



Photo: Vibeke Quaade, Kigali, 2011.

# Reporting from the African frontline of the global climate crisis

 **Are you a professional journalist eager to report about climate change and how it's affecting your country?**

 **Do you wish to enhance your writing and reporting skills to enable you to transform scientific research findings into compelling news stories?**

 **Would you like to enlarge and diversify your toolbox of impact journalistic tools?**

 **Do you have a keen interest in the global climate challenges, and do you want to learn more about its consequences, especially for Africa?**

 **Do you wish to participate in COP27, and will your media house accredit you to do so?**

**If yes, this is the course for you!**

## Introduction

This is a learning programme targeting African journalists. The prime goal is to pave way for climate news and feature stories that are relevant for Africans.

Media plays an essential role in getting the message of climate change and stories of adaptation across to the public as well as to decision makers. When journalists tell well informed and accurate climate stories, they help citizens and decision makers understand the realities of climate change and the possible responses.

This learning programme “Reporting from the African Frontline of the Global Climate Crisis” is designed for professional journalists including photographers and videographers working in African print and broadcast media. The participating journalists must have both experience and a keen interest in covering the global climate crisis and environmental issues. To take part in the learning programme, participating journalists must be assigned by their managing editors to produce and publicize climate change related content. In addition, the media houses must commit themselves to have the journalists accredited to COP27.



## Timing and venues

The learning programme will take place in the following periods and will include the following three main components:

- **3– 14 October, 2022** in Denmark
- **31 October – 4 November, 2022**, in Arusha, Tanzania
- **7-11 November, 2022** attending 1st week of COP27 in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt

**Transfer from Tanzania to Egypt** will be arranged during the weekend of 5-6 November, 2022.

**Please note that it is only possible to apply for the full learning programme and not parts of it. The applicant is to declare full commitment in a letter signed by the management of his / her place of work including commitment to COP27 press accreditation.**

## Why a learning programme for African journalists?

Ugandan Climate Activist Vanessa Nkate has described how Africa is on the frontline of the climate crisis but that it is not covered in the front pages of the world's newspapers. Although drought and floods are leading to food insecurity and exacerbating poverty there is relatively little reporting of this. So how does the African media cover Africa and climate change currently? Africa No Filter, an organisation set up to counter harmful and stereotypical narratives about the continent, investigated these questions. They found that one-third of all African stories in news outlets on the continent are sourced from foreign news services. They also revealed that local African media fell into many of the same pitfalls as international news organisations when reporting on the continent with 81% of the stories analysed classified as "hard news", for example conflicts and crises driven by events and largely political in nature. Thirteen per cent of the news coverage focused specifically on political violence, civil unrest, and armed conflict. In a subsequent report they discovered that conversations around climate change in Africa were not led by Africans but by international organisations with "disaster tweets" dominating rather than discussions around mitigation or policies. The learning programme's module on constructive journalism will provide the journalist tools to report in ways that critically and informed seeks to address and describe possibilities and solutions to the global climate crises.

Read more about the findings of Africa No Filter <http://africanofilter.org/research-how-african-media-covers-africa>.

## Setting the climate change scene before COP27

The climate change challenge is global, however, actions to adapt to the changes and increase resilience as well to reduce the emission of GHGs must also be taken at national and local levels, and we all have a role to play: From individual households, organisations and companies – to public institutions and politicians.

The module on climate change will provide an introduction to the most important aspects of climate change. This will include an introduction to the work of UNFCCC and Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), with particular emphasis on the Sixth Assessment Report from the IPCC, the present status and projections for climate change, and the main responses to the climate crisis; Adaptation and Mitigation. The presentation will relate to the global situation, but also introduce the Danish efforts to address climate change, thereby providing a frame for the two weeks in Denmark and for understanding the practices and technologies employed in Denmark.

## The role of the media covering climate change

What is the role of the media covering climate change? Are the traditional news criteria sufficient when reporting on climate issues or do journalists need to employ other tools if both citizens and decision-makers are to be helped to understand and so make informed choices. A recent study from University of Boulder shows that leading media houses around the world cover climate changes with more scientific accuracy today than twenty years ago where the media often gave climate deniers as much space as legitimate climate experts.

However, is it enough and is the direction especially the news media ought to go while covering climate change?

News media remain the most widely used source of information about climate change. It is therefore important that journalists of all media organisations are equipped to cover the issue, so they can help citizens and decisions makers understand the realities of climate change and how we might respond to them. During the learning programme, visits to leading Danish media houses, meetings with experienced climate journalists as well as roundtable talks with climate experts, frequently cited in global news media will be arranged. This component of the learning programme will equip the journalist to define his/her own role while covering climate change and avoid the pitfalls that one might easily fall in while reporting on climate change.

## What is science journalism?

Science journalists report news and other information about science to the general public. Traditionally, science journalism was seen as a way to convey scientific information in ways that a non-specialist audience could understand. However, today it is evident that journalists not only need to simplify academic jargon, they also need to be able to ask critical questions to the scientists.

Knowing the basics of science is essential when asking critical questions at COP 27. When politicians, international companies and other stakeholders are claiming to be acting on science you will have the tools to check if they are right or wrong. The learning programme will give you the tools to find unique local climate stories that are relevant to your audience and setting your work apart from other journalists.



## What is constructive journalism?

Constructive journalism is a frame and vocabulary originated in Scandinavia to address the problems of increasing negativity bias, sensationalism and the heightening of conflict in the global news industry. These tendencies have been exacerbated by digital disruption and a 24 hour news cycle that seeks to retain fragmented audiences and shrinking revenues. This news culture is contributing to polarisation and driving communities apart. It is also driving news audiences away from consumption of news, news avoidance is a growing trend.

Constructive journalism with its solutions focus, emphasis on context and nuance and efforts to build bridges across society is another layer journalists can use when investigating complex and intertwined issues. Constructive journalism allows journalists to go beyond the watchdog, frame which ends at pointing out villains and victims and move more towards a rescue dog role, facilitating conversations across society and asking What Now?

Constructive journalism is an approach to journalism that while being independent and critical also seeks to address and describe possibilities and solutions to problems. Constructive journalism seeks to describe events and developments in a holistic manner and to give hope for developments that can address challenges. Today journalists from Kenya to Kosovo are looking to implement constructive reporting in their work, complimenting the traditional frames of breaking news reportage and investigative journalism.

## Learning Objectives

After participation in this comprehensive learning programme, the participants will:

- Have a basic understanding of science and how scientists work
- Have knowledge of simple tools on how to find the latest breaking news based on science, including science on climate
- Have obtained tools to assist in interviewing scientists, including asking critical questions
- Have obtained a better understanding of how to distinguish trustworthy science from misinformation
- Understand concepts and principles as well as have knowledge of practical examples of constructive journalism
- Understand how to undertake workflow and editorial output
- Understand the present status of and background for climate change at a global and local/national scale
- Be able to account for appropriate action modalities, i.e. adaptation, mitigation and resilience

The learning objectives will be met by relating and adjusting the contents to the participants' own working environment through cases and writing assignments. The learning programme will also provide rich opportunities for establishing a network of colleagues and counterparts in African countries.

The responsibility for developing and transferring applicable knowledge and skills will be shared by the participants and facilitators in an enabling learning environment.

**“** ...facilitating conversations across society and asking What Now?

## Contents of the Learning Programme

### 3 – 14 October, 2022 in Denmark

- Setting the scene for Climate Change
- The role of the media covering climate change
- Introduction to science journalism
- Exposure to relevant climate change solutions adaptable to an African context

### 31 October – 4 November, 2022, in Arusha, Tanzania

- African climate stories in an African context
- Follow-up on science journalism assignment
- Introduction to Constructive Journalism
- Exposure to relevant climate change related research projects in Africa
- 5 or 6 November – transfer to COP27 in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt

### 7-11 November, COP27 in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt

- Coverage of the first week of the COP27
- Finalisation of science journalism assignment
- Preparation of news from the COP27 relevant for the participants' own media

## How to apply?

Applicants must fill in the “Fellowship Application Form”. The filled-in form should be endorsed by the respective Danish Embassy and forwarded to Danida Fellowship Centre. The final selection of participants will be carried out by Danida Fellowship Centre.

## Course Management

The learning programme will be managed by Danida Fellowship Centre (DFC) in collaboration with its partners. DFC manages and implements the DFC supported Scholarship Programme, which supplies training in support of capacity development in Danish supported development programmes and projects worldwide. DFC is responsible for the educational, administrative and practical aspects of the learning programme.



## The partner institutions

**The Constructive Institute** is an independent centre at the heart of the constructive journalism movement. The institute has the mission of working with reporters and editors to shape a global news culture that is more nuanced, bridge-building and solutions-focused.

**NIRAS** is a value-driven, multi-disciplinary engineering consultancy fundamentally committed to sustainable progress and service delivery.

**Videnskab.dk** is Denmark's leading science media written and edited by an independent group of editorial staff. Videnskab.dk provides free daily research and science news and has around one and a half million views per month. Its content is often sourced by international media.

**The Rise up Movement** is a global climate movement group that started in 2019 when 24-yrs old Vanessa Nakate began striking for climate change in Uganda. The Rise up Movement activates especially women and girls to transform their lives, families and communities for a more just and equitable world through investment in local solutions, strengthening leadership, and building movements for the people and the planet.

**The MS Training Centre for Development Cooperation, TCDC** is a Pan-African training centre, situated in Arusha, Tanzania, unique in our dedication to high quality capacity development for social transformation. Danida Fellowship Centre and MS-TCDC entered into a new partnership “Better Together” in 2022.

DFC's contact details are:

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**Danida Fellowship Centre**  
- Sustainable development through research and learning