



IMPROVING ENVIRONMENTAL OUTCOMES THROUGH THE MEDIA

An evaluation of how support for journalism changes environmental and climate-related policy and practice.

Prepared by Dr. Cathy Shutt

The background is a vibrant, abstract composition. It features a mix of green and blue tones. On the left, there are soft, painterly green shapes that resemble foliage or a forest scene. On the right, there are bold, expressive blue brushstrokes that create a sense of movement and depth. The overall effect is a layered, artistic background. In the center, the text '25 X 25' is written in a large, clean, white sans-serif font. The '25' is on the top line, and 'X 25' is on the bottom line, with the 'X' positioned to the left of the second '25'.

25
X 25

25X25 SERIES

Internews is an international non-profit that supports independent media in 100 countries — from radio stations in refugee camps, to hyper-local news outlets, to filmmakers and technologists. We train journalists and digital rights activists, tackle disinformation, and offers business expertise to help media outlets thrive financially. For nearly 40 years, we have helped partners reach millions of people with trustworthy information that saves lives, improves livelihoods, and holds institutions accountable.

We commissioned this research as part of the 25 x 25 initiative, the organization's strategic commitment to increase robust evaluation of our work by delivering 25 research studies by 2025.

We have made this commitment because we want to know which of our approaches are most effective in order to bring them to scale, to strengthen our understanding of the impact for communities when their information environments improve over time, to make our contribution to the global evidence base and to hold ourselves accountable to the people we serve.

We will do this work alongside external research partners who share our vision to realize the potential of a digitally connected world: a world in which evidence-based information advances human progress, enables broad opportunity and accountability, and fuels vibrant civic debate. We know we will only achieve this through a deep understanding of the contexts we work in and a constant drive to learn and improve.

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PREPARED BY: **Dr. Cathy Shutt**
Lead Researcher

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Any errors are the responsibility of the Lead Researcher.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

In recent years, Internews' Earth Journalism Network (EJN) has invested time and resources to better understand the results of the support it provides to journalists and media outlets. EJN already uses a suite of methods to gauge the impact of its efforts to improve environmental media, such as evaluating individual training and capacity development activities. In 2020, it commissioned a study that aimed to go a step further and support deeper learning on whether, how and why EJN's work contributes to changes in the policies and practices of different actors. This report summarizes the study's main findings, insights and recommendations.

METHODOLOGY

The study took a qualitative, theory-based approach to generate insights on:

- whether EJN stories could be linked to changes in policy, practices, and behavior;
- how they worked to influence motivations and actions to produce these changes; and
- why different contextual factors helped or hindered them generating outcomes.

It was informed by evidence that suggests journalism and the media affect environmental practice and governance through two principal pathways: Direct influence on government or policymakers, and less direct routes that influence public debate, norms and collective action. In both instances, media actors are part of a wider accountability ecosystem involving civil society and other actors who play critical roles in mediating stories and making them more accessible to various audiences.

This evidence links closely with conceptual approaches and theories of change that are used by some EJN programs to learn about not only the direct outputs of its work, but also its more indirect spheres of influence and interest. In the context of this study, they were used to distinguish between findings that demonstrate EJN's approaches are effective, resulting in outputs such as the publication of stories, and outcomes that are beyond EJN's control, being dependent on many other actors and factors. Such outcomes extend to raising the awareness of the public and people in power about drivers of environmental harm and degradation as well as what can be done to address them. The goal of this awareness-raising is to prompt action that improves environmental policies and practice.

The research followed a case study design that built on EJN's use of outcome harvesting (OH)¹ to identify and assess its contributions to changes in environmental policy and

practice. It was implemented through interviews and desk-based research by a team of 7 local researchers who examined 12 cases in 6 countries. They were supported by a team leader who consolidated findings and authored this report.

The researchers encountered methodological challenges when trying to substantiate some of the outcomes reported, including difficulties associated with arranging interviews during a global pandemic. We also realized that focusing on individual stories meant we were not systematically capturing potential outcomes emerging in instances where these stories begot more stories on similar issues. Despite these limitations, the study generated useful findings and insights. They have already triggered ideas from EJN staff on how their work might achieve and demonstrate greater impact in the future. Some of these are included in a set of recommendations that were co-constructed by EJN members and the lead researcher during deliberations on earlier drafts of this report.

KEY FINDINGS

WITHIN EJN'S CONTROL:

- EJN's financial and mentoring support enables journalists with varied levels of experience to undertake reporting that they would otherwise find difficult. As a result, they can produce newsworthy stories on environmental issues.
- Research challenges mentioned earlier resulted in incomplete data, but it appears that stories supported by EJN are likely to achieve higher levels of engagement when published in local languages. Many stories published with EJN's support are republished and shared through other news outlets and social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter. Levels of engagement appear to vary considerably across countries and distribution channels, however data explored by the study indicates they may be higher for local language media, particularly video.

EJN'S SPHERES OF INFLUENCE AND INTEREST:

Researchers were able to substantiate several outcomes, partly and fully, illustrating that EJN's support does influence discourse and environmental practices through both impact pathways below:

1. Influencing actions of powerful actors

- Stories written by a journalist supported by EJN motivated local government actors in Southeast Sulawesi, Indonesia to collaborate and intensify their efforts to protect the anoa, a dwarf buffalo, from extinction.
- The article "Adi Ganga disappears in West Bengal" published by The Third Pole was picked up by a local activist and used as evidence in a court case. This contributed to an order by the National Green Tribunal in India for the restoration of the river.²

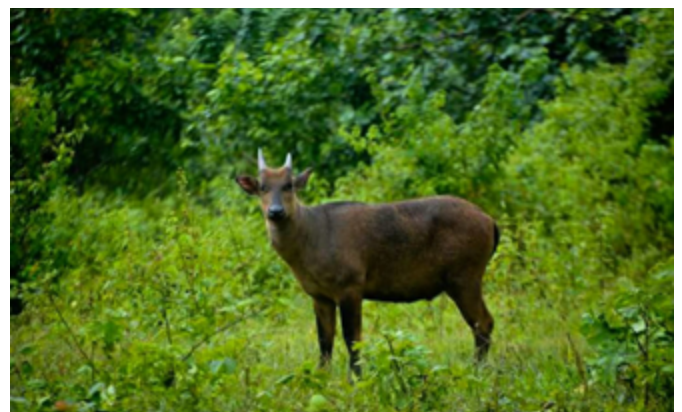


Figure 1.
A lowland Anoa was seen in the Wildlife Reserve Lambusango, Southeast Sulawesi.
Photo: Halidin

- An article on water shortages in the Philippines province of Albay contributed to a politician committing budget resources to the area. Researchers were unable to assess its contribution relative to a separate survey by the organization PulseAsia that he cited as influencing his decision, nor could we locate evidence that the village at the heart of the story ultimately benefited.

2. Influencing public discourse and citizen action

- Stories about the imminent extinction of the anoa in Southeast Sulawesi prompted community education activities by environmental activists. They were keen to deter community members from killing anoa that strayed onto their land or damaged crops.
- Financial support and mentoring enabled experienced journalists employed by the Philippine Daily Inquirer to write an article that empowered members of an indigenous people, the Aeta. Their article led to a significant outpouring of public support for the Aeta's struggle for land and environmental rights, which increased the group's confidence and determination.
- In Uganda, a story describing the success of anti-poaching initiatives in a particular game reserve sparked the interest of local radio journalists. As a result, the radio journalists triggered a short public debate on the beauty and economic potential of the Ajai Game Reserve. This is notable, as this region is an area where such issues had previously received little media discussion.

Exploring EJN's contributions to such outcomes generated insights on how and why the stories and media outlets it supports contribute to shifts in public discourse, policies and practice (or not):

- **Continuous reporting is often needed to increase awareness of slow burn disasters.** Occasionally, single stories may contribute to remarkable outcomes, but this is rare.
- **If specialized or niche media outlets are not well-known, this may reduce their audience and potential impact.** Researchers struggled to find informants



Figure 2.
An Aeta Hungey tills land under threat by the New Clark City project.
Photo: Kathleen Lei Limayo

familiar with The Third Pole, a specialist media platform publishing stories on the Himalaya-Hindu Kush mountain range and the Tibetan Plateau region. Those who were aware of The Third Pole valued it highly. This suggests the platform may not be as well-known as it deserves to be.

- **Evidence-based stories with human interest angles engage readers.** Many different aspects of the stories evaluated in this report motivated engagement and action. These included legitimacy of authors and channels, local relevance, newness of issues and inclusion of positive examples that drive aspirations for improvement or address an environmental challenge. The presence of both scientific evidence and human-interest angles appears to have been particularly important in examples from the Philippines and Indonesia.
- **The relative strength of civil society and connectivity are important factors that contribute to a story's influence and ability to prompt actions.** Case studies from India and the Philippines showed that civil society actors and journalists — other than those trained directly by EJN — play critical intermediary roles in making stories accessible to different audiences. Such intermediaries are important for both impact pathways: those that influence public opinion and citizen action, as well as those that influence policymakers and other powerful actors.
- **Representing marginalized people's voices in stories is necessary but not sufficient — the communities need to be able to access the information, too.** Hidden power³ means poor and marginalized groups are unable to directly access stories shared on digital platforms and/or published in English. Therefore, intermediaries play important roles in making stories accessible to such groups. Journalists in India, Indonesia, the Philippines and Uganda were good at representing marginalized people's voices in stories. In some instances, these stories were intermediated by other journalists and CSOs, making them more accessible to marginalized groups. However, there was no evidence that this was a deliberate strategy or tactic employed to build awareness and solidarity between poor and vulnerable people affected by and potentially interested in taking collective action on environmental risks and or environmental conservation activities.
- **Vested interests, local politics and government capacity all play roles in determining whether commitments triggered by EJN-supported journalism get implemented or not.** Several commitments inspired by EJN-supported stories, such as the GNT order to clean the Ganga river, were not followed up. These findings, together with other evidence on media impact, imply that media stories may have little sustainable impact on policy implementation without broad-based citizen action that challenges vested interests and inequitable power relations.
- **Outcome harvesting is a promising method for learning whether and how media platforms and stories influence environmental policies and practices (or not).** Yet, it needs fine-tuning to ensure it is effective for EJN. EJN has invested in OH and contribution analysis because it understands that impact pathways for environmental journalism are complicated, involving various other actors and factors. Findings from this study confirm that OH can generate useful insights for organizational learning. However, they also raise several issues that suggest EJN needs to adjust its approach so that it better fits its operational model.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

EJN could continue to engage with evidence in the field and undertake further research on the implicit or explicit assumptions in EJN's theory of change. This could include considering how EJN can ensure the reporting it supports is accessible to audiences most likely to act and have impact at different levels. Questions for reflection might include:

What are our assumptions about how environmental media and journalism is most likely to achieve impact in a given context? For example:

- ▶ Which impact pathway is likely to be more effective: raising awareness of citizens or powerful actors/policy-makers?
- ▶ How can EJN ensure stories reach organizations that work on issues related to the themes in the stories we support, to see that they are shared more widely?
- ▶ Are EJN's stories more likely to receive the support they need to gain traction at international, national or local level?

Would greater investments by EJN in local language media and translation of stories into local languages enhance the value for money it delivers?

- ▶ What additional research do we need to undertake to make this decision? For example, on the reach and levels of engagement with local language videos?

Does EJN need to encourage those it trains and supports to consider reach and engagement more deeply? For example, could they do more to disseminate stories to intermediaries with large networks that reach vulnerable groups?

EJN could revise its use of outcome harvesting so that it is more efficient and better supports EJN's learning around its complex theory of change and the nature of its operations. This would require EJN staff to:

- routinely collect relevant analytic data on the reach, scale of engagement and reactions with the stories and outlets EJN supports.
- better understand the difference between causation and correlation when reporting on the influence of stories and outlets.
- stress that the main aim of outcome harvesting is not attributing outcomes to single stories supported by EJN. Rather, it is to enable learning on whether, how and why journalists, multiple stories and the platforms that support them are making useful contributions to strengthening the wider ecosystem of actors seeking improved environmental practices and governance. Such contributions will vary considerably. They are likely to range from small wins, such as building the confidence of individual journalists to write more stories on the drivers of environmental harm, to making such stories accessible to diverse audiences who are likely to act on them.

EJN could integrate power analysis into different aspects of their work: Findings around story accessibility to vulnerable groups; the essential role that intermediaries play in environmental accountability ecosystems and the possibility of normative bias in outcome harvesting processes all suggest EJN might benefit from making power analysis more central to its planning, monitoring and evaluation systems.

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

Founded in 2004, the Earth Journalism Network (EJN) improves the quantity and quality of environmental coverage by empowering journalists, media outlets and other communicators, with a particular focus on low- and middle-income countries. EJN trains journalists to cover a variety of environmental and climate-related issues, provides financial and technical support to enable them to produce content for local media and helps journalists to cover key environmental summits and carry out investigative reports. EJN also partners with media websites to give a broader picture of global and regional environmental challenges.

The Earth Journalism Network improves the quantity and quality of environmental coverage by empowering journalists, media outlets and other communicators, with a particular focus on low- and middle-income countries



Figure 3. Imelda Abano, an environmental journalist and EJN staff member, conducts interviews in a village in Fiji.

In recent years, EJN has invested time and resources to better understand the results of the support it provides to journalists and media outlets. EJN already uses a suite of methods to gauge the impact of its work on media outlets and journalists, such as evaluations of capacity building. This study aims to go a step further to develop a deeper understanding of the outcomes of EJN's work on a sample of intermediaries, communities and policymakers.

The study builds on the outcome harvesting (OH) methodology EJN has been using to assess outcomes it contributes to under its Asia-Pacific project, as well as other initiatives. EJN uses a survey-based method to collect journalists' views about possible outcomes associated with their stories. This project was designed to enable local researchers to investigate a sample of these:

- to establish whether, or to what extent, the outcomes or changes could be substantiated; and
- to explore whether and how the stories produced by the journalists had contributed to them.

In other words, the project was designed to advance EJN's understanding of how media stories contribute to changes on the ground — be they changes in public policy, such as halting pollution or destructive development projects, broader public discussion of environmental issues or more understanding of and support for reporting on the environment, or instances of collective action.

The overall approach was to hire a lead researcher to coordinate and manage a team of local researchers. They, in turn, were to undertake investigations in six countries representing some of the different regions where EJN works, specifically: Indonesia, the Philippines, Bangladesh, India, Uganda and Honduras. These countries were chosen through a review of outcomes that had already been harvested by EJN staff to determine which ones might best fit the research questions and timeline.

Local researchers were then to write case study reports.

The lead researcher was contracted to design the overall methodology and train and support local researchers in their country-based work. She was also responsible for writing this synthesis report.

The entire project was carried out in an accelerated time frame and expected to last 3 months: from late October 2020 to late January 2021 with the bulk of the local research and case studies being undertaken during November and early December.

OBJECTIVES

The overall purpose of this research was to enable learning around the real-world outcomes of information produced with EJN support and the potential factors that contribute to the changes. It is an attempt to explore the outcomes within the context of a change “ecosystem” — the various actors and factors and how they interact, the pathways to change, and the role and value of media/EJN's stories. This is to develop a better understanding of how media stories contribute to change, and thus inform EJN's thinking about its future programming and investment priorities.

The specific objectives of this project outlined in the terms of reference were:

- To substantiate select outcomes through fieldwork and research (e.g., in-depth interviews and desk research)
- To enable EJN to understand how media stories can have an impact on actions

- To enable EJN to understand whether and how EJN contributed to these outcomes
- To identify other factors that may have contributed to the outcomes observed
- To create case study research reports of outcomes explored
- To create a synthesis report including analysis of insights

METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research questions guiding this study were:

1 Have EJN-supported stories led to better environmental policies and practices? If so, how?

2 Have EJN-supported stories led to changes in individual or collective behavior? If so, how?

3 To what extent did EJN contribute to these outcomes?

4 What other factors have contributed to these outcomes?

5 Which types of EJN stories support produce outcomes?

6 More generally, which types of environment/ climate stories and/or distribution channels produce outcomes?

7 What are the key components of these stories and/or what external factors generate impact?

In view of the limited time frame, overall findings and duplication of some concepts across questions, these have been adjusted slightly for the report.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The research design was driven by the nature of the research questions and evidence on how journalists' stories work to generate change.

Overall, the approach was theory-based, as the research sought to generate evidence on:

- whether EJM stories could be linked to changes in policy, practices and behavior;
- how they worked to influence motivations and actions to produce these changes; and
- why different contextual factors helped or hindered them generating outcomes.

EVIDENCE INFORMING THE DESIGN

Because of the short project timeline, it was not possible to do a literature review that focused on environmental journalism. Therefore, our thinking was guided by broader evidence on journalism and media influencing more accountable governance. A post-research review of literature on environmental issues demonstrates many similar strands of thinking that are referred to in the piece below.

Evidence on the impacts of journalism and the links between journalism, the media and public action and policy is contested and sometimes contradictory.⁴ This is partly because journalists tend to see their role as surfacing and publishing data and evidence — they are not responsible for what happens next.

There is some truth in this. But evidence from those studying governance and EJM's TOCs suggest we need to consider the role journalism plays in the wider ecosystem of actors and institutions concerned with reducing environmental harm and contributing to sustainable development.

We need to consider the role journalism plays in the wider ecosystem of actors and institutions concerned with reducing environmental harm and contributing to sustainable development.

As EJM's Asia-Pacific program TOC suggests, causal impact pathways for journalism are multiple and complicated. But wider evidence shows they can be separated into those that focus on media triggering citizen engagement or action, which may pressure the state or corporations to act differently; and those that aim to influence policy reform and implementation through more formal advocacy, for example, by NGOs that work on policy issues.⁵

It is tempting to treat this difference as a distinction between:

- a dissent public action ("outsider") approach in which journalism helps citizens challenge power and make demands; and
- a dialogue ("insider") approach where evidence from journalists is constructive and used by CSOs to inform the actions of policymakers.

However, such distinctions tend to be blurred in practice. What is important here is the different routes by which journalism and media can contribute to better policy and practice.

INFLUENCING CITIZEN PATHWAY

The evidence supporting causal pathways that link media stories with citizen action is strong, in democracies at least.⁶ Information disclosure, particularly through the media, shapes citizens' political engagement and voting behavior, further influencing political incentives and thus reforms and other outcomes.

There is also good evidence that powerful investigative journalism can influence public opinion in ways that have significant impacts on accountability and governance between elections. Reporters play roles as public interest watchdogs, not just by exposing environmental issues, but also by reporting public outrage. By generating insights about issues and public outrage, they can trigger public engagement in the democratic process and hold powerful institutions accountable. An obvious example in the environmental space is the impact of actions by Greta Thunberg and Extinction Rebellion which have been covered by citizen and more traditional journalists.⁷

By generating insights about issues and public outrage, reporters can trigger public engagement in the democratic process and hold powerful institutions accountable.

In many contexts where democracy is weak, the links between media reporting, political engagement by citizens and accountable governance are more tenuous. When media capacity is nascent and corruption is rife, journalists face threats or bribes. It makes journalism an unattractive career and can reduce the quality of information citizens engage with and act on.

This is the case in most of the countries where we undertook research. A recent report on environmental journalism highlights measures taken by powerful interests who stand to lose money or power as citizens demand better environmental policy.⁸ It cites journalists in India who report that big business is increasingly enlisting government allies to prevent the publication of environmental stories that might offend government. Similarly, in Indonesia, journalists have been sued and arrested for reporting on land grabs, and in Bangladesh, a journalist whose reporting delayed the construction of a poorly conceived irrigation channel faced repeated threats against his family.

In recent years, public interest in climate change has offered rays of hope. In India, for example, a new generation of journalists are reported to be writing on climate issues. Since many of the readers are younger in countries like Indonesia, much of this material is published online.

The spread of digital media has provided opportunities and challenges for environmental journalists. While investigative pieces can reach relative elites with good connectivity via the internet, traditional news organizations competing for relevance in a 24-hour news cycle see supporting such deep work as time consuming and costly.⁹ In some countries like Uganda, editors argue

Figure 4. In some countries like Uganda, editors argue they cannot afford deep investigations on environmental issues.



they cannot afford deep investigations on environmental issues. This has been made worse by the recent financial crash, which meant newspapers dropped environmental desks across the globe, including in the Philippines.¹⁰

What's more, environmental and investigative journalism does not guarantee publication and outcomes. The risks and challenges associated with accessing information mean inquiries will fail and they often require significant collaborations and sharing of expertise to work. In the case of environmental journalism, many generalist reporters do not have the specialized scientific knowledge to report on very specific aspects of issues related to climate change, conservation, pollution, etc.¹¹

In areas where media is in crisis and poorly paid environmental journalists face harassment and security threats, it can be difficult for them to generate stories that spur active citizen engagement. In such contexts, citizens' engagement with stories may be passive because they have little political agency which is also constrained by illiteracy. Passive engagement means the citizens are learning and gaining awareness, but then do not act on it. In such situations, journalists rely on intermediary actors and complicated vertical and horizontal relationships with different levels of the state. Unsurprisingly, this can make it difficult to untangle the specific outcomes of a single media story on public debate and action.¹²

But accessibility is not the only challenge to citizen engagement. Clientelist relationships, political violence and weak electoral institutions all mean that citizens may be too scared to take direct action. Therefore, other intermediaries have an important role to play in following up on data-driven news stories and advocating for policy reform, or in making accountability demands on citizens' behalf.

INFLUENCING DECISION MAKERS' PATHWAYS

The causal pathways by which journalists and media actors influence policymakers also entail complex vertical and horizontal relationships and intermediation. Successful advocacy, for example in the Philippines on issues of land reform, has often involved journalists being linked to coalitions that link grassroots groups to national level CSO intermediaries who have access to policymakers.¹³

But strong evidence and access to policymakers does not guarantee sound policy decisions, as data on the limits of evidence-based advocacy suggests. Evidence is also mediated by power. Oxfam's media work in the United Kingdom shows that media influencers, such as newspaper editorials, columns, and even important political blogs, are more effective at shaping decision-makers' ideas and behavior than general news coverage.¹⁴

Media influencers, such as newspaper editorials, columns, and even important political blogs, are more effective at shaping decision-makers' ideas and behavior than general news coverage.

It follows that the effects of environmental media stories on decision-makers may be limited without CSOs following them up with specific advocacy. Recent evidence from Oxfam implies that timing and framing of advocacy messages are important and that headline numbers can be more effective than deep rigorous studies in an emergency.¹⁵ Similarly, the sources of information matter. Several studies suggest local level state

actors may be more responsive to community-generated data and video evidence from citizens than other sources.¹⁶

Community perceptions, stories and photos have been found to be particularly effective in engaging local government actors as they work on emotions. In addition, comparative information is more effective than information on single cases or communities. Studies on how information triggers audience reactions show that the nature of the comparison matters. While shaming governments can work in some places, ‘name and fame’ comparisons that use positive role models to inspire duty bearers to improve can work better in others.¹⁷

In summary, how environmental journalism and media can influence environmental practices and governance are multiple and complex. However, there are common dimensions of change to help assess the outcomes of programs delivered by EJM. In short, these can be summarized as contributing to journalistic capacity to write compelling stories that:

- are newsworthy and get published in print or on radio and multimedia;
- raise awareness through passive social media engagement and reaction;
- stimulate active engagement, for example by sharing stories and contributing to individual or collective action;
- trigger responses of powerful actors (directly or indirectly) in terms of changes in policy and practice.¹⁸

These dimensions of change inform a loose conceptual framework used to analyze findings from the study’s research in the Discussion section below.

It highlights that although EJM can only control the quality of the stories and help distribute stories written by the journalists and communicators it supports, this research aimed to support learning about its indirect pathways to impact. In other words, it explored the role these stories play within its wider spheres of influence and interest.

PATHWAYS TO IMPACT

Figure 5. Pathways to impact.



In the context of this study, the different concepts were used to distinguish between findings that support single-loop learning on whether EJM is 'doing things right,' for example providing good quality mentoring and funding support to achieve outputs like published stories, and double loop learning, which digs deeper and asks whether EJM is doing the right things, for example supporting journalists who are making their work accessible to the kind of audiences likely to influence improved environmental policies and practice.¹⁹

INSTRUMENTS

The research approach used several instruments:

- **Sample selection spreadsheet:** I modified the initial outcome spreadsheet created by the EJM team to include some basic analysis of stories and the plausibility of journalists' claims to help during the selection of cases. This was partly to familiarize myself with stories as well as to finalize the research design.
- **Management tool:** In addition, I used the spreadsheet as a management tool to monitor researcher progress.
- The main tools designed to assist the researchers were:
 - ▶ **A basic research guide** that included details of the objectives, design, ethical standards and quality principles of the study. I used it in the three virtual training sessions run for different groups of researchers.
 - ▶ The guide included a **stakeholder mapping tool** for the dual purposes of a) helping researchers identify possible respondents for their interviews; and b) increasing my understanding of the local contexts and relationships between actors involved in the stories and outcome claims.
 - ▶ The guide also included **a research framework**. It was intended to help the researchers develop more detailed research plans that matched the informants that they had identified with specific knowledge relating to their case and the more generic research questions. The researchers then developed more specific interview guides for each informant.
 - ▶ As there was not time for transcription of interviews, **the research framework was also used as an organizing framework** for data analysis. For quality assurance purposes, each local researcher was asked to analyze and summarize key points from each interview. Following each interview or focus group discussion, the local researcher was expected to write a summary of notes for submission to the lead researcher. These included metadata about the interviewee, their position, and the date and quality of the interview and the headline points of relevance to the generic research questions for the study.
 - ▶ In addition, I developed **sample outlines for case study reports**. One was for cases where researchers were able to substantiate their outcomes and one was for use when they could not.

For purposes of quality assurance and to increase the depth of my engagement with each case, I encouraged each local researcher to submit their research frameworks and stakeholder plans to me for comment. Following this, I engaged all researchers in detailed discussions about their plans for each story. In 8 out of 12 cases, this involved

discussions around the research tool. In other instances, we had more general conversations. Once researchers began their research, I also requested copies of the interview headlines in real time. This was so we could have ongoing discussions about what they were finding out during initial interviews and adapt their research plans and instruments to fill emerging gaps. Some researchers were able to submit these while undertaking research. In other instances, they submitted them toward the end of their work. All in all, I reviewed 45 sets of notes. In addition, I reviewed drafts of 12 case studies very carefully, interrogating the data and researcher interpretations through conversations or exchanges with each researcher. In all instances, I made sure that the nature of data collected was appropriate for the nature of conclusions and issues raised. My decisions were subject to further triangulation during a constructive and engaging review process with EJM staff. In a few instances, our discussions led to efforts to generate additional data to explain incomplete or surprising findings.

SAMPLE

Overall study level: The sample of 12 outcomes chosen by EJM from a larger population of 25 outcomes was both purposive and convenient.²⁰

The Earth Journalism Network wanted a sample of outcomes that reflected the geographic spread of their work. Therefore, we aimed to include at least one example from each region where EJM currently has programs. Staff were also interested in exploring some recent outcomes, for example in Uganda, that had only just been reported.

In India, where the most outcomes had been reported, EJM staff chose 4 cases based on the potential interest of the stories, proximity, and language of the researchers.

Case level: Within each case, we used stakeholder analysis and a snowball sampling approach.²¹ This involved interviewing EJM staff and journalists first to identify the most appropriate respondents who were likely to know about the outcome and/or able to give an expert opinion on the quality of the journalist's report.

The rationale for the sample chosen by each researcher is included in their individual case reports.

DATA COLLECTION

7 local researchers customized semi-structured interview guides to make them appropriate for the respondents and the stories and outcomes they were researching.

In addition, some of them undertook desk-based research on the local context, as well as the media landscape, prior to the publication of the article which was their focus of interest.

DATA ANALYSIS

The overall design did not generate the kind of data that required complicated coding and computerized analysis. The overall sample of cases was small as were the number of interviews per case. Given most of the researchers were relatively inexperienced in outcome harvesting and contribution analysis, I tried to engage with them in a real-time, iterative and collaborative approach around the key research questions. I also made occasional references to evidence on how media works to generate citizen engagement, action and policy or practice change by governments and other powerful actors.

This iterative approach helped us to identify and try to fill gaps or deal with misunderstandings. It also let us flag normative respondents, for example in Indonesia, and ensure researchers treated their responses in an appropriate manner. Additionally, regular discussions with researchers and reviews of their outputs gave me a good sense of the overall quality of the data being collected and what this meant for the nature of findings and conclusions that could be presented in this report.

As it was only possible to fully substantiate 4 of the outcomes as initially framed, there was not much scope for contribution analysis. Similarly, given the nature of the outcomes, it was not appropriate to approach experts to reflect on their significance.

In regard to the synthesis report and analysis across the cases, I prepared data tables on key areas of interest, highlighting dimensions of change relating to environmental journalism identified in the literature review. These were used to try and identify patterns or insights from comparisons. The main table can be found in the section on results below.

LIMITATIONS

The study was affected by several weaknesses and limitations:

- **Local researcher inexperience using the study's approaches and techniques:** Outcome harvesting (OH) and theory-based approaches to assessing how and why interventions, such as training journalists, are effective, are relatively new additions to evaluation toolkits used in international development.²² They differ from common results-based management approaches that assume impact pathways are linear and predictable; for example, that a single story leads directly to actions by citizens or duty bearers. In contrast, OH assumes that change is unpredictable, and when a change happens that is associated with a story, there may be other factors and actors involved. Starting from a perspective that is more interested in how the change occurred than who was responsible for it is methodologically challenging and difficult even for experienced evaluators who have had significant training.²³ Applying this approach within a very short timeline and researchers with no prior experience in this way of thinking was bound to be challenging.
- **Impacts of short timescale on quality:** I greatly admire EJN's tenacity in pushing through with the local research in such a short timeframe and realize budget timelines were beyond its control. However, EJN would have achieved better value for money had it been possible to conceive the project within a 6-month timeframe. This would have allowed the lead consultant to get on top of the brief,

learn about the organization, compile background documents for the researchers and do a little more digging on the outcomes before local researchers were hired. This approach would not have mitigated all the inevitable challenges that arise in this kind of work. However, it would have allowed a little more time for preparation and testing research tools. This would have enhanced the quality of the report without increasing total input required. It would have facilitated a more systematic approach to efforts to collect data analytics for the different stories, for example.

- **Optimistic outcome harvesting:** We have identified several stories that have contributed to outcomes claimed by journalists/staff. However, in several instances, substantiation was not possible, and the exercise illustrates there is a risk of journalists or staff over-claiming outcomes relating to single stories. This may be because they assume that an article played a role in an observed change and interpret correlation as causation. It may also be because power relations in donor-recipient relationships encourage those receiving funds to send normative stories of success up the aid chain.²⁴
- **COVID-19:** The pandemic and travel restrictions prevented some of the local researchers from traveling to interview informants in person.
- **Length of time passed since publication:** Some of the stories were published four years prior to the research. This made it difficult for informants to recall them. We provided links so informants could refresh their memories but ideally outcomes should be followed up sooner.
- **Locating respondents for stories involving actions by large institutions:** Trying to locate the most appropriate respondent for one of the outcomes that involved an action by an individual staff member of the World Bank was a non-trivial task. However, we may have fared better and had more time to explore potential respondents with EJN staff had the project not been subject to such a tight deadline.
- **Researching sensitive outcomes:** An outcome associated with the World Bank was highly sensitive, leading to doubts that the individuals involved would be willing to confirm their actions in writing.²⁵
- **Accountability versus learning dilemmas:** The terms of reference for the local researchers assumed positive results. However, we encountered several examples where stories were unlikely to produce donor-friendly cases of impact. They arguably triggered useful learning questions. Therefore, we repurposed some projects and used the cases to generate insights on some of the challenges relating to research questions.
- **Unavailability of key informants:** Researchers in Honduras, Uganda, Indonesia and the Philippines were unable to interview key informants. This posed challenges for researchers in Honduras and Albay, who were unable to access the journalists who had written the stories they were investigating. Both were busy reporting on severe consequences of strong storms that hit their localities in November.
- **Guidance and tools needed to be clearer:** The guidance and tools I developed had mixed success. Though they were useful to continue discussions and level off assumptions, they were not always used as I intended. If EJN were to repeat this kind of project, the explanation of why a research framework is required to inform

operational plans and interview guides needs to be stronger. In addition, most of the researchers did not use the headline data collection tool as I had initially envisaged. Therefore, the decision was made not to publish them.

- **Challenges of identifying sources of information:** Technology and connectivity are changing rapidly, which means key messages from stories printed on mainstream media or online sites are circulated on various platforms. This makes identifying precisely how a particular informant was alerted to a particular news article or its theme tricky. Many of the respondents we interviewed had not read the articles referred to in the cases. They got to know about them through a variety of channels, including applications like WhatsApp.
- **Triangulation:** Researchers were not able to triangulate all data points. The strength of claims made in this report reflect this.
- **We were unable to complete the case on The Third Pole:** Upon discovering it was not possible to pursue a story on fisherfolk in Kerala, we decided to explore the role of The Third Pole instead. Several issues including an illness in the family of one of the researchers meant this work did not progress far. Though I made subsequent efforts to find respondents who are aware of the platform to advance this aim, I only managed to locate a few. A couple of individuals that I would have expected to be aware of the platform were not. But one, a disaster management expert who works in the region, wrote: “I was not aware of the Third Pole till you shared this link with me. It looks very interesting and useful.” His response, together with enthusiastic responses from two people who were familiar with the platform, suggests The Third Pole may not be as well-known as it deserves to be.
 - ▶ “They [The Third Pole] certainly fill a niche in the media landscape in terms of looking at Hindu Kush Himalaya issues from a broader, more regional perspective,” said a respondent who asked to be anonymous. “They have also been contributing significantly in helping journalists in the region better understand issues with regards to our mountains and environment through their various trainings and activities.”²⁶
 - ▶ “I find the platform extraordinarily useful since it spans multiple countries in the region, the issues raised are topical, and the writers are excellent,” wrote respondent Laurie Vasily. “Many articles focus on the work of institutions such as the one to which I am affiliated and these articles help translate the scientific output to lay audiences, help connect institutional reports and research to policies, practices and issues.”²⁷

RESULTS

INFLUENCE ON ENVIRONMENTAL POLICIES AND PRACTICES

This question was interpreted as referring to harvested outcomes on actions taken by powerful actors with potentially positive environmental effects. In view of the small sample, they include a range of actions with differing levels of significance: new policies, policy implementation, legal judgments, or advisory statements. The analysis that follows draws from the data presented in the table at the end of this subsection.

We were able to fully substantiate two of the nine outcomes (#4 and #8 in Table 1 on the next page) in terms of new environmental policies, policy implementation, legal judgments or advisory statements. Two outcomes (#10 and #11) were partially substantiated. Another two or three outcomes (#2, #6 and arguably #9) seem to be unsubstantiated but would benefit from further research as there were indications there were different outcomes than those originally mentioned. Finally, there is simply no evidence to suggest the other two such outcomes (#1 and #7) occurred.

Table 1.
Contribution of stories to outcomes.

Country	Claimed outcome	EJN contribution	Engagement	Outcome: Public debate or citizen action	Outcome: Action by powerful actors
1 Bangladesh	<p>Story grantee Shamsuddin Illius from the Bay of Bengal project reported that following his article on the impact of climate change on coastal professions in Bangladesh, the government started stricter monitoring to preserve marine resources in the area and has publicly talked about these issues.</p> <p>Article link</p>	<p>EJN's training enabled the journalist to start writing environmental stories.²⁸ However, they did not immediately provide the capacity to cover climate change issues well.²⁹</p>	<p>6 likes on the page. Journalist referred to 2 other follow-up articles but they were only vaguely related. Evidence on readership from interviews implied the English article was unlikely to have been read by local actors. No information on translation.</p>	N/A	<p>Unsubstantiated — no evidence that the outcome occurred. It was considered unlikely by local officials and experts.³⁰</p>
2 Bangladesh	<p>Persistent reportage including by grantee Sheikh Rokon in The Third Pole of shipwrecks in the Sundarbans leading to pollution in the world's largest mangrove forest has led to a recommendation by the World Bank to the Governments of Bangladesh and India to avoid the routes through the forest as the two countries step up cooperation on water transport.</p> <p>Article link</p>	<p>Experienced journalist commissioned by The Third Pole, which is supported by EJN.</p>	<p>321 likes on Third Pole Page.³¹ Relatively high number of reactions on this site.</p>	N/A	<p>Unsubstantiated to date — no evidence that the outcome occurred. Considered unlikely based on analysis by the researcher and experts.³² However, several World Bank reports suggest the contribution was possible.³³</p>
3 Honduras	<p>Stories on illegal fishing and pollution by Josué Quintana Gomez were said to have contributed to the number of rangers and military personnel in the Bay of Tela increasing, to protect the coral colonies and avoid overfishing. An article on the opening of the first marine aquarium in Central America was reported to have led to citizens becoming more empowered about the existence of corals in Tela and that they routinely go to the marine aquarium. Informal environmental education took hold after the reports. Several students from Mexico, Canada and Honduras invited the journalist to share his experience in the production of this journalistic series.</p> <p>Article 1 link Article 2 link</p>	<p>Training and \$1,000 grant led to research and publication.³⁴ He would not have been able to fund his travel to undertake the research for the stories without the support of EJN.³⁵</p>	<p>Good, according to editor at La Tribuna.³⁶ On December 12, 2020, the story on the Bay had been shared 2,700 times and seen 4,700 times.³⁷ The story on the aquarium was shared 3,600 times and had been seen 7,300 times.³⁸ As of January 5, 2021, the video with the first story had been viewed 466 times³⁹ and the second 977 times.⁴⁰</p>	<p>Partly substantiated: Manager said story had increased visitors to the aquarium, but he did not provide any evidence. Moreover, he questioned whether increased footfall was a meaningful indicator of awareness or empowerment.⁴¹</p>	<p>Unsubstantiated: Research suggests this outcome did not happen; there was no increase in rangers.⁴²</p>

Table 1 (continued).

Contribution of stories to outcomes.

Country	Claimed outcome	EJN contribution	Engagement	Outcome: Public debate or citizen action	Outcome: Action by powerful actors
4 India	<p>A report by Jayanta Basu in 2016 on EJN's partner website The Third Pole on the encroachment on India's national river the Ganges just about 50 miles upstream of the Bay of Bengal has been brought to the notice of the National Green Tribunal and has been referred to in its judgment ordering the government authorities to take corrective action.</p> <p>Article link</p>	<p>Experienced journalist credits EJN and The Third Pole for providing technical assistance in mapping the entire course of the river and giving the article an evidence-based approach.⁴³ Experts commented on quality⁴⁴ and bringing fragmented issues concerning a part of the river that was not often written about together.⁴⁵</p>	<p>0 likes/reactions,⁴⁶ none of our informants had read it. But it was republished by IM4change, a clearing house for information on marginalized people in India.⁴⁷ In addition, Basu wrote a follow up piece for the Telegraph India.⁴⁸</p>	N/A	<p>Substantiated: Article referenced in court judgment (but not followed through).⁴⁹</p>
5 India	<p>After publishing this story by Tanmoy Bhaduri it was shared and small fishers union in the state filed complaint to fisheries department referencing this report that highlighted disproportionate subsidy among small fishers.</p> <p>Article link</p>	<p>EJN provided training that enabled a journalist who had previously written on environmental matters to deepen his understanding of the policies and projects of the National Fisheries Development Board (NFDB). The workshop helped him understand the different issues in coastal West Bengal and other regions of coastal India.⁵⁰ Expert informant said article was good and included 2 issues rarely covered, but that some technical information was wrong.⁵¹ Local NGO activist thought it could have been more critical of government.⁵²</p>	<p>Published by the Quint, an educational platform with large readership (25 million late 2019).⁵³ Was shared by activists who regularly share such materials and local fishers groups but given it was written in English this does not provide evidence of engagement.</p>	<p>Partly substantiated: Story shared, but this did not represent informed deliberative citizen action. The claim that the report was used in a local petition was retracted and contradicted. Mallik considered mentioning story to Minister while submitting petition but decided against it for fear of causing offence that might undermine aims.⁵⁴</p>	N/A

Table 1 (continued).

Contribution of stories to outcomes.

Country	Claimed outcome	EJN contribution	Engagement	Outcome: Public debate or citizen action	Outcome: Action by powerful actors
6 India	<p>In the Indian state of Odisha, reports by grantee Priya Ranjan Sahu prompted the authorities in Odisha to change the rehabilitation site of people displaced by sea level rise, and resettle them further inland.</p> <p>Article 1 link Article 2 link</p>	<p>Limited mentoring and grant allowed an experienced journalist with knowledge of the region to write a human interest story through the lens of climate change. He was confident he could get it published in Scroll.in.⁵⁵ He later published a follow up in Down to Earth.</p>	<p>Scroll.in article received 70+ reactions, was shared 27 times including by 2 networks. Also published by Down to Earth which focuses on grassroots issues & bridges policy and decision makers. Received 40 reactions.</p> <p>Embedded video in Hindi made and published before the article was watched over 15,000 times⁵⁶ 341 likes over 20 comments of variable quality.</p>	N/A	<p>Unsubstantiated contribution: Outcome happened but journalists and local activists believe work of local media more important.⁵⁷ Research suggests that Sahu's work could have influenced local journalists picking up on issue or its links with subsequent actions of officials to improve resettlement. However, we were unable to triangulate.⁵⁸ Moreover, we did not investigate the impacts of the embedded video in local languages.</p>
7 India	<p>Grantee Nivedita Khandekar produced reports about the Maguri Motapung Beel (the wetland) with EJN support. When one of the areas from the region mentioned in her story had a massive fire in one of the oil wells six months later, several reports used material from her story as a background. At least one report used one of the photos from her story. The author believes she was able to create a sustainable asset about the wetland.</p> <p>Article 1 link Article 2 link</p>	<p>Mentoring, & travel support from EJN helped her travel and develop a multimedia story which was published by The Third Pole. She has gone on to publish several others since.⁵⁹</p>	<p>5 videos included in the article. First watched 880+ times, 2 others over 600 times. A little more on Scroll.in and as a result of sharing by a local NGO.⁶⁰</p>	<p>Partly substantiated: Photos were used by other journalists, but they were not interviewed and motives not researched.⁶¹</p>	N/A
8 Indonesia	<p>A story on Anoa conservation law by Riza Sulman has prompted conservation agency to establish an anoa conservation center, in Southeast Sulawesi. The agency said it has proposed the plan and budget to the central government, with hopes that this conservation centre will be established in 2021.</p> <p>Article 1 link Article 2 link</p>	<p>Training and support enabled journalist to travel and research, produce content for story and get published for the first time on Ekuatorial which has been jointly managed by EJN and a local partner.⁶²</p>	<p>Engagement by local officials⁶³ and community activists.⁶⁴</p>	<p>New outcome: Environmental activists and other journalists increased community education activities.⁶⁵</p>	<p>Substantiated: Story contributed to increased collaboration between different actors⁶⁶ and prioritization of anoa conservation by local government indicated by planned budget proposals.⁶⁷</p>

Table 1 (continued).

Contribution of stories to outcomes.

Country	Claimed outcome	EJN contribution	Engagement	Outcome: Public debate or citizen action	Outcome: Action by powerful actors
9 Indonesia	<p>When the articles by Mustafa Silalahi were published, some governance organizations like Balai Karantina Lampung and Balai Penegakan Hukum had announced will intensify raids of illegal's trade wild songbirds, including protecting species. Governance also intensify socialization of some rules of wildlife bird trafficking.</p> <p>Article 1 link Article 2 link Article 3 link</p>	<p>Funds from EJN enabled an experienced reporter to write three articles on the songbird trade that were published by three different outlets.⁶⁸</p>	<p>No evidence collected</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>Unsubstantiated: early research suggested articles on success of FLIGHT's campaign reported on, rather than caused, commitments to clampdown in Lampung,⁶⁹ little evidence that these articles had been socialized or had much influence on national level agencies.⁷⁰</p>
10 Philippines	<p>Article by Krixia Subingsubing and Mariejo Ramos on plight of indigenous people threatened with displacement by new a climate-resilient city to be built in Tarlac province in a bid to decongest Metro Manila came out, which would displace several IPs and negatively affect several natural landscapes — the Bases and Conversion Development Authority (BCDA) met with the IP leaders afterward to assure them of financial packages should they be relocated and that no harm would come to their ancestral land. Such meetings gave the IPs an avenue to air their grievances about the development. Before the report, they said, the agency usually only shrugged off their demands for free and prior informed consent (a necessary negotiation between the community and developers), claiming they had no claims to the land. Now the BCDA is hearing out their concerns and promised to discuss with them humanely. The BCDA also promised to minimize, if not improve, development such that no ecological systems would be harmed by its construction.</p> <p>Article 1 link Article 2 link</p>	<p>Funds enabled journalists already interested and able to do a deep investigative piece that included several trips to Capas and their payment for the freelance photographer and videographer.</p> <p>EJN staff Imelda Abano, then helped them highlight the environmental aspects which the journalists found challenging⁷¹</p> <p>Story "pivotal" in Aeta's struggle for ancestral domain and inclusive development. For the first time, the community's issue came under national spotlight, triggering strong responses from both the government and the public.⁷² Not clear how much difference the environmental angle made, but an academic interviewed mentioned the science added value.⁷³</p>	<p>Story shared several times by netizens & advocacy groups including acclaimed Filipino writer Ninotchka Rosca⁷⁴ and Facebook page Now You Know, and Tabak, a Manila-based IP organization.⁷⁵ Many activists shared story, including Renato Reyes⁷⁶ of Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (New Patriotic Alliance) and blogger Tonyo Cruz.⁷⁷ Used by advocacy groups like Katribu, a national alliance of IP orgs,⁷⁸ and IBON International, a local think-tank.⁷⁹ Inquirer Facebook page had 89 reactions, 142 comments, and 1,113 shares.</p>	<p>Substantiated: Story prompted BCDA, and the Capas local government to engage with IP on grievances.⁸⁰ It also contributed to empowering Aetas to articulate demands relating to their land and environment, which led to a more organized and united community as well as large campaign on their behalf.⁸¹</p>	<p>Partly substantiated: Authorities and companies denied IP displacement claims.⁸² But land title has not been handed over and the IPs have continued to be harassed to move and give up land.⁸³</p>

Table 1 (continued).

Contribution of stories to outcomes.

Country	Claimed outcome	EJN contribution	Engagement	Outcome: Public debate or citizen action	Outcome: Action by powerful actors
11 Philippines	<p>First story by Barcia reported residents in the Albay region lacked access to drinking water. Then in August 2019, Rappler published a follow up story featuring an interview with a local politician Elizaldy Co in which he thanks Rappler and Pulse Asia Survey for their article which motivated his political party, Ako Bicol, to allocate P200 million for waterless areas in Bicol.</p> <p>Article link</p>	<p>Journalist not interviewed, but given they were established we assume the main contribution was the funds for travel and research.⁸⁴</p>	<p>Video watched over 2.6k times on YouTube,⁸⁵ 19 likes and one dislike.⁸⁶</p> <p>Story was viewed 4,400 times, according to Rappler's data analytics team.⁸⁷ Facebook page, gained 65 mostly "sad" reactions and eight comments.⁸⁸</p>	<p>New outcome: Gave hope and triggered some discussion on local radio for about a week.⁸⁹</p>	<p>Partly substantiated: Story triggered commitment,⁹⁰ but evidence of follow up action in the particular village is lacking.⁹¹ Moreover evidence suggests the Pulse Asia study played more of role in influencing increased resource allocations for water in the area than the Rappler piece.⁹²</p>
12 Uganda	<p>Story by Richard Drasimaku on success of clamp-down on poaching reported to have renewed call to fence off the 166 square kilometre wildlife reserve and develop tourist facilities.</p> <p>Article link</p>	<p>Training on data analysis and geo journalism plus financial resources enabled an award-winning journalist to publish an in-depth piece on line.⁹³</p>	<p>FB as of September 2, 2020, 1,297 views. Reviews on Access FM radio increased reach.</p>	<p>Substantiated: Triggered discussions about conservation and fence around the game reserve on local radio and social media, that also included local politicians.⁹⁴</p>	N/A

Several of the cases, including those with substantiated outcomes, deserve further explanation. The article “Adi Ganga disappears in West Bengal” written by Jayanta Basu and published by The Third Pole contributed to an order by the National Green Tribunal on the restoration of the river.⁹⁵ It was picked up by Subhash Datta, a local environmental activist quoted in the piece who had long campaigned for the clean -up of the historical river. Initially, the National Green Tribunal had focused on the stretch of Adi Ganga falling within the Kolkata city and its precincts. But in 2016 this report by Basu helped shift its attention to a stretch of water that had been ignored. The piece, which focused on a portion of the river beyond the city limits, i.e., a stretch of about 13 Kms of the Adi Ganga commencing from Garia toward the Bidyadhari river, was well received. It was cited in an order that gave directions for restoration of the entire stretch of the river.⁹⁶

Despite surveillance by the court, and subsequent directions for the government of West Bengal to oversee the restoration, by 2019 very little progress had been made. Therefore, in September 2020, the NGT issued [a final set of directions](#) to the government of West Bengal, various state departments and the Kolkata Municipal Corporation for the restoration and rejuvenation of the river and then disposed of the case. Once again, monitoring and acting against non-compliance was left to activists. They were pessimistic and thought that the government would be unlikely to act because that would require challenging vested political interests. The West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee’s house is constructed upon an encroached piece of land on the banks of Adi Ganga.⁹⁷

The other outcome we were able to substantiate was in Southeast Sulawesi, Indonesia, where two stories on the threat to the anoa, a dwarf buffalo, contributed to greater collaboration between different government departments responsible for implementing an anoa conservation plan.⁹⁸ The stories were written by a relatively inexperienced journalist, Riza Salman, under the tutelage of EJM, and prompted social media discussion among various local government actors using WhatsApp. Its focus on the imminent extinction of their provincial symbol, the anoa, which was protected in law and government conservation management plans, stirred them to action.⁹⁹ This resulted in the anoa conservation being given greater priority and the local government submitting a plan for a conservation center to the Southeast Sulawesi Ministry of National Development Planning.¹⁰⁰ It was



Figure 6. Two stories on the threat to the anoa, contributed to greater collaboration between government departments responsible for implementing an anoa conservation plan.

accompanied by a financial proposal that went to the Bappeda office, the government body responsible for approving the budget provincial level development plans.¹⁰¹ Since then, it has been included in the “Regional Development Working Plan” for 2021 and mentioned in the Finalized Regional Budget and Income Guideline. Local informants therefore expect it to be an item in the approved budget for 2021. However, the plans still require ratification in the provincial parliament and several respondents expressed concerns that this project and ultimately the success of their anoa conservation efforts were at risk from interests in asphalt mining in the area. These mines destroy the forests, the anoa’s natural habitat.¹⁰²

Two cases in the Philippines were partly substantiated. They were both associated with responses by powerful actors, but we did not find evidence that they followed up on commitments that would have had important impacts on the lives of poor and vulnerable people. In 2019, a story written by a journalist who had received a grant from EJN described how climate change was affecting access to water in a community in Albay province.¹⁰³ It portrayed the daily struggles confronting poor people in San Miguel as they tried to collect water, using a video as well as describing their toils in text. This story and a Pulse Asia survey prompted an intervention by a local politician Elizaldy Co, who promised that his political party, Ako Bicol, would allocate funds to address the issue.¹⁰⁴ Though Ako Bicol has influenced an increased budget commitment for water in the area, our local researcher was unable to find an allocation for San Miguel, the island featured in the story, in recent budget figures.



Figure 7. Boatloads of people from villages with dried up wells flock to the Nagmuri aquifer on San Miguel Island to get their daily water supply.
Photo: Rhaydz Barcia

In Tarlac, a two-part story supported by EJN and published in the Philippine Daily Inquirer on how the development of New Clark City (NCC), a supposedly green city, would displace indigenous people from their land and destroy their environment, prompted a response from local officials. Two days after the first part was published, the Bases Conversion Development Authority (BCDA) that transforms military bases to centers of economic growth in partnership with the private sector and Mayor Catacutan, the chief executive of the development project, organized a press conference. They refuted the article’s claims and committed that no indigenous people would be displaced by the P607-billion project. Those affected, meanwhile, were to be given sound financial packages amounting up to P300,000 (\$6,246) each. Catacutan, the Chief Executive of the NCC project, said he would

“[b]e the first to resist any project or development that is not pro-Capaseño. Being an elected government official, my first order of business is to protect my people.”¹⁰⁵

He also insisted that the project has given indigenous people livelihoods by employing them as workers in the project.

In the following days, the BCDA sent out press releases stating that the NCC “will be

the most inclusive sustainable city in the country” and farmers and indigenous peoples will “greatly benefit” from it. It said that it had prioritized hiring Aetas as workers, either as laborers or repairmen, providing them with same salary rate and protective gears.¹⁰⁶

But once again the government failed to deliver and its commitment to inclusivity remains to be seen. On November 29, 2019, nearly five months after the Inquirer story was published, the BCDA issued a notice of eviction to around 500 Aeta families occupying the right-of-way road connecting the NCC to Clark International Airport in Pampanga. The order, which the Aetas received on December 2, 2020, reportedly warned the residents to voluntarily leave their homes or face forced evictions after a week. What’s more, they have still not given land title to the rest of the community. In fact, vested interests have pushed back and tried to identify the Aeta and those supporting them as dangerous militants.¹⁰⁷

We were unable to find evidence to support the information that stories supported by EJM in Bangladesh and Honduras on the need for protection of marine resources in the face of climate change had led to increased monitoring by rangers as originally stated. In both instances, informants said that the changes reported had not happened and no plausible evidence was presented by the journalists.¹⁰⁸

In another case in India, an experienced journalist, Priya Ranjan Sahu, and a local activist who had helped him with research for his article, denied that a story documenting threats to communities arising from climate change induced rising sea levels had been the sole influence on government resettlement plans, including provision of service infrastructure. In this instance, the resettlement happened and the lack of adequate infrastructure for those resettled received significant media attention. Correspondence with the journalist after the completion of the local research suggests it is possible that the line of questioning by the researcher was not subtle enough to illicit his opinions about the possible contribution of the story to the government decisions. But both he and a local activist interviewed made the important point that a single story written in English was unlikely to have had a significant impact. In their views, it took sustained effort by local and English language media to have any influence on the responses of authorities to slow burning problems.¹⁰⁹ It is not inconceivable that the story by Sahu had more influence than we were able to evidence. A follow up email exchange after the main study was complete suggests that the modesty of the journalist prevented him from referring us to evidence that might have provided a clear causal link between his reports, local media interest and changes in government decisions.

Similarly, substantiating that a Third Pole story on an oil tanker accident in the Sundarbans had prompted the World Bank to make recommendations to the Indian and Bangladeshi government was politically and methodologically challenging. Trying to locate individuals in either institution who might have been involved was impossible without a direct referral from the journalist or platform concerned. Moreover, as the issue is so politically sensitive, Bank experts thought it unlikely, which meant initial research efforts led to a dead end.¹¹⁰



Figure 8. A render of the proposed New Clark City land use plan. It will cover several sitios and barangays across Capas and Bamban, Tarlac. Photo: Kathleen Lei Limayo

Subsequent desk research, however, suggests we might have missed something. The issue is highly sensitive as identified by the researcher. Sensitivities around the transboundary waters are so extreme that the Bank distances itself from media actors such as The Third Pole. This is despite having relationships with them that include a Sundarbans-focused environmental media platform under a World Bank Bangladesh and India Regional initiative.¹¹¹

“Direct engagement with the media is limited due to sensitivities around transboundary waters, but SAWI consistently partners with organizations such as IWMI, IWA, and The Third Pole Project to create visibility around its activities and to acknowledge donor contributions.”¹¹²

Interestingly, the feasibility note for the communication platform makes explicit mention of most media attention focusing on “tanker disasters and the like instead of the delicate climate change vulnerability and climate adaptation vis-à-vis human development in the area.”¹¹³ As the Bank has a relationship with The Third Pole, and as it supports an environmental cooperation project between India and Bangladesh in the region,¹¹⁴ it is not beyond the realms of possibility that the article may have influenced behind-the-scenes discussions. However, as of now we do not have any firm evidence to substantiate this.

The final outcome from Indonesia was also difficult to evaluate. As initially framed, it suggested that Mustafa Silalahi’s stories about the illegal songbird trade had enhanced cooperation among various law enforcement agencies and increased raids within Lampung Province. It then suggested that this reporting had also led to national-level policy change. A more detailed investigation revealed that changes at the local level had been triggered by FLIGHT Indonesia, a local NGO’s campaign which the journalist had reported on, rather than caused. According to Mustafa, he hoped that

a story about this local level success might embarrass national level law enforcement ministries to act both to improve the law and enhance its implementation. Our superficial exploration, which did not allow us to speak to key environmental NGOs, suggested that the article had not penetrated high level offices within the Forestry Ministry and was only circulated among junior staff in the Jakarta Law Enforcement Bureau.¹¹⁵ One aspect that we were not able to evidence was whether the local level reporting by Mustafa had further amplified effects in Lampung Province. This was suggested, but the evidence was insufficient to make any conclusions.



Figure 9. The songbird is one of Indonesia’s protected species that has been extensively traded. Photo: Mustafa Silalahi

INFLUENCE ON INDIVIDUAL OR COLLECTIVE BEHAVIOR

This section covers outcomes where EJN-supported stories were reported to have contributed to actions by intermediaries and ordinary citizens. It also refers to one example where EJN's support encouraged an individual journalist to write more stories on the environment.

Two of the four reported outcomes (#10 and #12 in Table 1) regarding responses by citizens or intermediaries were substantiated, three were partly substantiated (#3, #5 and #7) and we identified two new examples (#8 and #11), one of which is reported below.

The most significant and well-documented example was of the empowerment of the Aeta, an indigenous people, triggered by the Philippine Daily Inquirer report on the impact of New Clark City on their land and surrounding environment. The story further amplified their voices and gave them the courage and strength to continue with their struggle:

“We indigenous people got a lot of courage from them [journalists]. Now we know that we have a partner in banging on the doors of those in power. If it’s just us indigenous people here below, what will happen to us? We do not know anything,” she explained, noting the literacy problem among their tribe remains a great impediment for them to assert their rights.¹¹⁶

As is its custom, the Inquirer shared the NCC story on its Facebook page. The two-part story garnered a total of 890 mostly “sad” reactions, 142 comments, and 1,113 shares — evidence that the story has resonated with the audience emotionally.

Figure 10.
The NCC posts reached over 1,000 shares on Facebook.

In addition, it triggered a wave of local advocacy that snowballed into a national campaign against development aggression. More people got involved, including Sandugo, a national group of indigenous people who helped them mobilize in Metro Manila and introduced them to renowned human rights lawyer Antonio La Viña, who now stands as the community’s legal counsel. Their issues drew public attention and stirred conversation in social media at the peak of the Southeast Asian Games, highlighting the irony of holding an extravagant sports event while threats of displacement haunted the people in the area. It became reference material for advocacy groups like Katribu, a national alliance of indigenous peoples organizations,¹¹⁷ and IBON International, a local think-tank.¹¹⁸



We were told that the campaign created such a stir that it even made the British Embassy reconsider investments in the area. However, we were unable to find more evidence and it seems that the investment has gone ahead.¹¹⁹

[The Aeta's] issues drew public attention and stirred conversation in social media at the peak of the Southeast Asian Games, highlighting the irony of holding an extravagant sports event while threats of displacement haunted the people in the area.

Though the case in Uganda did not have such significant effects, the story "Poachers' den turns wildlife haven: The Story of Ajai"¹²⁰ inspired two radio review programs that renewed debate on whether a fence should be established around a local game park.¹²¹ However, this was only one of the issues discussed. The local reviewers picked the story because of its positive tone. Arguably, the broader discussion about the beauty and potential of the game reserve stimulated by the program was the more important outcome.

Despite talking about the new livelihoods of communities living in Ajai, the debate was not particularly inclusive, and it was relatively short-lived. This was partly because the discussions were in English.¹²² Nonetheless, this example illustrates how an interesting and relevant positive local story about conservation can engage middle class listeners in discussions that let them draw attention to the failings of powerful actors. In this instance, a caller asked why a commitment to build a fence around the park had not been honored. The initial discussion led to another show about the Ajai Reserve which featured a local politician.

Information that a story about the opening of the first marine aquarium in Central America that displays coral reef species from the Mesoamerican Reef had increased visitors and empowered communities in Honduras was only partially substantiated. The manager of the aquarium reported that footfall had probably increased due to the story, but the researcher was not able to collect evidence to verify this.¹²³ Furthermore, the manager

Figure 11. Visitors at Tela Marine, Central America's first marine aquarium. Photo: Josué Quintana



argued that this was a weak indicator of empowerment.

Similarly, reports that a story, "Overfishing Drives West Bengal's Hilsa Fishers Up the Creek," had been circulated and used in a local petition for fishing subsidies by a cooperative with a history in activism was only partly correct. The journalist reported that

he had circulated the piece to the sources he talked to when he researched the story at a time when Sagar Marine Matsya Khuti Cooperative Society was preparing a petition. These included members of the local fishing organizations who reportedly passed it on in their WhatsApp groups.¹²⁴ However, evidence that this article, which was published in English, contributed to deliberative debate was less convincing. Abdar Malik, the secretary of the Marine Matsya Khuti Cooperative Society, who initially claimed that he had referred to the story in the petition, retracted his claim.¹²⁵ He said that after consideration he thought the tone of the piece might offend the minister and undermine their petition; he also admitted he had not read it.

In Indonesia, we discovered a previously unreported outcome: the story on anoa conservation had inspired local environmental activists to step up their community education efforts. According to one activist, the story had woken them up to the possibility of anoa extinction. As the local government had been so slow to implement their commitment to the national anoa conservation plan, activists decided community level action was urgently needed. They wanted to discourage villagers from hunting and killing anoa that strayed onto their farmland. Their activities included translating Riza’s report into a comic form in Bahasa, the local language, that made its messages more accessible to local communities.¹²⁶

The story in Bicol was reported to have been mentioned on local radio and inspired hope among the local community. However, we were not able to triangulate this.

One final example that deserves mention is that support from EJN not only enabled one young journalist in Bangladesh to produce a story funded by a grant from EJN, it also equipped him to write several other pieces that have been published in the Business Insider since.¹²⁷ Even though the story researched was characterized by some weakness in terms of accuracy in reporting on climate change,¹²⁸ it is still important to record an example where EJN’s support for a single article on environmental issues had ripple effects. The Business Insider has a relatively small audience of just over 160,000 readers, but arguably seeking to integrate environmental issues in a publication about business and industry is a worthwhile endeavor.

The story on anoa conservation had inspired local environmental activists to step up their community education efforts. According to one activist, the story had woken them up to the possibility of anoa extinction.



Figure 12. The story on anoa conservation inspired action by local activists, including translating the report into a comic form.

EJN’S CONTRIBUTION TO OUTCOMES

This section analyzes the role that articles supported by EJN played in the achievement of partly or fully substantiated outcomes. It then analyzes the nature of EJN’s contribution to the reports concerned.

The EJN-supported stories associated with most of the outcomes substantiated were not solely responsible for them, but they improved the processes that achieved them. In

the cases of the Aeta and Ajai Game Reserve stories, they made a substantial difference to the outcomes. The extent of the contribution is summarized using the rubric below. A score of 1 implies that the outcome would have happened, but the story enhanced the process or outcome; and 2 means the story was almost entirely responsible for the quality of the outcome.

Table 2. Weight of contributing factors in substantiated outcomes.

Story	4 Ganga	8 Anoa Extinction	10 Threat to IP land and eco system	11 Water shortage due to climate change	12 Conversation success
Change	Court ruling	Anoa conservation center & environmental activism	Aeta empowerment	Ako Bikol water commitment	Conservation debate
Contibution	1	1	2	1	2

4 Jayanta Basu’s story “Adi Ganga disappears in West Bengal” is assessed as having enhanced the quality of the outcome reported in the harvest.

It is not possible to assess whether the National Green Tribunal would have made the judgment to restore the river in the absence of the EJN-supported story on the River Ganga. The case was built on long-term research and evidence presented by local activists. But the reference to the article in the judgement is evidence that it made a difference.



Figure 13. Litter on the Adi Ganga in West Bengal. Photo: Eric Parker

8 Riza Salman’s story on the plight of the anoa is assessed as having intensified activity and speeded up or enhanced the quality of the outcome reported in the harvest.

The Buton government in Southeast Sulawesi already had a conservation plan and local activists were already concerned about the plight of the anoa. Therefore, the outcomes reported may have happened anyway, albeit at a slow pace. But the story provided a sense of urgency that triggered action by both parties. The activists intensified community education activities and discussions around the story increased collaboration among different government departments leading to a proposal and budget for the conservation center.

10 Krixia Subingsubing and Mariejo Ramos’ reports on the threats to the Aeta’s land by the New Clark City project are assessed to have had a significant effect on the quality of the empowerment outcomes reported in the outcome harvest.

The Aeta were confident to express their grievances prior to this report but coverage in a national paper took the story and their confidence to new levels.¹²⁹ National attention spurred the BCDA to at least engage with the community. It also galvanized significant public debate and support. Human rights activist Pia Montalban, who has long been working in the community, described the Inquirer story as “pivotal” in the Aeta’s struggle for their ancestral domain and inclusive development. “The previous stories barely nudged the mayor... but this [Inquirer story] made him panic,” she said, referring to Capas Mayor Reynaldo Catacutan.

11 Barcia's story on the water shortage in Albay is judged to have added to pressure for the commitment by Ako Bicol reported in the outcome harvest.

It was one of two sources quoted in the rationale for Ako Bicol's promise of 200 million pesos for water to be supplied to local communities. This intervention may have happened solely because of the Pulse Asia survey that found the basic problem of the people in Albay was that 80 to 90 percent go without potable drinking water.¹³⁰ However, Co's reference to qualitative descriptions of the struggles people face accessing water described by Barcia in the Rappler article demonstrates it made a qualitative difference to his intervention.¹³¹

12 Richard Drasimaku's story on local success at reducing poaching in the West Nile region of Uganda was mostly responsible for the most important outcome reported — a radio debate about the Ajai Reserve.

The plight of the white rhino had been written about previously by national papers¹³² and Richard had also published stories about the game reserve. However, this article was different. He decided that he wanted to write a much more positive account about local achievements in reducing poaching. His story resonated with local radio journalists looking for stories on the West Nile and they included it in a review program. This prompted a short, live conversation about when a previous commitment for the fence around the park was to be implemented. More importantly, it triggered a series of conversations about conservation and how to make more of the local game reserve.

EJN's financial support was essential for all of the stories above. It allowed journalists in India, Indonesia, the Philippines and Uganda to travel and undertake more in-depth research than would have been possible otherwise.

Mentoring on environmental issues by EJN was also mentioned as being important and improving the quality of the stories on the anoa, the Aeta and the Uganda game reserve. In the case of the Philippines, two experienced journalists who were struggling to integrate an environmental lens into the story talked about how useful they found EJN's help. Similarly, Riza Salman appreciated support finding sources and learning how to produce video content. Richard Drasimaku, an award-winning journalist, reported that EJN training had equipped him with new data analysis skills.

Lastly, EJN's support for media platforms helped get three of these stories published though the links between publication platforms and outcomes are harder to assess.

The story on Uganda's game reserve was published on the West Nile platform which Access FM saw as a source of local news they had a responsibility to disseminate;¹³³ The Third Pole published the story on the Ganga and the international platform contributed to its influence on the GNT;¹³⁴ in Indonesia, EJN's Ekuatorial online platform gave Riza his first opportunity to publish a story on an issue he had been passionately writing about for years. The published article with its focus on extinction was referred to as the trigger for action by government and activists. However, the journalist interviewed several of these people as part of the research for his piece and these encounters may have started to put pressure on the government and motivated some of the discussions and activities that took place on social media, rather than the article published on the Ekuatorial platform.¹³⁵

OTHER FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTED TO OUTCOMES

Overall, the study highlights the role that intermediaries, often civil society actors, play in contributing to environmental outcomes related to journalists' stories.

Subhash Datta, an environmental activist, intermediated and leveraged the Ganga story alongside photographic material from years of his work.¹³⁶ Both sets of evidence cited in the ruling influenced the decision of the GNT, but his determination and sustained effort was needed to produce the outcome. The journalist and activists in Odisha, where we failed to identify precisely what role the EJM-supported story played in policy decisions, also argued that local media and activists were mainly responsible for political decisions to resettle people threatened by rising sea levels.¹³⁷

Likewise, in the Philippines, previous support from academics and civil society actors meant the Aeta were sufficiently empowered to respond to the story and use it to engage with officials.¹³⁸ Their voices were further amplified by other bloggers and civil society organizations whom the story inspired to add their voices to the Aeta's demands.¹³⁹

In the Albay case, a survey also contributed to the response of Co and his verbal commitment of money for water in the area. Though local radio picked up the story, it did not fuel discussion for long and the case study written by the local researcher raises questions on whether the lack of follow up by civil society made implementation of the promise less likely.

In Indonesia, an existing government plan and commitment to anoa conservation certainly helped the story about extinction gain traction. In this instance, intermediaries within government played an important role in circulating some of the key messages on WhatsApp groups that were internal to government. Community education activities by environmental activists and comic publishers using messages from the story will be critical to the achievement of the article's overall conservation aims.

A local radio station in Uganda was the essential actor in making the story about the wildlife reserve accessible to a wider audience and triggering conversations. However, its reporting in English language and coverage meant that local people were excluded from these exchanges.



Figure 14. An environmental journalist interviews members of an indigenous Aeta community.

ASPECTS OF STORIES THAT ENABLED THEM TO CONTRIBUTE TO OUTCOMES

This section looks at aspects of stories that resonated with different actors, encouraging them to engage or act.

- **Evidence based:** Respondents for several cases commented on the quality of evidence presented in the reports influencing their motivation to engage with the environmental issues raised. For example, scientific data on the possible extinction of the anoa got the attention of officials in Buton, Southeast Sulawesi.¹⁴⁰ Similarly, the story on the Aetas' struggle for land and environment was said to have been so successful because it "provided the scientific basis for their fight, that their grievances were not without basis, which is very important for readers to understand."¹⁴¹
- **Emotional resonance:** Government actors mentioned how the imminent extinction of the anoa, which was the provincial symbol of Buton, would bring them great shame. This inspired them to act. Likewise, activists were motivated by the story because of their passionate concerns about the anoa and its environment. In Albay, Co specifically mentioned the struggles local people had collecting water outlined in the Rappler story in his rationale for Ako Bicol's response.¹⁴²
- **Trust and legitimacy of authors or stories:** The GNT court judgment specifically mentioned the eminence of Basu and The Third Pole being an international platform. It suggested these features gave the article more legitimacy. Another example comes from Uganda. Radio journalists picked up the story on the Ajai Reserve because they knew and trusted Richard as well as several of the people quoted in the article.¹⁴³
- **Local relevance:** Radio presenters at Access FM in the West Nile sub-region wanted to draw attention to the Ajai Reserve to increase visitors; the anoa story in Indonesia resonated because it was so focused on the extinction of the provincial symbol. One respondent suggested the story motivated him because it was the first time he had seen this local issue presented in news.¹⁴⁴ In contrast, the songbird case report suggests it is more difficult to trigger similar responses when making the case for changes in policy and practice at the national level.
- **New angle:** Informants commented that the anoa and Ganga pieces included information that was new to them. One respondent in South Sulawesi had been motivated because it was the first time he had read about anoa in his locality; people commented on the article on the disappearing Ganga drawing attention to an area of the river that had previously been neglected.
- **Economic benefits:** The evidence on this is weak, but there were a few references to aspects of stories that suggested it would be possible to undertake conservation with economic gains to localities or no economic risk.¹⁴⁵ Ugandan presenters used the story to make an argument that local schools should visit a local reserve rather than going further afield. In Buton, one government informant commented on being inspired by positive stories of conservation in other provinces without negative economic consequences.¹⁴⁶

- Timing of publication:** The publication of the Inquirer story on the impact of New Clark City drew public attention and stirred conversation in social media at the peak of SEA Games. It highlighted the irony of holding an extravagant sports event while threats of displacement haunted the people in the area. As a result, the story became a reference for advocacy groups like Katribu, a national alliance of indigenous peoples organizations,¹⁴⁷ and IBON International, a local think-tank.¹⁴⁸
- Tone:** We cannot tie this discussion to any particular outcome; however we came across several examples that illustrate the tone of the piece influences how different audiences engage with it. The most interesting one is the story on disappearing Hilsa in Sagar Island, India. On the one hand, the secretary of the cooperative that prepared the petition for fishing subsidies said he thought the story might offend the minister (even though he had not read it). On the other hand, an activist involved in the fisheries forum that had been interviewed thought the article should have been more critical of the government. He was an exception. Respondents in Honduras and Southeast Sulawesi suggested that constructive pieces were more likely to gain attention and achieve impact.¹⁴⁹

Two of the cases highlighted instances where environmental journalism could lead to risks of harm.

- Risks of journalistic emphasis on environment triggering disapproval of vulnerable people:** Debates among researchers about a report on oyster pickers in Bangladesh raised this important issue that deserves further consideration. The report opened with a sympathetic exploration of the negative effects of climate change on the livelihoods of oyster pickers. It then went on to the need for more government monitoring to put an end to the practice which harms the environment and has been banned. Members of the research team and EJM disagreed on whether the experts quoted in the report who called for such illegal practices to be banned were condemning the vulnerable oyster pickers. Regardless of whether they did or not, the discussion highlights the risk. There are instances where poverty may drive people to engage in practices that are detrimental to the environment and this requires sensitive treatment in stories written by the journalists EJM trains.



- Risks of stories about environmental defenders triggering pushbacks from vested interests that put journalists and communities at risk:** Tensions between the authorities in New Clark City and the Aetas who were struggling to defend their land and environment became so heated that it was extremely dangerous for journalists supported by EJM to cover their plight.¹⁵⁰ In addition, and as mentioned earlier, the support the Aetas received from the public led them to be labelled as dangerous militants. This meant they were under surveillance and constantly harassed by those with vested interests in their land.

Figure 15.
Aeta Hungeys in their wooden house in Sitio Sapang Kawayan, Capas.
Photo: Kathleen Lei Limayo

TYPES OF STORIES AND DISTRIBUTION CHANNELS THAT ENGAGE AUDIENCES

It is not possible to draw any general findings on the kinds of environment or climate change stories that work. Several respondents said that single reports of emergencies tend to get more attention and impact than single stories about more slow burning issues.¹⁵¹ Arguably, the imminent extinction of the anoa and threats to the indigenous peoples made the respective issues reported urgent, helping to garner audience attention. Though this is not hard evidence, it seems a reasonable proposition for EJN to explore further in the future.

It was difficult to find any patterns in the data that provide insights about the efficacy of particular distribution channels. This is partly because researchers were not always able to access basic analytics. Another reason was that identifying the particular channel by which an individual accesses a story that has been shared widely is difficult in short interviews where researchers are trying to get at other points. It is also because the most appropriate mediums and distribution channels depend on target audience and context. For example, respondents in Odisha remarked that journalists wanting to influence local opinion and action need to make stories accessible in languages and media forms that are appropriate for local audiences. Conversely, they perceived an advantage if some that aim to influence politicians or policymakers appear in the English language press.¹⁵²

Additionally, assessing the relative advantages of different channels at a time when media landscapes, connectivity and use of technology is shifting so fast within national contexts is no mean task. Thus, we present some data and possible insights below:

- Videos narrated in local languages embedded in stories could perhaps be an effective means to inform public opinion in support of the citizen engagement pathway to impact described in the evidence section. The video narrated and captioned in English that was not produced by the EJN-supported journalist but embedded in stories on the plight of villagers facing rising sea levels due to climate change in Odisha (state population 47 million in 2020¹⁵³) was watched over 15,000 times. This seems to be a much higher level of engagement than was received by any other story or medium used from the data that we accessed. Analytics for stories in Spanish published on La Tribuna in Honduras (population approximately 10 million in 2020¹⁵⁴) also look relatively high. The story about illegal fishing was shared 2,700 times and the video viewed 977 times at the time of the researcher's analysis.¹⁵⁵ The story on the aquarium was shared 3,600 times¹⁵⁶ and the video had been viewed 466 times.¹⁵⁷ Published on June 15, 2019, the story on water shortages in Albay, the Philippines, a country with a population of approximately 109 million in 2020¹⁵⁸ was viewed 4,400

Figure 16. Due to the water shortages in the Philippines, a couple has to take a boat to stock up on water. Photo: Rhaydz Barcia



times, according to the Rappler's data analytics team.¹⁵⁹ The video embedded in the story, also in a local language, was viewed over 2,500 times as of December 11, 2020.¹⁶⁰ The story, shared on Rappler's Facebook page, gained 65 mostly "sad" reactions and eight comments.¹⁶¹ In comparison, the Inquirer pieces with national reach was shared on the Inquirer Facebook page 1,100 times and received 890 mostly "sad" reactions, 142 comments. Of course, the Inquirer piece was probably shared more widely by civil society actors, but nonetheless the comparisons and figures for the videos are potentially interesting and might inform further research.

- The Third Pole, which caters more for academics and policymakers, does not get many interactions in the form of likes but over 50% of articles are reported to be shared further.¹⁶² The article on the disappearing Ganga that influenced the GNT did not get much interaction on The Third Pole, but it was republished by IM4change, a clearing house for information on marginalized people in India. In addition, Basu wrote a follow up piece for the Telegraph India.¹⁶³ Conversely, the report on the oil tanker crash that was reported to have influenced the World Bank received 321 likes which appears quite high from a cursory look at some other Third Pole articles. Few had more than 100 likes with one article with 18,000 seeming an exception. Interestingly, some of the videos embedded in the report on the Maguri Motapung Beel, a wetland in Assam, which was also published on Scroll.in, did well. The first of the five was watched over 880 times, the second over 600 times with the one at the end having been viewed just over 100 times. This suggests that readers ran out of steam as they read through the article.¹⁶⁴

Figure 17. Nutanga villager on his boat in the Maguri Motapung Beel, an endangered wetland in Assam. Photo: Nivedita Khandekar



KEY COMPONENTS OF STORIES AND EXTERNAL FACTORS THAT GENERATE IMPACT

Once again, it is not possible to generalize and important components identified in some stories may work better in some contexts than others as mentioned in the earlier evidence review. However, answers to an earlier question suggest that EJM may want to monitor the following components in the future:

- **Strong scientific evidence base** helps a piece to gain legitimacy, as was the case in the Aeta and anoa reports.
- **A human-interest angle**, whether it be about people or, in the case of the anoa in Indonesia, an animal, plays an important role in triggering emotional responses from readers. This was seen in the case of responses to the Inquirer story on the

Aeta and the story about water access in Albay.

- **Perspectives of different actors** who need to work together to solve an environmental or conservation problem may have helped collaboration in Buton, Southeast Sulawesi, though the evidence is thin.
- **Positive comparison:** The story on the anoa provides an example where using a positive illustration helped to inspire government to believe that they had agency and could do something to turn around the situation of the anoa.
- **The reputation and legitimacy of the author:** Though this is not strictly a component of the story, there were two examples where a well-known or respected author was mentioned as making a difference. These were the court judgments on the disappearing Ganga, and the story of the Ajai Game Reserve in Uganda. Another respondent commented that the stature of journalists influenced whether their stories were picked up on The Third Pole.

External factors, connectivity and the capacity of intermediaries to make stories accessible to different actors who speak different languages matters for those pursuing an impact pathway that involves stimulating public debate.

This is best illustrated by the story of the Aeta in the Philippines. The reason this story did so well was partly serendipitous — the timing so close to the SEA Games. But the really important factors that enabled it to garner so much attention were well-connected civil society organizations and netizens who are experienced in advocating for the rights of indigenous people and other issues on social media. The absence of such connectivity and civil society intermediaries in other contexts, e.g., Uganda, makes raising public awareness on wildlife conservation in an area such as the West Nile much more difficult. Though we do not know the impact, the intermediation of messages by journalists and environmental activists through the use of comics will have increased the potential accessibility of messages in the anoa story by local communities.



Figure 18. An Aeta leader points out the damages done by a golf course being built inside the land the Aetas are claiming as ancestral domain. Photo: Kathleen Lei Limayo

Political context. It is well documented that public apathy about the Ganga has let politicians get away with turning a blind eye to its pollution.¹⁶⁵ Perhaps that partly explains why the West Bengal official mentioned in the case report had built a house on encroached land, making him unlikely to support the GNT order for the river's restoration. In the Philippines, local political competition often influences the actions of leaders. Though we do not have firm evidence, the local researcher's analysis of the political context in the Albay case study suggests such competition may have influenced Co's intervention on behalf of the Ako Bicol political party. It may be interesting to ask for some expert opinion on if or how political competition influenced the behavior of officials in Tarlac.

Government capacity was mentioned as a constraint on increasing the number of rangers in Honduras. The availability of budgets will also affect whether the anoa center is built.

Powerful vested interests were identified as posing potential barriers to several stories achieving impacts: the land title being given to the Aetas in the Philippines; the implementation of the court order in the Ganga area; the fence being constructed in Uganda; and the success of anoa conservation.

Media ecosystems: Though this research was mainly interested in stories that had been published due to EJN's support, it is important to recognize that many journalists are working in contexts where environmental journalism is undervalued and poorly paid.



Figure 19. Public apathy of the Adi Ganga has allowed politicians to turn a blind eye to its pollution.
Photo: Eric Parker

DISCUSSION

This section presents insights with respect to common dimensions of change used to assess the effectiveness of media and journalism introduced earlier. They include aspects that are within EJN's control, such as enabling journalists to write compelling stories and or supporting them to get published on print or on radio and social media. These, in turn, raise audience awareness of the issues covered. However, arguably the most useful potential lessons for EJN come from findings that are within EJN's spheres of influence and interest, but beyond its control. These include factors that influence whether citizens and or powerful actors actively respond to messages, for example, by taking collective action or through policy and legal decisions. Consistent with evidence presented earlier, we found that environmental stories can influence powerful actors directly and or because of the collective action or civil society advocacy they support. Importantly, we highlight the complexity of the pathways by which actors supported by EJN contribute to environmental change and the important roles that civil society intermediaries often play in these processes. We end with some reflections on whether the outcome harvesting methodology used by EJN might need adjustment to engage with and fully capture such complexity.

EJN's financial and mentoring support enables journalists with varied levels of experience to undertake research that they would otherwise find difficult. As a result, they can produce newsworthy stories on environmental issues, including through online media verticals that EJN partners with or manages.

Many of the journalists interviewed work in media ecosystems where environmental journalism is undervalued. Thus, EJN's support enables them to travel to undertake research they would not be able to otherwise. This study found support from EJN enables journalists to publish reports that are generally viewed as being of good quality. However, there was at least one instance that suggested short courses are insufficient to equip early career reporters with the scientific knowledge required to write on complex issues like climate change. This is consistent with challenges noted in the general literature on environmental journalism discussed earlier. We also found one example that indicated EJN needs to ensure the journalists it supports are aware of the nuances in reporting on vulnerable groups whose lives may depend on harmful environmental practices.

Many of the journalists interviewed work in media ecosystems where environmental journalism is undervalued. Thus, EJN's support enables them to travel to undertake research they would not be able to otherwise.

Research challenges mentioned earlier resulted in incomplete data, but it appears that stories supported by EJN are likely to achieve higher levels of engagement when published in local languages. The stories included in this study were initially published on a wide range of mostly online media. These ranged from widely read English language dailies in the Philippines to more niche platforms with smaller audiences, including several environmental verticals supported by EJN. Many stories published with EJN's support are republished and shared through other news outlets and social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter. The overall study design and other challenges meant we were

unable to track this systematically. Nonetheless, the data we did collect suggests levels of engagement vary considerably across countries and distribution channels, but that those published or republished in local languages or with local language videos embedded gained more attention. Further research would be required to confirm this.

Many stories published with EJN's support are republished and shared through other news outlets and social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter.

Most respondents felt single stories would not lead to significant long-term outcomes and that increasing public awareness of slow burn disasters requires continuous reporting. The design of this study did not allow us to rigorously assess the role EJN's support plays in contributing to the continuous reporting of issues. However, we found several examples to suggest this is sometimes the case. The story about the Aeta in the Philippines was used by several intermediaries in their advocacy and reporting, one of the journalists in Bangladesh had written several other pieces on environmental issues following training and the story about the anoa in Indonesia had spurred cartoonists to take up the issue in one of their magazines.

Yet we still found examples where single or several stories had contributed to citizen action and/or commitments by powerful actors. The study's findings demonstrate that some stories supported by EJN, for example in Uganda, were sufficiently engaging and relevant to contribute to citizen action.

Whether stories work or not to engage audiences and produce short term outcomes through either impact pathway depends on different factors. However, combining evidence with a human-interest angle appears to further prospects for success. Informants commented on many different aspects of the stories discussed that they thought were good quality and motivated them to act. These included legitimacy of authors and channels, local relevance, newness of issues, positive examples to drive aspirations for improvement or to address an environmental or conservation challenge. The most common were the quality of evidence and a human-interest angle.

The relative strength of civil society and connectivity are important factors that contribute to a story's influence and ability to make gains in EJN's spheres of interest. Civil society and other journalists play critical intermediary roles in enabling stories supported by EJN to influence change through both impact pathways: those that influence public opinion and citizen action as well as those that influence policymakers and other powerful actors directly. Case study examples from India, Indonesia, the Philippines and Uganda all highlight the role that intermediary journalists or other activists play. They are often key in communicating whole reports or key messages that influence citizens or government actors to act in response to environmental issues raised by journalists. Several also suggested informal use of technology such as WhatsApp can aid dissemination, and overall levels of connectivity that varied across the countries studied seems to have had marked effects on the relative ease of provoking debate.

Civil society and other journalists play critical intermediary roles in enabling stories supported by EJN to influence change.

Representing marginalized people's voices in stories is necessary but not sufficient — they need to be able to access them too. Hidden power¹⁶⁶ means poor and marginalized groups are unable to directly access stories shared on digital platforms and/

or published in English. Therefore, intermediaries play important roles in making stories accessible to such groups.

This research shows that journalists supported by EJN are, with the odd exception, good at representing marginalized people’s voices in their stories about environmental issues. Yet these same stories are not always made accessible to the communities concerned. The Aeta case study illustrates the tremendous power of telling the story of one group’s problems and outrage to others also inclined to be outraged and support them in seeking accountability from powerful actors. Many of the stories published by EJN-trained journalists are in English and online. As a result, intermediaries, such as environmental activists and comic illustrators, are relied on to make them more accessible to others who may be similarly affected by an environmental problem or have a role to play in solving it. If EJN’s theory of change assumes that mass action and changes in attitudes and behavior are necessary for improved environmental governance, it might need to consider ways to make stories it supports more accessible to marginalized groups. Tactics might include strategic relationships with intermediaries such as local media organizations or merely advising the journalists it trains to develop dissemination plans that include such actors.

The complex paths journalist and media impact can take are illustrated in the diagram below. It shows how two quite different stories, one written in the Philippines and the other in Indonesia, triggered efforts by civil society actors to bring environmental issues to the attention of the general public. Similarly, both the story about the possible extinction of the anoa and the plight of the Aeta’s land and environment both spurred action by local officials and powerful actors.

IMPORTANCE OF CSO INTERMEDIARIES

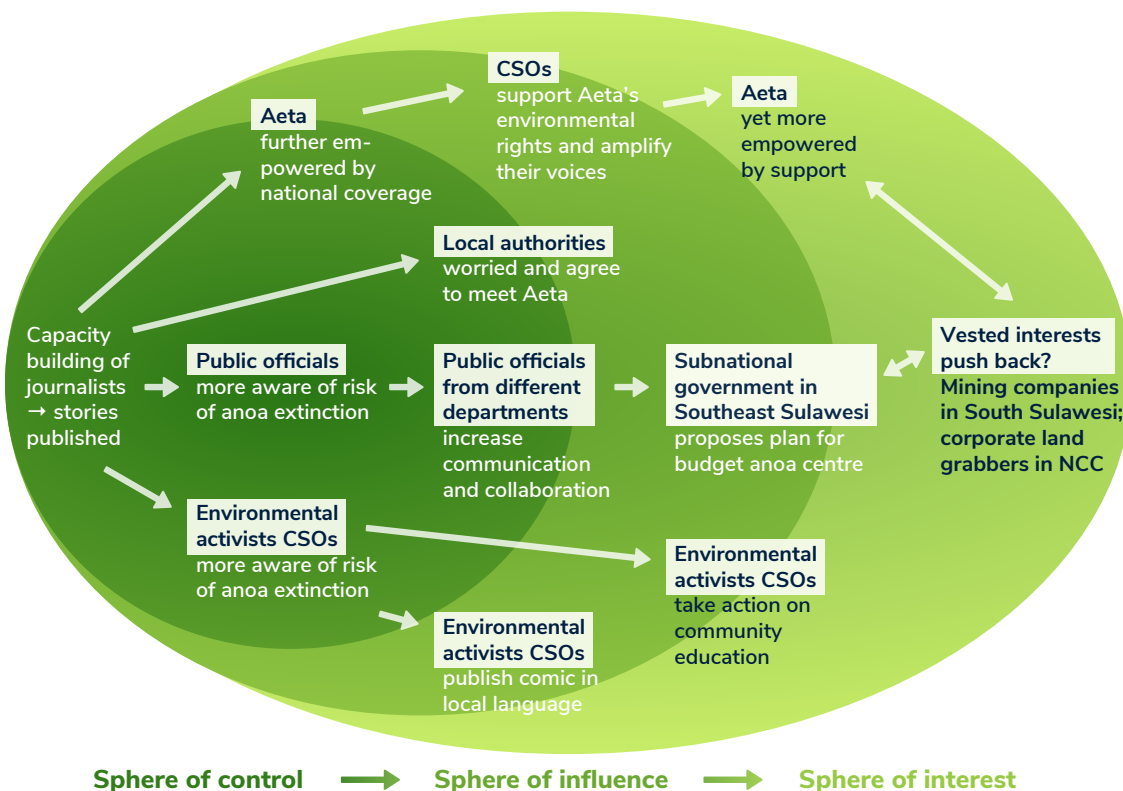


Figure 20: Impact of civil society organizations in generating impact.

Vested interests, local politics and government capacity all play roles in determining whether commitments triggered by journalism get implemented or not. Several examples suggest that trying to influence policy makers without broad-based citizen action is unlikely to lead to sustainable impact. Non-implementation of commitments in Albay and New Clark City plus the lack of action by local officials on the restoration of the Ganga illustrate the challenge of ‘the implementation gap.’ In some instances, such gaps occur because officials don’t have capacity to implement commitments. In others it can be down to political will. If political will is a problem, evidence cited earlier suggests that this is unlikely to change without joined up action by different actors in an environmental accountability ecosystem or in the absence of political competition.

Outcome harvesting is a promising method for learning whether and how media platforms and stories influence shifts in environmental policies and practices (or not). Yet, it needs fine tuning to the specific contexts of particular organizations and strategies to be optimally effective. EJN has invested in outcome harvesting and contribution analysis because it understands that impact pathways for environmental journalism are complicated, involving various other actors, such as civil society advocates and contextual factors. Findings from this study confirm that this approach generates useful insights for organizational learning.

The case study of the Aeta in the Philippines shows what is possible. In instances of significant outcomes, a curious, skilled researcher who is able to access relevant stakeholders can develop detailed and compelling accounts of how journalism contributes to changes in discourses, practices or environmental governance within EJN’s spheres of influence and interest but beyond its control. In this example, results were achieved by a researcher with limited training in the methodology and within a tight timeframe.

Conversely, the approach has drawbacks that may be peculiar to a small, lean operation like EJN. Some organizations that use outcome harvesting have staff on the ground who are able to keep detailed observations of outcomes within their spheres of influence and interest as they evolve. This means they contract external researchers to do deep dives for significant outcomes that are supported by monitoring data that demonstrates plausible causal links. Such an approach means external evaluators face an easier time substantiating and learning about how the outcomes came about than they do in an organization without staff located in areas that feature in stories, like EJN.

This study suggests that harvesting outcomes through surveys that focus on individual journalist’s stories may encourage respondents to overclaim their contributions to outcomes. This could be because they interpret correlation as causation. It may also be because donor-recipient relationships are characterized by power relations that often result in recipients wanting to please the international organizations that fund them. Other difficulties suggested by the Sundarbans case point to political sensitivities and methodological challenges, such as a researcher unfamiliar with a story published several years ago not being able to locate the most relevant respondents. In addition, some of the methodological techniques used to assess contribution take time to develop. This means a short orientation session plus mentoring during a relatively short-term project, such as this study, are insufficient to equip researchers with little prior evaluation experience to master the necessary skills.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall, the 25x25 study found that EJN is ‘doing things right’ in contributing to outputs that are within its control. EJN is playing an important role in supporting journalists to produce good quality reports on environmental issues that get published in different media outlets.

One case highlights that short-term courses aren’t sufficient to equip early career environmental journalists with all of the scientific knowledge they need to write on complex issues like climate change. But there is no easy remedy for this besides continuing to link journalists who are starting to write on the environment and climate change with scientific experts in the field.

The nature of the study was insufficiently extensive or rigorous to conclude whether EJN is ‘doing the right thing’ to have maximal influence on its spheres of interest. Nonetheless, having illuminated the complex pathways by which environmental stories contribute to EJN’s goals, it is possible to make recommendations for further research and reflections related to implicit or explicit assumptions in EJN’s theory of change.

Consider how EJN can ensure the reporting it supports is accessible to audiences most likely to take action and have impact at different levels. Questions for reflection might include:

- What are our assumptions on how environmental media and journalism is most likely to achieve impact in a given context? Which impact pathway is likely to be more effective: raising awareness of citizens or powerful actors/duty bearers?
- What is EJN’s role vis a vis other actors in the media and environmental accountability ecosystem, particularly civil society environmental communicators/intermediaries working on environmental issues with similar aims? Can it develop more strategic partnerships with them to enhance online and offline discussions of issues?
- Are the stories published as a result of EJN’s support more likely to be republished and gain ‘slow burn’ traction at international, national or local level? What are EJN’s assumptions about the role of intermediaries in this?
- Would investments by EJN in local language media and translation of stories into local languages enhance the value for money it delivers? What additional research does EJN need to undertake to make this decision? For example, on the reach and levels of engagement with local language videos?
- Does EJN need to encourage journalists it trains and media outlets it supports to consider reach and engagement more deeply? For example, could they do more to disseminate stories to intermediaries with large networks that reach vulnerable groups?

Revise EJN's use of outcome harvesting so that it is more efficient and better supports EJN's learning around its complex theory of change and the nature of its operations. Surveys could still be used to identify significant outcomes, however EJN would also support staff to:

- routinely collect relevant analytic data on the reach, scale of engagement and reactions with the stories and outlets EJN supports.
- better understand the difference between causation and correlation when reporting on the influence of stories and outlets.
- submit either basic evidence or better causal explanations to guide any deeper investigations by EJN or external researchers.

Additionally, EJN might try and mitigate the social desirability and normative bias that is baked into aid relationships. Outcome harvesting is not about attributing outcomes to single stories supported by EJN. Rather it aims to enable learning on whether, how and why journalists, multiple stories and the platforms that support them are making useful contributions to strengthening the wider ecosystem of actors seeking improved environmental governance and accountability. Such contributions will vary considerably.

They are likely to range from small wins, such as building the confidence of individual journalists to write more stories on the drivers of environmental harm, to making such stories accessible to diverse audiences who are likely to act on them. This study suggests this could be a big cultural shift for staff and journalists accustomed to having to report according to the linear and results-based management approaches used by many donors.

Outcome harvesting is not about attributing outcomes to single stories supported by EJN. Rather it aims to enable learning on whether, how and why journalists, multiple stories and the platforms that support them are making useful contributions.

Making this shift may require EJN to consider alternative units of analysis to individual stories. For example, in addition to routine analytics on stories, EJN staff could be asked to track and trace the dissemination and republication of stories by other platforms. Furthermore, they could try more ambitious approaches such as doing desk-based research on the coverage of issues before and after stories are published by journalists supported by EJN.

Two examples of frameworks used to monitor and assess the impact of media are presented below. They are tools that may help to stimulate further discussion on EJN's theory of change and the domains of change that EJN could use to monitor its contribution to environmental outcomes and impacts over time.

Integrate power analysis into different aspects of EJN's work: Findings relating to making stories more accessible to vulnerable groups; the essential role that intermediaries play in environmental accountability ecosystems; and the possibility of normative bias in outcome harvesting processes all suggest EJN might benefit from making power analysis more central to its planning, monitoring and evaluation systems.

Figure 21.
How media creates impact.
Credit: Media Impact Project

CREATING IMPACT THROUGH MEDIA

Reprinted from: Deepening Engagement for Lasting Impact: A Framework for Measuring Media Performance & Results, 2013

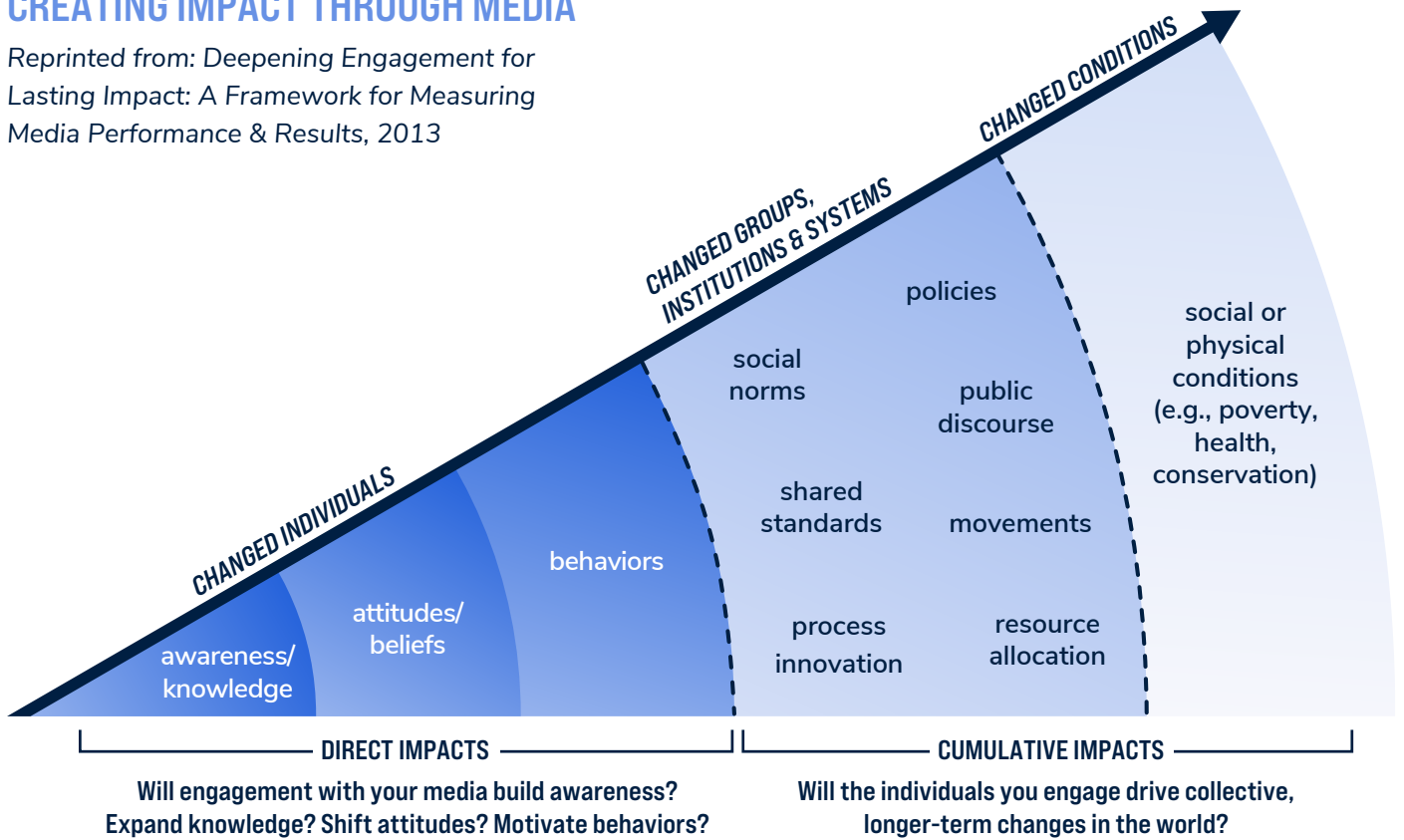
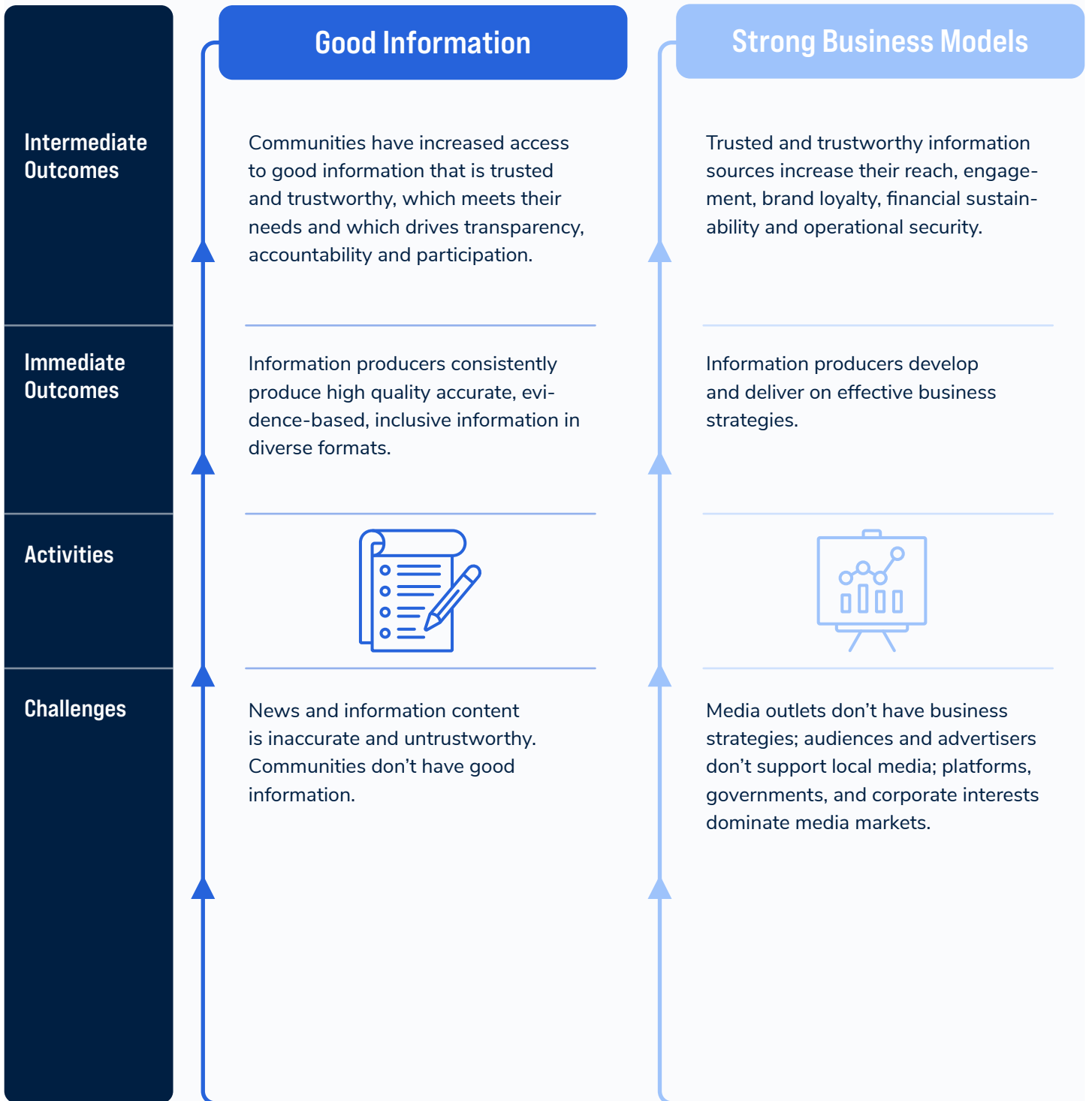


Figure 22.
Assessing creative media's social impact.
Credit: The Fledgling Fund

	WHY IMPORTANT?	SAMPLE MEASURES
COMPELLING STORY	Foundation for distribution, outreach and community engagement strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Festival Acceptance ■ Theatrical Release ■ Broadcast/Internet ■ Awards ■ Film reviews / Online “buzz” ■ Sales
AWARENESS	Critical building block for individual and social change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Audience Size ■ (By Distribution Segment) ■ Diversity of Audience ■ (geographic, age, faith, etc.) ■ Press Coverage (including online)
ENGAGEMENT	Indication of change in attitudes, beliefs and behavior and a shift from awareness to individual action.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Participation in / Response to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Facilitated dialogues ▶ Social network sites ▶ Take Action Campaigns ■ Website hits ■ Op/Eds and response letters
STRONGER MOVEMENT	Evidence that film or media can move individuals to collective action and strengthen capacity of advocacy organizations in their strategic work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ # of advocacy organizations utilizing film ■ Collaboration among org. ■ Viewer part in movement ■ Screenings w/ decision and policy makers ■ Mention in Policy Discussions and legislative press ■ Longevity of the film / media
SOCIAL CHANGE	ULTIMATE GOAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Policy / Legislative Change (international, national, state and local) ■ Behavior Change ■ Shift in public dialogue

INTERNEWS THEORY OF CHANGE

Impact: Healthy information environments enable everyone to make better-informed decisions, bridge divides, participate more fully in their communities, and hold power to account.



Problem Statement: In an unhealthy information environment, people are unable to make informed choices, false and hateful information divides communities, citizen participation in civic life declines and the structures for holding power to account are weakened.

INTERNEWS THEORY OF CHANGE



- Assumptions:**
- Internews has the financial, technical and human resources to achieve significant reach and operate in every setting where this work is needed.
 - Media and information providers share Internews' commitment to high quality, accurate, evidence-based, inclusive information and are open to collaboration.
 - The existence of shared global norms continue to value freedom of expression and independent media.
 - High quality information acts as a driver of positive change.

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APPENDICES

LIST OF INTERVIEWEES

RIVER POLLUTION IN WEST BENGAL, INDIA

1. Jayanta Basu, freelance journalist
2. Subhash Datta, environmental activist
3. Jenia Mukherjee, assistant professor in the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Kharagpur
4. Pradip Sikdar, groundwater expert at the Indian Institute of Social Welfare and Business Management
5. Mohit Ray, environmental activist

FISHERIES IN WEST BENGAL, INDIA

1. Tanmoy Bhaduri, freelance journalist and EJN grantee
2. Sugata Hazra, director of School of Oceanographic Studies, Jadavpur University
3. Abdar Mallik secretary of Sagar Marine Matsya Khuti Cooperative Society
4. Debashish Shyamal, district president of Dakhinbongo Matsajibi Forum
5. Chandranath Sinha, Minister of Fisheries for the government of West Bengal
6. Pradip Chatterjee, president of the Dakhinbongo Matsajibi Forum

WETLANDS CONSERVATION IN ASSAM, INDIA

1. Nivedita Khandekar, freelance journalist
2. Joydeep Gupta, South Asia Director at EJN and editor of The Third Pole
3. Senior environmental journalist who declined to be identified

SEA LEVEL RISE RELOCATION IN ODISHA, INDIA

1. Priya Ranjan Sashu, journalist
2. Ranjan Panda, environmentalist
3. Ashis Senapati, lawyer and local journalist based in Kendrapura, Odisha
4. Sudrasha Rout, Satabhaya Sangram Samiti

WATER SYSTEMS IN ALBAY, THE PHILIPPINES

1. Imelda Abano, the Philippines Content Coordinator for EJN and mentor of the journalist
2. Freddie Burce, chairman of local farmer-fishermen group that is also active in advocating for better water services in the area
3. Mayor Krisel Lagman-Luistro, the local chief executive of Tabaco City, which covers San Miguel and Cagraray islands

INDIGENOUS LAND RIGHTS IN TARLAC, THE PHILIPPINES

1. Casimira Maniego, member of the Hungey tribe, who are in danger of getting displaced by the New Clark City project
2. Mariejo Ramos and Krixia Subingsubing, Philippine Daily Inquirer journalists who worked on the story
3. Imelda Abano — the Philippines Content Coordinator for EJN and mentor of the journalists
4. Pia Montalban, community organizer who helped the Aeta launch their campaign
5. Inday Espina-Varona, one of the personalities who shared the Tarlac story on Facebook

ILLEGAL SONGBIRD TRADE IN LAMPUNG, INDONESIA

1. Endah, a junior official in the local Law Enforcement Bureau
2. Marison Guciano, executive director of local NGO FLIGHT Indonesia
3. Muhammad Jumad, head of the national Custom and Quarantine Bureau
4. Karman, representative from the Lampung Custom and Quarantine Bureau
5. Mustafa Silalahi, journalist and EJN grantee

ANOA CONSERVATION IN SOUTHEAST SULAWESI, INDONESIA

1. Riza Salman, journalist and EJN grantee
2. Prianto, head of the Southeast Sulawesi Office of Natural Resource Conservation
3. La Bakry, head of Buton District
4. Dani, local activist and director of local NGO KPA Tarsius
5. Udin, activist with local group WALHI
6. La Ode Kaida, conservation division head at the Southeast Sulawesi Office of Natural Resource Conservation

CORAL REEF CONSERVATION AND EDUCATION IN THE BAY OF TELA, HONDURAS

1. Sobeyda Núñez, director of Friends of Tela's Reef Association
2. Antal Börcsök, manager at Tela Marine Research Centre
3. Rolando Castro, director at the government institution General Directorate of Fisheries and Aquaculture (DIGEPESCA, by its initials in Spanish) in Tela Bay.
4. Nelbin Bustamante, executive director at PROLANSATE (Foundation for the Protection of Lancetilla, Punta Sal and Textiguat).
5. Ninfa Arias, editor-in-chief at La Tribuna newspaper in Tegucigalpa, Honduras

WILDLIFE RESERVE PROTECTION IN ARUA, UGANDA

1. Acema Dria Genesis, district chairman
2. Grace Munduru, district vice chairperson at Okollo
3. Bhakit Oulanya, game warden at Ajai reserve
4. Sadaraka Angudubo, official at Honey Pride
5. Patrick Nyakuta, environmentalist
6. Osman Draga, editor at West Nile Today
7. Richard Drasimaku, journalist
8. Mbaaga Madira Drazu, journalist
9. Denis Madira, journalist
10. Moses Alinda, journalist
11. Felix Warom Okello, journalist
12. Thomas Inziku, community member
13. Terezina Anguderu, community member
14. Yuda Amagule, community member
15. Tom Abiriga, community member
16. Bandale Oranja, community member

ENVIRONMENTAL JOURNALISM IN BANGLADESH

1. Zobaidur 'Soeb' Rahman, Bangladesh Content Coordinator for EJN
2. Pavel Partha, environmental activist, journalism trainer, researcher, and director at Bangladesh Resource Center for Indigenous Knowledge
3. Sidhartha Sankar Kundu, former UNO (Upazila Nirbahi Officer), top rank civil servant at the lowest tier

of local government in Cox's Bazar

4. Sharif Hossain Sagar, former UNO in Cox's Bazar
5. Sanuar Hossain, former UNO
6. Md Rakib Khan, additional superintendent of police serving at Cox's Bazar
7. Saiful Islam, local trader of mollusc products at Cox's Bazar.
8. Shahsnaj Rahman, assistant director at the Department of Environment
9. Iftekhar Mahmud, environment correspondent at Prothom Alo, the top Bengali newspaper in the country
10. Professor Anu Mohammed, development economist at Jahangirnagar University and member-secretary of the National Committee to Protect Oil, Gas, Mineral Resources, Power and Ports
11. Istiak Sobhan, environmental activist and climate change expert in the World Bank, Bangladesh
12. Razwana Hasan, environmentalist activist and founder and executive director at the Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association (BELA).

THE THIRD POLE

1. Laurie Vasily, International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development in Nepal
2. Kamal Kishore, member of India's National Disaster Management Authority and co-chair of the Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery
3. Naomi Hossain, research fellow at the Institute of Development Studies

RESEARCH AND REPORT TOOLS

RESEARCH GUIDE

This short guide gives an overview of our research project. It begins with some background information, goes on to the objectives and then describes the overall approach as well as key principles. It ends with details of expected outputs and a timeline. I will be going over key points in an orientation meeting this week. Please read this guide in advance and note down any points that need further explanation as well as any omissions.

BACKGROUND

Founded in 2004, Internews' Earth Journalism Network (EJN) mission is to improve the quantity and quality of environmental reporting across the globe. EJN support includes activities such as training journalists to cover a variety of different issues, support to produce content for local media and development of innovative online environmental news sites. EJN ensures evidence-based and data-driven environmental reporting that includes the voices, stories and experiences of local populations.

Its projects are supported by various donors, including Swedish Sida, and are underpinned by implicit or explicit assumptions and theories of change (TOCs). These elaborate on how EJN's tactics aim to increase access and use of good quality data for improved content that leads to greater multi-stakeholder engagement with socio-environmental stories. Gender and inclusion are central themes in as much as stories published by journalists are expected to reflect the experiences of women and marginalized groups. In some instances, there is also an assumption that these stories will be made accessible to marginalized groups.

Whatever the case, increased engagement with journalists' stories by communities, policy makers and accountability institutions are expected to influence new policy and the implementation of existing policies. EJN expects these actions to have positive effects on resilience to climate change, reduced environmental degradation, environmental health and sustainable development.

ABOUT THE RESEARCH PROJECT

In recent years, EJN has invested time and resources to better understand the capacity impacts of the support it provides to journalists and media outlets. In this project it seeks to go further and enhance understanding of its outcomes in terms of influence on communities and policymakers.

In other words, this project aims to advance EJN's understanding of how media stories lead to changes in public discourse, individual or collective action as well as environmental governance. Such governance includes public policy making or policy implementation in its key thematic areas.

More explicitly, the **objectives of this research** are to:

- Substantiate select outcomes through fieldwork/research (e.g., in-depth interviews and desk research)
- Generate insights and evidence on if, how and why media stories contribute to outcomes
- Generate insights and evidence on how EJN contributed to these outcomes
- Identify the other factors and actors that lead to outcomes

- Create case studies that tell stories of how verified outcomes were achieved

These insights will then be consolidated and further analyzed by EJM staff and me during learning events early next year. At that point we will be able to use the findings to reflect on some of the assumptions in EJM theories of action and change.

EVIDENCE THAT INFORMS OUR APPROACH

Evidence on the impacts of journalism and the links between journalism, the media and public action and policy is contested and sometimes contradictory.¹⁶⁷ This is partly because, as one of you said in your interview, journalists tend to see their role as surfacing and publishing data and evidence. They are not responsible for what happens next.

There is some truth in this. But evidence from those studying governance and EJM's TOCs suggest we need to consider the role journalism plays in the wider ecosystem of actors and institutions concerned with reducing environmental harm and contributing to sustainable development.

As EJM's Asia-Pacific program TOC suggests, causal impact pathways for journalism are multiple and complicated. But wider evidence suggests they can be separated into those that focus on media triggering citizen engagement or action that pressures the state to act and those that aim to influence policy reform and implementation through more formal advocacy.¹⁶⁸

It is tempting to treat this difference as a distinction between:

- a dissent public action ("outsider") approach in which journalism helps citizens challenge power and make demands; and
- a dialogue ("insider") approach where evidence from journalists is constructive and informs the actions of policy makers.

However, such distinctions tend to be blurred in practice. What is important for us when designing our research is thinking about the different routes by which journalism and media can contribute to better policy and practice.

INFLUENCING CITIZEN PATHWAYS

The evidence supporting causal pathways that link media stories with citizen action is strong, in democracies at least.¹⁶⁹ Information disclosure, particularly through the media, shapes citizens' political engagement and voting behaviour, influencing political incentives and thus reforms and other outcomes.

There is also good evidence that powerful investigative journalism can influence public opinion in ways that have significant impacts on accountability and governance between elections. Reporters play roles as public interest watchdogs, not just by analysing data, but also by reporting public outrage. They can generate insight and public engagement in the democratic process, inform consumers, and hold powerful institutions accountable.

One of the best-known examples of success is an investigative piece by the Philippines Centre for Investigative Journalism (PCIJ) that exposed presidential corruption. This played an important role in a popular uprising in 2001 that triggered a series of events that brought down President Estrada of the Philippines.¹⁷⁰

In many contexts where democracy is weak, the links between media reporting, political engagement by citizens and accountable governance can be more tenuous. When media capacity is nascent and corruption is rife, journalists face threats or bribes. It makes journalism an unattractive career and can reduce the quality

of information citizens engage with and act on.¹⁷¹

In recent years, the spread of digital media has added to the difficulties confronting investigative journalists. While investigative pieces can reach elites with good connectivity via the internet, traditional news organizations competing for relevance in a 24-hour news cycle see supporting such deep work as time consuming and costly.¹⁷²

Investigative journalism does not guarantee outcomes. The risks and challenges associated with accessing information mean many inquiries will fail and they often require significant collaborations and sharing of expertise to work. In areas where media is in crisis and poorly paid journalists face harassment and security threats, it can be difficult for journalists to spur citizen engagement and action. In such contexts, citizens' political agency may also be restricted by illiteracy. Thus, media must make the information it reports as accessible as possible and successful actions often involve many intermediary actors and complicated vertical and horizontal relationships with different levels of the state. Unsurprisingly, this can make it difficult to untangle the specific outcomes of a single media story on public debate and action.¹⁷³

But accessibility is not the only challenge to citizen engagement. Clientelist relationships, political violence and weak electoral institutions all mean that citizens may be too scared to take direct action. Therefore, other intermediaries have an important role to play in following up data driven news stories and advocating for policy reform, or in making accountability demands on citizens' behalf.

INFLUENCING DECISION MAKERS' PATHWAYS

The causal pathways by which journalists and media actors seek to influence policy makers also entail complex vertical and horizontal relationships and intermediation. Successful advocacy, for example in the Philippines on issues of land reform, has often involved journalists working in coalitions that link grassroots groups to national level CSO intermediaries who have access to policy makers.¹⁷⁴

But strong evidence and access to policy makers do not guarantee sound policy decisions, as data on the limits of evidence-based advocacy suggests. Evidence is also mediated by power. Oxfam's media work in the UK shows that media influencers, such as newspaper editorials, columns, and even important political blogs, are more effective at shaping decision-makers' ideas and behavior than general news coverage.¹⁷⁵

It follows that the effects of media on decision makers are limited without specific advocacy. Recent evidence from Oxfam implies that timing and framing of advocacy messages are important and that headline numbers can be more effective than deep rigorous studies in an emergency.¹⁷⁶ Similarly, the sources of information matter. Several studies suggest local level state actors may be more responsive to community generated data and video evidence than other sources.¹⁷⁷ This might be relevant to several of our case studies.

Community perceptions, stories and photos have been found to be particularly effective in engaging local government actors as they work on emotions. In addition, comparative information is more effective than information on single cases or communities. Studies on how information triggers audience reactions, show that the nature of the comparison matters. While shaming governments can work in some places 'name and fame' comparisons that use positive role models to inspire duty bearers to improve can work better in others.¹⁷⁸

In summary, the means by which journalism and media can influence environmental practices and governance are multiple and complex. However, there are common dimensions of change: compelling stories, awareness and engagement, shifts in policies and practice as well as capacity-building of networks of journalists who engage with other intermediaries.

All these dimensions and insights about how the nature and quality of evidence as well as local political contexts affect media outcomes inform a loose conceptual framework for our research which is unpacked further below.

APPROACH

We will be taking a theory-based approach that is loosely informed by evidence and EJN's theories of change. This project builds on EJN's use of the outcome harvesting methodology. We will start with outcomes that have been claimed by journalists and to work through a logical sequence of activities to achieve the objectives of validating outcomes and deepening understanding of **how and why** they took shape.

Note: Our role is not to try and identify and measure impacts according to logical framework indicators, the standard approach in international development projects.

RESEARCHING HOW STORIES WORK

This will involve trying to identify the causal mechanisms which explain how stories work to produce outcomes. These often align with explicit or implicit causal assumptions informed by some of the evidence above. You will likely have ideas shaped by your knowledge and experience, but some possible examples to get our discussions going might include:

- **Emotional or human interest effect:** The policy maker or intermediary is affected by the plight of those described in the story
- **Evidence effect:** The data and evidence make CSOs, policy makers, accountability actors or politicians aware of a problem they were unaware of before and triggers a rational response
- **Edutainment effect:** The channel or medium by which the story or message is communicated is particularly engaging and entertaining
- **Specific issue effect:** The decision maker is particularly knowledgeable and interested in the topic
- **Political incentive effect:** A mayor or other politician wants to run for office again and is motivated to act on a story to get noticed by constituents
- **Professional advancement effect:** Evidence from stories enable bureaucrats to suggest actions that help them achieve performance metrics in existing policies or job descriptions
- **Collective action effect:** Citizens realize that others share their circumstances and rage making them more inclined to take action to demand environmental governance
- Etc.

RESEARCHING WHY STORIES WORK IN SPECIFIC CONTEXTS

Also, we need to identify any particular contextual factors that made the mechanisms work. For example, in areas where there is political competition, politicians may be more incentivised to act.

Similarly, in a country that has a mature civil society and history of collective action, we might expect citizens to be more inclined to speak out and contribute ideas to stories or use stories in advocacy.

The general media landscape and civic space will also influence what happens.

SAMPLING STRATEGY

We will start by identifying key aspects of the story of change and potential respondents and/or paper-based evidence that can help us answer the various research questions. Then we expect to take a **'snowball sampling' approach**, identifying other potential respondents during initial interviews.

Research evidence standards and ethical principles

In order to ensure our evidence is rigorous we will adopt the following standards and tactics

- **Objectivity and mitigation of different kinds of bias:** Obviously, in this type of research, we select people who we think know the most about the outcome reported. However, we still need to be wary of normative bias, particularly from respondents who have close relationships with EJN and or the journalists concerned.
- **Assessing contribution:** Our starting assumption is that the journalist's story may have played no role in the change observed and we have to explore meticulously if it did and what kind of role it played. This involves using counterfactual thought experiments in interviewing techniques. Using the rubric logic, we need to get people to think about:
 - ▶ High contribution: Whether the outcome would not have happened without the story.
 - ▶ Medium contribution: Whether the story speeded things up or led to a better quality outcome
 - ▶ Low contribution: Whether the change would have happened anyway — what would have happened if the story had never been researched and /or printed?
- **Triangulation:** We will try to use different sources or methods to validate and substantiate the outcomes themselves, as well as data points related to how and why they happened. Where possible we should seek 2 sources to confirm each major outcome or theory about how and why a particular outcome happened. This may be difficult, but we will try!
- **Significance of outcomes:** We will use concepts used in the outcome harvesting manual and, where possible, try and link them to EJN's goals:
 - ▶ High significance: It is newsworthy and many people and or species will benefit from the change or a large number will benefit a lot.
 - ▶ Medium significance: A reasonable number of people and or species benefited
 - ▶ Low significance: No real impact relating to the overall EJN goals, and it may have even had negative effects
- **Careful interrogation of mechanisms:** Looking at how stories work and the motivations of people for engaging with them and taking action can be daunting if you have not done it before. But you are seasoned researchers and journalists so you should not have too many problems. We will practice interviewing techniques to get at this, taking care not to lead respondents.
- **Making explicit understandings of context:** As this is a multi-country study it is important that we identify contextual factors that shape mechanisms and results. Some of these factors will be identified by research informants. However, your own tacit knowledge is also important, so please share thoughts making clear when they come from you.
- **Inclusivity:** Where possible, we will be conscious of power relationships and seek to access the perceptions of different kinds of stakeholders about the significance of outcomes and/ or the contribution of stories to change.

- **Critical reflexivity:** We need to all be conscious how our positionalities affect our interpretation of data and talk about this explicitly rather than ignore it.
- **Flexibility and adaptability:** The approach we are taking is opportunist and you will snowball informants as you develop your understanding of the story. In addition, you may have to change plans due to unforeseen Covid-related issues. Please let me know if you confront anything that suggests a major rethink is necessary, so we can talk through the implications for you personally as well as for the project.
- **Kindness and collaboration:** This is a team project, bringing together people with diverse backgrounds and experience. We should celebrate this and acknowledge and respect differences of opinion through open communication.
- **Respect and dignity:** We must treat all respondents with respect.
- **Informed consent and confidentiality:** Informants need to be told about the purpose of the research and give their consent for recording and for the substance of what they say to be included in a case study or a formal report. Ask them if they mind being quoted and if they say no, ask if we can refer to their points while ensuring their identity remains confidential.
- **Self-care:** You are not expected to take any personal risks related to Covid or other factors. If you have any concerns regarding your own health and safety, please contact me or EJN staff immediately for advice and support.

DEVELOPING A RESEARCH PLAN

Each researcher will be expected to work with me to develop a customized research plan based on the framework below. The framework develops more specific questions from the TOR using some of the thinking from the terms of reference, theory of change, evidence and the standards and principles above.

Following the research orientation, please contact the journalist and relevant EJN staff, if you have not already. The main purpose is to get a rough idea of key elements of the story that was published and their accounts of how it led to the potential outcome.

In addition, you should be able to map all the stakeholders and identify first phase potential informants able to answer the kinds of questions outlined in the table below.

STAKEHOLDER MAP

This is an example of a very simple map identifying the different kinds of actors who may be involved in outcomes. Yours may be far more complicated, if for example it involved local and national actors and relationships. Note the potential roles of independent experts who know and can comment on key issues relating to stories. I would like to discuss possible experts with you and may possibly interview some of them.

Once you have the map, you can start completing a table like the one below, making it more specific to your growing understanding of the story and its role in the outcomes you are responsible for researching.

If you are researching two stories, you will need a diagram and table for each. Once you have completed the table, you can develop interview guides for in-depth interviews with different informants and undertake any necessary desk-based research.

GENERIC RESEARCH FRAMEWORK TABLE

Research question from the terms of reference	More specific questions	Examples of data sources: informants, reports, stories, social media platforms	Comments
<p>Have EJN-supported stories led to better environmental policies and practices?</p> <p>Have EJN-supported stories led to changes in individual or collective behavior?</p>	<p>1) What kind of outcomes relate to this story?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Increased awareness of environmental issues? ■ Change in behavior by citizens and or policy makers ■ Policy change (responsiveness)? ■ Implementation of existing policy implementation (accountability)? ■ Sanction for non-implementation of law policy (accountability) ■ Institutional change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Journalist article ■ Interview with journalist ■ Interview with EJN regional staff member 	
	<p>2) Where does it fit in terms of EJN's thematic goals: community resilience, decreased degradation, improved health, sustainable development?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Interview with EJN staff 	
	<p>3) Can the outcomes be verified — what is the evidence that a change/s occurred after the time of the research or publication of the story?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Documentary evidence of ex ante and ex post situations ■ Interview with journalist ■ Interviews with advocacy groups ■ Interviews with public officials 	
	<p>4) Have there been any further developments that either reinforce or undermine the outcome reported?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Interviews with advocacy groups ■ Interviews with community leaders ■ Interviews with public officials 	
	<p>5) How significant are the outcomes according to local informants and your own tacit understanding of the context?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Interview with local advocacy groups ■ Interview with officials ■ Census for population numbers ■ Documented evidence ■ Your tacit understanding 	<p>Remember to refer to rubric ideas above</p>
	<p>6) What factors and actors other than the story could have played a role in the outcome? (For example, other NGOs, donors, government programs)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Interviews with independent experts ■ Interviews with local officials ■ Interview with journalist ■ Scoping for NGO donor programs and government development plans 	

GENERIC RESEARCH FRAMEWORK TABLE (CONTINUED)

Research question from the terms of reference	More specific questions	Examples of data sources: informants, reports, stories, social media platforms	Comments
<p>To what extent did EJN contribute to these outcomes?</p> <p>What other factors have contributed to these outcomes?</p>	<p>7) Did the research or publication of the story play a role in the change? How important was it compared to other factors and actors?</p> <p>8) Was it the article itself that contributed to actions that led to outcomes: a) discussions during research? OR b) the intermediation of the story by other actors who were already working on the issue and made it more accessible to ordinary citizens?</p> <p>9) What role did EJN training or grants play? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Did the journalist have the knowledge and skills to write the story without EJN capacity building? If no what particular skills or capacities did EJN provide? ■ What role did the grant play? </p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Interviews with independent experts ■ Interviews with local officials ■ Interview with journalist ■ Scoping for NGO donor programs and government development plans ■ Interviews with key actors mentioned in the articles ■ Interview with the journalist ■ Review of baseline and end line data from EJN evaluation of training ■ Review of journalist portfolios 	<p>Refer to the rubric above</p> <p>Note is important to explore whether video or radio discussions around the article were more important than the article itself.</p>
<p>Which types of EJN stories support /produce outcomes?</p> <p>What are the key components that encourage people to act?</p>	<p>10) What was the reasoning or motivation related to the published story OR discussions during research OR the intermediated story that triggered the stakeholder to act? Did it inform them of a new situation? Were they moved by evidence? Was it the human stories? Other?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Interview with journalist ■ Interview with relevant actor ■ Interview with independent experts and CSOs 	<p>This could be a policy maker, politician, bureaucrat, CSO or citizen group? Important to think about causal mechanisms here</p>
<p>More generally, which types of environment/climate stories and/or distribution channels/intermediaries achieve impact?</p> <p>What external factors generate impact?</p>	<p>11) Given the above, can we make any observations about characteristics of environment/climate stories and/or distribution channels/ intermediaries that seem likely to achieve outcomes in a given context?</p> <p>12) What contextual factors influence how different actors engaged with the stories?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Analytical task based on findings above ■ Interview with journalist ■ Interview with independent expert ■ Your understanding, which might be supported by documented evidence 	

OUTPUTS

As per your stipend agreement, you are required to produce the following outputs:

1. **A case study story:** At the end of the research, you will be expected to produce an analytical story according to the following structure and the standards outlined above.
 - Title
 - Pull quote that captures the most interesting aspect of the story
 - Description of the outcome and its significance in terms of EJN’s overall goals and the particular local, political, institutional, social, cultural and environmental context
 - Story of how it came about that includes footnotes for sources of evidence
 - Key points to cover in this section are:
 - ▶ The role of the story in change vis a vis other factors and actors
 - ▶ The kinds of voices and evidence that were included in the story
 - ▶ What motivated different respondents to tell their story to the journalist: How did the journalist gain trust? What were their reasonings or assumptions about what it might achieve?
 - ▶ Intermediation: how did the citizens, advocacy groups or government groups who acted on the story access it? Was in a paper, on a social media platform, radio show? To what extent was it intermediated to make it more accessible and who performed the intermediation and why?
 - ▶ What motivated action by different people who influenced policy or based on evidence or information in the story?
 - ▶ Details of contextual factors that shaped this motivation.
 - ▶ Conclusions and potential implications, for example making reference to what it means in terms of some key assumptions relating to media impact pathways and EJN’s theory of change.
2. **Recordings and interview notes:** You are asked to record interviews and take very detailed notes in case the technology fails.
3. **Data/evidence grid:** A copy of a table like the one above, that is more specific to your story and includes the key points and references to relevant interviews or document sources
4. Copies or links to any documented evidence used
5. **References:** List of people interviewed and documents used
6. **Diagram:** Describes the different stakeholders, roles and relationships included in the story

ROUGH TIMELINE

Step	Deadline
Orientation and initial plan	Agreed by November 9 th
Pilot interviews for quality assurance	Completed by November 12 th
Interviews and desk research	Completed by 23 rd November
Stories drafted and other outputs submitted to me for feedback/ review	By 30 th November
Stories finalized and submitted to me	By 7 th December

CONTACT DETAILS FOR LEAD RESEARCHER

Email: CShutt@internews.eu

WhatsApp: +447824534954.

EJN RESEARCH INTERVIEW NOTES TEMPLATE

SECTION 1: META DATA	
Outcome details:	
Journalist name:	
Link to story:	
Names of informants:	
Position re stakeholder:	[Their position and role in the story as per the stakeholder map]
Date of interview:	
Location:	
Reflections on quality of interview:	[For example, comment on if you found the respondent credible, easy to understand and whether you had a good rapport. Please comment if you have any doubts about their responses]
SECTION 2: HEADLINES AS PER RESEARCH FRAMEWORK QUESTION NUMBERS AND RELEVANCE TO THE PARTICULAR RESPONDENT.	
1) What kind of outcomes relate to this story?	
2) Where does it fit in terms of EJN's thematic goals: community resilience, decreased degradation, improved health, sustainable development?	
3) Can the outcomes be verified? What is the evidence that the outcome reported by the journalist happened?	
4) Have there been any further developments?	
5) How significant are the outcomes according to local informants and your own tacit understanding of the context?	
6) What factors and actors other than the journalist story could have played a role in the change?	
7) Did the research or publication of the story play a role in the achievement of the outcome? What contribution did it make compared to other factors and actors	

<p>8) Was it the publication of the article itself that contributed to actions that led to the outcome? OR a) discussions during journalists' interviews and research for the article OR b) the intermediation of the story by other actors who were already working on the issue and made it more accessible to ordinary citizens or policy makers?</p>	
<p>9) What role did EJM training or grants play? - Did the journalist have the knowledge and skills to write the story without EJM capacity building? If no what skills or capacities did EJM provide</p>	
<p>10) What was the reasoning or motivation related to the published story OR discussions during research OR the intermediated story that triggered responses that led to outcomes?</p>	
<p>11) Given the above, can we make any observations about characteristics of environment/climate stories and/or distribution channels/ intermediaries that seem likely to achieve outcomes in a given context?</p>	
<p>12) What contextual factors influence how different actors engaged with the stories?</p>	
<p>Other interesting threads important for EJM learning.</p>	

EJM REPORT GUIDELINES

For successful cases where we have found some credible link from the story to the outcome:

A case study story report

- Title
- Pull quote that captures the most interesting aspect of the story
- Description of the outcome and its significance in terms of EJM's overall goals and the particular local political, institutional, social, cultural and environmental context
- Background to the research
- Methodology
 - ▶ How you developed your research framework and chose your informants
 - ▶ How you developed your interview guides
 - ▶ How you collected and analyzed your data
 - ▶ Reflections and limitations
- Findings
 - ▶ Context and baseline situation
- Story of how the change/outcome came about that includes footnotes for sources of evidence. Key points to cover in this section are:
 - ▶ The process of the journalist choosing the story and getting published

- ▶ Outline of the story
- ▶ The role of the story in change vis a vis other factors and actors
- ▶ Intermediation: how did the citizens, advocacy groups or government groups who acted on the story access it? Was in a paper, on a social media platform, radio show? To what extent was it intermediated to make it more accessible and who performed the intermediation and why?
- ▶ What motivated action by different people who influenced policy or based on evidence or information in the story?
- ▶ Details of contextual factors that shaped this motivation and the outcome.
- Conclusions and potential implications for example referring to what it means in terms of some key assumptions relating to media impact pathways and EJN's theory of change.
- **Headline interview notes:** as per the tool distributed
- Copies or links to any documented evidence used
- **References:** list of people interviewed and documents used
- **Diagram** that describes the different stakeholders, roles and relationships included in the story

For cases where we have not been able to develop a credible link between the story and outcome but have some interesting insights that relate to EJN's goals

A research report

- Title
- Pull quote that captures the most interesting aspect of the story
- A brief introduction informing the reader what the report is about
- Background to the research
- Methodology
 - ▶ How you developed your research framework and chose your informants
 - ▶ How you developed your interview guides
 - ▶ How you collected and analyzed your data
 - ▶ Reflections and limitations
- Findings
 - ▶ Context and baseline situation
 - ▶ The process of the journalist choosing the story and the role that EJN's training or grant played in this
 - ▶ Anything interesting about if how why the journalist struggled to get published
 - ▶ Whatever you were able to discover about whether the story was read or accessed by intended readers or those the journalist had claimed to influence; any constructive insights from people you interviewed who had read it about quality, accessibility or reach
 - ▶ Any insights into why the story did not contribute to the outcome or gain traction claimed or expected
- Conclusions and potential implications for example making reference to what it means in terms of some key assumptions relating to media impact pathways and EJN's theory of change.
- **Headline interview notes:** as per the tool distributed
- **Copies or links to any documented evidence used**
- **References:** list of people interviewed and documents used
- **Diagram** that describes the different stakeholders, roles and relationships included in the story

CASE STUDY REPORTS

RIVER POLLUTION IN WEST BENGAL, INDIA

Report prepared by Puja Bhattacharjee

“Mr. Subhas Datta, Ld. Amicus Curiae, has drawn our attention to an article by Mr. Jayanta Basu, an eminent journalist, which was published in an international magazine titled “Third Pole” down-loaded from the internet which gives rise to serious concern on the very existence of the water body,” read order by The National Green Tribunal Eastern Zone Bench, Kolkata, dated December 19, 2016.

This report shows how a story about the disappearing Adi Ganga published on an international platform, The Third Pole, contributed to a court ruling. It finds that the article was mentioned in the court order, but the ruling itself had no real impact. The report also raises questions about the pros and cons of international platforms publishing stories in English.

BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH

This research aims to validate the claim that an article on the disappearing Adi Ganga contributed to a court ruling, an outcome which was reported by the journalist who produced the story. It also investigates other outcomes the story has generated, and the actors, issues, and other contextual factors surrounding it.

METHODOLOGY

Beginning with the research framework template, the researcher reviewed the story and the outcome reported by the journalist, and formulated questions based on the research questions indicated in the terms of reference and initial desk research. From there, the researcher identified the main actors mentioned in the story: environmental activists like Subhash Datta and Mohit Ray; people with specialized knowledge on the topic like Jenia Mukherjee and Pradip Sikdar; and those who worked behind the story, including the journalist Jayanta Basu and the Earth Journalism Network (EJN) staff.

The researcher then listed the questions from the research framework meant for each of the interviewees, simplified it, and added contextual questions to establish their credibility as informants. The researcher prepared a semi-structured interview guide to allow the conversations to flow naturally and allow her to ask additional questions to get more details during the interview.

The researcher conducted desk research to substantiate and triangulate the claims by the journalist during the interview, and to locate additional information that may not have been covered in the story.

Limitations: Because of the tight timeline, some interviews were not conducted, including that of officials from the West Bengal government.

FINDINGS

Context and baseline situation

The river Ganga originates in the western Himalayas in the Indian state of Uttarakhand and flows south and east through the Gangetic Plain of North India into Bangladesh, where it empties into the Bay of Bengal. It is a holy river in Hinduism and received the national river status in 2008-09. Many major cities are located on its banks including Kolkata, and the Ganga River Basin supports nearly 43 percent of India's population.

The river has been a source of political fodder for decades. [Plans to clean up the 2,500 km holy river](#) date back to 1986 when the first Ganga Action Plan was announced. The two phases of the Ganga Action Plan (GAP) were implemented over 28 years. GAP-I was launched in 1986 and declared closed in March 2000. It covered 25 cities and towns. GAP-II was started in stages between 1993 and 1996; implementation finally commenced on April 1, 2001. It covered the main tributaries of Ganga and 95 cities and towns. The money was spent on setting up Sewage Treatment Plants (STPs), water pollution monitoring stations, protection of flood plains, and creating public awareness about the need to clean up.

In 2004, a parliamentary committee report declared the project a failure, due to insufficient funds and monitoring mechanisms. In 2009, after the Ganga was accorded National River status, the government set up the National Ganga River Basin Authority (NGRBA) as a planning, monitoring, financing, and coordinating body of the center and the states. NGRBA was headed by prime minister Manmohan Singh. In 2011, the World Bank sanctioned \$1 billion toward the NGRBA clean-up. The year after, at the third NGRBA meeting, the environment ministry commissioned a consortium of seven IITs to prepare a comprehensive River Basin Management Plan.

In 2017, the government informed the National Green Tribunal that an amount of over Rs 4800 crore has been spent on the rejuvenation of river Ganga and its tributaries from 1986 till June 30 of that year.

The river continues to play an important role in political discourse for the present Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government. Prime minister Narendra Modi [contested his parliamentary seat](#) from Varanasi due to its connection with the holy river.

Background on the Adi Ganga

The Adi Ganga, i.e., Ganga's old stream, was the main flow of the Hooghly River (a distributary of the Ganges in West Bengal) between the 15th and 17th century that virtually dried up due to natural reasons. In 1776, the old bed of the Ganges was excavated from its confluence at Hastings in Kolkata, south-eastwards to Garia, a distance of 13 km. [Then the canal was excavated](#) till the point it met the Bidyadhari River at Samukpota, a distance of 15 km. Thus, it could provide access to an inner route that led eastwards from Canning (towards the south of Kolkata near the mouth of the Bay of Bengal).

The 27 km long canal, named Tolly's Canal after William Tolly, [was opened for navigation in 1777 to accommodate boats of 400 maunds](#). After independence, Tolly's Canal has neither been restored nor maintained. Over time, illegal settlements grew up on both banks of the entire stretch of the canal.

The initiative to pressure state agencies to revive and restore Tolly's Canal as part of the heritage river, the Adi Ganga, surfaced during the 1990s when city NGOs led by Rebati Ranjan Bhattacharya launched campaigns for almost a decade to clean up the canal and its banks. In 1996, Bhattacharya filed a writ petition, which caused the issue of revival and clean-up to be heard by the Green Bench of the Kolkata High Court. On February 2, 1997, the high court ordered the government to clean the channel and evacuate squatter settlements along both its banks, which was imperative for river rejuvenation and beautification. (Reference: Blue Infrastructures Natural History, Political Ecology and Urban Development in Kolkata by Jenia Mukherjee.)

The issue of canal restoration during the early 1990s and the formulation of the metro extension project in the late 1990s led to another wave of protests. The issue was of local importance and had been covered in local media. The national media also picked up on the issue and there were features reported in various magazines.

The publication of the report

Jayanta Basu has long been aware of the issues surrounding the Adi Ganga. He has worked as an environmental journalist for two decades and teaches environmental science and environmental journalism in various institutions and universities. He is also part of the Ganga-Mekong Dialogue Committee and has attended the climate conferences between 2009 and 2020.

He had studied court cases related to the Adi Ganga and was gathering information for almost a decade before he published the story. He realized that the NGOs and civil society organizations had been talking only about a specific portion of the river. When he visited the portion of the river beyond Garia, which was not included in the public discourse, he came to know about the Ganga ponds. He took notes, photographs, and spoke to people.

In 2016, Basu pitched the story to The Third Pole, an environmental media website that has been in existence for 10 years. EJN is a major partner for the website. It supports The Third Pole financially and occasionally on projects. The website's audience is 25% policymakers, 25% think tanks (including academics), 25% NGOs, and 25% environmental journalists. The journalist credits EJN and The Third Pole for providing technical assistance in mapping the entire course of the river and giving the article an evidence-based approach.

The top ten countries in the Third Pole's audience are India, Pakistan, Nepal, USA, Bangladesh, Myanmar, UK, Australia, and Canada. The Third Pole commissions, edits, and publishes its own articles. They publish one article a day, five days a week using a Creative Commons license that allows the stories to be republished. On average, the website publishes 23 articles in a month, out of which at least 50% will be republished elsewhere.

Outline of the story

[The story, published in September 2016](#), starts with the hijack of Adi Ganga and how various factors like metro railway construction, encroachment, garbage disposal, and more have left it in a state comparable to a sewer. It adds that though a large fund has been reserved for its rejuvenation, the restoration project is way behind schedule even before it began.

The story then traces the origin of the river from the Hooghly river till it meets the Bidyadhari river. It refers to the court cases surrounding the river and the metro rail expansion project and captures the voices of activists and various scientific experts. The unique point of the story is the section titled Disappearing River which chronicles the hijack of the flow of the river by unauthorized and illegal constructions on top of the river that leads to its disappearance in certain sections. It goes on to trace the reappearance of the river and provides a scientific explanation — how a river can merge with the underground water and maintain a continuous flow.

The report then presents the opinions of various activists and experts about the river restoration plans. They believe the plans are a scam, as the river is being systematically murdered while the political establishment looks the other way. The report ends on a positive note outlining that there is still reason for hope because rivers in a worse state have been successfully rejuvenated.

THE ROLE OF THE STORY IN CHANGE VIS A VIS OTHER FACTORS AND ACTORS

Impact of activists and civil society organizations

As mentioned in the earlier section, activists and civil society organizations have been rallying for the clean-up of the historical river in the courts since the 1990s. A petition was filed in the National Green Tribunal (NGT)

against the pollution and degradation of the Adi Ganga river in Kolkata in 2015. The river is socially and culturally significant and it has been mentioned in historical and religious texts. From this perspective, the river should have been well cared for, but the onset of aggressive urbanization has almost killed it.

The hearings for the case went on for five years. Initially, the green court's attention was on the stretch of Adi Ganga falling within the Kolkata city and its precincts. In 2016, Subhash Datta, the amicus curiae appointed by the court, submitted a copy of the story *Adi Ganga disappears in West Bengal* by Jayanta Basu published in *The Third Pole*, to NGT. [The court took cognizance of the story](#) published in a reputed journal and written by an eminent journalist. It decided to consider the portion of the river beyond the city limits i.e., a stretch of about 13 Kms of the Adi Ganga commencing from Garia towards the Bidyadhari river and gave directions for restoration for the entire stretch of the river.

Despite surveillance by the court, the restoration of the river was very slow, and the court expressed frustration regarding the pace. [In an order dated July 29, 2019](#), when the case came up after a hiatus of two years, the court noted that "the Chief Secretary, Government of West Bengal was directed to oversee the proceedings and ensure that proper action plan was filed with a specific timeline. No report has been filed containing the action plan and action taken till date." The court further added, "Considering that the case has been going on since the year 2015 and the fact that specific proposals had been submitted by the KMC, the State Government of West Bengal and the NMCGA, we expect that the entire matter would have been sorted out by now and the works completed with the Adi Ganga being fully rejuvenated to its pristine condition."

In September 2020, five years since the restoration of the Adi Ganga was taken up by the NGT, it [gave a set of directions](#) to the government of West Bengal, various state departments, and the Kolkata Municipal Corporation for the restoration and rejuvenation of the river. This included the construction of sewage treatment plants (STPs), removal of encroachments and solid waste; and formation of a committee comprising of officials from various state departments. Afterward, the court disposed of the case. It further noted that a report of compliance must be submitted on or before February 4, 2021 and granted the amicus curiae Mr. Subhash Datta the liberty to approach the court in case there is a failure to abide by the directions given by the court.

Subhash Datta has called the court's decision to dispose of the case irrational, illogical, and irresponsible. He says that the situation did not improve much despite the court actively monitoring the restoration of the river and he believes that disposing of the case with some directions only brings mileage to the state respondents to not act on those directions. "It will simply add to the existing by-laws, laws, rules, and notifications," he said. Some of the illegal structures on the banks of the river which were removed under the court's directions like piggeries and large cattle sheds are back in the places they occupied before. Datta added that if the state government takes no action within six months of the date of the final order, he will take up the matter with NGT.

The publication of *The Third Pole* story did give a boost to the restoration and rejuvenation of the river, especially for the portion of the river that not under the court's purview initially. However, due to ground realities of governance or the lack of it, this little push did not translate to a big win. It goes on to show how even with good journalism, the impact can be limited.

But it was not only *The Third Pole* story that influenced the court ruling. Before Datta's submission of the story to the court, he had navigated the entire route of the river using a hand boat and had submitted 400+ photographs documenting the worsening situation of the river along with affidavits and arguments in the court. Here, the activist's role was very important to the outcome because he referenced the story in the court.

Moreover, Datta, who has been surveying the river for years, is privy to information that may not be readily available in the public domain or exists as an open secret. One such piece of information is that the West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee's house is constructed upon an encroached land on the banks of Adi

Ganga. Datta says that no one would dare challenge the chief minister in an open forum or report on it.

Datta submitting the report in the court played a big factor in the court taking cognizance of almost 50 km of the river beyond Garia and directing the state government to remove illegal structures along that route. However, the task remained unfinished. Instead of penalizing the state bodies for non-compliance with its orders, it rebuked them several times and finally wrapped up the case with specific directions. Given that the state did not comply with all the green court's orders for five years between 2015 and 2020, it is unlikely that it would do that now. Datta has expressed severe frustration with the court and speculates that the presiding judge probably saw to his own interests before that of the river. He adds that if the judge who was due to retire was eyeing a post-retirement job in the state, he would do well not to antagonize the state government.

Online reach of the story

It is difficult to assess the extent of the story's reach and engagement. Since the story was published online, most people accessed it online. According to the October 2020 monthly report, The Third pole got 289,065 page views and 163,157 users visited the website. Though this provides some idea of the potential reach of articles on their website, it reveals little about the reach of this piece, which was published 4 years ago.

The journalist made the article accessible to some of the informants named in the story, who in turn presented it in court. However, several research respondents had not read the story until they were shown it by the researcher.

Datta said that such international publications are usually not accessible to ordinary people, which means they are unlikely to shape public discourse. But a relevant article published in an international publication can gain significance if presented in the proper place, i.e., a court.

Expert opinion on the quality of the article

Experts consulted during research were generally positive about the piece. Jenia Mukherjee, a scholar, noted three important points in the story:

- How the river is being destroyed, i.e., the larger issue of non-restoration.
- Chronological coverage of the river, i.e., pre-, and post-colonial times.
- Lack of awareness and non-enforcement of rules.

She added that social and ecological causes, such as squatters, must be addressed and the section *Reason for Hope* is an appealing part of the story that should have received more emphasis.

Pradip Sikdar, a groundwater specialist, merits the story for collecting facts that had previously been published in a fragmented manner. However, he said that it would have been more complete if it had discussed the implication of pollution of drinking water due to the lack of clay soil that filters water in other locations such as Kolkata. As an example, he mentioned the risks posed by arsenic compounds seeping into the river from a local factory.

Since the court's reference to the article in one of its orders explicitly mentioned the stature of Basu and its publication in an international media platform, expert respondents were asked whether they believed this had increased its legitimacy and influence.

Pradip Sikdar, a groundwater expert, explicitly states that it is beyond his means to comment on a court order. He, however, said that the eminence of a journalist provided justification for the court to admit the document as proof of the condition of the river. He also pondered why international publications should be given more weight than national or local publications when an article, irrespective of the publication, presents

the facts. He also found it amusing that journals or publications based out of the West are sometimes given more importance than those based out of other smaller countries, though they too are international in scope.

According to Datta, the eminence of the journalist and the article's publication in an international outlet made the article more legitimate. However, many other aspects influenced the decision to recognize the article as outlined above.

CONCLUSIONS AND POTENTIAL IMPLICATIONS

The story made a useful but small contribution to ongoing discussions and debates about the Ganga river. This was partly because of the evidence-based approach and a new focus. The journalist extensively researched the tell-tale signs of the holiness of the river by mapping the Hindu temples and crematoriums on its banks and thereby establishing the ancient nature of the river. Activists also helped link the river to history by digging out various religious and historical literature that made references to the river.

Publishing on The Third Pole added legitimacy to a long struggle of local activists which were ultimately more important in shaping a court judgment. Activists have been working on the issue of the restoration of the Adi Ganga decades before the story was written. They fought with all their resources to save the heritage river and are continuing to this day. Though the contribution of an international publication was appreciated, one respondent expressed incredulity that the court held the article in more esteem because it was published on an international website. It might be argued that the decision of the court to admit the article as a sort of evidence of the deterioration of the river based on the publication reflects the colonial vestiges of the country.

Though the intentions of the court may have been good, it failed to make any headway regarding the rejuvenation of the river because of the lackadaisical attitude of the state departments and the court's reluctance to rule with a firm hand. The river still fails to be on the radar of the political establishment. The state government could have used the river to rally support for the ruling party but then the many illegal constructions on the riverfront, including the chief minister's residence, would have been under the spotlight. In the end, politics and vested interests trumped the little progress that was made. The presiding judge chose to dismiss the case with some directions, probably knowing full well how badly the government machinery would perform in such matters.

This case study shows that though stories on environmental calamities may reach the right forums, they do not always lead to change due to reasons well beyond the control of journalists and activists. In this case, the court monitored the restoration of the river for five years before disposing of it without seeing it through the end. Activists speculate that the judge wanted a cushy post-retirement job in the government and hence did not take it up further.

There is some hope that in the event the directions of the green court are not followed, the amicus curiae appointed by the court can approach it again and reopen the case. One can only hope that when that happens, as activists have reported none of the court's directions are being implemented on the ground, that this time the court will adopt a stricter stance and see through the task of restoring the river to its original state.

FISHERIES IN WEST BENGAL, INDIA

Report prepared by Puja Bhattacharjee

“I didn’t mention the journalist’s report in the petition or verbally for fear of offending the minister,” said Abdar Mallik, secretary of Sagar Marine Matsya Khuti Cooperative Society.

This report presents findings from research that set out to establish if, how, and why (or why not) a story on fishers in West Bengal achieved outcomes claimed by the journalist.

The outcomes claimed by the journalists are as follows:

- After publishing this story, a small fisher’s union in the state filed a complaint to the fisheries department referring to this report that highlighted disproportionate subsidy among small fishers.
- Dakshin Banga Matsajibi Forum, an advocacy group, shared this report on multiple platforms during a discussion on the state of small-scale fishers in West Bengal.

METHODOLOGY

Beginning with the research framework template, the researcher reviewed the story and the outcome reported by the journalist, and formulated questions based on the research questions indicated in the terms of reference and initial desk research.

From there, the researcher identified the main actors mentioned in the story: representatives of local and state-level fisher’s bodies like Sagar Marine Matsya Khuti Cooperative Society and Dakhhinbongo Matsajibi Forum; a professor of oceanographic studies and author of a scientific study cited in the report; the state fisheries minister; and the journalist.

The researcher then listed the questions from the research framework meant for each of the interviewees, simplified it, and added contextual questions to establish their credibility as informants. The researcher prepared a semi-structured interview guide to allow the conversations to flow naturally and allow her to ask additional questions to get more details during the interview.

The researcher undertook fieldwork on Sagar Island on November 23, 2020. They spoke to traditional small-scale fishers and members of local fisher’s welfare organization to substantiate and triangulate the outcomes claimed by the journalist. They also conducted desk research for the same reasons and to add information that may not have been covered by the fieldwork.

Limitations: Because of the tight timeline, it was not possible to get the opinion of all the interviewees in the article published by the journalist.

FINDINGS

Context and baseline situation

West Bengal is one of the more densely populated states in India. The coastline of West Bengal spreads over two districts: South 24-Parganas and East Midnapore. The marine fishery of West Bengal mainly focused on these two districts. Sagar Island is in the Kakdwip subdivision of South 24 Parganas, about 100 km south of Kolkata, the capital of West Bengal. The island is located [within a tidal creek and has a very low elevation](#). Fisherfolk of the island depend on the waters of Ganga Sagar (where the river Ganges meets the Bay of Bengal) for their livelihood. During the season, which lasts from October to February, they set out in

mechanized boats every six hours during the high tide. During this time, they barely sleep. Once they return from the waters, their family helps them dry the fish and fish meal using wires and nets in their front yards. They live in huts called “khutis” made of hogla leaves during these four months.

Trawlers have wreaked havoc on the livelihoods of small fishermen in Sagar Island and the marine environment. The bottom trawlers destroy the plants on the seafloor. They choose certain species of fish from the catch and throw out the rest of the dead fishes, polluting the sea. The trawler nets are such that even if the mesh size is big when they are pulled, the mesh closes completely, trapping even the smallest of fishes.

The Indo-Norwegian Treaty in the 1950s introduced trawlers in these waters, the effects of which reverberated throughout India. In the 1980s, marine fishing regulations were enacted to deal with the fallout.

Struggle for livelihood

Several state and district-level organizations have been working to protect the interests of small-scale fishermen. The Dakhinbongo Matsojibi Forum and Sagar Marine Matsya Khuti Cooperative Society are two of the more influential organizations advocating for the rights of fisherfolk in West Bengal and Sagar, respectively. Action Aid, an NGO, also helped the fisherfolk after cyclone Amphan by distributing ration and sanitizer.

There are different categories of small-scale fishermen. Some have motorized boats; others use the dinghy or small boat. They fish in the shallow seas, in the inland waters, estuaries, lakes, and reservoirs. Some of them do not use a boat at all and catch fish with fishing nets. All these fishermen cater to the local market and supply 80 percent of the fish that is available in markets across Bengal. Bengal’s small-scale fisheries have an [estimated annual turnover of Rs 500 crore](#).

During the fishing season, the boats must be out in the sea every six hours to catch the high tide. The fishermen lay nets one hour into the sea. To catch more fish, they must travel up to three to four hours into the sea. Nets for catching Hilsa are different. Hilsa fishing is labor- and fuel-intensive. It needs different nets and bigger boats, and the expenses can go up to two lakhs. On average, fishermen catch 1.5 quintals of fish every day. Some need hired help on the boats for which they pay Rs 15,000 a month. Six nets can be laid from a boat at one time and different boats must lay their nets about 500 feet apart. During the offseason, the fishermen do odd jobs, get employment in government schemes, work in construction or brick kilns. During the fishing season, one fisher can earn about Rs 10,000 a month. Off-season earnings vary between Rs 5,000 to 7,000.

Due to a lack of micro-financing opportunities from the government, the fishermen often take loans from either money lenders or middlemen to repair boats, buy nets, etc. If they take loans from the moneylender, they can sell off their catch and pay off their debt. But there is always a risk that an insufficient catch or falling market prices might end up landing them in the debt trap. As a result, they prefer taking a lump sum loan from the middlemen. In return, these middlemen are entitled to all their catch.

Deep-sea fishing ban was introduced in 2015 by the department of fisheries, to allow uninterrupted breeding and growth of fish. Every year, fishing activity [is banned between April 15 and June 14](#) for the east coast. The Savings Cum Relief scheme was started by the Central government of India in the '90s to compensate small fishermen for the losses incurred during the fishing ban period. According to the scheme, each center, state, and the beneficiary would contribute one-third of the total relief amount throughout the fishing period and get the returns during the non-fishing period. At present, the total amount is Rs. 4,500. It was an occupational entitlement and the central government later made the scheme available only for those in the below poverty line (BPL) category, which means only BPL fishermen will be entitled to benefit from the scheme.

The Dakhinbongo Matsojibi Forum opposed this change as most fishermen are far from being rich. According to Debasish Shyamal, district president of Dakhhinbongo Matsajibi Forum, the forum gave mass petitions to the

state fisheries department when they announced the change to BPL-only. They also filed Right to Information (RTI) to the central and state governments to learn the status of the scheme in West Bengal. The center responded saying that the scheme is not being accessed by the state. The state is yet to respond to the RTI. In Kerala, the scheme is given to both marine and inland fishers, but only marine fishermen are eligible for the scheme in West Bengal.

Demands

The Forum demands at least Rs. 5,000 compensation under the scheme for fishers during the ban period. According to Pradip Chatterjee, president, Dakshinbongo Matsajibi Forum, an accidental death benefit scheme is also very much required as poor fishermen are prone to accident deaths at sea and due to tiger attacks in the Sundarbans region.

Moreover, the forum wants preferential access to marine fish resources for small-scale fishermen. They demanded that bottom trawling be banned as it was looting and destroying the resources. Their second demand was to increase the exclusive fishing zone (EFZ) for small scale fishermen, and lastly to match the efforts to available resources. The forum recommended that the government decrease the numbers of mechanized boats and not register new mechanized boats.

After the Amphan super cyclone in May, the Sagar Marine Matsya Khuti Cooperative Society approached the fisheries minister for relief to cope with the destruction of houses, boats, etc. but the minister said that there was no separate budget for relief for the fisherfolk. Solar lights were installed by the department five years ago along the seashore where the fishermen live in khutis during the fishing season. The fisherfolk do not own the title to the land where they set up khutis. They live there with permission from the local panchayat. In 2014, the chief minister had said that the seafront would be developed for tourism. The local fishermen under Sagar Sangam Matsojibi Khuti Samabyay Samiti led a protest against the move and delivered a petition with a set of demands to the chief minister. The chief minister had assured them that they would not be evicted without being given an alternative piece of land. There has been no further development on this matter so far.

The society petitions the state fisheries department a few times every year with different demands. According to Abdar Mallik, secretary of Sagar Marine Matsya Khuti Cooperative Society, only one demand has been fulfilled in a long time. A few years ago, the department gave a bicycle along with a pot, weighing instruments, and financial subsidy to about 20 women fish vendors. The societies' recent demands include mechanized boats, nets, diesel subsidies, concrete slabs for drying fish, tube wells, and titles to the land where they set up khutis. These things were last given in 2006. The government does not provide in sufficient quantities to meet everyone's needs at once, so the material needs to keep coming to accommodate everyone's needs. When something is made available by the government, the society decides who gets it based on the need. Their activism has stopped the registration of new trawlers, but trawlers have found a way around the new rules by using one registration number on multiple trawlers.

Women fisher's cooperative

There is a women's cooperative in Sagar Island named Sagar Samudrik Mahila Samudrik Mahila Matsojibi Khuti Samabyay Samiti. It has 60 members. All members contribute Rs 20 monthly which is deposited in the bank. Members of the cooperative can be given microloans from the cooperative that accumulate in the bank up to Rs 5000 at an interest of Rs 2 per month. Besides, members can purchase shares of the cooperative and this share money pays for the wages of the women who dry and sell the fish. The cooperative recently bought a boat, nets, and hired people to catch fish from the share money. The profits from selling the catch from this new business will be shared equally among the members.

Fishermen rear goats and chicken for additional livelihood. There will be no need for alternative livelihoods if the fishing areas are returned minus the mechanized boats. Small fishermen need iceboxes very badly. Every

day, in the markets there is a distress sale of fishes due to lack of preservation mechanisms. The government distributed iceboxes but due to corruption many of them ended up in pan (betel leaf) shops or with ruling party members.

The publication of the report

Tanmoy Bhaduri is a young independent journalist and documentary photographer. He routinely publishes his stories in leading English-language national and international online portals. He published [Overfishing Drives West Bengal's Hilsa Fishers Up the Creek](#) in The Quint. Funded by advertising revenues, The Quint had a monthly unique readership of 24.8 million as of August 2019. It has also won several prestigious national journalism awards.

It all started when the journalist attended a fisheries workshop in Kochi, India in October 2019. Internews' [Earth Journalism Network conducted a workshop](#) for India-based journalists about state subsidies for marine fisheries in 2019. The three-day workshop focused on how subsidies often harm small fishers and deplete fish stocks.

The journalist has a history of environmental reporting and had previously received a grant from EFN. However, before attending the workshop, the journalist did not have any idea about the policies and projects of the National Fisheries Development Board (NFDB). The workshop helped him understand the different issues in coastal West Bengal and other regions of coastal India. He got some resources from the workshop which are relevant but are unreported in West Bengal.

Soon after he cultivated the contacts developed from previous reporting assignments and got in touch with Abdar Mallik of Sagar Marine Matsya Khuti Cooperative Society. He traveled to Sagar Island and stayed in a khuti while reporting on small-scale fishermen's issues.

The journalist pitched the story to The Quint. Initially, the publication did not show much interest in publishing the story and did so after dragging its feet for a while. The publication had asked the journalist to write something on social-political issues from Bengal. They wanted something on climate change, smog, air quality but the journalist had this piece in hand. Once he sent it, they accepted.

Outline of the story

The story outlines the struggles of small-scale fishers due to the over-exploitation of marine fish resources by bottom trawling in shallow water. The problem is exacerbated by the lack of enforcement of several rules and regulations by the state of West Bengal including a lack of surveillance during the fishing ban period. It then goes on to describe 2 state sponsored schemes to support fishermen during ban periods and to wean them away from destructive fishing practices. However, these schemes are either not active anymore or are riddled with corruption. The report also highlights the need for alternative schemes to support fisherfolk, like in Bangladesh, to successfully conserve Hilsa and livelihood for fishers.

ROLE OF THE STORY IN CHANGE VIS-À-VIS OTHER FACTORS AND ACTORS

Filing petition to the state fisheries department

Sagar Marine Matsya Khuti Cooperative Society, which has a history of activism, was preparing a petition to the state fisheries minister regarding the re-starting of the Savings Cum Relief Scheme and outlining the need for subsidies for small fishers when Tanmoy visited Sagar to research his story. This means the journalist's reporting had no impact on their decision to file the petition. Abdar Mallik, the secretary of the society, told the journalist that he mentioned his story in the petition but later recanted his statement. This could be due to several reasons: He perhaps thought of mentioning the story in the petition but later decided against it, or he made a casual comment to the journalist at the time without thinking about it seriously. According to him, this exchange could have offended the minister and created hurdles in getting their demands fulfilled.

Expert opinion on the quality of the article

Sugata Hazra, the director of the School of Oceanographic Studies at Jadavpur University and an expert quoted in the story, said that the article clearly demonstrates the present state of fisheries in West Bengal. In 2013, new regulations were put in place concerning the mesh size, a new ban period in the winter months, and five new no-fishing zones at the Hilsa breeding sites were declared.

The report has made clear the non-observance of the rules. Hazra adds that at present, the state of West Bengal does not have the manpower or the mechanism to enforce the regulations. Commercial fisheries are involved in overfishing on an excessive level and target young fish instead of mature ones. 90 mm nets are supposed to be used to catch Hilsa, but the government has not banned 40 mm nets that also trap juvenile Hilsa.

According to Hazra, the report is a little unclear on the devastation of monofilament nets. These nets catch fish babies and even eggs and are used mainly to catch prawns that have export value. The article had two unique points — it mentions that bottom trawling beyond 12 nautical miles in West Bengal, which falls in the delta region and has a shallow depth, will not stop habitat destruction. The second unique point in the article is the discussion around compensation for fishermen during the fishing ban period.

Pradip Chatterjee, president of the Dakshinbongo Matsojibi Forum, feels the story should have included the greater story of how the government regulates fishing in and around the Hooghly river, its failure to hold talks with fisher folks and understand the extent of losses they face from the decisions it makes and the unfettered access given to transportation in the river. However, since the story published by the journalist deals explicitly with marine fisheries, these things can be taken up in another story and it may be not clear to someone outside of the journalism industry why multiple issues cannot be discussed in one story.

The role of other local and national media

The local and national media goes through a cycle of fisheries reporting concerning West Bengal every year during the Hilsa season. The reports range from how much catch is predicted in a particular year, why there may be a low catch, the social significance of Hilsa, and the government's response. In 2020, for example, 1,450 tonnes of Hilsa were imported from Bangladesh to fill the crippling shortage of Hilsa in the Bengal region. A lot of reporting at this time concentrated on the import of Hilsa around the context of India-Bangladesh relations. In online media, the social crisis of Hilsa along with the scientific dimensions have not been reported as well.

Government response

The state fisheries minister, Chandranath Sinha, put the blame squarely on the central government. According to him, the central government has not made the funds needed for the Savings Cum Relief Scheme available. He also did not recall receiving a petition from the delegates of the two major organizations mentioned in this case study. He further added that an alternative can be thought of and discussed if no benefit is reaching the fishers.

Sharing the story beyond the initial audience

After the publication of the story, the journalist sent the story link to all his sources and shared it on his social media. Some sources re-shared the story on their personal social media accounts. The story was also shared by national and local environmental blogs. Moreover, the story was shared in a WhatsApp group with leaders and members of the fisherfolk community. In the Indian context, when something is shared in a community WhatsApp group, the participants feel obliged to respond even if they have not read the story. In this case, many could not read the story as it was published in English.

It was tedious to determine how many people the article reached as a simple search on the Facebook page of The Quint did not yield the article and associated reactions and comments. The article itself gives an option to share on various social media platforms but does not reveal the number of times it has been shared.

CONCLUSIONS AND POTENTIAL IMPLICATIONS

One outcome was validated by the case study: Dakshin Banga Matsajibi Forum, an advocacy group, did share the report on multiple platforms during a discussion on the state of small-scale fishers in West Bengal.

The other — that the report was cited in a petition — could not be validated, owing to either miscommunication or a statement made in haste. Despite the above, this case study provides evidence of the effectiveness of EJN's training and provides insights that are useful for learning.

This case study confirms that the various workshops held by the Earth Journalism Network can equip a journalist to write an article that was relatively highly regarded on a topic in which he had no previous experience. The situation of overfishing is widely reported from other coastal areas of India, e.g., southern and western coastal states, but the issue has not been given much attention in West Bengal by the press. In this regard, this story was unique.

On the one hand it shows how EJN helps to spur reporting in areas that go largely unnoticed due to the media's preoccupation with other ostensibly more important stories. In this instance, however, there was also an element of serendipity. The journalist submitted the article to a request from the Quint for articles on vaguely similar themes.

In this case the petition cited in the outcome claims was not motivated by the article, but rather long-term community advocacy. The journalist happened to arrive in Sagar Island as Sagar Marine Matsya Khuti Cooperative Society was preparing the petition. His report could have given a boost to the petition, as it came out around the same time the petition was filed, but the petition did not mention the report. This is partly because it was relatively inaccessible, being written in English.

This case study cautions against hasty interpretation of social media analytics in an era where people have become accustomed to sharing and liking material they have not engaged with. Even though the article was shared, it does not seem to have been widely read, even by those belonging to the platform that shared it.

The Sagar Island example also highlights how the tone of a piece will influence if and how different actors engage with and use a story in advocacy and making demands of duty bearers. Mallik, who submitted the petition, was not interested in a report that might offend the minister. Yet, unless a news report is particularly revelatory or damning, it is usually not taken note of by the government.

This case has several potential implications. It suggests journalists are likely to have more impact if they collaborate with local organizations and rights bodies to produce and disseminate stories that are otherwise neglected by the mainstream media. Stories written by journalists trained by EJN can be used to highlight government inaction and corruption. But as the researcher found in Sagar Island, in many cases, poverty forces people to engage in environmentally destructive practices. Therefore, journalists need to address the root causes of environmental degradation rather than just addressing the effects. EJN in turn can support the production of such stories through grants and fellowship opportunities.

WETLANDS CONSERVATION IN ASSAM, INDIA

Report prepared by Shobha S V

This report synthesizes data from several interviews and data analytics relating to the role of EJN and The Third Pole in enabling a mainland journalist to publish a detailed story on an Assam wetland that was picked up and disseminated on other platforms.

The lead researcher may try to develop this case through undertaking further interviews and desk-based research that were not possible due to the limited timeframe of the country level research.

BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH

The research set out to explore an outcome reported by Nivedita Khandekar in response to the outcome harvest survey: “Impact was slow on the policy makers or for that matter public behavior. But when one of the areas from the region mentioned in this story had a massive fire in one of the oil wells six months ago, I saw that several of the reports were using a lot of material from my story as a backgrounder. And at least one report used one of my photos from the story. Thanks to the Travel Grant from EJM for this story, I believe I was able to create a sustainable asset about the Maguri Motapung Beel (the wetland).”

In view of the challenges relating to substantiating the outcome, I sought to explore the role of The Third Pole in creating sustainable assets.

METHODOLOGY

This report built on Earth Journalism Network’s (EJM) use of outcome harvesting Methodology and started with outcomes that were claimed by Khandekar and later worked through a logical sequence of activities to achieve the objectives of validating outcomes and deepening understanding of how and why they took shape. Taking off from the research framework template, the story was reviewed, and questions were formulated based on the terms of reference and desk research. Then, main actors as mentioned in the story were identified. The informants consisted of the journalist; the editor of The Third Pole, the publication that carried the story; and a senior environmental journalist.

While the reporter was open about her story not having made a policy impact, we did find out that her story was replicated in different digital publications in India. We therefore decided to focus on trying to understand the role played by The Third Pole in the dissemination of the story and the role it plays in supporting environmental journalism in the country.

The purpose of interviews with these stakeholders was to understand the issue, the context, and to finally verify the details of the ‘impact’ stated by the journalist. Cross-checking facts with other informants and desk research were employed to substantiate and triangulate claims made by the informants. The researcher also spoke to a member of the EJM staff to understand the fellowship program better.

Owing to the Covid pandemic, the interviews happened over the phone, which was a limitation in this study. For each interviewee, the researcher had a separate list of broad questions with a few overlapping ones in a semi-structured interview format. Based on our telephone conversations and questions asked, the researcher divided the interviews into broad themes and analyzed them. The researcher would have ideally wanted to go into the field and interview the villagers, but thanks to the pandemic, that was not an option. The researcher also used CrowdTangle, a free software to understand the reach and social media engagement related to this story on Facebook and Twitter. However, CrowdTangle does not provide for Twitter engagement around a story after 7 days. This is also a limitation because Twitter is a platform where people in positions of power in government and policy occupy and can be a platform which journalists and social movements have used creatively to achieve social change.

FINDINGS

Context and baseline situation

Located at the foothill of the Himalayas, Maguri Motapung Beel is a wetland in Assam with a rich diversity

of fish and wildlife. It is also located close to Tinsukia, a commercial hub situated just 15 kilometres away. According to Khandekar, a profile of Maguri Motapung Beel has regularly been done by journalists from Assam both in Assamese and English media outlets. She also added that the challenges facing the wetland is a routine story in the local press when there is an issue, but seldom from the perspective she took in her article.

The journalist's involvement with EJN

Nivedita Khandekar is a senior journalist with more than two decades of experience in journalism. She has worked with mainstream dailies like Hindustan Times, agencies like Press Trust of India, among others. She is currently an independent journalist based in Pune, India and her interests are environmental and developmental journalism with a focus on The Himalayas and water issues in India.

Khandekar came to know of opportunities for an EJN fellowship when she was in the Northeast region for some other story, thanks to the editors at The Third Pole. She was, by then, a regular visitor to Assam and Arunachal Pradesh. She spoke to some of her contacts in Assam and then zeroed in on writing about Maguri Motapung Beel because she thought the story idea was interesting and topical. She submitted the story pitch to The Third Pole, which was then approved.

According to Joydeep Gupta of the Earth Journalism Network and an advisor with The Third Pole magazine, EJN sends out a call for applications across their network and expects journalists to send them story pitches along with a tentative travel budget. A qualified jury then selects the best story pitch and awards the fellowship. Once the fellowship is awarded, the journalists are assigned mentors and it is up to them how to make use of the mentorship. This is not a group mentorship program. He added that they had to put in a lot of effort with Khandekar, as this was her first attempt at doing a multimedia story.

Upon the approval of her idea by EJN, Khandekar immediately pitched the idea to The Third Pole, which they approved.

Khandekar has primarily been a print journalist for most of her career. The EJN fellowship, she says, helped her get started with multimedia storytelling for the first time. Thanks to the fellowship, she said, she invested in a tripod, which has helped her in making videos. Ever since receiving this fellowship, she has done many multimedia stories.

Freelancer woes and digital outlets

Khandekar says that she pitched the story only to The Third Pole and nowhere else. Any story about The Himalayas she would pitch it to The Third Pole because of their interest in covering the region — something that they display on their website very prominently. She enjoyed a prior relationship with them and hence, they were the 'obvious choice.'

According to Gupta, "Getting a story is 30% of the job for a journalist. Convincing that the story to be published is 70% of the job." Given this, it seems clear why Khandekar chose to use her prior relationship with The Third Pole while pitching her stories.

According to her, the audience for her stories included policy makers (since government officials monitor all media outlets), people in the field of environment (conservationists, environmentalists, and activists) and people who are involved with eco-tourism models.

When asked about whether she considered pitching stories to mainstream media outlets, she said that despite having worked for Hindustan Times for such a long period of time, she did not want to pitch there because of their poor payment scale. She would have considered the digital section of HT but in the past, they delayed her payments so much that she decided never to pitch to them in the future.

Delayed payments for freelancers are unfortunately a common problem in India.¹⁷⁹ “My livelihood depends purely on journalism and no other work. Despite working for so long, I still struggle financially owing to poor and late payments,” Khandekar said. This is also a common issue discussed on the Network for Women in Media in India (NWMI) group as well.¹⁸⁰ Freelance journalists suffer from not only poor but also delayed payments.¹⁸¹ Given this, often journalists prefer international publications for their stories because they are often treated well and in a professional manner.¹⁸²

Outline of the story

Khandekar profiles the Maguri Motapung Beel, a wetland in Assam, that plays host to a vast variety of birds and fish, both endangered and rare — and the threats it faces, including unsustainable tourism and fishing practices by the locals and the digging of oil wells by Oil India Corporation.

According to Khandekar, although the wetland has been written about before, her story contains a unique combination of detailed data and video of the beel, which was not present in the public domain back then. Additionally, the story is peppered with voices from a cross section of locals and is contextualized by environmental studies which helps understand the problem better.

The story brings out the importance of Maguri Motapung Beel on the lives and livelihoods of the people living in villages surrounding it. Khandekar speaks to many villagers, especially women and their small entrepreneurial initiatives that are dependent on the Beel.

Analytics

As you can see below, the TTP Facebook post did not yield much traction on social media. However, the one by Scroll yielded more likes, shares and comments than TTP. Also, Scroll shared the story twice. The article was also shared by Green Guard Nature Organization, a civil society group that works in wildlife conservation. These analytics were gathered using CrowdTangle.

Link 1

Facebook Interactions	Reactions	Shares	Comments		
0	0	0	0		
Source	Followers	Date	Interactions	Post Type	Link
The Third Pole	0	Fri May 25, 2018 07:14:24 GMT+0000	2	Facebook	Link here

Link 2

Facebook Interactions	Reactions	Shares	Comments		
132	93	34	5		
Source	Followers	Date	Interactions	Post Type	Link
Scroll	1486528	Wed May 30, 2018 00:38:00 GMT+0000	18	Facebook	Link here
Green Guard Nature Organization	0	Wed May 30, 2018 02:59:00 GMT+0000	17	Facebook	Link here
Scroll	1486487	Tue May 29, 2018 10:38:00 GMT+0000	10	Facebook	Link here

About the Third Pole

The Third Pole (TTP) is a decade-old niche portal carrying environmental stories based on the Himalaya-Hindu Kush mountain range and the Tibetan Plateau region. This is how TTP describes itself on its website: "[The Third Pole](#) is a multilingual platform dedicated to promoting information and discussion about the Himalayan watershed and the rivers that originate there. The project was launched as an initiative of chinadialogue, in partnership with the Earth Journalism Network. It is a registered non-profit organization based in New Delhi and London, with editors also based in Kathmandu, Beijing, Dhaka and Karachi."

TTP is a non-profit and its donors include the UK Department for International Development (DFID) and Internews Earth Journalism Network through a grant from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida). The readership of TTP according to its South Asia Director Joydeep Gupta is a combination of "25% of policy makers, 25% of those who work in think tanks (includes academics), 25% from NGOs and 25% environmental journalists." The TTP sees an average publication of 23 articles every month. According to Gupta, they commission, edit and publish their own articles.

Substantiation of outcome

While Khandekar clearly stated that her article did not really have any impact on a policy change per se, her article did get published in 2-3 different places. One of the reasons can be attributed to TTP's publishing policy. Every story published on TTP is published under [a creative commons license](#) where anyone is free to republish the articles so long as they are given appropriate credit, used for non-commercial purposes and no changes are made upon the original work. After the publication of Khandekar's story on TTP, it was later republished in [Scroll with credit given to Third Pole](#) and [on NE Now](#). The publication on The Third Pole led to further dissemination and to some social media engagement on their digital channels. That TTP is a non-profit enables them to publish articles under creative commons license. A similar arrangement with a for-profit news outlet would be difficult to find.

Archival record

Newspapers have performed the role of an archive with librarians also terming them 'newspaper of record' for having chronicled the day-to-day events on a regular basis. According to Khandekar, the combination of data, multimedia, and voices from the field gives her story depth which was not found earlier. This, she said, served as having an archival value two years after the publication of her report. The Magori Motapung Beel was back in the news in June 2020 after the Baghjan oil field in Upper Assam's Tinsukia district, operated by Oil India Limited, burst into flames. The Baghjan oil field is located between Magori Motapung Beel and Dibrus-Saikhowa national park. The fire in the oil field also brought the ecologically sensitive Magori Motapung Beel into the news and Khandekar said that many of the reports used the background information from her article about the wetland without any due credit to her. Upon investigation, we did find that one of her photographs was reused in some digital outlets without due credit to her.¹⁸³

When asked for outlets that may have republished her work without credit, she shared this story: [Near the Baghjan Blowout, Assam's Critical Wetland Habitat Is Burning — The Wire Science](#). She said that this story used a lot of background information from her story. Upon reading both the articles, it does not look like the information was picked up from Khandekar's article.

CONCLUSIONS

While Khandekar was open about her story not having a policy impact, we did see that publication on a website like TTP has proved to be helpful especially from the point of view of dissemination. Even though we did not have access to analytics of the article published on Scroll and NE Now, it is a safe conclusion to make that getting republished exposes a journalist to different types of readers. An EJM fellowship and a publication on TTP enables an environmental journalist to have a fixed source of income, especially in Covid's

precarious times. Also, the publishing of environmental stories that are largely ignored by mainstream English media, TTP ends up becoming an archive as seen by the republication of photos taken by Khandekar for the purposes of this story.

SEA LEVEL RISE RELOCATION IN ODISHA, INDIA

Report prepared by Shobha S V

The research aims to validate the outcome reported by the journalist who produced the story. It also investigates other outcomes the story has generated, and the actors, issues, and other contextual factors surrounding it.

BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH

In the Indian state of Odisha, reports by grantee Priya Ranjan Sahu may have prompted the authorities in Odisha to change the rehabilitation site of people displaced by sea level rise and resettle them further inland.

METHODOLOGY

This report built on Earth Journalism Network's (EJN) use of outcome harvesting Methodology and started with outcomes that were claimed by Sahu and later worked through a logical sequence of activities to achieve the objectives of validating outcomes and deepening understanding of how and why they took shape.

Taking off from the research framework template, the story was reviewed, and questions were formulated based on the terms of reference and desk research. Then, main actors as mentioned in the story were identified. The informants consisted of a combination of people quoted in the story; members of civil society, such as environmentalists that know about the context of the issue; members of local media; and members of the grassroots group that is fighting for the rights of the villagers. The purpose of interviews with these stakeholders was to understand the issue, the context, role of the media (local, national, and international) for effecting a change towards the cause steered by the grassroots movement and to finally cross verify the details of the 'impact' stated by the journalist.

Cross-checking facts with other informants and desk research were employed to substantiate and triangulate claims made by the informants. The researcher also spoke to members of the EJN staff to understand the fellowship programme better.

Owing to the Covid pandemic, the interviews happened over the phone. For each interviewee, they had a separate list of broad questions with a few overlapping ones in a semi-structured interview format. For instance, while all the interviewees had questions to establish a background on the struggle by the Satabhaya villagers, the questions for the journalist involved information about the how he pursued the story, places where the story was disseminated, challenges faced by him in doing this story, questions about his stated impact, among others.

Based on the telephone conversations and questions asked, I divided the interviews into broad themes and analysed them. The research framework provided an analytical framework, as well. The researcher would have ideally wanted to go on the field and interview the villagers but thanks to the pandemic, that was not an option. All the interviews were done over the phone. That is a limitation for this study.

The researcher also used CrowdTangle, a free software to understand the reach and social media engagement related to this story on Facebook and Twitter. However, CrowdTangle does not provide for Twitter engagement

around a story as it can only be accessed for 7 days after the publication of a story. This is a limitation because Twitter is a platform people in positions of power in government and policy occupy. It can also be a platform which journalists and social movements have used creatively to achieve social change.

Sahu also did another story about water shortage in the city of Puri, Odisha. However, the story about Satabhaya villagers and the water shortage in Puri are totally different from each other. Hence, the researcher has focused only on the story about Satabhaya villagers and their rehabilitation woes as that was the one EJM referred to at the interview.

FINDINGS

Context and baseline situation

The earlier generations of the present-day residents of Satabhaya lived in seven villages —Sanagahiramatha, Mohanpur, Habeli Chintamanipur, Gobindpur, Kaduanasi, Saheb Nagar and Paramanandapur — with a robust economy dependent on fishing and agriculture. However, the erosion of the land by the sea started in the 1960s and the people of these villages shifted subsequently inland and formed five newer villages: Kanhupur, Satabhaya, Barahipur, Rabindrapalli and Magarakanda. Satabhaya was the gram panchayat headquarters. Today, of these five villages, only Satabhaya remains. The last village to disappear into the sea was Kanhupur, in 2011.

According to informants, the issue had been widely covered in local Odiya media on a regular basis prior to a deeper story being written for an English language platform by an EJM-supported journalist.

Shrinking space for environmental news

Almost all the informants the researcher spoke to discussed the shrinking space for news about the environment in print and television media. Sahu spoke about how environmental stories get deprioritised for stories about local, state, and national level politics.

Ashis Senapati, a lawyer and a journalist based in the area who also writes on environmental issues, said: “Nowadays, the media rarely carries environmental stories. Local media carries them regularly. Television and national media are not interested. They only carry city centric news. They are least concerned. TOI carries PTI or ANI stories. Most big channels don’t have a single official rural reporter in their midst.”

The origin and publication of the story

According to Joydeep Gupta of the Earth Journalism Network, EJM sends out a call for applications across their network and expect journalists to send them story pitches along with a tentative travel budget. A qualified jury then selects the best story pitch and awards the fellowship. Once the fellowship is awarded, the journalists are assigned mentors and it is up to them how to make use of the mentorship. This is not a group mentorship programme. He also added that owing to Sahu’s seniority, they did not have to spend a lot of time mentoring him. But that is not the case with all the journalists.

Sahu said that he was aware of what is happening in Satabhaya prior to the fellowship as well, owing to his decades’ long experience as a journalist in Odisha. He had done a brief 400-word story about the villagers in Satabhaya when he worked with Hindustan Times in the past. He chose to revisit this issue for the fellowship as it was an environmental issue, it was a climate change story and because of his personal preference for stories with a human-interest focus.

Though local media is more widely read in Odiya, Sahu said he had Scroll.in, an Indian digital publication in mind, because mainstream media (according to him) just accept 300–400-word stories, which would not have been sufficient for a story like this. A digital publication would not have an issue of space and hence he sent off the entire story to the outlet. He also mentioned that he does not send pitches, just complete stories.

It does not appear that the journalist struggled to get his story published.

Outline of the story

The story explores how Satabhaya village, located in Kendrapura district belonging to the state of Odisha, has experienced displacement of people because of coastal erosion of the area.

As mentioned earlier, the struggle of the people at Satabhaya has been going on for a long period of time. It is a complicated issue which has been covered both by Oriya media and English media. [This video](#) succinctly explains the issue: “Satabhaya panchayat used to be a cluster of seven villages in the Kendrapura district of coastal Odisha. In the last three decades, rampant coastal erosion has swallowed not only the villages but also its agricultural fields, schools, temples. Now, on the google map, Satabhaya appears inside the sea.”

This issue has been ongoing for about three decades now. While some of the residents have been relocated by the state government of Odisha, their problems are far from over. Sahu’s story on Scroll.in reflects the plight of villagers who are struggling with their livelihood options especially after being relocated to a new village by the state. This is mainly because despite being resettled by the state in a new place, the government had not investigated the livelihood concerns of the villagers. Left with no options in their new place, the villagers are forced to travel back to Satabhaya to eke out a living.

EJN’s involvement and support

Sahu mentions that despite heading Hindustan Times’ Odisha bureau, he could never do in-depth stories, because the pressure was to do 300–400-word stories. “The first time I did a story around the Satabhaya issue, the desk chopped the 1,100-word story to 400 words,” he said. He feels that the fellowship helped him explore an issue in depth and helped with travel funding. “Going to Satabhaya was not easy. It is also expensive. It would have been difficult to do it on my own. The funding offered by the fellowship helped him pursue the story,” he said.

Odisha-based environmental activist Ranjan Panda, who also actively follows the issue at Satabhaya, and tracks news related to the environment also shares this view. He says that environment stories get deprioritised as political news takes centre stage in newspapers.

Writing about climate change and wildlife was never Sahu’s focus, but the EJM fellowship opened a new path for him. Since the fellowship, he has done many in depth stories around environment and climate change. He also did [a follow-up story](#) on the Satabhaya issue for Down to Earth magazine.

Analytics on reach and engagement

Despite Scroll.in having quite a large following, the story appears to have triggered little engagement when it was shared on other sites.

Sahu also did a follow-up story on Satabhaya published on Down To Earth which was not part of the EJM fellowship. This story embedded a video produced by someone else along with the story. It is interesting to see that the video that is largely in Odiya language was viewed almost 15,000 times, 341 likes and over 20 comments of variable quality.

Analytics

From the analytics below, we see that the story received about 100 interactions including likes, comments, and shares. It was also shared on two Facebook groups: ‘Combat Climate Change Network India’ and ‘Intellectuals of the World DISCUSS DEBATE & DECIDE.’

Link

Facebook Interactions	Reactions	Shares	Comments		
105	77	27	1		

Source	Page Followers	Date	Interactions	Post Type	Link
Combat Climate Change Network India	0	Sun Dec 23, 2018 04:31:12 GMT+0000	10	Facebook	Link here
Scroll	1,531,364	Sun Dec 23, 2018 04:58:00 GMT+0000	4	Facebook	Link here
Scroll	1,531,364	Sun Dec 23, 2018 20:18:00 GMT+0000	2	Facebook	Link here
Intellectuals of the World DISCUSS DEBATE & DECIDE	0	Sun Dec 23, 2018 19:02:21 GMT+0000	2	Facebook	Link here

Contribution to change

Despite the quality of the training and story, none of the informants claimed that the story had a significant influence on the decision of the authorities in Odisha regarding the relocation of communities. Even though Sahu mentions the outcome and believes his story may have prompted other coverage of the issue, when prodded if his story was alone responsible for the change, he said “One story alone cannot make a difference.”

Nobody made any specific reference about what the story had done but they spoke about it generally. Although this story would have played a role, it was very minor. None of them spoke about it specifically.

As someone in the space of environmental advocacy, Panda feels that the Satabhaya case is an example of slow-burn disaster in the making and that any kind of change that happens is a result of cumulative efforts put in by the local villagers who protest, lawyers that go to the court for their rights, media (local and national) that amplifies their efforts. “I don’t think one story does it. These are slow onset disasters,” he said. “One story doesn’t do much difference ... One publication of a news story does not change much. You don’t know what works.”

Senapati, who helped Sahu in Satabhaya with this story, also agreed with Panda’s observations. When asked if any changes happened because of the publication of the article, he replied in negative.

English media versus Odiya media

One reason that Sahu’s story is unlikely to have had a significant influence on the outcome is that the story was published in English in an English language digital publication. According to Sahu, it has not been translated in local Odiya media, which reduced its reach and accessibility. The follow up story in Down to Earth was also published in English, but the embedded video was in the local language, which could be the reason it was more popular — although the video was not produced by Sahu.

Both Sahu and Panda suggested that local media was far more likely to have an influence on local public discourse and action. While Indian digital scene is booming thanks to cheap data and a huge population owning mobile phones, print media still has access in places digital news media does not have. Also, Indian language news media is far more popular and preferred by people compared to English language news media.

What emerged strongly from the interviews was the important role played by local media. Panda says that while national media hardly pays attention to the problems faced by the residents of Satabhaya, local Odiya

media has been consistent in their coverage about Satabhaya and have supported the locals in their fight for just rehabilitation.

Panda also affirms the role of local media over the years in keeping the issue alive in the public domain. “Local media has played a very prominent role. 2-3 reporters who kept on reporting from there. We tried to flag it and put that across to the policy makers. State level coverage increased because of that. If something good has happened, 70% credit goes to local media.” Senapati says that the villagers and the local government officials only read local Odiya media. He also added that nobody in Satabhaya would have read Scroll since it is primarily an online English publication. Sudrasha Rout of the Satabhaya Sangram Samiti, the grassroots group fighting for the rights of the Satabhaya villagers, said that he primarily reads news on Sambad, an Odiya daily newspaper. He was aware of Times of India.

When asked if knew about online media, he was not aware of any which means he would not have read Sahu’s article. However, that does not mean he did not see value in the kind of journalistic approach used by Sahu and supported by EJN.

According to Senapati, English media reports played an important role in engaging politicians and bureaucrats. He added that media is used strategically by the local activists in the region: “If we have to put pressure on local bodies, Odiya media is very helpful. But if we must catch the attention of the Chief Minister’s office or any senior bureaucrat, then English media is helpful.”

The local media was viewed as shaping public action and discourse locally and English language media was seen as a way of putting pressure on the politicians.

Role of civil society in pushing news to the people in power

In our interviews, we found out that journalists and activists use social media in different ways as a part of their job and advocacy work. Publication of a news item on digital news media is typically followed by efforts by the journalist, the news organization and civil society (activists and policymakers interested in specific issues) to disseminate it on the internet. Dissemination of news on the internet is almost as important as publication of the news itself. As you can see above in the analytics section, this story was shared by two civil society groups on Facebook. There are deliberate efforts by civil society in ways that they would hope influence bureaucrats. As a part of his advocacy work, Panda also uses Twitter to tweet environment-related news stories directly to government officials, who are not easily approachable.

Sahu also mentioned that he uses Twitter for the same purposes too and directly tweets his stories at people in positions of power. Social movements also leverage the media as per the developments and needs by the people at any given point of time. When asked, EJN mentioned that they have not had any workshops or training in helping journalists with promotion and online dissemination of stories.

CONCLUSION

This case report shows that at a time when media houses are shutting down, journalists are losing jobs and existing media houses shrink spaces for environmental stories and travel budgets, EJN fellowships can be immensely helpful for journalists like Sahu. They enable them to delve deep into an issue and find publishers for long English language articles which they are unable to do if it is a print publication.

However, when it comes to contributing to impact, a more nuanced analysis is required. As far as making policy impact is concerned, it may help for EJN to reflect on the points of views of some of the informants about how social change at that level is a prolonged process and that a fellowship to do a series of articles on the same issue over a period of time would be more helpful than a single-story effort. Also, efforts could be made

towards translation and subsequent publication of stories from English to Indian languages, which would enable an increase in readership but also lead to diversity in the readership.

WATER SYSTEMS IN ALBAY, THE PHILIPPINES

Report prepared by Paola Alano

This report describes how a Rappler story on waterless areas in Albay province did not result in the outcome reported by the journalist. A year after the story's publication, the island's residents still await an improved water system that would have lessened their struggle of going to another part of the island just to get water supply. While it raised public awareness about the community's problems and the lack of efforts to fix it, the story, due to limited participation of actors, did not lead to the expected change.

BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH

In June 2019, Philippine media outlet Rappler published an article on how some residents in the Albay region lacked access to drinking water. Two months later, in August 2019, Rappler published a follow up story featuring an interview with a local politician, Rep. Elizaldy Co of Ako Bicol Party-list, who promised to allocate P200 million for waterless areas in Bicol, particularly in Albay province. Co thanked Rappler for their article, saying it motivated the government to act. More than a year after the promise was made, however, the project has yet to materialize.

The research aims to validate the outcome reported by the journalist: that Ako Bicol responded to reports of water shortage. It also investigates the other factors that may have played a role why the story did or did not result in the outcome.

METHODOLOGY

Taking off from the research framework template, the researcher went back and reviewed the story and the outcome reported by the journalist, and formulated questions based on the research questions indicated in the terms of reference and initial desk research. From there, the researcher identified the main actors mentioned in the story: the residents in San Miguel island in Tabaco City, Albay province; Rep. Elizaldy Co of Ako Bicol Party-list; EJN staff Imelda Abano; the journalist who worked on the story, Rhaydz Barcia; and Tabaco City Mayor Krisel Lagman-Luistro. The researcher was unable to interview Co, who instead asked his media relations officer to contact the researcher.

The researcher then listed down the questions from the research framework meant for each of the interviewee, simplified them, and added contextual questions to establish their credibility as informants. The researcher prepared a semi-structured interview guide to allow the conversations to flow naturally and allow her to ask additional questions to get more details during the interview.

Limitations: Due to travel and budget constraints, the researcher was unable to go to the subject area to validate the outcome. The research was purely done remotely through online and desk research, and phone/online calls.

The researcher was also unable to interview two crucial informants: Barcia and Co. The researcher made several attempts to interview Barcia through online messages and phone calls, but the journalist brushed off interview requests, saying she was busy with post-disaster work and year-ender stories. Thus, the research was unable to validate the journalists' motivations that pushed her to do the story.

Co, on the other hand, did not answer the researcher's request for interview and instead let his media relations officer, Remy Araneta-Mendones, reach out to her.

The recent typhoons that ravaged the Bicol region, where Albay province is located, in early November pushed back the case study's research timeline by a week as interviewees were still reeling from the impact of the disaster and communication lines were damaged.

The researcher also verified the outcome the second time upon request from EJM staff Imelda Abano. She reached out to AKB Representative Alfredo Garbin Jr. on Dec. 22, 2020 via WhatsApp message to ask the source of the P200-million funding but did not conduct an interview due to the limited amount of time.

FINDINGS

Context and baseline situation

Background on Albay

Albay is a province in the Bicol region, located south of the main Philippine island of Luzon. It is composed of 15 towns and three municipalities, with Legazpi City as the provincial capital. Albay is an agricultural province, which mainly produces crops like coconut, rice, sugar, and abaca. Fishing is also a main source of livelihood for areas near the shores.¹⁸⁴ According to the 2015 Philippine census, the province has 1,314,826 residents, the second highest in the region next to Camarines Sur. It has a total of 277,127 households and an average household size of 4.7.¹⁸⁵ Bikol is the main dialect spoken in the province, but majority of the populace can understand Filipino and English.¹⁸⁶ Literacy rate in Albay stands at 99.2 percent as of 2018.¹⁸⁷

Albay is generally a mountainous province with scattered fertile lands and valleys. Located some 550 kilometers south of Manila, Albay is bounded by Lagonoy Gulf and the province of Camarines Sur in the northwest, the Pacific Ocean in the east, Sorsogon province in the south, and the Burias Pass in the southeast.¹⁸⁸ It is popularly known as home to Mt. Mayon, a near perfectly-shaped active volcano 2,462 meters (8,077 feet) high.¹⁸⁹ This natural landmark helps draw tourists to the province, making tourism one of the most important revenue-generating sectors in Albay.¹⁹⁰

With its geographic location and features, Albay is vulnerable to natural hazards, both geologic (earthquake-induced and volcanic) and hydrometeorologic (typhoons/tropical cyclones, storm surge, tsunami, and landslides). The province lies on the eastern seaboard and it is one of the areas first hit by landfalling cyclones, which can reach up to 20 per year with an average of two major destructive events. In November 2006, Albay was hardest hit by Typhoon Durian (locally known as Reming), one of the most deadly and destructive tropical cyclones in Philippine history. Bringing a high amount of rainfall, Durian caused debris and volcanic materials from the slopes of Mt. Mayon to stream down as mudflow, burying communities lying at the foot of the volcano.¹⁹¹ It left a total of 1,266 people dead, which includes 740 people missing and presumed dead. The magnitude of devastation caused by Durian resulted in mass permanent relocation of about 10,076 families to safer grounds.¹⁹²

Albay's vulnerability to disasters has pushed the provincial government to adopt climate change mitigation policies, becoming the first province in the Philippines to do such. In 2008, it established a Center for Initiatives and Research on Climate Adaptation (CIRCA), the first institution of its kind to deal with climate change adaptation through capacity-building and research programs.¹⁹³

Political situation in the province

While it is not as dramatic as the clashes of political bigwigs in adjacent Camarines Sur, politics in Albay is also considered noteworthy as prominent families have lorded over the province for a long time. These personalities

have their own bailiwicks, representing each of the province's three legislative districts.

One of the most known and influential families in Albay is the Lagman family. The clan has governed the province's first district, which includes Tabaco City, since 1987.¹⁹⁴ Known human rights lawyer Edcel Lagman currently serves as its representative, while his eldest child, Krisel Lagman-Luistro, serves as mayor of Tabaco. His son, Edcel Grex Lagman Jr., is Albay's incumbent vice governor.

Former Albay governor and economist Joey Salceda currently serves as the province's second district representative. Entering politics in 1998 after working in the world of economics, Salceda is one of the province's newer breed of political kingpins, allowing some members of his family to occupy positions in his hometown Polangui and the provincial board. Salceda, a known political butterfly or a politician who flits and floats from one party to another, is the province's line to Malacañang, having established close relations to whoever is in power.¹⁹⁵

Fernando Cabredo sits as the third district representative. He was a long-time aide of former congressman Fernando Gonzalez, who ended his term in 2019.¹⁹⁶ The Gonzalez clan has held positions in Ligao City and the provincial government.

Former ambassador to Lebanon Al Francis Bichara is the current governor of Albay. He is a son of a Lebanese immigrant Victor Bichara, who owned a chain of businesses in the province.¹⁹⁷

San Miguel Island

San Miguel is an island in Tabaco City, Albay. It is located off the east coast of Tabaco Bay and lies south of Lagonoy Gulf. The island has a total land area of 44.08 square kilometers, characterized by hilly to mountainous and slightly rolling areas as well as plain and elevated areas at about 35 meters above sea level. The island consists of three upland villages (Hacienda, Agñas and Visita) and two coastal villages locally referred to as "barangays" (Rawis and Sagurong).¹⁹⁸ The island is remote — it usually takes a 30-minute boat ride from Tabaco City port and communication signal is often weak.

For the longest time, people in San Miguel island had to endure the lack of water access in their community. Water sources started to dry up starting in 1986, when the island was covered by agrarian reform program and forests had to be cleared as the lands were used for farming, said Freddie Burce, a resident in Hazienda, in an interview.¹⁹⁹ The deforestation also causes the island to sink one inch every year, Burce said, quoting a German scientist that visited the area years ago. This information, however, cannot be verified independently as online search yield no such results.

"Before the island's forests were thick...now it's almost gone. They were not preserved that's why the rivers, other water sources were affected," Burce said, adding that wildlife in the area has deteriorated due to deforestation. Monkeys and birds, which were abundant back in the days, have migrated to nearby Cagraray Island, where the forest is much denser. Soil erosion has also been prevalent during typhoons, affecting fishes and marine life.

To access water, the people had to go to Pahuladan aquifer, which is in another part of the island and can be accessed by boat, Burce said.

Burce explained that this water source can be complemented if the government sets up a water system from the Nagmuri aquifer, which is located upland, and preserves the forest surrounding it. "If there's an available technology, it could serve the whole island," he said.

Tabaco City Mayor Krisel Lagman-Luistro, however, denied that the water problem in the island is a "perennial"

problem, insisting that the problem was only exacerbated by the prolonged El Nino last year.²⁰⁰

In an interview, the mayor said that summertime, especially now that the climate is changing, is really a problem for the residents because extreme heat dries up the wells and other water sources.

“The climate is really changing, and there should really be an intervention,” she said.

She explained that a large chunk of the city’s local development fund in 2020 went to water improvement projects as a response to the extreme drought they have faced last year.

“Almost all of our local development fund, a large chunk of it went to developing new water sources, including in San Miguel island and also upgrading water systems, which were damaged by the typhoons,” she said. According to the mayor’s estimate, the estimated cost of damage to the city’s infrastructure is at P1.5 billion.

There are no active civil society groups in the area except for Burce’s now-defunct group, Asosasyon kan Conservationist Farmers and Fishers.

AKO Bicol Party-list

AKO Bicol (AKB) is a registered political party in the Philippines participating in the country’s party-list elections. First elected to Congress in 2010, the party represents the Bicol region and the Bicolano people. According to its website, AKB is a “movement” of Bicolanos that advocates for the development of the region through anti-poverty programs and improvement of social services.

Its current representative is Elizaldy Co, a businessman and founder of Sunwest Group, a power, hospital-ity, and construction company with interests in Bicol;²⁰¹ and Alfredo Garbin Jr., a lawyer, and former Legazpi City councillor.²⁰² Co’s brother, Christopher, served as AKB’s representative for three terms.²⁰³

In 2019, AKB got the highest party-list vote in Albay with 56.72 percent or a total of 230,698 votes.²⁰⁴

The AKB had its own share of controversies. In 2012, the Commission on Elections (Comelec) ruled to disqualify the AKB along with 12 other party-list organizations from participating in the 2013 midterm elections. According to the poll body, AKB is a political party, violating the party-list system law, which only allows the marginalized sector and underrepresented sectors to participate.²⁰⁵ The Supreme Court, however, overruled Comelec’s decision and allowed AKB and three other party-lists to run.²⁰⁶

It faced a similar disqualification case in 2010, which resulted in the delay of their proclamation. Poll watchdog Kontra Daya accused AKB of having been created by then President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and funded by the wealthy and influential Co family.²⁰⁷ The Comelec dismissed the case filed against the party-list.

In 2018, AKB representative Rodel Batocabe, together with his security aide, was killed while on a gift-giving event for senior citizens in Daraga town, where he was running for mayor. His rival, Daraga mayor Carlwyn Baldo, was allegedly behind the attack.²⁰⁸

Sunwest Group

Sunwest Group is a construction, hospitality, and power corporation founded by Co in 1992. It owns several establishments in the province, including commercial hub Embarcadero de Legaspi, the upscale Misibis Bay Resort, La Venezia Hotel, and Hotel St. Ellis. It also runs power company Sunwest Water and Electric Co., Inc (Suweco), which has mini powerplants in Catanduanes, Sorsogon, Romblon and Antique provinces.

Sunwest Group has a corporate social responsibility arm, the Sunwest Care Foundation Inc. (SCFI), which has been working with AKB. The “partnership” between the AKB and the SCFI go way back in 2010, when Co still sits as the party’s chairman. It became more apparent in 2020, when AKB and SCFI spearheaded several joint charity events — a year after Co became AKB representative.

PUBLICATION OF THE STORY, RESULTING EVENTS, AND THE ROLE OF EJN

Unfortunately, since the journalist refused to be interviewed for this research, the researcher could not identify the process and motivations that pushed the journalist to work on the story. The only information that was clear was Barcia, the journalist, applied to the EJM grant and was approved. In an interview, EJM staff Imelda Abano said that she has provided minimum mentoring support to Barcia because the reporter already knew the issue at hand and was very familiar with the area.²⁰⁹

Titled “Residents of island in Albay struggle to get daily water supply,” the story investigates the suffering of people in San Miguel island who needed to go to a different part of the island just to get clean source of water at the height of the El Niño phenomenon in June 2019. It features the challenges they face before they can access water, which include waking up in the wee hours of the morning and traveling far.

Using compelling narratives, photos and videos, the story has put spotlight on the people’s sufferings just to access water, a basic human right encoded by the United Nations. It gave ordinary people and representatives of their environmental associations voice to air their concerns; in fact, one interviewee thanked the journalist for coming to know their plight and making it heard by politicians unaware of their situation. It also noted that Garbin and AKB would prioritize the water problem in the country in the 18th Congress, which, unfortunately, did not happen, as is discussed later in the report.

Contribution to the outcome

Two months after the story was published, AKB, moved by the story, promised to allocate some P200 million to 24 waterless communities, many of them in Albay, which Rappler reported had gone waterless for seven months in 2019.²¹⁰ Co, in an interview with Rappler, vowed to shift AKB’s priority programs to “help the region meet the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals [...which] is to provide water to underserved barangays.”

“We are grateful to Rappler for their article, showing people using motorized boats just to get drinking water at night-time and at daytime. Women trek for several kilometers to get drinking water and are sometimes victimized or raped for walking in the wee hours,” Co said, according to the article.

Story reach and engagement

Published on June 15, 2019, the story was viewed 4,400 times, according to Rappler’s data analytics team. Readers based on the mood meter find it both sad and inspiring (33 percent).²¹¹ The video embedded in the story was viewed 2,524 times as of December 11, 2020.²¹² The story, shared on Rappler’s Facebook page, gained 65 mostly “sad” reactions and eight comments.²¹³

While it did not reach the same level of engagement like that of the Inquirer-Tarlac story, the Rappler story has stimulated a certain level of engagement and feelings (in this case, sad emotion) among the audience based on the data above. However, unlike the previously mentioned article, the absence of a follow-up or intermediation by a civil society group in the area had dimmed the story’s possibility of it being accessed by more people.

Broken promise?

The Rappler story, as well as the subsequent promise of AKB to allocate funds for the improvement of the

water system, was picked up by several radio stations in the island and dominated the airwaves for almost a week, Burce said. It gave hope to the community that, finally, its water problem will be addressed. The issue, however, died down a few weeks later and has since been “forgotten” by the community.

More than a year after the promise was made, the project has yet to materialize. Burce confirmed the fund allocation promise by AKB, noting that the people are wondering too if the project will push through.

Luistro said AKB have not communicated with the city government about the P200-million allocation. There was only one instance that a representative from AKB went to the island to survey the area, but nothing came out of it, she said.

“Some political groups and organizations like Ako Bicol have commitments...I think it was mentioned here that they committed a certain amount for San Miguel island, but unfortunately it did not materialize because all of our interventions there come from the local development fund,” she said, pointing out that the allocation promise remained a promise because all funds used for improving water systems in the island came from Tabaco City’s local funds.

It is worthy to note that the mayor only learned of the story in November 2020 when approached by the researcher.

“There was no mention of any amount that they have earmarked for San Miguel island, nor was there any follow up after that initial one,” she added. The city, she emphasized, can manage on their own — an apparent cold-shoulder to AKB’s promise of repairing water systems in the island.

The source of the P200-million fund is unclear. Rappler’s follow up story also did not indicate the budget source. Co’s media relations officer, Remy Araneta-Mendones, said the funds came from both Sunwest Care Foundation and AKB, but she declined to provide more details, particularly on how much public funds were used.

Moreover, there was no evidence that AKB, as indicated in the story, prioritized water problems in the 18th Congress. To quote the article: “Meanwhile, Ako Bicol Representative Alfredo Garbin Jr told Rappler that their party will prioritize the water problem in the country specifically in the countryside, in the 18th Congress.” However, a search in the list of authored and co-authored bills and resolutions by Co and Garbin showed that they have not filed any measure related to improving water access in the country.²¹⁴

According to Garbin, the source of the so-called P200-million allocation was the 2020 General Appropriations Act, or the national budget. Further validation of the outcome found that there was indeed an allocation for waterless areas in Albay, but it did not include San Miguel Island, the subject of the story. It also appeared that AKB’s intervention only resulted in an P87-million increase from the proposed 2020 budget, far from its P200-million promise. The researcher arrived at this sum by deducting the approved budget from the proposed budget for the Bicol region, because the intervention happened after the proposed budget was submitted to Congress on August 20, 2019 (AKB made the promise on August 26, 2019).²¹⁵

Why the story may not have contributed to action

Despite its compelling narratives, which was commented on by Co, and it being intermediated by local radio stations, the story did not contribute to the outcome reported primarily because the actors involved were limited — and in this case, it is just the residents, the journalist, and one official (Co of AKB). There were no active civil society groups in the area that would have intermediated the story and made accountability possible, which could have led to cementing the change. Civil societies provide an arena for citizen participation, amplifying the voice of the people which can influence policymaking.²¹⁶ In the case of the Rappler story, reach

was limited as there were no civil societies involved in the intermediation process.

Other local officials, like the mayor, who could have been one of those who responded to the issue at hand, was not interviewed for the story and was unable to access the article. The Local Government Code of 1991 mandates that the mayor “exercise general supervision and control over all programs, projects, services, and activities of the city government”²¹⁷ — meaning, it is the mayor who ultimately decides which projects would be approved or implemented in their area of jurisdiction. It has been a common practice in the Philippines where journalists will seek attention of the politician to address a specific issue in their jurisdiction and get their public commitment on air or on paper. Leaders’ public commitment in the media often promotes transparency and makes it easier to demand accountability.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

There is no evidence that the story has resulted in the outcome reported by the journalist, that AKB responded to reports of water shortage. The promise to build water systems in areas reported remained a promise as of December 2020, and the residents are waiting for it progress.

The limited desk research and interviews were unable to uncover the province’s political dynamics or draw connections among top politicians in the area, particularly between Tabaco City mayor Krisel Lagman-Luistro and AKB, that could have played a role in achieving the expected outcome. However, it was clear that there was a questionable partnership between AKB and Sunwest Care Foundation, both led by AKB representative Elizaldy Co, as it muddles the line between public and private intentions and gains. The connection between these two organizations raises the questions: did the AKB, a party who represents poor Bicolanos, take advantage of the story to advance its political agenda? Did the party use the story to push forward the corporate interests of Sunwest Group through Sunwest Care Foundation’s involvement? These are possibilities considering the party-list’s background and the strong links between the two entities, coupled with the AKB’s strong political presence in the province. The AKB’s refusal to disclose the sources of funding for the supposed project is also a cause for concern, given the party’s access to public funds.

The allocation in the 2020 national budget raised more questions than answers: if the Rappler story moved the AKB to push for an allocation in waterless areas in the province, it should have included San Miguel island, not leave it out. The approved budget allocation for the province should also have increased by P200 million, not just P87 million, had the AKB intervened. Unfortunately, due to the tight research timeframe and the lack of time, the researcher could not ask AKB questions about the budget data nor the motivations behind their vow.

The findings of the research also raise the question whether it would have been helpful to interview the right politicians, the mayor in this case, to reach the expected outcome. A local chief executive is the main decision-maker in a local government unit — and their role in providing services in localities are not negligible. Would the story have panned out differently if Lagman-Luistro was interviewed? Possibly. Could the story have facilitated a more lasting impact if it involved more actors that hold more decision-making powers? Very likely. It has been a common practice in the Philippines, where journalists will involve politicians and decision-makers to address a certain issue under their jurisdiction. In future stories, EJM may want to consider doing this — consciously interviewing actors that could help in producing an expected outcome.

The human-interest dimension was used by Co in his response and the intermediation of the Rappler story by local radio stations also helped in raising awareness among the people directly affected by the existing problem. It gave them hope that finally, there is a solution to their long-time suffering. However, the hope turned out to be a false one — more than a year after the commitment has been made, the project has yet to be implemented. It also gave a misleading impression to people who were aware of the promise that AKB provided service to the area when it really did not.

The absence of a vibrant civil society and local mass movements in the island may have been one of the factors why the story fell short in achieving the reported outcome. Civil societies serve as a government watchdog; they demand accountability from the powers that be and help influence and cement social change. If such groups were active in the area at the time the Rappler story was produced, would they have helped in intermediating the story? Would AKB have been held accountable for their public commitment? Both are well within the realm of possibilities. What was clear in the research findings was the importance of intermediating stories, especially those depicting human and environmental suffering, to strengthen linkages among actors and intermediaries to increase the likelihood of influencing decision makers and cementing change.

INDIGENOUS LAND RIGHTS IN TARLAC, THE PHILIPPINES

Report prepared by Paola Alano

This report describes evidence on how the Philippine Daily Inquirer story on New Clark City generated outcomes and influenced communities and policymakers. Since its publication, the story has sent ripples of impact beyond the boundaries of Tarlac. It compelled the BCDA, the state-run corporation behind the project, and the Capas local government to listen to the people's grievances. It also allowed the voices of the Aetas affected by the NCC project to be heard, empowering them to assert their ancestral lands and better articulate their demands, which led to a more organized and united community. However, the story fell short of prompting policy change, mainly because of strong vested interests in the NCC as well as the powerful actors involved the project.

BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH

The research aims to validate the outcome reported by the journalists who produced the story. It also investigates other outcomes the story has generated, and the actors, issues, and other contextual factors surrounding it.

After the Inquirer story about the planned multibillion New Clark City (NCC) — supposedly a climate-resilient city to be built in Tarlac province in a bid to decongest Metro Manila, which would displace several indigenous peoples (IP) and negatively affect several natural landscapes — came out, the Bases and Conversion Development Authority (BCDA) met with the IP leaders afterward to assure them of financial packages should they be relocated and that no harm would come to their ancestral land. Such meetings gave the IPs an avenue to air their grievances about the development. Before the report, they said, the agency usually only shrugged off their demands for free and prior informed consent (FPIC, a necessary negotiation between the community and developers), claiming they had no claims to the land. Now the BCDA is hearing out their concerns and promised to discuss with them humanely. The BCDA also promised to minimize, if not improve, development such that no ecological systems would be harmed by its construction.

The outcome reported by the journalist has only been partly substantiated during the research. The story was unable to facilitate increased dialogue and engagement between the government and the Aeta community — the BCDA and the Capas local government continued to brush aside the Aeta's demand for an FPIC and harass villagers who refuse to leave their homes and resist the project. Instead, the story helped in empowering the Aeta community as it validated their grievances and amplified their voice, which were crucial in sustaining their campaign against development aggression and environmental degradation on the national level. It increased awareness about the project's serious environmental and social impacts, generating strong responses from the public and the government itself.

METHODOLOGY

Taking off from the research framework template, the researcher went back and reviewed the story and the

outcome reported by the journalist, and formulated questions based on the research questions indicated in the terms of reference and initial desk research. From there, the researcher identified the main actors mentioned in the story: the resident IPs and the BCDA; those who worked behind the story, including the journalist, the Earth Journalism Network (EJN) staff and NGOs working in the area (in this case, Pia Montalban); and the audience that helped stirred conversation (veteran journalist and activist Inday Espina-Varona).

The researcher then listed down the questions from the research framework meant for each of the interviewee, simplified it, and added contextual questions to establish their credibility as informants. The researcher prepared a semi-structured interview guide to allow the conversations to flow naturally and allow her to ask additional questions to get more details during the interview.

The researcher undertook field work in New Clark City in Tarlac on November 14, 2020. Unfortunately, she was unable to access the Aeta community as she was not allowed entry by the BCDA guards, effectively limiting the number of interviews with the residents. The informants instead went down to Sitio Kamatis, a settlement beside the NCC and the national highway, where the interview was held.

The researcher also conducted desk research to substantiate and triangulate the claims by the community during the interview, validate the timeline, and add information that may not have been covered by the field work.

Limitations: Because of the tight timeline, some interviews were not covered, including that of Capas Mayor Reynaldo Catacutan and the BCDA. The researcher sent an interview request along with a set of guide questions to the BCDA on November 23; the company replied on December 2 saying it would send a statement instead, which remained a promise as of writing.

Additionally, we were not able to triangulate claims that the story had influenced discussions by the UK Government about whether it should invest in the area. Even though we found evidence that the UK Government investment has gone ahead, the possibility that the story may have influenced UK Embassy discussions is remarkable.²¹⁸

FINDINGS

Context and baseline situation

Indigenous communities in the Philippines

The Philippines is a culturally diverse country, home to around 14-17 million indigenous peoples (IP) that belong to some 110 ethno-linguistic groups mainly concentrated in northern Luzon and Mindanao, according to the United Nations Development Programme (2010).²¹⁹

The Aeta is one of the largest groups of IPs in the Philippines and considered one of the country's first people. Aetas are nomadic in nature and generally practice traditional ways of survival like hunting, foraging, and fishing, thus many of them settled in the upland areas like the hills and forests of the Sierra Madre mountain range.²²⁰

Most Aetas inhabit central and northern Luzon. One of its groups, the Hungey, is known as the "old blood" or the oldest Aeta tribe²²¹ in Tarlac, a province north of Manila. Many of them reside in Sitio (settlement) Sapang Kawayan in Barangay (village) Aranguren in Capas town.

Throughout history, the Aetas have long endured threats of displacement and have been pushed to the margins, withdrawing to the hinterlands as threat of colonization grew. There, they maintained close links to

their ancestral past and formed their own distinct identity.²²²

The Aeta's seclusion and nomadic way of living, not to mention poverty, have greatly contributed to their low literacy profile and access to basic services. According to a 2017 study by the Philippine Institute for Development Studies,²²³ Aetas have a 72 percent literacy rate and average years of schooling at 3.8 years. Less than half of their population (46.3 percent) have access to safe water, while only 53.7 percent have access to sanitary toilet and 38 percent to electricity.

New Clark City

Dubbed as a “legacy” of the Duterte administration, the New Clark City (NCC) in Capas is one of the big-ticket projects under the government's ambitious Build, Build, Build program. It was unveiled in 2012 by former BCDA chief Arnel Casanova, designed as an alternative to highly congested, poorly planned Metro Manila. It was modeled after green cities in Singapore and China and conceptualized by master planners from Asian Development Bank, Japan Overseas Infrastructure Network, and Singapore's Surbana Jurong.²²⁴

Worth a total of P607-billion (US\$12.6 billion), the project is seen as the country's first smart, “climate-change resilient” city for the younger generation. “At its heart is clean energy and sustainable practices, which are expected to transform the way people commute and power their homes,” the Inquirer reported.²²⁵ The BCDA said that of the 9,450 hectares of land, only 3,500 hectares would be developed, leaving the rest as green open spaces. Overall, the city can accommodate up to 1.2 million people.²²⁶

But behind the seemingly harmless and sustainable project are thousands of Aeta families and villagers who might get displaced by the development. Over 15,000 local farmers and 20,000 Aeta and Abellings from about 26 indigenous communities are likely to be affected by the project, according to researchers from the University of Glasgow (UG) and the University of the Philippines (UP).²²⁷

Countermapping the development

In their study, UG and UP researchers sought the participation of Aeta villagers to “counter-map” the development in NCC for six months starting November 2018. Here, the scholars used mixed-media counter-mapping methodology²²⁸ — auto-photography, interviews, focused group discussions, etc. — to document the Aetas' experiences and produce their own maps to expose their own narratives and historical accounts.²²⁹

This activity has helped the Aetas map their own stories of struggle against the official maps of the NCC. In a way, it was a form of empowerment as it allowed the Aetas to take control of their narrative, of their lives in the lands flattened by the NCC.

The study revealed productive lands and thriving communities, which were in stark contrast with the BCDA's claim that the NCC sits on an idle land and no communities would be harmed by the project.²³⁰

Ancestral domain

The Aetas' ancestral land spans some 18,000 hectares²³¹ of lush green land, mountains and forests, part of which is included in the development area of the New Clark City project.

The BCDA has maintained that no ancestral domains will be affected by the project as there are no Certificates of Ancestral Domain Titles (CADT) covering the area according to the National Commission on Indigenous People (NCIP), thus Aeta families “are not displaced.”²³² The BCDA and Capas local government have used this loophole to assert that they are not required by law to ask for the Aetas' Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) before implementing the project.

The NCIP's refusal to acknowledge the Aeta's longstanding application for a CADT was partly to blame. According

to Aeta tribe leader Casimira Maniego, former Sapang Kawayan chairman Rogelio Aquino first applied for a CADT in 1994, which was later endorsed in 1999. However, it was not approved despite numerous requests and follow ups, the latest of which was in 2014.²³³ Maniego said the NCIP had told them there was no fund for surveying the land.

Organized movement

While the community has poor literacy rates, this does not deter the Aetas from organizing themselves. Their organization, Asosasyon ng Katutubong Mahawang (AKMA), mostly composed of the tribe elders, has been active in their ancestral domain and environmental advocacies, leading mobilizations against forced evictions by the BCDA in the NCC. In October 2020, AKMA was awarded the Gawad Bayani ng Kalikasan (Nature's Hero Award), an annual award given by national non-government organization Center for Environmental Concerns to people and groups who defend the environment.²³⁴

In an interview with Maniego, he explained that the Aeta community has a long history of organized struggle against oppression. During the martial law period (1970's to 1980's), many tribe members were tortured by the military as they were accused of being members of the New People's Army (NPA), a communist rebel group. Maniego said that this oppression had pushed the Aetas to organize themselves, training them to stand up for their rights and their tribe.

Connectivity

Most Filipinos are on the internet and on social media. According to Digital 2020 report by We Are Social and Hootsuite,²³⁵ about 73 million (67 percent) of 108.8 million Filipinos are internet users and active social media users as of January 2020. An average Filipino spends 9 hours and 45 minutes on the internet, with 3 hours and 53 minutes of time spent on social media. Facebook is the top social media website in the Philippines with 668,300,000 traffic generated monthly, followed by Twitter with 54,300,000 monthly traffic.

Social media campaigns can spread like wildfire in Philippine internet. In the past few months, as frustration over the government's response to the coronavirus crisis and the successive disasters mounted, hashtags such as "#OUSTDUTERTE" and "#NASAANANGPANGULO" (#WhereisthePresident) repeatedly trended on Twitter's trending topics.²³⁶ These drew strong reactions not only from Malacañang but President Rodrigo Duterte himself.

While data show that Filipinos are active internet users, internet in the Philippines remains one of the slowest and most expensive in the world. According to the Digital Quality of Life Index 2020 study by virtual private network (VPN) provider Surfshark, the Philippines ranks 66 out of 85 countries in terms of digital well-being. The country ranks 82nd in terms of overall internet affordability and 77th in terms of internet speed.

The publication of the report

The journalists, Mariejo Ramos and Krixia Subingsubing, are young reporters from the Philippine Daily Inquirer, the country's leading English-language newspaper. Funded by advertising revenues, the Inquirer boasts the largest circulation among the country's major dailies with a market share of 47.12 percent and an average of 1,979,000 eyeballs reached per day.²³⁷ Its website, Inquirer.net, has an average 70 million page views and 13 million unique visitors monthly.²³⁸ Being one of the largest mass media conglomerates in the country, the Inquirer is considered as one of the country's newspapers of record due to its higher standards of journalism than most print media.²³⁹ Its history of courageous reporting has significantly contributed to the Philippines' vibrant press, which is often regarded as the "freest and liveliest" in the region.²⁴⁰ This title, however, is now being questioned as journalists and media institutions are under relentless attack.

At the time they were working on the NCC story, Ramos and Subingsubing were under the paper's Metro section, covering city and transport beats.²⁴¹

The story all started when Ramos came across a photo on Facebook of Aetas standing on bulldozed land, which she later learned was part of NCC. Around that time, the government had just announced that it would be used as a venue for the Southeast Asian (SEA) Games, triggering condemnation from local activists for undertaking a project that could displace thousands of tribespeople.²⁴²

Wanting to know more about the issue, Ramos sought Subingsubing's company and together, they went to the NCC as early as May 2019, sacrificing days off to validate the story.

"We wanted to bring out the human dimension of such a development; that it was not just a mere addition to the Build-Build-Build portfolio," Subingsubing said.

It was a timely decision, too. By the time the journalists embarked on the field work, the UG and UP had just finished their research and counter-mapping of the NCC development, further convincing them to do the story. The academic research gave scientific evidence to the community's struggles, "making it harder for the BCDA to dispute independent research," Subingsubing said.

But given the Inquirer's scant resources, Ramos and Subingsubing knew it would be hard to support their fieldwork even though the editors had immediately greenlighted their story pitch. Fortunately, they stumbled upon the Earth Journalism Network Asia Pacific Project grant and got approved, which funded several trips to Capas and their payment for the freelance photographer and videographer.

For more than two months, the reporters worked on the story, mentored by EJN staff Imelda Abano, who helped them pursue and highlight the environmental aspects of the issue. Ramos admitted that at first, it was difficult for them to emphasize on the environmental aspects of the story — they saw it as a displacement and development issue initially — but with the help of the mentoring support, it became clearer to them that the environmental issues are also weaved in the community's traditions and centuries-old practices.

The story underwent the usual writing and editing process with EJN staff providing inputs and comments as needed. EJN gave the Inquirer team the full editorial independence while producing the story.

The story was published in two parts: the first was on July 8, 2019 entitled "P607-B Clark 'green city' to displace Aeta communities" on the front page accompanied by a large, colored photo of the NCC project, while the second was also on the front page but as one of the boxed stories.

A multimedia version was also published on Inquirer.net complete with photos and maps. This was shared on social media together with a 5-minute video version of the story uploaded on Facebook, which garnered 18,000 views as of December 7, 2020. This can be considered a wide reach considering most Inquirer videos on the platform range from 1,000 to 6,000 views.²⁴³

Outline of the story

The two-part series tackled how the NCC flattened mountains, deforested green lands, and threatened the displacement of thousands of Aeta tribe members who have been living in the area for centuries. It also discusses the destruction of the ecosystem and natural landscapes, as well as the gradual disappearance of animals like birds, fishes, and snakes in the area.

Its outline is as follows:

Part 1: P607-B Clark 'green city' to displace Aeta communities.

- Case study: Casimira Maniego and the NCC's threat of displacement
- Background of the NCC project

- Countermapping efforts
- Impact of the project on people's livelihoods and environment

Part 2: New Clark City: Development for whom?

- Case study: Petronila Muñoz and a short history of the Aetas in their lands
- Background of the NCC project
- Cases of displacement
- BCDA's development plans
- Ancestral domain and FPIC
- Villagers' requests

ROLE OF THE STORY IN CHANGE VIS-À-VIS OTHER FACTORS AND ACTORS

Amplified voices

Since its publication, the story has sent ripples of impact beyond the boundaries of Tarlac. It prompted the BCDA, the state-run corporation behind the project, and the Capas local government, to listen to the people's grievances.²⁴⁴ It also empowered the Aetas to assert their ancestral lands and better articulate their demands, which led to a more organized and united community.²⁴⁵

Human rights activist Pia Montalban, who has long been working in the community, described the Inquirer story as "pivotal" in the Aeta's struggle for ancestral domain and inclusive development — for the first time, the community's issue came under national spotlight, triggering strong responses from both the government and the public.

"The story had a heavy impact," Montalban said. While it was not the first time the media covered the story, the Inquirer's wide reach has certainly helped in getting the message across the audience. "The previous stories barely nudged the mayor... but this [Inquirer story] made him panic," she said, referring to Capas Mayor Reynaldo Catacutan.

While the story was not the only factor, Montalban said it was a catalyst in generating the impact that compelled the BCDA and the Capas government to heed the people's demand to be heard.

"They learned that the story has gone beyond the borders of Capas," Montalban said.

Government response

Two days after the first part was published, the BCDA and Catacutan organized a joint press conference to refute the Inquirer article, saying no indigenous people will be displaced by the P607-billion project as there was no CADT covering the area. Those affected, meanwhile, will be given sound financial packages amounting up to P300,000 (\$6,246).

"As the local chief executive, I will be the first to resist any project or development that is not pro-Capaseño. Being an elected government official, my first order of business is to protect my people," Catacutan said in a prepared speech read during the briefing.²⁴⁶

He also insisted that the project has given indigenous people livelihood by employing them as workers in the project.

In the following days, the BCDA also sent out press releases stating that the NCC "will be the most inclusive sustainable city in the country" and farmers and indigenous peoples will "greatly benefit" from it. It said that it had prioritized hiring Aetas as workers, either as laborers or repairmen, providing them with same salary

rate and protective gears.

But the government's commitment to inclusivity remains to be seen as it maintained that it holds title to the land covering the NCC. On November 29, 2019, nearly five months after the Inquirer story was published, the BCDA issued a notice of eviction to around 500 Aeta families occupying the right-of-way road connecting the NCC to Clark International Airport in Pampanga. The order, which the Aetas received on December 2, 2019, reportedly warned the residents to voluntarily leave their homes or face forced evictions after a week.

With their campaign snowballing since the publication of the story in July, the villagers immediately protested the order and spread it on social media, gaining wide media coverage in time for the much-anticipated SEA Games to be held the following week. After widespread condemnation online, the BCDA denied days later that there was no "forcible demolition" at the NCC, and that the order was addressed to those who rejected the financial assistance offered by the government. On December 8, 2019, the Aetas would form barricades in access roads to their village and pressure the BCDA to hold a dialogue with them.²⁴⁷

The eviction did not happen, although efforts to drive Aetas and villagers away from their land persisted until the first few months of 2020. Land surveyors came in first, followed by heavy equipment ready to construct an eight-lane highway to Pampanga. Part of this road, Montalban said, will cut through Mt. Kaniman, a "spirit mountain" that Aetas consider sacred ground where hunting and foraging are forbidden. A 450-hectare mountain resort and a golf course will also be constructed in the area.

Residents, however, welcomed them with protests. In February 2020, Aetas formed a human barricade in the access roads to their community to ensure that BCDA contractor, Pancho Construction Inc., would not access their village, blocking bulldozers for at least eight days. This series of tense confrontations pushed the BCDA to seek a dialogue with the villagers on March 12, but it did not happen as several company officials had been quarantined.

Red tagging

As the Aeta's demands and campaign grew louder, the BCDA and Capas government answered back with harassment and repression. Red-tagging and militarization in the area have become prevalent. They have set up an outpost in one of the main access roads to the Aeta community, inspecting identification cards of those entering the premises to make sure that only bona fide residents and landowners can go inside the area.

The military, who has been deployed in and around the NCC, have consistently tagged Aetas from Sitio Sapang Kawayan, where Maniego resides, as members of the NPA for resisting the project, a dangerous label that has led to murders of several Filipino activists and human rights defenders.²⁴⁸

Maniego said that their village used to be an NPA hotspot during the martial law period in the 70's and in the early 80's, but rebels there have surrendered after the People Power Revolution in 1986.

"A lot of people were tortured here during martial law," she said. "But now there are no longer rebels here because if there are, the construction equipment would have long been burned and destroyed."

Maniego said that because of the Aeta's strong resolve to fight for their ancestral lands, the military thinks that they are being organized by the rebels to fight against the government.

"No one is organizing us. Our protest comes from our hearts... what we're fighting for here is our right to ancestral domain," she said.

Empowered Aetas

The story further empowered the will of the Aetas to continue fighting for their demands and right to their ancestral lands as it amplified their voices. It gave them the courage and strength to continue with their struggle, Maniego said, even as they have limited means to fight the powers that be.

“We indigenous people got a lot of courage from them [journalists]. Now we know that we have a partner in banging on the doors of those in power. If it is just us indigenous people here below, what will happen to us? We do not know anything,” she explained, noting the literacy problem among their tribe remains a great impediment for them to assert their rights.

Since the *Inquirer* story was published, the local advocacy snowballed into a national campaign against development aggression. More people got involved: Sandugo, a national group of indigenous people who helped them mobilize in Metro Manila and introduced them to renowned human rights lawyer Antonio La Viña, who now stands as the community’s legal counsel. Their issues drew public attention and stirred conversation in social media at the peak of SEA Games, highlighting the irony of holding an extravagant sports event while threats of displacement haunted the people in the area.

The Aeta’s familiarity about their issues and their indigenous rights have greatly helped in cementing the change in their community. They already know how to push back and articulate their demands even before anybody else covered their story. Because of the local movement, navigating through the area and understanding the indigenous people’s issues became easier, Subingsubing said.

“And so, when we arrived, they already knew their story by heart — it was just a matter of doing our part then,” she said. “This deep knowledge of what was going on in their communities provided such a rich resource for the story, and it is thanks to them that it was even possible.”

Story reach

The story was mainly accessed online and was shared several times by netizens and advocacy groups including acclaimed Filipino writer Ninotchka Rosca²⁴⁹ and Facebook page Now You Know, and Tabak, a Manila-based IP organization.²⁵⁰ Many activists also shared the story, including Renato Reyes²⁵¹ of Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (New Patriotic Alliance) and blogger Tonyo Cruz.²⁵²

The story was shared on social media (Facebook, Twitter) for months leading up to the SEA Games in December 2019, especially after the news about the forced eviction of the Aeta community broke. It became a reference material for advocacy groups like Katribu, a national alliance of IP organizations,²⁵³ and IBON International, a local think-tank.²⁵⁴

Like all its other stories, *Inquirer* shared the NCC story on its Facebook page. The two-part story garnered a total of 890 mostly “sad” reactions, 142 comments, and 1,113 shares — evidence that the story has resonated with the audience emotionally.

Inday Espina-Varona, a veteran journalist known for her sharp commentaries, was one of the many netizens who shared the *Inquirer* story on Facebook, helping publicize the July 2019 forum organized by the Philippine Geographical Society in UP, where researchers shared the findings of their counter-mapping research undertaken with Scotland-based University of Glasgow.

The story, Espina-Varona said, stirred discussion on social media as it set the context of the Aetas’ struggle for land and environment. It also provided the scientific basis for their fight, that their grievances were not without basis, which is very important for readers to understand.²⁵⁵

“It was very clear — to whom is that project for? Why don’t they have a place in the development? That stirred the interest and anger and protest in that story. It went beyond he-said, she-said. The data supported it and they [journalists] showed the process of building the city,” Espina-Varona said in an interview.

Impact of civil society actors in the Philippines

The Philippines’ mature civil society and vibrant democratic space have indirectly shaped the outcome: with several existing organizations linked around shared concerns, in this case indigenous people’s rights, it became easier for the Aetas to organize themselves and consolidate their ranks, despite the poverty that surrounds them. The tribe’s deep understanding of their own issues and demands as well as the local mass movement that supported the villagers played a significant role in creating the motivation and the outcome. These were the same factors that gave access to researchers from the University of Glasgow and University of the Philippines to the community, which provided strong scientific evidence to the people’s struggle.

These elements also made it easier for the journalists to navigate through the reporting process. The organized Aeta community gave them access to several interviewees willing to share their stories, including brave community leaders who were ready to impart their insights and wisdom to the public.

The people’s longstanding grievances and their willingness to unite as a community, triggered by the Inquirer story produced by competent journalists, compelled the government to act and listen to their grievances, leading to the outcome reported.

The Philippines’ fluency in English as well as the wide access to the internet and social media have also helped in the communicating the people’s demands into a broader audience, particularly those in the urban area, the target market of the project, who have little knowledge of the ongoing aggression.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Despite the brevity and limitations of the research, the findings present good evidence that the story made a significant contribution in the Aeta’s empowerment as a community and the overall public discourse on their land and environmental rights. The story amplified the IP’s voice, making them more confident in telling their stories and protesting injustices against their tribe that has long been left on the margins.

While they initially saw the issue as one of displacement and development, the journalists were able to uncover the environmental and human rights aspects of the story through support and mentorship from EJM. The Inquirer’s NCC story, which provided a different lens than other previous coverages, effectively prompted strong responses from various sectors of the society, from the community, the government, non-government organizations and advocates. It merged human narratives and scientific evidence, highlighting the community’s voice and human rights, making a compelling argument against development aggression and its harmful impact to the environment. The compelling story resonated on the audience’s rational and emotional levels, encouraging various intermediaries to disseminate it on various platforms, with high degree of connectivity multiplying its reach.

While it fell short of prompting policy change, the story sparked conversations on how big-ticket projects should not inflict human suffering and environmental destruction. It serves as a strong reference for future development plans and a wake-up call for policymakers to include marginalized sectors and the environment when planning progress.

The story and the events that followed its publication also showed the challenges of making gains in the face of resistance by powerful interests. In a project with such magnitude, it would be hard to find a resolution between and among the competing actors, especially since one of the parties — the Aetas in particular

— is part of the most vulnerable and oppressed sectors of the society.

The validated outcome is very much in line with EJN's overall goals to promote inclusion of marginalized groups in socio-environmental media and information and increase public knowledge and understanding around critical socio-environmental issues. Deviating from the usual business-centric reportage and focusing on the people's right to ancestral domain and their traditions to conserve the environment, the story highlighted the Aeta's way of life, how its history as a people weaves into the environment and how their very own existence as a tribe is threatened by the development the NCC project seeks to create.

Existing underlying conditions — such as the Philippines' internet and social media connectivity, English language proficiency, and vibrant civil society — helped shape the outcome substantiated by the research. These unique factors have created a fertile ground for engagements between and among the actors and intermediaries — particularly the Aetas, non-government organizations, scholars, and netizens — resulting in a more inclusive and critical socio-environmental media and information. It remains a question, however, if such kinds of stories would make similar outcomes in other countries where such conditions and factors are absent or not as strong.

ILLEGAL SONGBIRD TRADE IN LAMPUNG, INDONESIA

Report prepared by Muhammad Reza Zaini

“I think [the reports] did reach the national government efficiently [on the lower levels such as the Law Enforcement Bureau and the Custom and Quarantine Bureau.] However, I do not think that the impact can be sustained in the long run, especially if there are no continuous reports,” said Marison Guciano, executive director of FLIGHT Indonesia. “I think that after the news report is published and read, the government will most likely back to business as usual.”

This case study reveals that journalism supported by EJN highlighting the need to implement and enhance laws to prevent songbird trade control did not influence any significant outcomes. It explores research informants' reflections on why such stories might have more impact on lower-level government bodies, such as the Custom and Quarantine Bureau in Lampung, than national level ministries in a context like Indonesia.

BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH

This report presents findings from research that explored a journalist's claim regarding a series of articles on the success of a campaign to get the Custom Quarantine Bureau of Lampung Province to clamp down on illegal songbird trade. He said it had influenced attitudes and behaviours towards law enforcement within the national level Law Enforcement Bureau and Custom and Quarantine Bureau.

METHODOLOGY

The researcher employed a qualitative methodology. Following an orientation from the lead researcher, he developed a research framework based on EJN's outcome harvesting approach. He then identified key informants for in-depth interviews. Regarding the selection of the informants, the researcher chose several people associated with the policy and practice change targeted by the journalist. He used a snowball sampling strategy, first interviewing the journalist and FLIGHT Indonesia's director, who were asked to provide the contact details of

other prospective informants. These included several individuals with significant roles in enacting stricter laws on songbird trade and conservation activists. Details can be found in the table at the end of the document.

Where possible, the researcher sought to triangulate data from interviews with different informants and document analysis of news and secondary sources.

Overall, the research has been able to answer the question regarding the outcomes relating to the stories published. However, there were setbacks regarding the data collection process which means the data is not as complete or rich as the researcher had hoped it would be.

First and foremost, the researcher was not able to interview at length anyone from WALHI an environmental NGO that was mentioned as a potentially important actor in national level environmental advocacy. The informant at the organization said he was too busy, so the researcher was only able to ask short questions via WhatsApp. Neither was he able to interview ministry-level government officials. These challenges were compounded by the normative responses given by several government respondents. The researcher tried to overcome this through a careful line of questioning, repeated check-ins with the lead researcher and efforts to triangulate responses from different actors. But overall, it was difficult to establish exactly what effects the story had.

FINDINGS

Context and baseline situation

Informants interviewed for this research argued that Indonesia's long problem of endemic songbird trade requires a solution on the national level. Muhammad Jumad, the head of the Custom and Quarantine Department, mentioned that this country has an average of 3,250 birds smuggled every day. Most of the smuggling process takes place in Sumatra Island, which has tropical rainforests with diverse songbird species. It is one of Indonesia's largest islands, sharing borders with Malaysia and Singapore, as well as with Indonesia's Capital City.



Image 1:
Location of Lampung
Province (in orange)
within Sumatra Island
(in light blue)

Mustafa Silalahi, the journalist at the centre of the research, explained that the songbird is one of Indonesia's protected species that has been extensively traded. In fact, according to Marison Guciano, the Executive Director of FLIGHT Indonesia, songbird trade is the most lucrative black-market industry in the country.

The implementation of laws to prevent smuggling (Peraturan Menteri Lingkungan Hidup dan Kehutanan No. P.106 Tahun 2018) has been weak at the national level. Many government officials have ties with those involved in the avian trade.²⁵⁶ This means corruption within various levels of the Indonesian government has contributed to inaction by local authorities.

To address the illegal trade, FLIGHT Indonesia, a local NGO in Lampung Province and Sumatra Island, has long been advocating and trying to raise awareness of the importance of implementing tougher laws. It has also called for government cooperation with law enforcers. Karman, a representative from Lampung's Custom and Quarantine Bureau, explained that the outcomes of FLIGHT's work have been positive in Lampung Province. FLIGHT Indonesia has persuaded local government actors to work together to prevent smuggling of the songbird.

The writing and publication of the story

Mustafa Silalahi, a journalist who is affiliated with Tempo, one of Indonesia's biggest national news companies, had long been interested in conservation. Coming from Sumatra, a home of many songbirds, he was particularly keen to undertake investigations to encourage efforts to prevent illegal songbird smuggling. Thus in 2020, he responded to an offer of funding and mentorship from EJM to support this work.

Although he attended a training event, the grant was more important for an experienced journalist like Mustafa. Following the training he decided to document a successful example of FLIGHT's work with the Law Enforcement Bureau and Custom and Quarantine Bureau in Lampung. According to Mustafa, the plan was to use this positive example at local level to influence and inspire Indonesia's national government at the ministry level. It was assumed that if the central government in Jakarta was informed of a successful local effort to implement controls in Lampung, they might be interested to replicate the success nationally. The implicit theory of action was that a local success story might embarrass and/or inspire national government to act on implementing and improving the national law.

As Lampung is the centre of songbird trade in Indonesia, it was easy to make links between local level campaigning and the need for action at the national level. Jumad, from the national Custom and Quarantine Bureau, explained that 1,300 of the daily number of 3,250 birds smuggled get to Jakarta via Lampung. Since Lampung Province effectively acts as the gateway of the songbird trade to the rest of Indonesia, it was an ideal location for Mustafa's story.

Mustafa travelled to Lampung where he investigated and wrote three articles concerning FLIGHT Indonesia's successful approach to influencing protection of the songbird. They described FLIGHT's approach to educating and socialising local stakeholders on the songbird and other protected species. His articles also showed how inter-sectoral coordination between FLIGHT Indonesia and local government was increasing government capacity, prompting increased raids on illegal songbird trade in Lampung Province. Aside from the reporting achievements in Lampung, Mustafa also highlighted the risks of songbird extinction due to corruption in various relevant government bodies.

Three of Mustafa's articles were published on digital platforms. Two of the three platforms are nationally owned media companies, which are Kumparan (8 September 2020) and Republika (3 November 2020). The third is an NGO-based media named Garda Animalia (3 November 2020). As a national journalist, Mustafa had links to such national-level platforms without needing EJM assistance. Republika was founded as a national newspaper in 1992, whereas Kumparan is a national online media founded in 2017 as Indonesia's first online-based news website that was not started from printed media.

On the other hand, Garda Animalia is a non-profit website created by journalists who wished to stop the wildlife trade in Indonesia. The website published stories from the various journalists. However, the website is not well-known like Kumparan or Kompas, as can be seen from the number of engagements such as comments and likes. Mustafa's article does not have any comments or likes on Garda Animalia.

The story's contribution to change

Though informants were generally positive about Mustafa's story, we were unable to uncover any solid evidence

that the story had contributed to advocacy or action on implementation of tougher laws or suggestions for improved ones at national level.

Informants generally appreciated the positive account the story told of the Bureau of Quarantine in Lampung becoming more efficient at identifying species, as well as inter-institutional coordination. They also appreciated Mustafa exposing corruption and drawing attention to the importance of Indonesia's diverse bird ecology which is the second most diverse in the world behind Brazil.²⁵⁷ Some said that there were good economic reasons for the government to respond to such issues. For example, Endah from the Law Enforcement Bureau believed that increased songbird trade measures would minimize the spread of zoonotic diseases such as avian influenza. Karman added that the economic loss from another outbreak such as the avian influenza needs to be prevented at all costs.

Despite this generally positive response to the story, so far it has not resulted in the kind of responses the reporter hoped to illicit.

Following the publication of the story, Mustafa met with Endah, who worked for the Law Enforcement Bureau, hoping he would be able to persuade her to act within the department against illegal smuggling of the songbird. He hoped she might be an intermediary and disseminate the message to higher echelons and policy decision-makers with power in the ministry.

However, the article did not get far. During the researcher's interview with Endah and other informants it became apparent that Mustafa's article had not been discussed by senior ministry level officials.²⁵⁸ Endah had not disseminated the article to the ministry-level officials and it was unlikely they had read it. Furthermore, Endah also said that her department, the Bureau of Law Enforcement, lacked close communications with other relevant departments that would have been needed to replicate what had happened in Lampung. This was partly caused by poor connectivity. This made it impossible for her to disseminate the *Republika Online* article to her colleague within her immediate department, let alone her supervisors at higher levels of the government institution.

Endah claimed that she and some colleagues at the Custom and Quarantine bureau were trying to act on the article and make a difference. According to Endah, the government said that the best thing that her department can do is to educate the enforcement officers and the public about the risks of extinction of bird species. She said this would be more effective than trying to persuade her supervisors to draft new legislation. However, overall, the tone of her interview was very normative, and the researcher was unable to triangulate her claims.

Factors that impeded the story's impact

Overall, informants thought while journalism like Mustafa's could influence government at a local level, it was unlikely that a single story had or would have had any impact on national actors without more institutional support from other government actors and advocacy from non-government actors like FLIGHT.²⁵⁹

Marison Guciano, the executive of FLIGHT Indonesia, said that the NGO had been able to intensify its actions with the Law Enforcement Bureau and Custom and Quarantine Bureau, in Lampung, following Mustafa's reports. Informants from these institutions were motivated to implement existing laws to fight songbird poaching.²⁶⁰

However, Marison Guciano also stated that corruption on the national level is a negative contextual factor. He argued how the bird trade industry was too profitable to be eradicated by the high officials. He believed that it would be difficult for the national level organisations to replicate FLIGHT Indonesia's success in Lampung.

Mustafa largely agreed. He reflected that although national journalist platforms like EJM helped him with

capacity to get published he needed more help influencing national level policy makers.

Other speculative ideas on why a single story would be unlikely to achieve change at national level mentioned by informants included:

- Government ties and economic interests in bird-trading,²⁶¹ which could explain the inefficient investigation of suspects²⁶²
- Logistical issues: Indonesia's large number of the entry points poses a significant obstacle to train and monitor implementation of law nationwide. This means that the best the government can do is socialize ideas and hope to shift the attitudes and behaviours of its staff so that they enforce tougher controls.²⁶³
- Public ignorance that capturing and keeping songbirds are illegal.

CONCLUSION

The research for this case was unable to confirm any significant outcomes relating to Mustafa's stories.

His reports on FLIGHT Indonesia's successful work with local level law enforcers were generally appreciated. Moreover, they were reported to have further amplified efforts to socialise the law and build capacity to implement it within the Law Enforcement Bureau and Custom and Quarantine Bureau at Lampung.

Evidence that his articles had stimulated any similar action at the national level was quite weak. It is possible this was because we were unable to interview important key informants such as WALHI and the Ministry of Forestry. But it was also because the articles had limited reach and were not read by senior officials.

Given vested interests and the scale of the problem, it is unlikely that a single story would have had significant impacts even if it had been widely read. Informants offered several proposals to overcome this. They argued for more institutional approaches that encourage the kind of multi-stakeholder approaches reported in Lampung and the other report in Buton to influence ministry bureaucracies.

Perhaps as a lesson learned, EJM journalists need to keep reporting the stories to get more attention from the ministry-level officials. National media such as Republika Online would give an impact only if it is done through constant reporting with follow up from national level advocacy organisations. Without such support, the government stakeholders will not have any interest in the cause.

ANOA CONSERVATION IN SOUTHEAST SULAWESI, INDONESIA

Report prepared by Muhammad Reza Zaini

"Anoa has been our [provincial] mascot and pride. Seeing it extinct will be a major blow to our province," said Prianto, the division head of the Southeast Sulawesi Office of Natural Resource Conservation.

"We are even more motivated to protect our forest after seeing that anoa will perish from Lambusango Rainforest Reserve," said local activist Dani from KPA Tarsius NGO.

BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH

This case study describes how EJN's support for a local journalist enabled him to write a story that has contributed to separate actions by government officers and environmental activists. The story helped the government prioritise an anoa conservation centre in Southeast Sulawesi Province's Buton Island in support of the national goal for anoa conservation by 2022. This is partly because the anoa has been a symbol of the province and the story written by the journalist reminded the authorities about the possibility of its extinction. In addition, the story encouraged local environmental activists, impatient because of slow government action, to embark on a renewed anoa conservation community education campaign.

METHODOLOGY

The researcher employed a qualitative methodology to understand outcomes associated with Riza Salman's stories.

After orientation on the study's approach, the researcher developed a research framework and identified potential respondents for in-depth interviews. The researcher chose the informants based on an interview with the journalist, Riza Salman, and his understanding of their roles in anoa conservation. He then undertook document analysis and developed customised interview guides. Following early interviews, the researcher used snowball sampling to identify additional informants, like conservation activists who had collaborated with Riza in the research for and dissemination of his story.

Triangulation was used to validate the data from different informants. In some cases, this was supported by document analysis from news and secondary sources.

Limitations: The research methodology was relatively effective for analysing the impact of Riza's story. However, there were several limitations.

- A lack of data collection time because of the project schedule which reduced opportunities for triangulation, including with EJN staff in Indonesia.
- The researcher's inability to travel to Buton Island due to travel restrictions, hazards, and challenges of aligning schedules with key informants in nearby towns. In this situation, it was difficult to conduct ethnographic analysis of the local institutions and people regarding the media impact. However, by analysing Riza's article and comparing it with previous reports on the anoa by Tempo and Kompas, the researcher was able to develop more specific questions to assess the contribution of Riza's story to some high-level outcomes described below. For example, Riza's article was the first to focus on the importance of a multi stakeholder approach to anoa conservation.

FINDINGS

Context and baseline situation

Buton Island, a small island off Sulawesi, is known for its sprawling rainforest and pristine ecosystem that supports high biodiversity. Buton's biodiversity is unique. It includes many endemic species and mammals not found anywhere else on Earth. This is because of its location between the Wallace and Weber Lines.²⁶⁴ Some of the most common endemic mammals in the areas are anoa, kuskus, and babi rusa (Arini, 2013). Of all the mentioned mammal species, the anoa (a type of small buffalo) has been considered as Buton and Sulawesi's most iconic wildlife.



Image 1. Lambusango Forest Reserve (LFR) within Buton Island (Patterson, 2017)

Aside from its biodiversity, Buton Island is equally known to be Indonesia's centre of asphalt extraction and production. According to the Southeast Sulawesi Province Statistical Bureau (2016), asphalt mining industries generate approximately 175,149 million Rupiah or about 12,300 million US dollars in revenue. The asphalt industries are expected to develop in the next years because of the increasing demand, in addition to its fine quality (Southeast Sulawesi Province Statistical Bureau, 2016).

According to local activists, the Buton Regency Government has always been eager to create a Special Economic Zone on the island for the asphalt mining activities. Data provided by Global Forest Watch since 2001, shows Buton Island has experienced deforestation in its coastal areas, that can be attributed to the ever-expanding mining industries.²⁶⁵ Such deforestation and intensive mining industries threatened the ecosystem of Buton Island and its provincial symbol, the anoa.²⁶⁶

In 2013, a national mandate for anoa protection was passed through the 2013-2022 Strategic Action on Anoa Conservation plan. This ministry-level strategic action mandated each province in the Sulawesi Island Region to have anoa conservation (Ministry of Forestry, 2013). Despite considerable activity on anoa conservation, implementation has been slow. Local activists like Dani and Udin from WALHI argued that Southeast Sulawesi Province, especially Buton Regency, had not yet made 2013-2022 Strategic Action on Anoa Conservation a priority. They attribute this mostly to the government accommodating the mining industry.²⁶⁷

According to La Ode Kaida from Southeast Sulawesi Office of Natural Resource Conservation, the province currently has four wildlife reserves but has no place for anoa breeding or protection aside from the Lambusango Forest Reserve.²⁶⁸ Dani, a local activist, explained that this reserve provided insufficient safety for the anoa who often roam into local villages where they are hunted and killed by local people. Interviews and other sources mentioned in Riza's articles indicate that only 300 anoa remain alive.

Media coverage in the anoa was weak before EJN's intervention and support in 2020, according to interviews with government officials, Riza Salman, and a thorough online search.²⁶⁹ There had only been handful of reports by Tempo magazine in Indonesia back in February 2017. However, Tempo's reports, just like most of the reports at that time, focused on North Sulawesi Province or Sulawesi Island in general. Another couple of online reports by Detik (2018) and Kompas (2012) mentioned that Southeast Sulawesi had only 300 anoas left.²⁷⁰ However, they only reported on anoa in Southeast Sulawesi, and relied on expert perspectives without engaging with local NGOs, communities, and local government actors.

Riza is a local journalist from the relatively pristine Buton Island and he has been trying to put pressure on the Buton government to implement the anoa protection mandate since 2016. Prior to support from EJN, he had been writing reports on the risks of anoa extinction and trying to get published without much luck. It was only following assistance from EJN through a grant in February 2020 from Ekuatorial, an Indonesia geo-journalism website developed by EJN and the Society of Indonesian Environmental Journalists, that his fortune changed. This research project was designed to understand to what extent Riza's reportage under EJN's tutelage influenced the policymakers to invest in anoa conservation.

Writing the story

Riza saw support from EJN in 2020 as a great opportunity to try to influence the local government on anoa conservation. When he saw EJN's programme advertised, he decided to submit a proposal. EJN then provided capacity-building and funding that helped Riza pursue his goal of promoting the importance of anoa conservation. As well as providing Riza with mentorship on how to create effective journalism, EJN's Indonesia Content Coordinator Florence Armein also advised him on finding prospective sources and platforms that might publish his story and with creating video content.

Inspired by the support and mentorship, Riza planned a story that combined rigorous scientific evidence

with local people's accounts of the anoa. As part of his research, he travelled to Lambusango Forest Reserve in July and August 2020 to make a video. There he met Dani, a local conservation activist, who was equally passionate about anoa conservation. Dani helped Riza with research for a story.

EJN's support and mentoring had a considerable impact on Riza's reporting. Before the training, his efforts to report the possible extinction of the anoa had been unsuccessful, and he had struggled to attract the interest he needed to get his stories published. This time was different. As a result of EJN having introduced him to Ekuatorial, an online environmental media platform managed by EJN, his stories were published online.²⁷¹

The stories

Riza wrote two stories that were both published on Ekuatorial.com.

The first story, titled "[Anoa, Masyarakat, dan Konsesi Tambang Aspal di Sekitar SM Lambusango](#)" (Anoa, Society, and Mining Concessions around Lambusango Forest Reserve) can be summarised as follows:

- It begins with a human-interest approach that describes the local community's relationships with the anoa and why anoa that roam on their land risk being hunted.
- The human-interest approach is also used as an entry point for a discussion of how mining industries in Buton Island further decrease the anoa's roaming range and its habitat. This includes a discussion of scientific evidence.
- Voices of those from environmental agencies note that business as usual, i.e., an inadequate and unimplemented conservation plan, mean the anoa will become extinct in Southeast Sulawesi.
- The story mentions provincial government mandates related to budgeting for anoa conservation in 2013.
- It includes insights from government officials in district and provincial levels, such as how to efficiently manage anoa conservation and how conservation can contribute to the local economy as an eco-tourism location.
- There is a discussion of potential approaches taken to manage tensions between conservation and income in other provinces.
- The story also includes interactive videos on the realistic possibility of anoa extinction based on academic analysis.

The story titled, "[Nasib Anoa di Pulau Buton Berada di Unjung Tanduk](#)" (The Dire Fate of Buton Island's Anoa) can be summarised as follows:

- It begins with an emotive story about Erin, a rescued anoa whose leg needed to be amputated after being shot by a villager.
- The story then describes the uniqueness of the Southeast Sulawesi anoa that is protected by law.
- It draws attention to the lack of provincial budgets and human resources to run efficient anoa conservation.
- The failures of provincial and district government to implement the national anoa protection law are highlighted within a discussion of scientific evidence regarding the threat to the anoa.
- Riza sets out a rationale for a multi-stakeholder approach to implementing the law as well as performance management.
- The importance of educating communities and including them as stakeholders is stressed.
- The story also includes interactive videos on the realistic possibility of anoa extinction based on academic analysis.

THE STORIES' CONTRIBUTION TO OUTCOMES

This case study research suggests that EJN's capacity building helped Riza produce two compelling stories that contributed to three outcomes:

1. Government giving greater priority to anoa conservation;
2. Increased bureaucratic cooperation between different agencies;

3. Intensification of community-based environmental activism and local journalism on the anoa.

Government prioritizing anoa conservation

Following the publication of the story, the Southeast Sulawesi Office of Natural Resource Conservation and law-making institutions began to prioritise anoa conservation as a part of their policies.²⁷² Initially, the authorities only focused on the anoa within the Lambusango Forest Reserve, which is already close to human habitation. But the stories' focus on extinction sparked internal conversations among different officers that encouraged the government to do more and make a proposal for a special anoa conservation center.

To make the center a reality, they submitted a plan to the Southeast Sulawesi Ministry of National Development Planning,²⁷³ and a financial proposal to the Bappeda office, the government body responsible for approving the budget provincial level development plans. According to informants Prianto and Udin, the government has intensified pressure for the financial proposal for anoa conservation facility to be approved through including it in the "Regional Development Working Plan" for 2021. Since then, the center has been mentioned in the Finalised Regional Budget and Income Guideline. They therefore expect it to be an item in the approved budget for 2021. However, the plans still require ratification in the provincial parliament.

Increased bureaucratic cooperation between different agencies

The second outcome mentioned in relation to Riza's article is the coordination between different institutions to support anoa conservation. As explained by Prianto, the responsibility of implementing anoa conservation used to almost fall on the Office of Natural Resource Conservation exclusively. This made progress slow and inefficient. What Riza managed to do in his story is bring together varied perspectives from different organisations and stakeholders who had a role or interest in anoa conservation within Southeast Sulawesi. This triggered new ideas about the possibility of intersectoral cooperation between various government bodies.

In addition, it led to more engagement between government bodies and local NGOs. As explained by Prianto, the issue of conservation has always been considered the sole responsibility of the Office of Natural Resource Conservation before Riza's reports.

"After this [anoa] report, we now have a sense of solidarity between different institutions," he said. Many government informants credited the rich data presented by the EJN-affiliated journalist with triggering the behaviour change in the executive institutions.²⁷⁴

The intensification of community-based activism

This was exemplified by environmentalists educating the community on risks facing the anoa. Activists have long been involved in community education. However, Dani from KPA Tarsius, explained that his relationship with Riza and the article's portrayal of government's lack of response inspired him to act.

Activists like Dani understand the cultural, economic, and social connections between local people and Lambusango Rainforest. Therefore, when they read of the risk of anoa extinction — including because of the animals being killed by local communities — they were quick to act.

Likewise, local journalists followed Riza's example by making his story more accessible to communities. Komikia.id, for example, a comic-based activism journalist site, retold the story about the risk of anoa extinction in comic form. The comic below was published on November 10, 2020. According to Riza, Komikia



Image 2. One of the non-EJN reports on the anoa written by Komikia.id. Source: Riza Salman

were inspired because they knew that this report had influenced the local government. Unfortunately, the researcher was unable to triangulate this or access data regarding its dissemination.²⁷⁵



Komikia’s comic on anoa extinction in Southeast Sulawesi, which replicates Riza’s reports into a comic.

The story’s emotional and rational resonance inspires readers to act

Before Riza’s EJN-funded reporting on the anoa, there have been other reports on the anoa issue published by Tempo Online (Tempo Online, 2017). However, the article published at Tempo was conducted in North Sulawesi Province and focused mostly on describing the operations of North Sulawesi conservation without giving any specific warnings of anoa extinction. In the words of La Bakry, the head of Buton District, EJN’s story was the first time someone had reported about the anoa in his province.

Riza’s story, which focused on the possibility of the extinction of the province’s symbol, triggered emotional responses from government officials and activists alike. The Head of Buton Regency, La Bakry, mentioned his fear that the anoa perishing from Buton Island would be “a slap to our face.” La Bakry explained that such a scenario would mean that Southeast Sulawesi Province had failed to achieve the 2013-2022 Strategic Action on Anoa Conservation. It was that spurred him and other officials from various agencies to act. Similar stories were told by activists who also felt passionately about the risk of extinction.

La Ode Kaida, the conservation division head in the Southeast Sulawesi Office of Natural Resource Conservation said, “Welcome to the land of anoa... but where are the anoas?”

In addition, the article’s content also worked on a rational level. Academic perspectives from Haluoleo University, a major public university in Southeast Sulawesi Province, served as a “wake-up call”. Their simply worded forecasts predicted the extinction of anoa in a business as a usual scenario. By integrating diverse perspectives and advocating for a multi stakeholder approach it also encouraged recognition of the need for increased cooperation between different government institutions.²⁷⁶ BKSDA staffs such as Prianto finally understand the perspective of the law-making institution such as the governor and the governor’s office that they are willing to help.



Image 3. Provincial Seal of Southeast Sulawesi Province with anoa at the centre

Importantly, the story also provided hope and inspiration. Riza’s story described how the anoa received better treatment and conservation in other areas of Indonesia. It gave two examples of successful anoa and maleo conservation in North Sulawesi Province. The article is not only successful in explaining the details of well-established conservation, but also explaining its successful strategy. As an example, Udin from WALHI mentioned that the success story from different regions across Sulawesi Island serves as an inspiration for replication in his province.²⁷⁷

Such motivations explained in the previous paragraph are shaped by two interconnecting factors. As an internal factor, the anoa has been considered the “provincial mascot” in Southeast Sulawesi. The extinction would be a shame for the province for being unable to conserve its symbol. As an external factor, many government stakeholders are eager to comply with the national Strategic Action on Anoa Conservation. Government stakeholders see the strategic action that mandates provinces in Sulawesi Island to have anoa conservation as a motivation.

The importance of intermediaries

Riza generally received positive feedback from his stories and digital platform. The feedback of the article is mostly related to its digital basis. Some stakeholders argued that digital media made it easy to be disseminated in many social media groups. However, several respondents also remarked that the article, which was published on social media, was relatively inaccessible. Grassroots activists such as Dani from KPA Tarsius argued that articles published online may not reach ordinary people and therefore have limited bottom-up impact.

Since the reports are exclusively published in digital media, Dani, the activist from KPA Tarsius, felt motivated to disseminate the message to stop anoa hunting among the local villagers. Dani argued that many Indonesians have low digital literacy, especially in the villages. Riza’s use of “scientific” language meant his reports were unlikely to be read by ordinary people in the villages. This motivated Dani and his team of local activists to start disseminating the messages to the villagers around anoa habitation. Dani believes it is important to socialise to villages close to anoa habitat, since he has firsthand experience of seeing local villagers kill anoa that sneaked into their villages looking for food.

This case study highlights the important role intermediaries play in increasing the accessibility of stories produced by EJN-supported journalists. It was only when government officers started disseminating Riza’s story through social media such as Facebook and WhatsApp that it began to make waves and influence action. Informants Prianto and La Bakry explained how Facebook and WhatsApp groups for government staff communities became the spearhead of the dissemination and has a domino effect. The WhatsApp and Facebook groups have been used by government officials long before EJN’s programme. It mainly served as a communication platform for both professional and informal conversation that has nothing to do with work. Prianto explained that the social media dissemination gave an opportunity for more government staff to realise that their effort to achieve the 2022 goal is not enough.

The challenge ahead

Despite the generally good intentions of government respondents who are keen to protect the provincial symbol, the vested interests of asphalt mining industries and power relations may act as an obstacle for the anoa conservation cause.

Most government informants stated that they are not bowing down to the asphalt mining industry to compromise the anoa conservation. Informant Prianto stated that the asphalt mining areas were not included in the conservation area plan that is mostly closer to the Lambusango Forest Reserve. In his words, the plan is considered as a win-win solution allowing industry and conservation.

However, triangulation from the journalist that quoted academic research explained that anoa must roam in the coastal areas where most asphalt mining companies are located. Furthermore, informant Udin from WALHI stated his pessimism that the parliament members may



Image 4. Asphalt mining company near the forest. Source: EJN-affiliated journalist.

not consider anoa conservation as a priority policy.

Udin stated that many parliamentarians may see conservation facilities as not being able to generate much money as mining industries. This drives home the important point that even though Riza's article contributed to important changes in attitudes and behaviours, the anoa remains vulnerable.

CONCLUSION

This case is an example of how a well-researched story can strike a chord with different audiences and inspire them to form relationships and take actions in support of animal conservation. It shows how the journalist managed to tell a story that struck rational and emotional chords with intended audiences that inspired them to advocate in support of policies and plans to save Buton's anoa from extinction.

This example highlights the value of journalists including success stories from other locations to inspire and motivate government action while also drawing attention to failure to implement policy. The article written by Riza and published on an EJN-managed platform told a compelling story and succeeded in engaging some audiences to an extent.

However, the positive aspects of this case also draw attention to the limited impacts of technical journalism without collaboration between journalists and other actors who act as intermediaries.

It also highlights how vested interests, such as mining companies, can block change. In fact, government informants explained how the anoa conservation progress still requires various discussions and hearings by higher levels of government.

All the above raise questions on if or how EJN training (and mentorship) might encourage journalists to make stories more accessible in support of greater impact. Perhaps EJN could support follow-up in the next year by journalists aiming to influence the highest policy-making bodies and the local community.

CORAL REEF CONSERVATION AND EDUCATION IN THE BAY OF TELA, HONDURAS

Report prepared by Lucy Calderón

BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH

In 2019, the Earth Journalism Network (EJN) launched the Mesoamerican Reef Reporting Project. As a result, a series of stories on the Mesoamerican Reef (MAR) was produced by journalists living in the MAR region. (Editor's note: The researcher who prepared this report was EJN's project lead for the MAR Reporting Project.)

One of the project fellows was Josué Quintana Gómez, from Honduras, who wrote four stories on the state of the corals in the Honduran Caribbean.

Then, in 2020, as part of its outcome harvesting, EJN sent a survey to all its journalist fellows to get information about the impacts that the published stories could have produced in terms of influence on communities and policymakers.

In that survey, Josué indicated that two of his stories: “Illegal fisheries, pollution and unsustainable tourism threaten Honduran corals”;²⁷⁸ and “Honduras inaugurates Central America’s first coral aquarium”²⁷⁹ had significant impacts among their audiences.

When filling out the survey, Josué indicated that his stories produced the following outcomes:

- “The number of rangers and military personnel in the Bay of Tela was increased, to protect the coral colonies and avoid overfishing.”
- “Citizens became more empowered about the existence of corals in Tela and they routinely go to the marine aquarium. Informal environmental education took hold after our reports. Several students from Mexico, Canada and Honduras invited me to share with them my experience in the production of this journalistic series.”

This report presents findings from research to substantiate these claims.

METHODOLOGY

To verify the outcomes claimed by Josué, and after receiving the needed training and guidelines to make the research, I read the two mentioned journalistic pieces to find the possible respondents (most of them were the same interviewed by Josué, because its knowledge on the topic and because they could have the testimony to verify the outcomes he claimed). I also worked in a research plan as suggested by the research leader Cathy Shutt.

Other important tool for this work was the stakeholder map to establish to which sector of the population the respondents belonged to. Then, I wrote a questionnaire for each of them, that was based in the generic research framework table provided by Cathy. This key research questions were checked by and discussed with Cathy too.

Triangulation was an important principle of the methodology. To do so, I made similar questions to all the interviewees about the increase in the number of rangers -that was one of the outcomes claimed by the journalist-, to have their answers and compare them.

Limitations: Of course, to interview Josué was an important step in this research process, to know how he knew or supposed about the outcomes he claimed for. Unfortunately, when I reached out to him and explained the importance of his participation, he was reluctant to cooperate. Perhaps the reason of his lack of cooperation was that he applied for the research position to do this work, and he was disappointed because he was not selected.

Also, coincidentally at the time that I tried to convince Josué to participate in the interview, hurricane Eta and then tropical storm Iota hit Northern Honduras. So, he told me that his priority was to report on the situation for the online media outlet where is currently working. After trying once more to get his cooperation, he suggested to send him the questionnaire because he would answer it as soon as he could, so I did it, but I never hear back from him. (Editor’s note: We later heard from Josué in an email response after the research had been completed and determined that he did not provide sufficient additional information to warrant inclusion here.)

My inability to interview Josué had significant impacts on the quality of evidence in this report. Although I was able to use my prior knowledge about how this story came about, I was not able to interview him about the evidence he had to support his outcome claims. Moreover, I was unable to ask his advice about other possible informants.

FINDINGS

The context and baseline situation

In the port city of Tela, Honduras (300 kilometres from Tegucigalpa, the Honduran capital), it is the Tela Bay Marine Wildlife Refuge, a protected area since 2017, that has some of the healthiest²⁸⁰ coral reefs along the entire Mesoamerican Reef, a giant marine ecosystem that stretches from Mexico through Belize, Guatemala, and Honduras.

The 86,300-hectare refuge contains 46 species of coral, 83 species of fish and 18 types of marine ecosystems. According to marine biologists, Honduras has the largest number of marine protected areas in Central America, and local scientists point out that live coral in Tela Bay average 70% per square meter, a record rating in the Mesoamerican Reef system.

But a growing tourism industry, unregulated fishing, and liquid- and solid-waste pollution are threatening the health of the reef and fish populations. So, to raise awareness about the topic and to make Hondurans feel proud of the valuable marine treasure they have in Tela, Josué Quintana proposed to write the story on Tela's reef.

For his report, he interviewed local and foreign conservationists who are doing scientific research, leading community projects, and working to spread the word about the importance of the coral preservation among the almost 120,000 inhabitants of Tela.

One of those environmental education efforts was the opening in 2019 of the first Central American marine aquarium in Honduras. Josué also wrote a story on the topic. To learn if citizens became more empowered about the existence of corals in Tela and if they routinely go to the marine aquarium, I interviewed Antal Börcsök, Manager at Tela Marine Research Centre, where the aquarium is located.

"How did we go about telling Hondurans that they have something super special (referring to Tela's reef)? How to explain that having the reef is like having a Roman coliseum or the Eiffel Tower? So, we decided to bring the reef to the people, and that is why we built the aquarium," Börcsök said.

"The only way to avoid damage to Tela's reef is by educating people, so they are the bastion that defends the resource. It doesn't matter if there is a law, if people do not protect the resource there is no way that things work," Börcsök added.

Börcsök thinks that "unfortunately, and I am going to be very honest, currently, most people receive their news on Facebook, and that has complicated everything, because real information, from serious media, no longer has the weight it had before," he remarked.

Publication of the reports

As fellow of the Mesoamerican Reef Reporting Project, Josué received a US\$1,000 grant from EJN. The subsidy helped him to visit the natural marine protected areas that he described in his stories, because most of the time, even you work for a formal daily newspaper, you not always receive the support you need to move to distant locations to get first-hand information on the topic you want to report on.

So, last year, when asked about the meant of the grant for his journalist work, Josué replied: "The grant I received to write about the Mesoamerican Reef was very useful. It strengthened my independence to make the journalistic field work and it is also motivating to know that the stories produced will transcend borders ... At a personal level, I hope to continue as an EJN ally. Honduras is a country with more than 90 protected areas but unfortunately [one] with many incidents [such as overfishing, mangrove deforestation and plastic pollution] and a population that needs to be empowered on environmental issues."²⁸¹

The story on illegal fishing, pollution, and unsustainable tourism (that was both printed and online) was published in the daily newspaper *La Tribuna*, which is owned by former president, Carlos Roberto Flores,²⁸² and aimed at a low-income audience. It was not possible to access the overall readership of this publication which was reported to have had a circulation of 40,000 in 2018.²⁸³ However as of January 2021, it has almost 270K followers on Twitter.²⁸⁴

The outline of the stories

The story on illegal fishing, pollution and unsustainable tourism tells how fishermen and local conservationists in recent years have seen an increase in poachers from northeastern Honduras who come in and “kill everything” in Tela Bay Marine Wildlife Refuge. It explains that inadequate numbers of rangers from the Honduran Armed Forces make it impossible to implement a local conservation management plan.

Another challenge facing the marine protected area is solid-waste pollution; and the evasion of formal entry to the zone to avoid paying fees that should go toward environmental conservation.

A second story explains that despite those threats, conservationists in Honduras are working hard to conserve the ecosystem and are teaching people from the coastal communities to live in harmony with nature. At Tela Marine Centre, scientists are making studies to better understand how Tela’s reefs are thriving even though they are growing in polluted waters. Foundation PROLANSATE is leading research to increase the number of fish in Los Micos lagoon that is affected by illegal fishing, and from which depend at least 1,100 families.

In short, these two stories show the ecosystem value of the refuge, its threats, and the work of conservationists to protect it.

A third story publicizes the opening of the first marine aquarium in Central America, which displays coral species from the Mesoamerican Reef.

The quality of the stories and engagement

Several informants mentioned the high quality of Josué’s articles and the constructive approach he takes to his reportage. One of the interviewees to verify the highlighted outcomes was Antal Böröcsök, Manager at Tela Marine Research Centre, a private institution.

When referring to Josué’s work, Böröcsök said he likes to give him interviews because Josué is not an extremist. What he meant is that Josué knows how to report on the topics without attacking people and creating problems among different Honduran society’s sectors.

Sobeyda Núñez, director at the Friends of Tela’s Reef Association, as well as Nelbin Bustamante, executive director at Foundation for the Protection of Lancetilla, Punta Sal and Textiguat (PROLANSATE, by its initials in Spanish) also agreed that Josué is a good reporter, that he is always willing to support them.

Concerning the two stories on Honduran corals produced by Josué, all the interviewees assured that both were well written. Núñez said that she received good comments and congratulations for her participation in the story about illegal fishing. She added that environmental journalism and the publication of news on this topic is important because it helps inform people about a specific issue at local or national level.

These qualitative observations were supported to some extent by *La Tribuna*’s analytics. Contacted via WhatsApp, Ninfa Arias, editor-in-chief at *La Tribuna* newspaper, wrote that Josué’s article on illegal fishing had a high traffic, in relation to the reading level shown by other works related to the topic. “The publication was one of the main notes. I can say it had a good impact,” she wrote.

The story on the bay was shared 2,700 times and had been seen 4,700 times.

And by December 12th, 2020, the story on the aquarium that also was printed and online was shared 3,600 times and had been seen 7,300. However, it is difficult to assess what that means in the absence of comparative data from other local sources.

Contribution to claimed outcomes

None of the interviewees could verify that after Josué's article publication on illegal fishing, there was an increase in the number of marines assigned to the naval station there.²⁸⁵

Bustamante, Executive Director at PROLANSATE, an institution that co-manages the National Park Jeanette Kawas where the Micos lagoon is located, said that the number of marines assigned to the naval station has always been 8. He also did not know about any increase in the number of marines assigned to Los Micos lagoon after the publication of Josué's story. Núñez shared this view.

Bustamante added that more than the number of marines assigned to the naval station, the point is that they should enforce the law and they do not always do it. At the end of the day, the natural resources are affected and, also PROLANSATE's staff, because when they want to apply regulations, the governance of the management of natural resources is lost.

Börcsök affirmed that the number of rangers in Tela Bay cannot be increased because there is no budget. "The navy can lend us as many people as they want. We can have 40, and that is not the problem. The problem is the budget. Who is going to feed them and with what fuel are we going to do patrols?"

Castro said that in the naval station located at Los Micos lagoon cannot be less than 6 marines, and always there are between 8 and 13. He also indicated that when DIGEPESCA makes patrols, only 4 marines can join them, because if they make seizures, they will not all fit on the boat.

"Our problem is the fuel for the patrols; the lagoon measures 38 square kilometers of water," he said. The government gives us fuel, but it takes a lot to patrol. It's about a 20 gallon drive each time we patrol. With this pandemic that we have had, the economic support has been withdrawn," Castro remarked.

"I manage an Annual Operating Plan and I put in the least I can do, otherwise [my supervisors] ask what happened," Castro said.

Contribution to increased numbers of visitors to the aquarium

Evidence that another of Josué's stories had led to citizens' empowerment about the existence of corals in Tela and routine visits to the marine aquarium was weak.²⁸⁶ However, informants raised important questions on whether increased footfall is a meaningful proxy for empowerment. On the one hand, Börcsök said "the story definitely influenced the quantity of people visiting the aquarium." However, when asked about how they measured the number of people attending the aquarium and if that visits influence in some way their lifestyle, he answered that one of the problems that NGOs have is that they want to measure everything from 1 to 5. "Changing people's minds and the way they use their resources is not something that you can do in one to three days, and that you can measure with a 'mydographer' or checking boxes of how many trainings were done and how many people arrived," he said.

"For example, if 800 people attended a workshop, how to know if they came just to drink coffee or to be trained; or if they took something in their hearts and left the meeting with the idea of changing something. Changing the mindset of an entire town [towards environmental marine resources] has to be in the long-term," he added.

How journalism contributes to change

Even though we were not able to substantiate outcomes, informants interviewed for this report shared ideas on how journalism like Josué's support environmental conservation and community resilience.

For Bustamante, environmental journalism is the best that can happen to environmental conservation. However, he says: "Journalism should propose solutions. It is necessary to point out the things that are bad, but also see in what way the commitment of the authorities and the communities to propose things can be achieved, to go from the protest to the proposal."

Rolando Castro, director at the government institution General Directorate of Fisheries and Aquaculture (DIGEPESCA, by its initials in Spanish) in Tela Bay, said that during the season of closures (when is forbidden to fish), local media outlets contribute to inform people about it.

Börcsök indicated that journalistic reports or environmental stories help because they expose problems to the public, so they can be aware of their existence. "But beware, because a poorly done report can be just as damaging and twist the situation. It does not matter how environmentalist the report sounds. If you rather confront the parties and create division and hatred, you do not solve anything. Rather, what you are doing is that the parties cannot later cooperate with each other," he added.

Though several respondents appreciated work by environmental journalists like Josué, they also commented on the limited impacts of single articles. When asking Börcsök about his thoughts on environmental journalism and the way news can produce an impact on their audiences or the state of thing, he answered: "For a story published in a formal media outlet to have an impact or produce an immediate solution, it would have to report about a problem occurring in the moment... what can I tell you... an oil spill, for example. But if it is about something chronic, it does not produce the immediate reaction of authorities. However, ... do not downplay it just because there was no immediate response. As I said before, that is not the way we should measure things. It is the sum of all thing that will make the change in the long-term."

According to Núñez, stories like Josué's only make "noise" during the day of publication. After it, nothing happens.

Moreover, one informant implied that shifts in media consumption means serious media articles need to be intermediated on social media to get attention. "Most people receive their news on Facebook, and that has complicated everything, because real information, from serious media, no longer has the weight it had before," Börcsök remarked.

CONCLUSIONS

The support provided by EJM to Josué Quintana through the Mesoamerican Reef Reporting Project was very useful and enabled him to produce a series of stories on the Mesoamerican Reef in Honduras that otherwise could have not been possible due to financial limitations. Although the researcher was not able to speak with him directly, in his eventual email response he did explain the importance of EJM's support.

Even though the outcomes claimed by journalist could not be proved, respondents agreed that his work is valuable, and that environmental reporting is important to raise awareness about a specific topic.

When a journalist has credibility in the country where he works, it is easier for him to get sensitive information. In this case, as respondents know Josué's work and they trust him, they talked to him with freedom about the impacts of illegal fishing and pollution on Tela's reef.

In countries like Honduras, where environmental problems and other situations are chronic, as one of the

respondents said, it is important to continue informing on them, so they can have a better chance to get the attention they deserve.

WILDLIFE RESERVE PROTECTION IN ARUA, UGANDA

Report prepared by Clement Aluma Aribo

“Though we were hunters, the white rhinos were always our treasured animals, which we never killed even if they came up to our compounds,” said Tom Abiriga, 76, local council II chairman of Ayavu parish, Ogoko sub county, Madi Okollo district.

This case study explores how a local journalist’s story about the Ajai Game Reserve triggered a wildlife conservation debate on local radio and social media, including renewed calls for a fence around the Reserve. The case reflects on why such an important discussion on conservation was relatively short lived and did not reach or include local communities living around the Reserve or have any impact on policy makers.

Background to the research

This report presents findings from research to substantiate a journalist’s claims that a story “Poachers’ den turns wildlife haven: The Story of Ajai” written by Richard Drasimaku and published in the media outlets West Nile Today and InfoNile, and supported by EJN, stimulated public debate and renewed calls for a fence around the Ajai Game Reserve.

Methodology

Following an orientation and training, I developed a stakeholder map and a research framework. Respondents were then chosen according to the roles they played in the story. Expert informants were selected according to their knowledge of the issue being investigated. A few community members were also chosen randomly to assess how far the message played over radio had reached and if or how it was received by different kinds of audience. This was done to provide a rich and descriptive account of the topic of exploration.

Customised interview guides were then developed to engage the different key informants. Specific questions and strategies were developed to facilitate conversations in meaningful ways.

I interviewed local council leaders who are in charge of political and policy decisions. These included, Mr. Acema Dria Genesis, the elected political leader of Madi Okollo district; Ms. Grace Munduru, the district vice chairperson and leader of government business in the district council; Bhakit Oulanya, the game warden of Ajai wildlife reserve; Sadaraka Angudubo, the project manager of Honey Pride, the organisation that has partnered with the locals to abandon poaching for beekeeping; Patrick Nyakuta, an environment expert; Richard Drasimaku, the author of the story; and Mbaaga Madira, Denis Oringi and Moses Alinda, all journalists who reviewed the story on Access FM radio. Other interviewees included Thomas Enziku, Tom Abridge, Yuda Amagule, Terezina Anguderu and Bandale Oranja among the local community members.

All the interviews were recorded and then transcribed.

The data collected was triangulated through cross verification from more than two sources. This was to test the consistency of findings obtained through different instruments and sources.

Limitations: The majority of my informants seemed knowledgeable about the issues but had not read the story or heard it discussed on the radio by the time of interviews. The reasons for this are explored in the findings. One of the limitations to this project has been limited time and power outages in our place here

which has really affected my progress of work. Another has been the key informants who failed to honour appointments despite accepting.

FINDINGS

Context and baseline situation

The Ajai Game Reserve is located 52 kilometres southeast of Arua in Ogoko sub-county, Madi-Okollo district, along the River Nile.

The 166-square-kilometer reserve is one of the three wildlife protected areas in West Nile alongside Mt. Otze forest reserve in Moyo district and Mt. Kei forest reserve in Yumbe district, which the Uganda Wildlife Authority manages together with the National Forestry Authority.

Unlike the other two reserves, Ajai is recovering from the heavy poaching of the 1970s and 80s that led to the loss of its treasured animal species, the white rhinos. In 2008, the Uganda Wildlife Authority gave a 20-year concession to a private company, Uganda Safaris, and one of the issues in the agreement was fencing the 166km game reserve. But 12 years on, local people see nothing on the ground and the cause of the deaths of the rhino and what should now happen to the reserve are hotly contested.

Authorities say it was the hunting by communities for game meat that severely affected the animal population.²⁸⁷ This assertion is however disputed by the community especially in regard to the white rhinos also known as “Obiriva” in the local language.²⁸⁸ According to them, local people had always treasured the rhinos and never killed them however close the animal came to them.

Now that the white rhinos that were the sole reason for the issuance of a protection status are no longer there, some local people are against the idea of a game reserve or a fence. A section of locals are opposed to the fencing because they claim it will stop them from accessing forest resources like firewood, which is the source of their energy for cooking, and grass for thatching their houses.²⁸⁹ But others are in agreement with the fencing because it would stop wildlife from within the reserve area from destroying their crops from fields.²⁹⁰ They are also optimistic that a game park status would attract tourists with benefits to them.

Disagreement about what should be done grew in 2016 when the Uganda Wildlife Authority increased its presence in the area. In addition to more game rangers, the UWA reviewed its strategic plan that included the unresolved issue of erecting a fence around the Reserve.²⁹¹

Local officials who wanted to protect the reserve from poachers became involved in the debate. Before Madi Okollo became a district in 2019, district councillors hailing from the area then under Arua district started to agitate for a fence around the game reserve.²⁹² When the district became operational in 2019, the first council sitting in January 2020 moved a motion to upgrade the status of the reserve to a national game park. This motion is still pending approval.

As one of the interviewees noted, previously, it was not only poaching that was of environmental concern, but also cutting trees along the periphery of the reserve. Now as community is into apiary, they are slowly appreciating the importance of trees and nature’s gift.²⁹³

In summary, different stakeholders wanted the fence for their own reasons. While the district local government wants the fence to protect the game reserve against poachers, local people are divided and the Uganda Wildlife Authority are undecided as they lack money to do the work.

Media coverage of wildlife related issues

Wildlife stories had been reported in the media before this article, but rarely. Three game reserves in the area had received some attention. According to Patrick Nakuta, Mt Kei has been known for illegal tree lumbering while hunting in Ajai and Otse has been the focus of some stories.

But according to journalist Osman Draga, accessibility to those areas is very difficult for most journalists because they are located in remote areas where transport costs are very expensive and roads are very poor.

According to Mr Felix Warom Okello, the bureau chief of Daily Monitor Newspaper in West Nile region, the last story they wrote about Ajai game reserve was in 2015 where district councillors in the area were demanding the return of white rhinos and fencing of the reserve as wildlife were destroying people's crops.

Writing and publishing the story

Richard Drasimaku is an experienced news correspondent with a demonstrated history of working in the media production industry. He has worked as a correspondent for radio Voice of Life, the Observer Newspaper and the government owned New Vision printing and publishing company.

Skilled in photography, web content writing, investigative reporting and storytelling, he has a Bachelor of Mass Communication degree focused in Public Relations from Makerere University.

"Poachers' den turns wildlife haven: The Story of Ajai" was Richard's third story about Ajai wildlife game reserve. He was one of the few journalists who had previously written on conservation issues. He had published two other stories about poaching at the Ajai wildlife game reserve and was aware about new developments in the area.

"When I saw an advert by InfoNile about the opportunity to publish a story on the internet platform, I did not hesitate, I applied and was taken first for the training and that is when I made up my mind to write a third story, offering solutions about what has been happening there," Drasimaku says.

"When I wrote the second story about Ajai in 2017, poaching had reduced drastically and this is why I thought about this one," he added. "This one is a solution story. Having recovered from poaching, I wanted to highlight to the world how the management of Ajai wildlife reserve managed to stamp out poaching or at least control it."

Richard believes this is important because poaching is one of the drawbacks or most serious challenges that faces wildlife conservation not just in Uganda, but in other East African countries. Having identified a situation where poaching had been successfully controlled, Richard believed it could be replicated. As he thought the Ajai approach might differ from others tried elsewhere, he was keen to write it up, believing it offered important lessons which could be learnt and used in replication.

Prior to the grant, Richard attended six weeks of training supported by EJM in data visualization, geo-journalism and many other skills. The training was run by Code for Africa, a civic technology and data journalism organization, with support from InfoNile, an EJM-supported outlet, and EJM itself. This training and the subsequent grant helped him write the piece.²⁹⁴ Richard had no prior experience using data or geo-journalism and graphics in the article provide evidence that the training equipped him with skills he was able to apply in his work.²⁹⁵

"Given the situation we were in, the COVID-19 situation, we face financial challenges because we were not making money and therefore the grant came in handy," he adds. The grant allowed him to move to areas which are often difficult to access under normal circumstances because journalists lack resources. Thanks to professional and cordial relations with his editors, his pitch to get published was soon approved.

Overview of the story

The story includes the main actors in the reserve such as the game warden and the community members who are introduced by the author.

It is set in the remote location of Madi Okollo district, formally part of Arua district, in the West Nile region of Uganda. The author describes the environment and the surrounding with pictures and makes the reader appreciate what it's all about. The story does not, however, discuss or delve into the long-standing question of the fence around the game reserve.

This story plot is about a community which has abandoned their hunting ways and are adopting new ways of coexistence with the game reserve. But there is still a challenge as some community members are finding it hard to adapt to the new ways. Finally, it offers solutions to the challenges, including the apiary business, memorandums and assistances offered by UWA.

Story engages local audiences

The West Nile publication was marking its 10-month anniversary in September 2020, and at the time the article was published, it had less than 500 views per story.²⁹⁶ By the beginning of December, this story alone had received 1,554 views. This implies that the story alone had driven traffic to the site more than any other of their ordinary stories published, and that views are still growing.

One of the reasons for the increased traffic to the website may have been because the story was reviewed on September 4, 2020 on Access FM during their 30-minute-long daily English language press review radio show. During this programme, Mbaaga Madira, Denis Oringi and Moses Alinda made the local game reserve the major issue of discussion.²⁹⁷ Panelists and callers asked why so little was being done to promote it as a tourist attraction. The discussions then drifted towards the need for a fence after a caller had made inquiries about the progress of the fence construction.²⁹⁸

The nature of his question suggested that the story had reminded the caller about the proposed fencing of the game reserve and he was asking what UWA was doing to fast-track implementation. He wanted to know what was being done to protect the game reserve against land grabbers who may want to use part of the reserve land for cultivation and poachers who easily enter the protected land without detection. It could be argued these discussions were not in any way driven by strong demands for the game reserve to be fenced; the question just came in circumstantially. Nonetheless, the account of the discussion illustrates that Richard's story triggered a useful conversation about wildlife and conservation.

While the host of the show wanted to drive the chat towards the need for the protection of this animal sanctuary using the fence, other callers were inquiring about when the white rhinos would be returned.

This radio program inspired a subsequent talk show on the same radio station where the area game warden Mr. Bhakhit Oulanya joined to broadly discuss the issues of the game reserve.²⁹⁹

Additionally, the story also prompted interest and a small discussion on social media on the day it was published related to the lack of facilities at the reserve.³⁰⁰ The initial comments about the story that was posted on the Facebook page of West Nile Action Plan had only seven (7) comments but more than 30 likes. The story stimulated a little discussion on this site regarding the need to establish better facilities to reap opportunities from the untapped tourism potential of the wildlife reserve.³⁰¹ This site is mainly for political activists, and we were unable to explore it further due to political sensitivities at the current time.

Intermediation and motivation

The question of whether the original story was read or not or was accessed on social media depended on

the category of interview informants you spoke to. The journalists and the environmentalists I interviewed, relatively educated and English-speaking with reasonable access to the internet, did have access.

Listenership figures show that radio is the most popular medium in Uganda. In 2017-18, 78% of individuals said they listened to the radio, according to the National Information Technology Survey [4]. Therefore, arguably, Access FM played an important intermediary role in making the story accessible to more people.

It was unusual for them to review a local story on the station, which usually reviews *New Vision* and *Daily Monitor*, two national dailies in the country. They chose the story because they wanted to feature the beauty of wildlife, the importance of protecting it and how humans around the reserve can coexist.³⁰² They wanted to expose the beauty of the reserve nearby which people did not know about. They thought the preservation of an animal sanctuary was important and wanted this message to go down to the community, that the place is not only important to them but the entire West Nile region.

They also had another motive. Access FM reviewed this story because they wanted to target the education institutions in the region. They wanted these institutions, instead of always taking students far away to Murchison Falls National Game Park for study tours, to realize they had one in their own backyard which would be cheaper.³⁰³ Importantly, they also mentioned that they had picked the story up because they trusted the integrity of the journalist as well as some of the sources he quoted. In addition, they saw it as their duty to report on local issues relevant to the West Nile.³⁰⁴

Although the radio show and social media expanded the story's reach, it remained inaccessible to informants in local communities of Madi Okollo district and Arua city. None of the communities interviewed had heard or participated in the discussion.

The radio journalists remarked that it would have been important for them to hear the story on the radio or read about it themselves because they are the primary beneficiaries of the fence and therefore expressing their views and sharing their thoughts about the fence would have enriched the discussions on radio and social media. As Mbaaga Madira stated during the interview, "We like such nature-related stories. This was the first of its kind we had reviewed and the calls we received were not residents in Madi Okollo but people who listened and got concerned. Their concern was mostly about white rhinos which they were demanding that they be returned."

Factors that limited the story's impact

While Richard's story was compelling, and stimulated important public debate, it did not gain significant traction. This research identified several possible reasons for this. The story itself, as well as the radio review, were in English, making it inaccessible to vast swathes of the local population. This is not only an issue of language but also connectivity among poor communities.

Although online platforms are growing in number, only 13% of the adult population in Uganda have access to the internet within their household. The consumption of online material is still low in this area and this is because the Information Communication Technology (ICT) infrastructure is still not well-developed. This makes accessibility to such online materials for rural communities a challenge.³⁰⁵ While local people have phones, they are not smart phones and data is too expensive for many to afford. They would rather buy airtime and make calls compared with purchasing data to navigate the internet where they don't trust the source of information.

A recent study points out that in emerging economies, especially in rural or remote areas, more than four billion people still remain unconnected to the internet (Facebook, 2016). In addition, there are gaps in high-speed internet access that have important effects on media access such as streaming video.

Therefore, online publications in the area, such as West Nile Today, a relatively small entity and a new entrant into the online news business, is likely to struggle to reach a wide audience. They lack their own social media page where viewers can easily click to reach their main site. Moreover, they are finding it even more difficult due to the downturn in the economy in the wake of Covid-19. When the coronavirus pandemic hit Uganda in March 2020, they lost their source of revenue in terms of advertising money which was mainly from education institutions and hospitality.³⁰⁶ This meant they had to suspend printing their magazine, which had a potentially bigger audience, to concentrate on publishing all their news online.

CONCLUSION

Research for this report substantiated Richard's claim. Support from EJM led to the publication of a compelling and engaging story on wildlife conservation that made a small contribution to renewed discussion about a fence around Ajai Park. But arguably this is only part of the story.

The story, which focused on local wildlife, struck a chord with local radio journalists, motivating them to share it with a wider audience during a regular review programme. By so doing they triggered a short debate about the game reserve while also driving new readers to the West Nile Today website that was only clocking 500 readers on average at the time the story was published. In addition, the discussion triggered a second show featuring a local game warden.

Richard's story further sparked a discussion on social media about the need to establish better facilities to reap opportunities from the untapped tourism potential of Ajai wildlife reserve.

On a positive note, this is a good case study of how a well written solution-based story written by local trusted journalists for local audiences can make an important contribution to EJM's goal of supporting conversations about conservation and reducing environmental harm. However, it also illustrates that such stories need to be followed up and made more accessible to wider audiences with low literacy and connectivity if they are to have impact. This remains a challenge in the context of rural Uganda.

Bridging the digital divide requires making internet publications and stories accessible for the poorest people. Platforms such as West Nile supported by EJM will have to rely on active intermediaries such as radio stations and CSOs to disseminate the stories published by the journalists they train and support.

ENVIRONMENTAL JOURNALISM IN BANGLADESH

Report prepared by Md. Nadiruzzaman

This report joins discussions of two separate EJM-funded reports to bring in a wider debate of environmental journalism in Bangladesh. Though two different journalists with very different skills set led the environmental reports on different geographical settings, the claims about impacts of those reports have a common thread — both said the stories resonated with actors linked to policy and legislation. In both the cases of Bangladesh, following a review of the content, identifying, and interviewing the relevant stakeholders, critically examining the clues provided by the reporters, taking account of expert opinions, this report could not find enough evidence to substantiate the claims of impact of those reports. At the same time, this report also identifies some key achievement of EJM initiatives. Thus, it proposes an adjustment of lenses to spot the right impact of all activities.

BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH

The following sections unfold a detailed analysis of the subject matter. This is by no means an endeavour to undermine the importance of what EJM is striving to achieve. Instead, this report recommends EJM readjusts the lenses it uses to judge the impacts of environmental journalism it supports. Instead of looking for the impacts of single stories, EJM might consider assessing its role in supporting a wider coordinated movement seeking to inform stakeholders about policies and practices relating to environmental governance.

Having established that the outcomes could not be substantiated, early in the research, the lead researcher and I agreed it would be most constructive to take an appreciative inquiry approach to explore the stories. This is a half-glass-full approach to understand the strengths in individuals, team and system and envision future pathways pragmatically.³⁰⁷ This report adopts this investigative lens and strives to reimagine a situation to observe both the reporter and the created storyline from an observable distance. Therefore, the following sections give a background of the reporters and their stories and claimed impacts, explain the methodology, critically review the contents of the stories, reflects on the claimed impacts, and ends with final thoughts and possible ways forward.

EVALUATED STORIES AND CLAIMED OUTCOMES

[Gone with shifting tides - how climate change is wiping out coastal professions, lifestyle](#)

This story strives to pull several strings together:

1. How coastal marine biodiversity and environment are changing because of 'climate change',
2. How this gradually disconnects people from nature through constraining their nature-based livelihood opportunities, as manifested in changing patterns of naming children; and
3. How do we restore integrity to the marine environment? The report finds that climate change, pollution and economic growth are jointly putting pressure on marine resources, which is recognised by relevant governmental institutions.
4. Finally, the report urges to restore marine environmental integrity through complying with the government's plan of protecting biodiversity and moving toward ecotourism.

Reporter Shamsuddin Illius, a local journalist from the Chittagong region, is currently working as bureau chief of Chittagong for the Business Standard. He did not have experience in environmental reporting until 2019, when he obtained an EJM fellowship and underwent training by EJM on issues around environmental degradation and climate change. According to Illius, the EJM workshop was the first training in his journalism career on environmental issues and immensely inspired him to report on environmental issues in future. The subject report funded by EJM was Illius's first attempt in environmental journalism and was published in the Business Standard (a Bangladeshi English newspaper) on the September 6, 2019.

Both the reporter and an EJM Bangladesh focal point claim that following the publication of this article in the Business Standard, the government implemented stricter monitoring to preserve marine resources in the area and has publicly talked about these issues. For instance, they claimed that the story motivated the Department of Environment (DOE) to conduct a series of operations to arrest illegal smugglers and hosted several awareness programs to stop illegal smuggling of marine resources. Both the EJM affiliates also claim that the report has been picked up and referred to by other popular national press media, which helped to draw the attention of the relevant governmental institutions. Below are links of two important follow-up stories by a popular national Daily, Kaler Kontho (supplied by the EJM affiliates).

The follow-up stories are:

1. [“পাচারকালে কক্সবাজার সৈকত থেকে ৩০ টন শামুক ঝনিক উদ্ধার,”](#) published on August 13, 2020.
2. [“জীববৈচিত্র্য রক্ষায় কক্সবাজারে বছরব্যাপী প্রচারণা কার্যক্রম শুরু”](#) published on September 3, 2020.

[Another shipping disaster in the Sundarbans](#)

The political sensitivity of the second story is much higher than the earlier one, as it takes place in the

Sundarbans, which UNESCO has declared as a natural heritage site. There is a massive disagreement between the environmental activists and growing government-supported corporate interests around the Sundarbans. The Rampal coal power plant is a controversial bilateral project between Bangladesh and India, and as the report mentions in its concluding remarks, is a potential threat to the Sundarbans.

In this setting, journalist Sheikh Rokon covered the story of a shipwreck inside the Sundarbans on January 13, 2017. The story describes the government's slow response to all previous accidents of such kind and raises the civil society's environmental concerns. The Third Pole published this report in their online portal on the January 16, 2017, 3 days after the event.

Sheikh Rokon is a celebrity figure in Bangladesh as a river activist. He is the General Secretary of Riverine People, a civil society movement that works around saving rivers from manmade obstructions and pollutions to the natural flow of channels. However, Rokon's work with EJN's fellowship is on the Sundarbans and he has not carried out any prior work on the subject matter. He agreed to prepare a report on the shipwreck event on a request from EJN's Bangladesh correspondent and took 2 days to do desk research, interview relevant individuals and write up a draft. He is an Assistant Editor of a leading Bengali national daily, Somokal. However, reporting on an international news outlet and in English is not common in his everyday journalistic works.

There is a contested view on the claim of the report's outcome. The description of the story provided by EJN's outcome harvesting summary suggested the publication of this story in The Third Pole led to a recommendation by the World Bank to the governments of Bangladesh and India to avoid the routes through the forest as the two countries step up cooperation on water transport. According to Rokon's statement, his report has had several hundred shares on social media (Facebook), but he seemed unaware of it contributing to any World Bank advice to both the governments on water routes through the forest.

METHODOLOGY

As highlighted at the very outset, this report intends to review the given two stories to critically reflect on the content of the story and evaluate how those two stories were received and reacted to by their audiences. The first part of this work is accomplished through engaging with the subject matter, looking into contesting knowledge and discourses, understanding relevant actors and their politics, putting on lenses of justice, equity, gender, environmental integrity and so on.

These efforts also provide a foundation for the second intention, which seeks to understand the reach of the story and how that makes a difference. For example, has the story sparked new knowledge? Has it contributed to changes in any perception or behaviour for people or a group? Has it mobilised any institution to change its course of action as claimed in the outcome harvesting? The earlier section describes two cases and outcomes that were claimed to have resulted through the publication of those stories. The remainder of the report investigates the evidence to support those claims and points out some other outcomes worth highlighting.

The interviews were designed to understand the context of each story, to reflect on the claimed outcome, and discover how and why they were achieved as indicated in the research guidance. The interviews with the EJN Fellow and the EJN correspondent helps to understand the story better and situate that to the context. My bachelor, master's and Ph.D. degrees in Geography and Environment and significant research experiences on climate change and development in Bangladesh have given me the foundation to relate my knowledge to the subject matter and identify potential informants to understand the problem better. Speaking to relevant journalists and experts and quick literature review helped to update me on the topic.

Since the most significant impact of the news report was claimed to be an increased intensity of environmental regulation at the local level, I spoke to local administrators and law enforcement officers who have a better

understanding on how law enforcement and environmental regulations are operated at the local level. As the informants and I were known to each other from previous work and work-related networks, there was easy communication among us, and we had a high-quality interview. Therefore, I did not need any gatekeeper for an initial introduction. This helped immensely. I was able to get beyond the tension that often occurs between informants and researchers and openly discuss sensitive issues (i.e., power, governance, inherent corruption, inter-agency struggles, and so on). This added richness to the subject matter. However, discussions with the government officers were on a principle of not to mention them on sensitive matters. And all of them agreed to give their testimonial on a more general question. I had the opportunity to revisit the informants for clarity on every detail. I strictly followed the standard research ethics principles in terms of communicating with my informants, asking for consent, maintaining information transparency with them, and maintaining the privacy of their information. Below is the list of informants and their relevance to making a good case.

Table 1: List of informants

No.	Name and their relevance to my cases	Story 1	Story 2
1	Mr. Zobaidur Rahman ('Soeb') — the EJN and The Third Pole focal point in Bangladesh. He is also involved with an international development agency in Bangladesh. Soeb encourages and supports local and national level journalists in Bangladesh to engage more in environmental reporting. He described the Bay of Bengal (BoB) project and explained EJN's activities in Bangladesh and his understanding of the two cases and their impacts.	Y	Y
2	Mr. Pavel Partha is a Director at the Bangladesh Resource Center for Indigenous Knowledge (BARCIK, a national NGO), an environmental activist and researcher. Climate change and culture, indigenous peoples' rights and climate justice are his core area of interests. He was one of the trainers at the EJN workshop where Illius participated. His ideas influenced Illius's first environmental report. Here is his bio.	Y	
3	Mr. Sidhartha Sankar Kundu, Mr. Sharif Hossain Sagar, and Mr. Sanuar Hossain are former UNOs (Upazila Nirbahi Officer), the top rank civil servant at the lowest tier of local government institution and all of them are now serving at the secretariat. Both Mr. Kundu and Mr. Sagar served at Cox's Bazar local government administration and have experiences of administering mobile courts on several occasions including events of environmental protection initiatives. Therefore, they would be able to highlight environmental protections in local contexts. All three informants would also be able to compare their similar works in other parts of Bangladesh.	Y	
4	Mr. Md Rakib Khan is an Additional Superintendent of Police serving at Cox's Bazar. Local administration asks supports from the police for administering mobile court and restoring order in the locality. Mr. Rakib, being one of the high-rank police officers at district level, have insights and data on how police operations work at the local level. Thus, he explained to me the situations that trigger them from going for any action. For example, are mollusc collectors in their list of targets, etc.	Y	

5	Saiful Islam is a local trader of mollusc products at Cox's Bazar. He was introduced by a friend of mine who is working in a development agency in Cox's Bazar for more than two years. Saiful imports mollusc from Myanmar, Thailand, Philippines, and China. He also sells local products. It was extremely useful to learn from his experiences.	Y	
6	Ms. Shahsnaj Rahman, Assistant Director, Department of Environment (DoE). She explained how DoE functions with supports from other governmental departments, politics and tensions within different government departments, bottlenecks on accomplishing environmental protections considering the two cases, and so on.	Y	Y
7	Iftexhar Mahmud, Environment correspondent, Prothom Alo, is a very highly regarded environmental journalist in Bangladesh and covers reports for the highest circulated Bengali newspaper in Bangladesh. He has published the highest number of reports on Rampal and marine routes through the Sundarbans since 2011. He was like an encyclopaedia in terms of obtaining a glance view of both the cases and quickly identifying relevant references and contacts to discuss the subject matter further.	Y	Y
8	Professor Anu Mohammed is a development economist at Jahangirnagar University, and he is the member-secretary of the National Committee to Protect Oil, Gas, Mineral Resources, Power and Ports. He is one of the doyen figures of the 'Save Sundarbans' movements. The National Committee to Protect Oil, Gas, Mineral Resources, Power and Ports is a well-coordinated and vocal prominent civil society group against the Rampal coal power plant project and against the government's decision to establish the power plant within proximity to the Sundarbans.		Y
9	Mr. Istiak Sobhan is an environmental activist and a climate change expert in the World Bank, Bangladesh. He has a PhD in natural conservation and served at managerial positions in international organizations like IUCN and World Bank. He discusses WB's involvement in development projects in Bangladesh. He also highlights on WB's strategic stand while dealing with politically sensitive issues.		Y
10	Ms. Razwana Hasan, Executive Director, Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association (BELA), is a leading environmental activist and she is the founder of BELA, a pioneer NGO in Bangladesh on environmental law.		Y

At a very early stage, while I did the desk research, I was trying to understand the stories and make sense of them. Thus, I came up with a list of questions, which would help me to understand the story and crosscheck their claimed impacts. We had regular meetings with the other researchers working in other countries for the same research project and exchanged our views and approaches. This helped us to obtain instant peer review of our work. Once reviewed and vetted, the questions were asked to the concerned reporters of the two cases and the EJM focal point in Bangladesh. Once they responded to those questions, the cases were further reviewed to determine if any question is unanswered or need further clarification and potential informants to reach out to answer fill those gaps in. Later, relevant informants were asked a set of question concerning their domain and every single interview added some level of clarity to the stories.

Every single informant was provided with the questions in advance so that they could reflect upon the answers. This was extremely useful in terms of respondents opening. For example, while the two reporters were approached at the very first time to understand the background of their stories, they asked for time to recollect their memories to the subject stories as they have been working on several other projects since then. The same approach was applied with the activists, experts and government officials and other informants and it helped to stay focused on the discussions.

Now the other important approach this research adopted is a triangulation of information. All the information on the subject matter is seen as dots which individually bear less sense and collectively create an image. Dots are like graphic information on the story and changing the positions of dots impacts on the making of the image. Clarity of the position and shape of the dots thus becomes extremely vital. This is achieved in a combination of two measures:

1. clarity of meaning, and
2. reflecting that meaning to with a different set of mirrors.

For example, 'collection of molluscs' is a dot. Its collector, trader, officials from the DoE, local government, police, and many others are associated to this business in a myriad way. Understanding all their takes on this subject matter gives shape to the dot. Combining their opinions to obtain an aggregated meaning gives the position of the dot. The sharpness of the image depends on the diversity and frequency of opinions, where a researcher makes a cognitive decision based on available resources (mostly time and budget).

When we spoke to all the parties mentioned in the above table, none of them disagreed that extracting molluscs is illegal, however, reaction to that task being reported and sentencing someone for performing that job was being disputed. Therefore, it was important to learn about the situation when the people in the administrative job reacts to a report or an event and what the magnitude of that reaction could be. Talking to a reasonable number of relevant people gives a consensus on their opinions. The table above on the informants would give a sense of who is being consulted before writing the report and how that adds value to this work.

Having said that, it is also important to recognise that fact that the methodology was very much adaptive to the Covid new-normal situation, where despite constrained time limit, virtual meetings were optimised to reach the goal.

In Bangladesh, a controversial [Digital Security Act](#) promulgated in 2018 creates risk for researchers, journalists and their informants. Therefore, I have not named or quoted from some key informants.

FINDINGS

[Gone with shifting tides - how climate change is wiping out coastal professions, lifestyle](#)

Journalist capacity

The journalist did not have enough knowledge and skills to write the story, even after he obtained a short training on climate change in the middle of 2019. In a few months after that training, he came up with his first report on an environmental issue, which strived to explain livelihood loss as an impact of climate change (with no reference to the science of climate change), consequent environmental degradation and regulations which contradict with the earlier section, and enforcement of the law for environmental protection (which seems contested as the journalist was criminalising the group of people, he showed empathy at the very outset). This report certainly has huge areas to improve further. Though the journalist tried to weave through three plots, it was not a coherent story at all, which is explained in the below paragraphs. Mr. Pavel Partha, a trainer of EJM workshop, expressed similar concerns about the report.

Climate change

The headline of the report suggests that people collecting molluscs are losing their livelihoods because of climate change, but in the description, he points out morphological change, pollution, over-harvesting as the causes of degrading biodiversity in one hand, and flourishing income in intensive fishing and the salt industry as reasons for people diversifying their livelihoods on the other hand. Thus, in this report, the use of 'climate change' make no sense and adds no value. (Editor's note: Multiple EJM reviewers disagreed with this explanation and added that the [IUCN](#) has noted the effects of increasing salinity on mollusc populations because of climate change. Due to the time constraints of the research, we were not able to explore this difference of opinion further.)

There is no doubt that Bangladesh is one of the climate change hotspots. However, attributing any natural setting to climate change requires adequate information on the variability of climatic data and sea-level rise. In some parts of the Pacific, livelihoods are dependent on marine creatures where climate change-induced ocean acidification and salinity affected local biodiversity as well as livelihoods. However, there is no evidence of such cases in Bangladesh. (Editor's note: Again, this conclusion was not shared by all participants in this research.)

The Bangladesh Environmental Conservation Act 1995 (updated in 2010) and declaration of Ecologically Critical Area in 1999 protect Cox's Bazar and Sonadia area from any extraction of marine resources. The EJM fellow initially expressed empathy to the mollusc collectors, gave a vivid description of their hardship and hinted a cultural loss with the disappearance of this livelihoods. As the title of the story shows, this livelihood decline is very much climate change induced, which in a way, frames them as a victim. As the story unfolds, we see that there are other environmental and manmade factors, which are responsible for the decline of molluscs in the coastal settings. As the story progresses, in the final section, mollusc collectors are being condemned for threatening the marine environment. In short, a livelihood group was empathised at the beginning of the story and vilified at the end for maintaining a livelihood which is declared illegal for more than two decades, even before the climate change discourse surfaced and popularised in public and policy domain.

Livelihood loss or livelihood diversification

Though the report finds a clear link between climate change and livelihood loss, its information contradicts with its argument, which is hinted in the earlier point. Combining the information of local administrators, police, and a local mollusc trader, it turns out that employment opportunities accelerated in the region for many reasons, including:

1. New income-earning opportunities like fishing, working in salt industries, and so on are much more profitable than collecting oysters.
2. Since 2017, because of Rohingya refugee influx in the region, many development agencies are running large-scale development projects in the area, which opened employment opportunities at different levels.
3. Government brought in two mega projects in the area, which tremendously expanded employment opportunities locally.
4. Law enforcement agencies oversee petty-hawkers and restrict their access to tourist areas, as a measure to improve tourist's security. Therefore, mollusc collection has become a secondary job for poor school-going children, and they operate far away from the tourist area.
5. Cox's Bazar nowadays has become a hotspot of the drug business, which brings in more money in quick time. This attracted many people toward the street drug trade.

Culture of naming children

The argument of the name-calling of children was very weak. There are many reasons for the changing pattern of names. Articulating them only with the strings of climate change induced disconnect with nature is more an anecdote. The first story report argues that Bengali names associated to molluscs are gradually disappearing as that livelihood shrank. But there were no strong reasoning or explanation of the patterns of

new names and what influences the new pattern. According to the reporter, he borrowed the idea of linking climate change to changing pattern of baby names from a lecture at the EJM training workshop. This report reveals from the EJM trainer's account that he reviewed the first case story and could not find any strong evidential logic to establish that link. On this note, [Banglapedia](#) argues that childbirth rituals in Bangladesh have religious influence. The Cultural Atlas (IES, 2020) also recognises this fact for Bangladesh immigrants in Australia. However, the first story does not echo this fact, nor brings any verified theory.

Journalism is not policing

The story started with a passion and empathy to a particular profession and at the end that group is being vilified and condemned for destructing nature. Eventually, that was claimed as a major impact of the story and the marginal professional group ended up being described as smugglers and the subject of increased vigilance and jail sentencing. I found this claim very inappropriate from the ethical standard of journalism and moral bearing. This is very well recognised that people who collect oysters on the coast are extremely poor and do not have much choice. Therefore, in no professional standard, it sounds appropriate to make such vulnerable group victim of one's novel work. I think this is our moral duty to protect our informants and vulnerable people. (Editor's note: There has been much internal discussion over who the reporter was referring to when using words like "smuggler," and we did not have time to verify whether it was gang leaders or the poor, marginalized collectors.)

Claimed outcome on environmental protection

It was not possible to substantiate the claim that the story had led to a clampdown and more arrests. The reporter could not provide any valid reference to substantiate that information. However, I inquired with the local administrators, the police, and the local vendor about how the administration responds to a call of environmental protection like this case. All their responses triangulated — they do not execute jail sentences on poor people such as the subjects of the article who collect oysters. Instead, they are taken under governmental social safety net packages. The government of Bangladesh has about 38 different types of social safety net programmes and all are targeted to the extremely poor and vulnerable group of people in the society.³⁰⁸ All three UNOs interviewed explained the process of distribution of social safety net programmes. They said the mollusc collection is illegal and harmful to the environment and often an extremely poor group of the society are involved with these livelihoods. When they are encountered, the administration empathises with their vulnerabilities and strive to bring them under different rehabilitation packages within their jurisdiction. The police officer also echoed to this point. The Prothom Alo correspondent, Iftekhar Mahmud, who has vast experience in environmental journalism, also agrees with the opinion of the administrators.

Claimed outcome on readership and reach

Both the EJM Fellow and the national correspondent claimed that the article, which was published in the Business Standard on 6 September 2019, drew attention to the local administration and was picked up by the national media. I asked three local administrators and a police officer if they have heard of the Business Standard and none of them had any clue on the existence of a national daily with this mentioned name. I looked up online and could not find the Business Standard in the top 10 national English daily's list. The Department of Film and Publications records national daily circulation and advertising rates of 504 national daily, including 37 English Newspapers and the Business Standard is not in that list. Readership of English newspapers are very insignificant in Bangladesh and a less known newspaper are not followed by many. However, the number of followers of the Business Standard on their Facebook page is 162 245, whereas the most popular national daily has about sixteen million followers. The subject news report has only 6 likes on their social media page. An EJM staff member explained that the Business Standard is a new media outlet in the country staffed by journalists from the Daily Star and Prothom Alo to run the new outlet.

The key informants supplied two links of reports, which followed up on the subject story. The links of those two stories are already given in an earlier section. Both the stories came out in the Kaler Kantho, one of the

top five national dailies. The content of those two news reports has little or no connection to the subject story. The subject story talks about livelihoods connected to the collection of seashells and pearls and artisan of their extractions. In contrast, the first follow up story reports on illegal trafficking of molluscs for poultry feed and the second follow up story mentions an awareness campaign to the fisher folks for protection of dolphins, turtles, and other big sea creatures. As we see, though the first follow up story has an extremely thin connection to make, the second story is completely on a different subject matter. Now, we look very closely to the first follow up story, we would agree that they are separate human subjects who are connected to a very different trade. The local seashell trader, DoE officer and local administrators further confirmed the distinction between these two groups.

[Another shipping disaster in the Sundarbans](#)

Story focus

This story about a shipwreck in the Sundarbans refers to complex and politically sensitive issues. The reporter, an experienced journalist, made a very quick event report, with an underlying appeal to protect the Sundarbans from external disturbances. These included safeguarding from being used as a commercial water route so that this UNESCO heritage site could avoid degradation in the future.

His report included reference to the highly politically sensitive issue of the risks posed by the Rampal power plant.³⁰⁹ Yet it only presented a small part of the political complexity of the story, omitting mention of other factors that threaten the heritage site. These extend to the geomorphology of the delta, the geology of subcontinental plate, bilateral water sharing between India and Bangladesh, river engineering, coastal embankment plan, corporatisation of shrimp farming, neo-liberalizing the forest, and the ramifications of implementing the perspective plan 2041.

According to the author, the story proved engaging and was widely read. He said that following its publication on the Third Pole site in January 2017, it was shared by many from his Facebook wall. I was unable to validate this, due to the time that has passed since.

Claimed outcome

I could not validate the claim that the article had influenced a recommendation from the World Bank to the Bangladesh and Indian governments to avoid the route through the Sundarbans. This is not non-trivial and difficult methodological task. The government is a large collective entity and there is no specific information on where to crosscheck. Therefore, through interviews and desk-based research I tried to understand the following:

1. The history and complexity of stakeholders involved in water routes through the Sundarbans (which were not mentioned in the article, but that any multilateral financial institution would look at before making any recommendation)
2. The process of WB's making recommendations on government bodies.

Desk based research, including a recent publication by the World Bank, revealed the multifaceted factors that influence the fate of the Sundarbans. It is characterised by a history of changes in the fluvial morphology, which impacted the water routes, disputes between two governmental departments within Bangladesh, environmental activism, polderisation, economic growth, climate change, contested conservation discourse, and so on.³¹⁰

According to various informants, the water route through the forest has a long history.³¹¹ It was abandoned in the late 1970s when the water flow dropped below a critical threshold level and riverbeds became very shallow for heavy siltation. Later, Bangladesh Inter Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) opened the route in 2011. Since then, the Department of Forest (DoF) and BIWTA had battles over the legitimacy of a water

route through Sundarbans. Therefore, since the BIWTA approved the route about a decade ago, the DoF disputed this decision, which went to the court and the route was postponed a few times on the court's verdict. In recent years, megaprojects and the illusion of economic prosperity resulted in infrastructural development along the Sundarbans and offshore which magnified the intensity of water route use inside the Sundarbans. While the use of this water route has such a high level of national stake, it seemed unlikely that the WB would interpret this problem through a bilateral lens. This was confirmed during the interview with Istiak Sobhanan, Environmental Specialist, World Bank Bangladesh. In his view no financial institution would risk their relationship with a central government by expressing an opinion on such a highly delicate matter.

Reach and readership

The success of any news or research report is judged by its readership, resonance in readers' cognitive process, change in social perception, human behaviours, or a system. Therefore, I was very interested to know the readership of the story and its portal. I do not have any data on them. Readership of a news report is so fundamental, but the reporter could not give me any idea on the number and type of audiences. I asked all my informants if they could recognise the news portal and two out of twelve have said 'yes.' Now if we investigate online subscription on Facebook, the Prothom Alo, the highest circulated Bangladeshi newspaper, has 15,978,045 followers. On the same search among only English national daily, the Daily Star has the highest followers, which is 3,386,140. In contrast, the Third Pole has about 160,000 viewers³¹² and Facebook followers are only 7,313. The shipwreck story has two likes and three shares on its Facebook page. There is no doubt that to increase the readability of the news reports, targets should be to publish in a high impact news portal.

Conclusions and possible implications

Even though it was not possible to substantiate outcomes, EJN's efforts to support environmental journalism in a country like Bangladesh is important, especially at the local level. Environmental journalism is a very new phenomenon and usually limited to a small elite circle at the centre. Breaking this cycle through decentralising and localising green press is an extremely important and timely task.

This report strives to understand how EJN is contributing to this endeavour through examining two reports. A young journalist who wrote the first article had his first introduction to environmental journalism through a training and demonstrated his enthusiasm in environmental reporting ever since. An experienced reporter of a reputed national daily, who is also a very well-regarded river activist and researcher, led the second article. Two articles are on coastal environmental protection and conservation of the Sundarbans, the largest mangrove forest on earth. In the earlier section, both the articles were reviewed in terms of their contents, relevance, and readership, and their potential impact. I would summarise some key points here and then move on to questions for EJN's reflections.

1. Given the context, it is great that journalists are writing about the environment and encouraging others to report on such issues. However, the first story suggests it takes more than a short course to ensure they have the skills and ethics to do it well. It is important to engage more with EJN trainees through refresher training and mentoring to strengthen their clarity on the subject matter and ethical concerns of journalism. This will eventually contribute to production of a high-quality content. There could be a separate research to sketch out pathways of achieving high quality content through EJN initiatives.
2. High quality content is certainly one way to increase readership. However, it is important to reconsider the platforms the EJN fellows are publishing on. None of the reporters has clarity of the reach or the audiences of their pieces. There needs to be strategy in how to communicate the message of an article depending on where the article is being published. In case of the second article, we see that the Third Pole has been reporting on the conservation of the Sundarbans consistently and bringing in well-regarded journalists to contribute with their thought-provoking ideas. More focused plans with the young and early career journalists would help to strength a new cohort of environmental activists and reporters.

3. The above analysis raises questions about whether the outcome harvesting as currently framed is encouraging positive bias — journalists and/or staff to over-claim. Given the power dynamics of the aid industry that is well evidenced in the literature, this is unsurprising, but it does raise questions about what metrics should be used. On odd occasions where a story does have real impact, they need to be advised to provide plausible evidence when they make claims. For example, in the first case, the major outcome is the EJN Fellow's commitment to reporting on environmental issues. The reporter has demonstrated his enthusiasm for environmental journalism. This needs to be rightly documented and supported further to make future works more critical and empathised toward environmental justice.

ENDNOTES

- 1 Outcome harvesting is an approach in which 'evaluators, grant makers, and/or program managers and staff identify, formulate, verify, analyze and interpret 'outcomes' in programming contexts where relations of cause and effect are not fully understood.' See Wilson-Grau, 2015, for more.
- 2 Basu, J., 2016. Adi Ganga disappears in West Bengal. The Third Pole. Available at: <https://www.thethirdpole.net/en/pollution/adi-ganga-disappears/>.
- 3 The term hidden power comes from Lukes, 1974, on the three faces of power. It refers to mobilization of bias, such as the use of the English language, that sustains unequal power relations that make information more accessible to some people than others.
- 4 Simons, M. et al., 2017. Understanding the civic impact of journalism: A realistic evaluation perspective. *Journalism Studies* 18, no. 11: 1400-1414. Available at: <https://research.monash.edu/en/publications/understanding-the-civic-impact-of-journalism-a-realistic-evaluati>.
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- 6 Khemani, S., et al., 2016. Making politics work for development: Harnessing transparency and citizen engagement. Policy Research Reports Washington, D.C.: World Bank Group. Available at: <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/268021467831470443/Making-politics-work-for-development-harnessing-transparency-and-citizen-engagement>.
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- 13 Acheron, J., 2018. Going vertical: Citizen-led reform campaigns in the Philippines. G-Watch Citizen Center for Accountability. Available at: <https://accountabilityresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Going-Vertical-e-book-14may2018.pdf>.
- 14 Green, D., 2009. Who do governments listen to? Some intel from the Oxfam media team. Oxfam. Available at: <https://oxfamblogs.org/fp2p/who-do-governments-listen-to-some-intel-from-the-oxfam-media-team/>.
- 15 Evans, D. & Goldstein, M., 2018. 8 lessons on how to influence policy with evidence - from Oxfam's experience. World Bank. Available at: <https://blogs.worldbank.org/impactevaluations/8-lessons-how-influence-policy-evidence-oxfam-s-experience>.
- 16 An example from Guatemala can be found in Flores, 2018.
- 17 This evidence is from research on open governance, but it seems reasonable to assume that the mechanisms may also be relevant to performance on environmental issues. See Williamson, 2016.
- 18 This is based on impact framework suggested by the Global Center for Investigative Journalism.
- 19 For more on single and double loop learning, see Cartwright, 2002.
- 20 For more on purposive sampling, see Oliver, 2013.
- 21 For more on snowball sampling, see Patton, 2002.
- 22 For an extensive discussion of these issues, see Shutt, 2016.
- 23 This is based on the lead researcher's experience as a professional evaluator who has been involved in debates about monitoring and evaluation approaches for over 11 years.
- 24 For more on this, see Wallace, 2007.
- 25 An email from an EJM staff member concerning possible respondent.
- 26 An anonymous respondent speaking by email.
- 27 Respondent Laurie Vasily by email.
- 28 Interviews with Soeb Rahman and Shamsuddin Illius,
- 29 Researcher analysis of stories and interview with Pavel Partha.
- 30 Ibid.
- 31 Website analytics were accessed on January 5, 2021.

- 32 Interviews with Istiak Sobhan and Professor Anu Mohammed.
- 33 See [Establishing Joint Media Platform for Sundarbans](#), page 3; the [Bangladesh India Sundarban Region Cooperation Initiative](#); and [South Asia Water Initiative Annual Report](#), page 66.
- 34 Interviewees, including Antal Böröcsök, Rolando Castro and Nelbin Bustamante, were positive about the quality of the stories.
- 35 Communications between journalist and local researcher.
- 36 Interview with Ninfa Arias, editor-in-chief at La Tribuna newspaper.
- 37 Gómez, J. Q., 2019. Pesca ilegal, contaminación y turismo insostenible amenazan corales de Honduras (Vídeo). La Tribuna. Available at: <https://www.latribuna.hn/2019/12/17/pesca-ilegal-contaminacion-y-turismo-insostenible-amenazan-corales-de-honduras-video/>.
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- 39 Video embedded in one of the reporter's stories, Gómez, 2019.
- 40 Video embedded in one of the reporter's stories, Gómez, 2019.
- 41 Interview with Antal Böröcsök.
- 42 Interviews with Antal Böröcsök, Rolando Castro and Nelbin Bustamante.
- 43 Interview with Jayanta Basu.
- 44 Interview with Jenia Mukherjee.
- 45 Interview with Pradip Sikdar.
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- 49 Interview with Subhash Datta and source: National Green Tribunal, 2015. Joydeep Mukherjee vs. Chairman, Pollution Control Board & ORS. The National Green Tribunal. Available at: https://greentribunal.gov.in/gen_pdf_test.php?filepath=L25ndF9kb2N-1bWVudHMvRWZpbGluZ19kb2N1bWVudHMvbmd_0ZG9jL2NhczVkb2MvMTkwMjEzNDAwMjI2MjAxNS8wNC8wMMS8yNS8wNF8yNV8wMDFfMTU2NDgxODU3NzQwNC5wZGY=.
- 50 Interview with Tanmoy Bhaduri.
- 51 Interview with Sugata Hazra, Director, School of Oceanographic Studies, Jadavpur University.
- 52 Interview with Pradip Chatterjee, president, Dakshinbongo Matsojibi Forum.
- 53 Researcher report, no source provided.
- 54 Interview with Abdar Mallik, Secretary of Cooperative preparing petition.
- 55 Interviews with Joydeep Gupta and Priya Ranjan Sahu.
- 56 Chaudhary, S., 2019. Satabhaya; swallowed by the sea. Down to Earth India. Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KLHhpxpoT8o&feature=emb_imp_woyt.
- 57 Interview with Priya Ranjan Sahu.
- 58 Email exchange between Joydeep Gupta and Priya Ranjan Sahu after the research was complete.
- 59 Interviews with Joydeep Gupta and Nivedita Khandekar.
- 60 Analytics from the case study report.
- 61 The reporter said that material from her original report (Khandekar, 2018) was used in several follow-up reports including Sharma, 2019; Ranganathan, 2020; and Saikia, 2020.
- 62 Interview with Riza Salman.
- 63 Interviews with BKSDA staff, such as Prianto.
- 64 Interview with Dani, environmental activist and director of KPA Tarsius.
- 65 Interviews with Dani, environmental activist and director of KPA Tarsius; Riza Salman, journalist; and review of Komikia.id, 2020.
- 66 Interview with La Bakry.
- 67 Interviews with BKSDA staff, such as Prianto.
- 68 Interview with Mustafa Silalahi.
- 69 Interviews with Marison Guciano, Muhammad Jumad and Mustafa Silalahi.

- 70 Interviews with Endah, Law Enforcement Bureau; Marison Guciano, Muhammad Jumad and Mustafa Silalahi.
- 71 Interviews with Krixia Subingsubing and Mariejo Ramos.
- 72 Interview with Pia Montalban.
- 73 Interview with Inday Espina-Varona.
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