoring the words and phrases completely isn't helping to improve understanding of the subject.

## Section 2 – Storytelling: Making the audience care about climate change

### 2.1 – What's the story?

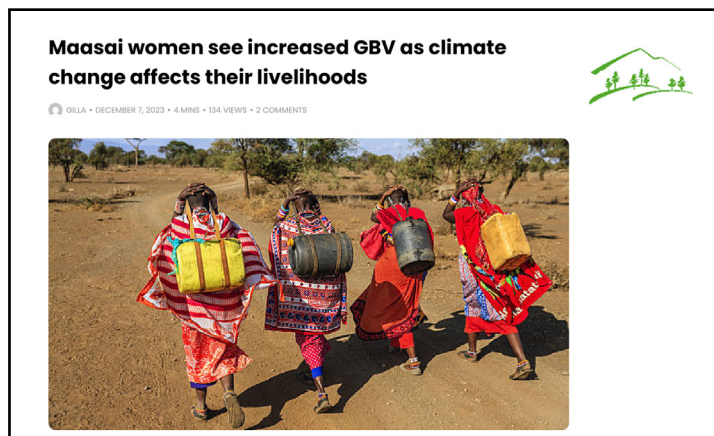
What was the last great news story you read, watched or listened to, and maybe thought, "I wish I'd done that"? It's likely that the story that grabbed your attention contained some of the elements we're going to look at in this section - elements that can help news stories come alive and connect with audiences.

Journalists are storytellers but it can be hard trying to sell stories about climate change to editors, maybe due to a perceived lack of audience interest when measured against the excitement of breaking news, the latest political scandal, health scare or sporting achievement. So how can you make both your audience and your editor care? That's the question we will try to answer in this section.

### 2.2 – Exposing the link to climate change

It's worth doing some groundwork before you start the job of telling your story. Asking and answering the right questions will make it a lot easier in the long run. Importantly, asking the right questions can help you expose the link to climate change if one isn't immediately apparent.

**Example:** This well-written story by journalist Jenifer Gilla exposes a link between an increase in domestic violence suffered by some Maasai women to the global impacts of climate change. Drought and water shortages are forcing these women to go further to find water and pasture for cattle. Spending longer away from home can result in beatings from some husbands. The story then widens the lens from the village perspective to give the regional, national and international perspective and proposals to improve their situation. Find the story here: <https://habitatmedia.co.tz/maasai-women-see-increased-gbv-as-climate-change-affects-their-livelihoods>



Listed below are questions you should consider to help expose the potential climate change link in your story.

- **What questions should I ask?**

Consider this scenario: *You've discovered that police are investigating a clothing factory in a town which is believed to be at the centre of a human trafficking network.*

Initially there doesn't appear to be any link to climate change – so how might you go about uncovering one? Take a few moments to consider what you would do and then read some of the suggestions below.

Ask:

- *Who is being trafficked?* For example, asking where they are from may reveal if they have been forced from a part of the country badly affected by a cycle of drought and floods.
- *Why are they in the town?* For example, you may discover they are climate and economic migrants. Their local economy has collapsed due to the cycle of drought and floods.
- *Why were they working in the factory?* For example, the latest devastating flood displaced many people leaving them vulnerable to criminal gangs promising them jobs and shelter.

- **Who can I hold to account?**

Being able to hold power to account is the job of a journalist. Here's a reminder of the scenario: *You've discovered that police are investigating a clothing factory in your town which is believed to be at the centre of a human trafficking network.*

On the face of it the trafficking gang appears responsible. But take a few moments to consider if there is anyone else you can hold to account then read below for some suggested questions.

- *Ask questions about the money:* For example, who is making money from this? How big is this network? Is it just one trafficking gang or are there local, national or even international business people and politicians behind it who stand to gain.
- *Ask questions about the politics:* For example, what has been the political response to the cycle of drought and flood. Were resources promised for that region and not made available quickly enough?

**Take Care:** As said previously, asking questions can be dangerous both for you and your sources. The issue of safety is looked at in more detail in Section 4.

- **Who are my sources?**

Finding the right sources: people to talk to and places to find information is a key element of great storytelling. Here's a reminder of the scenario again: *You've discovered that police are investigating a clothing factory in your nearest town which is believed to be at the centre of a human trafficking network.*

Take a few moments to consider who you might talk to. As well as people directly linked to the story such as the police and victims of human trafficking you could also connect with:

- *A climate change expert.* Exposing the link to climate change can involve going to the less obvious interviewees. They can also provide a fresh, new, interesting perspective.
- *A lawyer.* Do you need legal advice for your story? Many media outlets have access to lawyers but there are organisations who offer free legal advice to journalists in Tanzania. Links are at the end of the section and there is more information in Section 4.
- *Online resources* (find links at the end of every section) to help you explain to your audience more about the science and policy responses.

We'll return to sources later in this section.

- **How can I empower my audience?**

The best storytelling by journalists empowers audiences. It enables them to think critically about their decisions and understand how decisions made by those in power impact them. It gives them information they can use to hold power to account. If you, the journalist, can make that happen through engaging storytelling that relates to their lives – then you are the person audiences will look to.

**Sylvester Domasa** is the digital media service manager at Tanzania Standard Newspapers. He's also an experienced science and environmental reporter. He says while it's important for journalists to ask the standard questions: who, what, when, where, why and how (the five W's and H) when they embark on a story, in order to connect to audiences, they need to ask a bigger question.



*"When I used to work with the newspapers, basically I would rush to the five W's plus H. Right now, I am not bothered with that. I am bothered to respond to the 'so what' question. Would this be what other people on the internet are looking for? So storytelling is being able to respond to what someone else would relate to."* (Sylvester Domasa)

So how will you grab the attention of your audience? That's what we will look at next.

### 2.3 - Storytelling ingredients

These are some of the key storytelling ingredients:

- Humanise the story
- Missing voices
- Images and sound
- Data
- Constructive journalism

Let's look at each of the ingredients in closer detail.

- **Humanise the story**

Putting a name or face to a story can make it more interesting. It can make difficult climate science concepts relevant and relatable to audiences. Humanising your story through a case study allows you to introduce the climate change angle in a more nuanced way and create a sense of connection and empathy. If people connect with the story they are more likely to stay with it.

**Example:** More than 150 people died in floods and landslides across the country in April 2024.<sup>1</sup> Tens of thousands were left homeless. A disaster like this can be overwhelming for audiences as much as for journalists trying to report on it.

This example begins with the impact of the devastation on two flood victims. Interviews can be done virtually if the situation on the ground is too dangerous.

Find the story here: <https://www.thecitizen.co.tz/tanzania/news/national/rufiji-floods-voices-of-resilience-amidst-devastation-4588450>

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.thecitizen.co.tz/tanzania/news/national/rufiji-floods-voices-of-resilience-amidst-devastation-4588450>

- **Missing voices**

One important question to ask is: whose voice is missing? Take an honest look at your stories:

- How many of the people you spoke to were men or women?
- How many of them were professional? E.g. politicians, lawyer, official
- How many of them were ordinary people affected by the story?

It matters on two levels:

***Local level:***

- New voices and angles can make your stories more interesting and unique
- You are doing a disservice to your audience if you ignore certain people
- If audience numbers fall it could directly impact your job

***Wider level:***

- People who feel ignored will go elsewhere for news which may impact the spread of mis- and disinformation
- If for example, children, women and minorities such as people with disabilities aren't included in the conversation then the whole story isn't being told which could impact policy changes by government
- Engaging storytelling can also make it more relevant to a national and international audience as they identify more with ordinary people

**Example:** The voices of children were given prominence in a story by journalist Wangu Kanuri who travelled for two days to witness how climate change is impacting the lives of children and teachers at a rural school in Kenya. Their stories were woven throughout the narrative. Find the story here: <https://nation.africa/kenya/health/classrooms-or-ovens-the-price-of-schooling-under-a-scorching-sun-5097434>

- **Images**

A great image is a simple but very effective way of grabbing the attention of audiences.

**Example:** Look at these images used to illustrate two versions of the same story. Which would you rather read?

Choosing the right image can be subjective but think of a great image as a window to your story – if people like it they'll come in. In this case, showing someone in the photo can help create an emotional link. The plastic bottle on its own could be anywhere.



Think also about how the image connects to your audience. For example, there would be little relevance to using an image of a polar bear if you are trying to explain the impact of climate change on people living in the Mbeya region.

- **Sound**

Audio has the power to connect a journalist with an audience in a way that is unique. You are the trusted voice in their ear. Many people in Tanzania still rely on radio for access to news but they still need a reason to tune in. The best storytelling through radio gives audiences a sense of place, it connects them by painting a picture through sounds.

**Example:** From the sounds of insects to people walking through squelching mud, Farm Radio International takes listeners into the lives of farming communities across the continent.

In one example farmers in Ghana explain how and why they are creating their own natural compost and why this is helping them deal with the changing climate. The programme has also been reversioned into a short reel for social media which you can hear via this link: [https://www.youtube.com/shorts/yMNgU\\_gfnJw](https://www.youtube.com/shorts/yMNgU_gfnJw)

You can find more examples from Farm Radio International here: <https://www.youtube.com/@FarmRadioInt/featured>

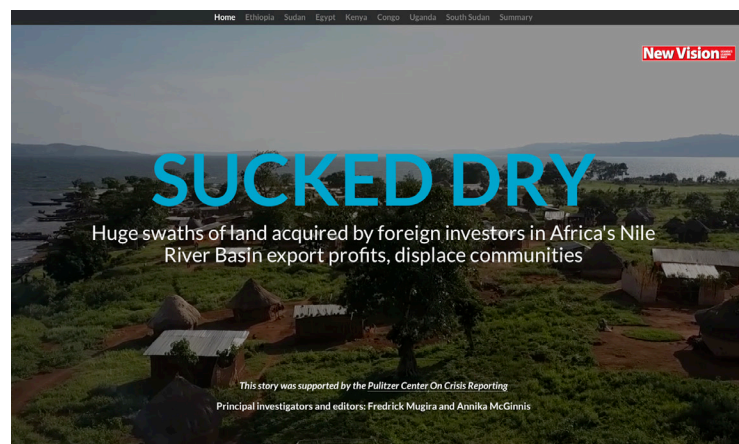
- **Data**

Data is just another source for your story, and when it comes to fact checking, the issues you need to consider are the same:

- Do you need permission to use it?
- Are there any legal considerations? E.g., does the data set contain personal information such as names that need to remain confidential
- Is the data accurate? Does it come from a reliable source?

Climate science is data rich: from transport to energy use and beyond making it a great resource for journalists. Your job is to lead the audience through that data. What story is it trying to tell?

**Example:** A series of investigations called 'Sucked Dry' by InfoNile used data to reveal the extent of land grabs by foreign and local investors which it's claimed not only displace local communities but also damage natural resources in Uganda, Sudan, Ethiopia and Egypt. Find the story here: <https://infonile.org/sucked-dry/>



You'll find links to some free data visualisation tools at the end of the section.

- **Constructive journalism**

Dystopian headlines about climate change can grab audiences' attention, but they can be counterproductive. It can leave people feeling disempowered and helpless. Negative stories shouldn't be ignored, but one way to attract audiences is to offer something constructive rather than just highlighting problems.

Sometimes it's not easy to find a constructive angle – one solution is to ask the question, what's next? It automatically looks to the future and offers a way to include scientific-based solutions into the narrative.

**Example:** Water resources are under pressure from drought. This story exposes how 12 villages worked together to construct dams and reservoirs to reduce water scarcity. Find the story here: <https://www.ipsnews.net/2024/07/climate-smart-strategies-revitalized-tanzanias-livestock-sector/>

## 2.4 – Making your story part of the global narrative

Climate change is a global issue. To tell the whole story you need to make your local story part of the bigger picture. It's a storytelling skill that can also benefit your career; if you can make your story have a wider impact by making it relevant and engaging at a local, national and international level, you will appeal to new audiences.

**Example:** This report brings together farmers, AI innovators and community leaders to look at how AI is helping overcome crop failure. The report feeds into the wider global issue of how technology can support sustainable development. Find the story here: <https://necjogha.net/smarter-skies-how-tanzanian-innovators-are-using-ai-for-climate-action/>



**Tips** for linking your story to the global climate change debate and vice versa:

- Assume there is no such thing as a local climate change story
- Find comparisons to what is happening where you are to what is happening in another locality. It helps audiences realise they're not alone
- Local audiences will want to know the impact on their daily lives but national or international audiences may be engaged if you explain the consequences for them on food prices for example, from crop failures

## 2.5 - Exercise: Police raid clothing factory

Let's return to the scenario at the beginning of this section. The story has now moved on.

*Police have raided a clothing factory in a town and are investigating alleged links to a human trafficking network. Sources tell you that the workers in the factory who were being exploited were forced to leave a part of the country experiencing a severe drought followed by a flood causing widespread devastation. You also discover the factory was producing very cheap clothes for distribution abroad.*

Consider now how you might tell this story by answering the questions. You can find the answers at the end of this section.

**Question 1.** Is there a climate change angle to this story?

- A. Yes
- B. No
- C. Maybe

**Question 2.** What are some of the questions you might ask to expose the political and economic drivers to the story and hold someone to account? *Hint:* there is more than one right answer

- A. Ask who owns the factory
- B. Ask who else has financially invested in this factory
- C. Ask how many people were found to be working in the factory
- D. Ask what the response was from the authorities to the initial drought and subsequent flood and if promises were made and/or broken

**NOTE:** As has been said previously, asking these questions can be dangerous for journalists and sources. You can find advice on staying safe in Section 4.

**Question 3.** What would be the most engaging way to humanise this story?

- A. Interview a climate scientist
- B. Interview a local politician
- C. Interview a police officer on the raid
- D. Interview one of the workers who had been trafficked

**Question 4.** How might you make the story of interest to a national and international audience?

- A. Reveal the link from climate change impact to cheap clothing in shops
- B. Interview a climate change scientist about the global picture
- C. Do nothing as it's a local story only

## 2.6 - Key takeaways

You've reached the end of this section. Here's a reminder of three key things you have learned:

**Takeaway 1:** Ask the right questions to:

- expose the link to climate change
- promote accountability
- empower audiences

**Takeaway 2:** Include missing voices to make your stories interesting, unique and relevant to your audience

**Takeaway 3:** Create impactful stories by making them part of the global climate change story or make the global picture relatable at a local level

## General resources

Thomson Foundation's free e-learning courses:

- African Stories: A guide for journalists on how to tell better stories about Africa - <https://www.journalismnow.org/course/african-stories-a-guide-for-journalists-on-how-to-tell-better-stories-about-africa>
  - News Writing: The art of storytelling - <https://www.journalismnow.org/course/news-writing-the-art-of-storytelling>
  - Advanced Writing: The art of storytelling - <https://www.journalismnow.org/course/advanced-writing-the-art-of-storytelling>
  - News Analysis: The art of storytelling - <https://www.journalismnow.org/course/news-analysis-the-art-of-storytelling>
  - (Audio storytelling) Podcasting: Making It - <https://www.journalismnow.org/course/podcasting-making-it>
- Africa Data Hub: <https://www.africadatahub.org/>
  - DataJournalism.com: <https://datajournalism.com/>
  - Solutions Journalism Network: <https://www.solutionsjournalism.org/>
  - Code of ethics for media professionals - Media Council of Tanzania: <https://mct.or.tz/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Code-of-ethics-2020.pdf>

## Answers to the exercises

### 2.5 - Police raid clothing factory

**Question 1.** The best answer is c, maybe. Drought and flood are a normal part of weather patterns, so you need to know whether these events are happening more frequently and intensely and if as a result, they are being linked to climate change. Refer to Section 1 if you need to, as a reminder.

**Question 2.** The best answers are a, b, and d. Following the money is a key part of investigative environmental journalism so knowing who owns the factory and the names of any investors is a crucial starting point. Asking what the response was from the authorities can expose wrongdoing, incompetence or corruption by officials if any promised flood defence work or aid to farmers for example, didn't happen. Asking how many people were found to be working in the factory is an important fact for the story but doesn't help hold anyone to account.

**Question 3.** The best answer is d, interview one of the workers who had been trafficked. All of the interviewees suggested are relevant to your story but the worker's story is likely to be the best way in. If you did manage to talk to a worker you need to allow enough time for the interview. The person may be suffering from trauma and may of course wish to remain anonymous. It's an interview that must be approached sensitively and planned in advance.

**Question 4.** The best answer here is a, reveal the link from climate change impact to cheap clothing in shops. The United Nations calls the fashion industry one of the world's most polluting sectors, responsible for up to eight per cent of greenhouse gas emissions.<sup>2</sup> It immediately links the story to consumers around the world. A climate scientist is important to your story but an interview about the global picture isn't unique to your story or particularly engaging. Doing nothing, as has been shown, should not be an option.

<sup>2</sup> <https://news.un.org/en/story/2025/03/1161636>

## Section 3 – Climate disinformation: educating audiences

### 3.1 - The spread of false information

A report by the African Digital Democracy Observatory claims that, “*bad information is making Tanzania more vulnerable to climate shocks. When people believe false claims, they delay action that could protect their farms, homes and income*”.<sup>1</sup>

False information about climate change is rampant in Tanzania as much as anywhere else in the world. In fact, misinformation and disinformation along with extreme weather events are listed among the most severe risks facing society across the next two years in the latest global risk report from The World Economic Forum.<sup>2</sup> What it means is that journalists have a critical role to play in exposing false claims whilst also ensuring they don't unwittingly play a part in their dissemination by reporting them unchecked. In this section, we'll look at how you can play that role and help audiences build resilience against mis- and disinformation.

### 3.2 - Defining disinformation

Before you can deal with a problem, you need to understand what you are up against. It matters because understanding more about the type of false information being shared can help you expose, correct and prevent its spread. Here are the key terms:

- **Disinformation** is when someone spreads false information deliberately. The intent is to deceive people and manipulate them into believing what they are saying is true. Along with misinformation it's the most used term.
- **Misinformation** is when someone shares false information by mistake. They aren't deliberately intending to deceive people. Along with disinformation it's the most used term.
- **Malinformation** stems from true information that is shared with the intent to cause harm or embarrassment such as someone's address.
- **False context** is when genuine content is re-circulated out of its original context.

A common term often used in the media is '**fake news**'. Avoid using this phrase for two reasons:

- It's used by politicians wanting to avoid difficult questions being posed by journalists
- It doesn't sufficiently describe the variety of falsehoods journalists come up against as – as listed above

<sup>1</sup> <https://disinfo.africa/ignorance-and-faith-blur-tanzanias-climate-facts-3944ec758ecb>

<sup>2</sup> [https://reports.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_Global\\_Risks\\_Report\\_2026.pdf](https://reports.weforum.org/docs/WEF_Global_Risks_Report_2026.pdf)

### 3.3 - False climate narratives

In this lesson we will look at:

- When to expect mis- and disinformation to increase
- What are the common false narratives around climate change issues in Tanzania
- Why people believe them

- **When to expect mis- and disinformation to increase**

Climate mis- and disinformation is spread continually but it tends to get worse around particular moments:

- Severe weather events such as major flooding or drought. The situation can be chaotic and sourcing accurate information can be difficult.
- International climate change conferences. False information may be circulated by people with a vested interest such as big business, who feed it to social media platforms and sympathetic media outlets, political, religious and community groups.

- **The common false narratives**

A story published by the African Digital Democracy Observatory (<https://disinfo.africa/ignorance-and-faith-blur-tanzanias-climate-facts-3944ec758ecb>) revealed the findings of an investigation which found three dominant narratives shaping public debate on social media around climate change in Tanzania. They are:

- **Denial narrative.** A denial narrative claims that climate change is either a 'hoax', part of the 'Western agenda' or 'natural'.

**Example:** This example from the social media platform X claiming that volcanoes create more CO<sub>2</sub> emissions than humans is another oft-repeated falsehood which in this case has been debunked by Africa Check using reputable scientific sources.



- **Displacement narrative.** A displacement narrative blames local events (e.g., deforestation) as the sole cause of flooding without giving the wider climate context.
- **Religious/spiritual narrative.** A religious or spiritual narrative frames disasters as divine punishment, ignoring links to climate change or other environmental factors.

- **Why people believe false narratives**

There are a number of reasons including:

- The false claim allies with their political or religious beliefs
- They have limited access to accurate information
- The language barrier\*
- It comes from friends or family so feels more credible

\*Talking to people in a language they can understand as outlined in Section 1, includes talking to them in their own language. However, climate science terms may not always translate clearly or easily and can be misinterpreted or misunderstood.

The last reason – the false narrative comes from friends or family so feels more credible – can be a particularly hard one for journalists to counter, but it helps if you recognise the tactics being used by tricksters which is what we'll examine next.

### 3.4 - How to spot disinformation

There are tactics that those spreading disinformation tend to repeat in order to manipulate people into believing things that aren't true. Social psychologists at the University of Cambridge in the UK have come up with an acronym - **DEPICT** - to help you spot them.

- **D is for discrediting:** Journalists, mainstream media and science are often targets with doubt sown about their credibility.
- **E is for emotion:** Content that appeals to basic emotions such as fear and anger gets more attention.
- **P is for polarisation:** Political polarisation is a central aim of targeted disinformation campaigns which use fake accounts to spread it.
- **I is for impersonation:** Pretending to be someone else online e.g., a climate scientist or a legitimate news organisation.
- **C is for conspiracy:** False theories which focus on what people care about e.g., political corruption.
- **T is for trolling:** Journalists are often targeted by a barrage of inflammatory comments to whip up public outrage.

There's more about the work of the social psychologists at the University of Cambridge at the end of the section.

**Sylvester Domasa** is the digital media service manager at Tanzania Standard Newspapers where he says they have this approach: "*We push ourselves to say, can this be possible? We ask that question and we have this rule that if you doubt something, leave it.*"



### 3.5 - When journalists are part of the problem

- **False balance**

According to a report called *A study of climate journalism in East Africa in an Era of Misinformation*, two-thirds of journalists surveyed say '*they still 'balance' their stories by seeking sources who explain that climate change is happening and being caused by humans, along with those who are skeptical of these scientific conclusions*'<sup>3</sup>.

This is known as false balance when both sides of a story are presented as equally valid. Journalists who take this approach become part of the problem by perpetuating a myth without checking who is promoting it and what their motive might be. The approach can lead audiences to believe that climate scientists are split on the reality of climate change. They're not. The truth is that the vast majority of climate scientists believe human-caused climate change is real.

#### **Tips to avoiding false balance in climate change coverage:**

- Remind audiences about the scientific consensus (citing for example, scientific reports)
- Check where the sceptical voices are on the climate change denial spectrum. Do they deny the science or are they just questioning the political and policy response?
- Check what the sceptical voices have been saying on social media
- Assess if it would be fair and appropriate to include the voice of someone who denies the science or are you giving their misplaced theories oxygen

- **Sharing stories on social media and messaging apps**

It can be difficult not to share or respond to viral stories on social media or in messaging apps particularly if you're under pressure to produce a story but always **STOP** and **THINK FIRST** because:

- It could damage audience trust in you and your news outlet
- It could provide the authorities a reason to impose restrictions on media freedom

<sup>3</sup> [https://earthjournalism.net/sites/default/files/2024-06/climate-misinformation-in-east-africa-september-2023\\_final\\_o.pdf](https://earthjournalism.net/sites/default/files/2024-06/climate-misinformation-in-east-africa-september-2023_final_o.pdf)

**Example:** The fact-checking specialists PesaCheck which has staff in 18 countries across east and West Africa and the Sahel revealed that a video being shared on social media which claimed to show severe flooding in Tanzania was actually filmed in the Indonesian capital, Jakarta. Full story here: <https://pesacheck.org/false-this-video-claiming-to-show-floods-in-tanzania-is-actually-from-indonesia/>

### 3.6 - Boosting audience resilience

Debunking a story - where a journalist exposes the lies after publication - can be frustrating. That original false claim may have been seen by tens of thousands of people by the time your debunking report is published. But imagine if you could expose the lies before those stories reach your audiences. You can do just that through a technique known as **prebunking**. So what is prebunking?


- Prebunking works like a vaccine with journalists exposing audiences to examples of the mis- and disinformation
- Prebunking helps audiences build immunity to false claims by helping them recognise them before they hear them
- Prebunking gives audiences critical-thinking skills to resist mis- and disinformation because journalists have refuted the false claims in advance


So what does that look like in a newsroom?

south africa • pre-bunking • debunking • fact-checking • state of the nation address

## How to 'pre-bunk' a state of the nation address (and almost anything else)

Ahead of one of the most anticipated speeches of the year in South Africa, an Africa Check researcher shares how you too can get ahead of potentially false claims.  
Published on 11 February 2025





THE ART  
OF  
PRE-  
DEBUNKING

During the Covid-19 pandemic Africa Check published short explainers containing accurate facts on topics likely to be targets of false information, such as vaccines. This article explains how to prebunk a state of the nation address without seeing the speech beforehand: <https://africacheck.org/fact-checks/blog/how-pre-bunk-state-nation-address-and-almost-anything-else>

### 3.7 - Building partnerships

Debunking and fact checking remain critical skills for a journalist wanting to tackle the spread of mis- and disinformation. It can be difficult and time-consuming work for a single, time-poor journalist so one answer lies in building partnerships with other journalists and newsrooms. Here are some examples.

- **Fact-checking initiatives**

- Fact-checking organisations such as Africa Check, African Fact-Checking Alliance, Code for Africa, JamiiCheck, and PesaCheck collaborate with journalists and news organisations as well as civil society to fight the spread of mis- and disinformation on many issues including climate change. (Links at the end of the section).

- **Fact-checking initiatives**

- Either through individual universities or organisations such as ClimDev-Africa, the World Federation of Science Journalists or the United Nations. (Links at the end of the section).

- **Training and support**

- Collaborating with other newsrooms to provide training resources or accessing opportunities via organisations such as Climate Action Network (CAN) Tanzania, the Tanzania Media Foundation or Earth Journalism Network. (Links at the end of the programme).

### 3.8 - Exercise

Imagine yourself in this scenario and then answer the questions. You'll then find the answers at the end of the section.

*You receive a message from a friend in a WhatsApp group who shares with you a social media post showing a climate scientist saying climate change is a natural phenomenon and nothing to do with human activity. He appears to have said it during an interview as the news outlet's branding is on the quote. It's the lead up to an African climate change summit and your friend says it's important information that you should share.*

**Question 1.** What is the first thing you do?

- A. Share the post on social media and WhatsApp
- B. Write up a story about the quote for your news outlet
- C. Start to investigate if the quote is true

**Question 2.** Who might you contact to check if the quote is true? **Choose any two** from the list below.

- A. Your friend
- B. Your editor
- C. The scientist who is quoted
- D. The news outlet whose branding is used
- E. No one as you trust your judgement

**Question 3.** You discover that the social media post is fake. What could you do to stop the false information spreading further?

- A. Nothing, it's already out there
- B. Write a story and share it on the platforms where the fake post is being shared to explain why it is false and how you can prove it
- C. Contact the social media platform where it was originally posted

**Question 4.** Your editor asks if this is a one-off post or is it likely there will be more disinformation circulating in the run up to and during the climate change summit. What would you say?

- A. It's highly likely there will be more when you consider what has happened during previous summits
- B. There's no way of knowing
- C. It's a one off

**Question 5.** Your editor then asks what would be the best approach to tackling the spread of mis- and disinformation before and during the summit? What would you advise?

- A. Debunk it when it appears
- B. Ignore it
- C. Prebunk before the summit the false claims you believe will be made and debunk further claims if necessary

### 3.9 - Key takeaways

You've reached the end of this section. Here's a reminder of three key things you have learned)

**Takeaway 1:** Understanding disinformation tactics will help you tackle it more effectively

**Takeaway 2:** Avoid false balance and remind audiences about scientific consensus on climate change

**Takeaway 3:** Empower audiences by exposing and prebunking the false claims they are likely to hear

### Resources

#### General

- DigihubAfrica: <https://www.digihubafrika.org/>
- Thomson Foundation | Rethinking Disinformation: psychology, prebunking and other tactics to halt the spread: <https://www.journalismnow.org/course/rethinking-disinformation-psychology-prebunking-and-other-tactics-to-halt-the-spread>

#### 3.4 - How to spot disinformation

- University of Cambridge Social Decision-Making Lab: <https://www.sdmlab.psychol.cam.ac.uk/>

#### 3.6 - Boosting audience resilience

- A practical guide to prebunking misinformation: [https://prebunking.withgoogle.com/docs/A\\_Practical\\_Guide\\_to\\_Prebunking\\_Misinformation.pdf](https://prebunking.withgoogle.com/docs/A_Practical_Guide_to_Prebunking_Misinformation.pdf)

#### 3.7 - Building partnerships

- Africa Check: <https://africacheck.org/>
- African Climate Change Experts: <https://uneca.org/african-climate-policy-centre/african-climate-change-experts>
- Africa Fact-Checking Alliance: <https://factcheck.africa/about-afca-658670a36eb5>
- Climate Action Network Tanzania: <https://cantz.or.tz/>
- Climate-Uni.com: <https://www.climate-uni.com/tanzania-team>
- Code for Africa: <https://codeforafrica.org/>
- Earth Journalism Network: <https://earthjournalism.net/>
- PesaCheck: <https://pesacheck.org/>
- World Federation of Science Journalists: <https://wfsj.org/>

### Answers - 3.8 Exercise

**Question 1.** The correct answer is c. You may come under pressure from a friend or someone else to write a story, but you always need to fact check first. Never share anything unless you know it's accurate.

**Question 2.** The correct answers are c and d. The scientist can confirm if they really did say that and the news outlet can confirm if it was said during an interview or if the branding that is being used is fake.

**Question 3.** The correct answer is b. This is a proactive approach that also enables your audience to see the tactics used to create disinformation.

**Question 4.** The correct answer is a. Mis- and disinformation tends to increase during international climate summits.

**Question 5.** The correct answer is c. Debunking remains an important approach but prebunking can help build your audience's immunity and resilience against disinformation before it even reaches them.

## Section 4 - Reporting climate change safely

### 4.1 - Assessing risk

Trying to hold power to account can come at a cost for journalists. Some stories can be more dangerous to tell than others and this is especially true of environmental journalism, which includes stories about climate change. As we learned earlier in this toolkit there are economic and political drivers such as corruption behind stories relating to climate-related disasters and access to resources such as food and clean water. Journalists can face threats to their physical safety or have material they've filmed or recorded compromised. There are additional risks when covering extreme weather events like flooding and storms.

In this section, you'll be helped to assess risk and be given tips to staying safe. You'll also be given advice about your legal rights.

### 4.2 - Why does risk assessment matter?

Reasons why some journalists and editors don't take risk assessment seriously might include:

- Not understanding what is meant by risk assessment
- Believing that good will or good luck is enough
- It's too expensive
- It takes too much time

The truth is there are risks with every story you cover, particularly where climate change is a factor and you may be reporting on extreme weather events or protests at a climate change summit. Identifying the risks you might face BEFORE you go out on a story can help keep you safe and adapt to changing circumstances on the ground.

**Hassan Mhelela** is the chief editor at Azam TV based in Dar Es Salaam. He's trained journalists and editors across Tanzania on physical and digital safety and the importance of risk assessment. He encourages them to consider at least three different levels of risk to assess.



*"The first level is general safety. It can be road safety: the vehicles they are using to chase stories, the drivers are insured, the vehicles are in good condition, they can think about mapping the routes before they set off. The second layer of risk assessment can involve outside factors. For example, the areas where they're visiting, is it safe? Do we know previous incidents that are recorded or reported? The third level of security is likely to involve maybe security forces...General elections are always a flash point. We know football can turn into public order problems so we encourage sports journalists to plan ahead, even think about where to position themselves and have an escape plan in case the crowds turn into a problem."* (Hassan Mhelela)

### 4.3 - What does risk look like?

Being able to identify the risks you might face is the starting point. Consider these scenarios.

- **The flood**

There are reports of a major flood after an intense storm. You set off for one of the worst affected places on your own and without informing anyone. Take a few moments to think about what risks you might face then look at the suggestions below the image.



- You could get stuck in floodwater
- Your mobile phone and any recording equipment could suffer water damage
- You could be stranded without food or water
- You put someone else in danger if you arrange to meet them
- You haven't told anyone where you are going

- **The protest**

Climate activists are protesting at a remote site where a team of illegal loggers are known to operate. The police are there. You hire a car to go to the protest on your own.

Take a few moments to think about what risks you might face then look at the suggestions below the image.



- You could be in an accident whilst driving the car and discover the insurance doesn't cover you in situations considered to be 'risky'
- You are in a remote area without any access to food or water
- You could be arrested by police who confiscate the device you have been using to film and record the protest
- You could be injured by being in the wrong place during the protest
- You could make yourself a future target for the criminal gang

The list of potential risks isn't meant to scare you. None of this might happen. You might be lucky. But do you want to rely on luck alone to keep you safe? This advice applies whether you are a freelance, contractor or staff journalist or an editor responsible for the safety of your team. Be aware too that risks can change when you are out on a story as situations develop. Remain open to reassessing the risks you face. Once you've identified those risks, the next step is thinking about what you should do to keep yourself, your kit and potentially any colleagues and interviewees safe.

#### 4.4 - What does a risk assessment look like?

A risk assessment is primarily questions you need to consider in advance of covering a story. The fundamental principles are:

- **Plan** – what's the story and how will you cover it?
- **Prepare** – have you got the essential items that you need to stay safe?
- **Predict** – what might go wrong and what might you do?

A template of a Risk Assessment form is in the Appendix. Use it as a basis to create your own. Alternatively, editors can use it to create a standardised form for use throughout the newsroom. There is a brief guide at the top of the form to help you fill it in. Risk assessments don't necessarily cost money or a lot of time. You are simply assessing the risk you might face and how to mitigate that risk. Below is a breakdown of some of the issues to consider. Not all of them will be relevant to every story.

##### **Where am I going and how will I get there?**

- Are the roads safe? Check the travel advice before you go. Some roads may be impassable in a flood, for example
- Is the car roadworthy?
- Is the car insured for all potential issues? Do I need a local fixer familiar with the area for advice?

##### **What supplies might I need?**

- Always carry food, water, extra clothing and equipment to get you out of trouble such as tow ropes and shovels
- What forms of identification will I need? Think Press Pass/Passport
- Always carry a first aid kit

##### **What to wear?**

- Think practical clothing and footwear. You may need to walk long distances
- Do I need protective clothing in case of rioting or an attack?

##### **What is the plan for digital security?**

- What measures will I take to protect the content filmed on camera or mobile phone? More on this later in the section
- Do I need more than one smartphone? One for content, the second for making calls?
- How much kit can I physically carry and be able to stay on the move?
- How will I share my material with the newsroom or a trusted colleague? More on this later in the section

### What's the escape plan if I get into trouble?

- Always have an escape/exit plan. Are the floodwaters rising, will the road you came in on be blocked? Where is the exit point from a protest? Check Google Maps, ask for local advice before you set out
- What's my exit strategy if in a building? In hotels check fire escapes, avoid hotel rooms above reception which can be vulnerable to car bombs
- In case of emergency, agree a coded message with your newsroom to alert them that you are in trouble

### How will people know where I am?

- Always tell your editor or a trusted colleague where you are going
- Stay in touch. Consider setting up prearranged times to call base with an update
- In case of losing your smartphone, always carry a hard copy of emergency contact numbers

The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) also provides a risk assessment form template which you can access at [https://cpj.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/CPJ-Emergencies\\_Risk-Assessment-Template-2.pdf](https://cpj.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/CPJ-Emergencies_Risk-Assessment-Template-2.pdf). Find more resources at the end of the section to help you assess risk.

## 4.5 - Digital safety and security

If you don't think enough about digital security and take adequate measures you could find yourself, your sources and your team exposed to whoever wants your information. So along with physical safety, digital safety and security is an essential part of any risk assessment.

### • Digital safety and security risk assessment

Think about:

- Who can access my devices
- How will I secure any material recorded on my devices
- How will I share material with my newsroom

**Hassan Mhelela** who's the chief editor at Azam TV based in Dar Es Salaam is training journalists about digital security. These are his top tips:



- Don't use biometrics (your fingerprint or face) to open your device. It's easy for someone to force you to open it

- A long alphanumeric password is more secure. It's possible to set some devices to delete all contents if the password is entered incorrectly too many times
- Use an end-to-end encrypted messaging app like Signal to share information
- Know that VPNs (virtual private networks) are illegal to use in Tanzania without permission from the telecom regulator
- Other safer ways to share sensitive material: OnionShare - an open-source tool that lets you anonymously share files and talk to others. It uses the Tor network - a free encrypted browser

Hassan warns that journalists are often too quick to click on links they have been sent without checking if the URL is legitimate. He warns:

- A single click of a fake URL can take down the whole newsroom
- Always check the URL first before you open it
- Don't assume that because the link has been sent from a source that it is OK to open

There are links to URL checker sites at the end of the section.

**Don't reveal your location:** If you are working on a contentious story, never post on social media until you have left the area. You may be tracked putting both you and your sources in danger.

- **Dealing with online harassment**

Online attacks against journalists in Tanzania, particularly women, are reported to be increasing. It can be frightening, intimidating and overwhelming. While many trolls – a term for online abusers – work alone, they could be part of a group working for big business, criminal gangs or governments. Every risk assessment should include questions about the journalist's online presence.

- Document the abuse and take screenshots
- Do not respond to trolls as it can give them the oxygen of publicity which is what they often crave
- Ask a colleague to monitor your social media sites if the abuse becomes too much for you to cope with on a daily basis
- Block or mute abusive people online

## 4.6 - Legal advice

Climate change reporting in Tanzania often intersects with sensitive issues such as land disputes, extractive industries, conservation conflicts and public protests. These contexts expose journalists to legal risks, including arrest, confiscation of equipment, or compelled disclosure of sources. Most journalists are not trained media lawyers and many media organisations cannot afford legal counsel - it may be possible for newsrooms to share the cost so there is someone on a retainer who can be contacted for advice or help when needed. There are also links to organisations offering free legal advice for journalists at the end of the section. Having practical guidance can strengthen both your professional credibility and legal defensibility.

So imagine you are a journalist covering a climate change protest, what happens if you're arrested or police try to take your smartphone or camera from you? What should you do and who should you ask for help?

- **Your rights and responsibilities**

Laws are being used increasingly against environmental journalists around the world to stifle, restrict and intimidate them. It's why risk assessments covering your physical and digital safety is so important. In Tanzania, journalists have legal rights as well as responsibilities as outlined below.

### **Freedom of expression**

The Constitution of the United Republic of Tanzania guarantees every person the right to freedom of opinion and expression, including the right to seek, receive and disseminate information under Article 18. This protection extends to journalists engaged in public interest reporting, including environmental and climate-related investigations. However, constitutional rights are not absolute and may be restricted in the interest of national security, public order, morality, or safety. Asserting your constitutional rights should be done professionally and without physical resistance.

**Advice:** If stopped from reporting: remain calm, present valid accreditation, ask under which law the restriction is imposed, document the interaction if safe, and notify your editor or legal counsel.

**Recommended field script:** *"I am a journalist exercising my constitutional right to gather and disseminate information under Article 18 of the Constitution. Could you please clarify the legal basis for restricting my work?"*

## **Gathering information**

The Media Services Act provides the statutory framework governing accreditation, licensing, ethical standards and professional conduct of journalists and media organisations in Tanzania. Accredited journalists operating under registered media houses are legally recognised to collect and gather information from diverse sources.

### **Your responsibilities when gathering information:**

- Accreditation must be valid and current at all times
- Reporting in protected areas, forests, mining concessions, conservation zones or other regulated areas may require additional access permits beyond press credentials
- The Act restricts publication of seditious content, false information, material threatening national security, or content deemed to incite unrest

### **Your responsibilities when publishing high-impact environmental stories:**

- Maintain a documented evidence trail
- Attribute allegations clearly
- Use qualifying language such as "alleged" where investigations are ongoing
- Offer and document a right of reply
- Conduct internal legal vetting for high-risk investigations

**Advice:** Journalists should operate with legal literacy, procedural discipline and strong documentation culture. Administrative sanctions (including fines, suspension or deregistration) may precede judicial review.

## **Confidential sources**

The Media Services (Amendment) Regulations reinforce the ethical obligation of journalists to protect confidential sources. Tanzanian law recognises journalistic confidentiality. However, this protection is not absolute:

- Disclosure of a confidential source may be compelled by a court order
- Disclosure may also be framed as necessary in matters involving national security or serious criminal investigation
- The law does not provide absolute digital privilege for journalists

### **Practical clarification**

Sources can generally expect confidentiality unless:

- A lawful court order compels disclosure
- The matter involves serious criminal activity or national security concerns
- A judge determines disclosure is necessary for the administration of justice
- It is not limited only to situations where a source is directly involved in criminal activity. Broader security or investigative grounds may be invoked

**Advice:**

- Never promise absolute confidentiality without explaining legal limits
- Inform sources of potential compelled disclosure scenarios
- Store identifying information separately and in encrypted form
- Use secure communication platforms
- If pressured informally, request formal legal process

**Recommended field script if pressured to reveal a source:** *"I have a professional and legal obligation to protect confidential sources. I respectfully request that any demand for disclosure be made through a formal court process."*

**What happens if you are arrested?**

Under the Constitution and applicable criminal procedure laws, a journalist has the right to be informed of the reason for arrest, be brought before a court within a reasonable time (generally within 24 hours where practicable), access legal counsel, remain silent except for identification details, and be free from torture or degrading treatment.

**Advice:** Journalists should not physically resist, delete footage or data, sign statements without legal review, or volunteer confidential source/s information.

**Recommended field script:** *"I am a journalist performing my professional duties. Please inform me of the legal basis for this arrest. I request access to legal counsel."*

**What happens if your devices are confiscated?**

Device seizure may occur under criminal investigation procedures, court-issued warrants, national security laws or cybercrime investigations. General Principles are:

- A warrant is typically required to search a newsroom or private residence
- Arrest-linked searches or items considered evidence of a crime in progress may not require prior warrant presentation
- Seizures should be documented

**Advice:**

- Do not physically resist
- Request written documentation of seizure
- Record officer names and badge numbers where safe
- Inform your editor and legal support immediately

**Recommended field script:** *"Is there a warrant authorizing this search or seizure?"*

**Should you unlock your phone without a warrant?**

There is no absolute journalistic digital privilege under Tanzanian law.

**Advice:**

- Do not voluntarily unlock devices without clear lawful authority
- Politely request that any search follow formal legal process
- Use strong passwords rather than biometric-only access
- Enable full-device encryption

**Recommended field script:** *"I respectfully request that any search of my device follow formal legal procedure."*

**Legal summary**

Tanzania's legal framework provides formal constitutional protections while maintaining a vigorous statutory regulatory regime governing media practice.

Risk in climate and environmental reporting arises not from the subject matter itself, but from its overlap with governance, resources, economics, protests and security concerns. Journalists must therefore combine:

- Legal awareness
- Procedural discipline
- Secure data practices
- Strong professional ethics

The Media Council of Tanzania has a code of ethics which covers the conduct expected of a professional journalist which you should abide by. There is a link at the end of the section. There is also a list of referenced and relevant legal materials and instruments in the Appendix.

## 4.7 - Exercise – The mudslide

Imagine you are covering the story in this scenario and then answer the questions.

*There has been a major mudslide in a town 30 kilometres from where you are. Homes have been destroyed and there are early reports of several people being killed. It comes in the wake of a ferocious storm which caused widespread damage. You want to cover the story for your news outlet.*

Consider these questions and then you'll find the answers at the end of the section.

**Question 1.** What is the first thing you do?

- A. Get in your car and head straight to the scene
- B. Talk to your editor about the best and safest way to proceed

**Question 2.** If after talking to your editor it's agreed you can go to the scene, you fill out a risk assessment form. What are some of the risks you need to consider? **Hint:** there is more than one right answer.

- A. Is my car roadworthy?
- B. Are the roads passable?
- C. What clothing will I need?
- D. What supplies will I need?
- E. How will I keep my device/s safe and share my material?
- F. Who can I contact if I need help?

### NEWS UPDATE

*You arrive at the town where people tell you that a nearby waste dump has been impacted by the mudslide. They say it's caused toxic waste to leak into their water supply with people already starting to get sick. Locals had campaigned against the waste dump saying it was too close to homes. They believe corrupt local officials allowed it to go ahead.*

**Question 3.** This is an important update for your story. What's the first thing you do?

- A. Contact your editor and talk through how you can prove the story and whether you need back up and enhanced digital security
- B. Go to the local administrative offices and confront them
- C. Nothing, you are just there to report the mudslide

**Question 4.** With news that the local water supply may be contaminated, what other risks might you face? Answer as many as you think are correct.

- A. None
- B. You could get ill from drinking the water
- C. Your clothing could get contaminated

**Question 5.** Climate change means extreme weather events (and the consequences such as mudslides) are becoming more common. You need to update your risk assessment form to ensure you consider the changing circumstances and risks you might face. Who might help you with that?

- A. No one as you know enough
- B. Emergency services
- C. Your editor
- D. Colleagues who have experience covering similar disasters
- E. NGOs

## 4.8 - Key takeaways

You've reached the end of this section. Remind yourself of three key things you have learned.

**Takeaway 1:** Identify the risks you might face BEFORE you go out or send someone out on a story

**Takeaway 2:** Safety is paramount for you, your colleagues and sources. Never leave it to chance

**Takeaway 3:** Think legal and know what your rights and responsibilities are under the law

### Resources:

#### Risk-assessment

- Risk assessment form – CPJ: [https://cpj.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/CPJ-Emergencies\\_Risk-Assessment-Template-2.pdf](https://cpj.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/CPJ-Emergencies_Risk-Assessment-Template-2.pdf)
- Essential safety tips for journalists African Centre for Media Excellence: <https://acme-ug.org/wp-content/uploads/Essential-safety-tips-for-journalists-2.pdf>

- Digital safety guides – Reporters without borders (RSF): <https://resources.rsf.org/external-resources/>
- Eset (URL) Link Checker: <https://www.eset.com/uk/home/link-checker/?srsltid=AfmBOoq1GEKlvvr9V2uG-F4HjoULxxEytn3lGxqveoQLb11WWurGlpSh>
- Google URL checker: [transparencyreport.google.com/safe-browsing/search](https://transparencyreport.google.com/safe-browsing/search)

### Legal advice

- Legal advice resources: <https://resources.rsf.org/external-resources/>
- MiSA Tanzania: <https://tanzania.misa.org/>
- Legal and Human Rights Centre Tanzania: <https://humanrights.or.tz/en>
- Media Defence: <https://www.mediadefence.org/>
- Legal Network for Journalists at Risk: <https://www.medialegalhelp.org/>

### Laws

- Understanding the laws on journalistic sources in Tanzania - TRF and iWatch Africa: <https://www.trust.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/KYRG-Tanzania-SOU-MAY-2025-V5-1.pdf>
- Media Laws in Tanzania - Media Council of Tanzania: <https://new.mct.or.tz/zlsc-constitution/>
- Ethical Guidelines - Media Council of Tanzania: <https://new.mct.or.tz/zlscconstitutions/>

## Answers - 4.7 Exercise

**Question 1.** B is the correct answer. You would want to talk to your editor and assess the risks and evaluate if you are the best person to go there – there may be someone nearer for example.

**Question 2.** All of the suggestions are factors you need to consider in a risk assessment.

**Question 3.** This is an important update for your story. What's the first thing you do? The correct answer is A. The story update exposes new risks that you need to assess. You could put yourself in danger if you just go to the offices alone without telling anyone where you are going or knowing who you might be dealing with. Also you have no proof yet that toxic waste is in the water supply – it would be worth getting a sample for testing. Stories on the ground often change, particularly where extreme weather events are concerned so you wouldn't want to ignore it.

**Question 4.** B and C are the correct answers. If there is any possibility of the local water supply being contaminated, you need to make sure you don't drink it. You could get sick. Always make sure you have your own bottled water with you when covering a story and include that in your risk assessment. Your clothes too could get contaminated so always carry a change of clothes and shoes and make sure potentially contaminated ones are placed in a sealed plastic bag.

**Question 5.** B, C, D and E are the correct answers. Don't rely solely on your own experience, gut instinct or belief that things will work out OK. Emergency services can offer overall guidance while NGOs can be quick to respond to disasters and can be a source of useful contacts.

## Appendix 1

### Who is my audience? Survey questions

Question	Answers
What is your audience's age range?	Under 18 18-25 26-35 36-50 51-64 Over 65
What is your audience's gender?	Male Female Both male and female
Is your audience rural or urban?	Rural only Urban only Both
What is their employment status?	Employed full-time or self-employed Not currently employed Student Homemaker Retired
What is their education level?	Up to age 11 Up to age 16 Up to age 18 Educated to degree level and above
What is their family status?	Parent with pre-school children Parent with school age children Parent with adult children Grandparent caring for children Grandparent not caring for children Person with no children
What is their partnership status?	Single Married In a relationship Widowed



## Appendix 3

### Referenced legal materials

- 1. Constitutional Framework**
  - Constitution of the United Republic of Tanzania, 1977
- 2. Media Regulation Framework**
  - Media Services Act
- 3. Media Services (Amendment) Regulations**
  - Criminal Procedure and Arrest Powers
- 4. Criminal Procedure Act**
  - Police Force and Auxiliary Services Act
- 5. Cyber and Digital Regulation**
  - Cybercrimes Act
- 6. Electronic and Postal Communications**
  - National Security and Public Order Legislation
- 7. National Security Act**
  - Public Order Act
- 8. Access to Information**
  - Access to Information Act
- 9. Evidence and Confidentiality**
  - Evidence Act
- 10. Child Protection and Privacy**
  - Law of the Child Act
- 11. Penal Code**
  - Supplementary International Standards (Persuasive but Not Self-Executing)
- 12. African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights**
  - International Covenant on Civil and Political Right