

# Communicating Sustainable Development

## A practical guide for communications and media professionals



Alliance of communicators for sustainable development

### ***Part 2: Mass Media and Sustainability***

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## **Part 2: Mass Media and Sustainability**

Information Needs Seen Among Journalists

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## Introduction

Despite 13 years of innovative work since the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio, media coverage of sustainable development initiatives in both developed and developing countries is still minimal, confused and fails to recognise the aims of such work. Environmental matters continue to get good press coverage, but media reporting of sustainable development's triple bottom line agenda (economic, social and environmental values) is sporadic, even non-existent (Voisey & Church, 1999). This poses a special problem for those working on issues relating to Agenda 21 and other specifically sustainable development related issues. At the same time, the needs of those working in the media regarding information on sustainable development issues are, to a great extent, not known, specially as they differ considerably from country to country (IFEJ, 2005). This report aims to analyse the current links between mass media and sustainability, focusing upon the main needs of journalists from developed and developing countries and how these needs can be addressed. It also contains some guidelines on how successful (and otherwise) some experiences have been.

## Understanding the links between mass media and sustainable development

The need to understand the links between the mass media and sustainable development is indeed a very important one and has been widely acknowledged (Leal Filho, 1993; Okigbo, 1994; Voisey & Church, 1999; Oepen & Hamacher, 2000; SustainAbility 2002; Tabakova, 2002; Porter & Sims, 2003; Rabelo, 2003). There can be little doubt that the mass media are important sources of awareness towards sustainable development issues. A significant proportion of people's knowledge about sustainable development problems is acquired through mass media coverage (newspapers, magazines, television and radio). Public participation in democratic decision-making about sustainable development is dependent to a large extent on the degree to which arguments, analysis, evidence and evaluation pertaining to such issues can be made available to the general public. Media coverage of sustainable development issues is not only a question of creating a forum for political debate, but it is also a question of providing and managing the kind of information which will enable citizens to make decisions about 'appropriate' behaviour and precautions (Hansen, 1995).

There is a need to understand the deeper role that the media can play in raising public awareness and concern about sustainability. A starting point is the observation that the mass media – and television in particular – serve as a primary source of information worldwide (Hansen, 1991). On a wide range of sustainability issues the public – particularly in developing countries – have few sources, other than radio, television and newspapers, to turn to for information. That is why journalists in developing countries feel that their role (and also the media's) is not only to inform the public but also to educate them. While it is rare for anyone in the developing world to question that role, in the developed world it evokes debate. Many Western reporters and editors believe their job is only to inform, not to educate. They see themselves more as watchdogs pursuing investigative stories (Friedman & Friedman, 1989).

While journalists have differences of opinion in their role perception, other key players seem unaffected by this debate. Faced with increasing depletion of ecosystems; overloaded urban environment and population growth; unending poverty and stresses on human health, decision makers in both developing and developed countries often speak of the important and strategic role the media play in promoting public awareness and

shaping its attitude in favour of sustainable development. To some planners and decisions makers, the growth of the planet in a sustainable way rests as much on journalists' shoulders as it does on those of national leaders. They consider journalists not only 'public educators' but also 'social engineers' who can effectively help to transform the values and ethics of society towards sustainable development (Friedman & Friedman, 1989).

## Media coverage of sustainable development: the ups and downs

**Despite the high hopes of decision makers for journalists' commitment, media coverage of sustainable development issues has gone up and down in cycles, directly reflecting the level of public interest and political action (Kunst & Witlox, 1993). Throughout the period 1961-2001, three main waves of public concern, political action and media coverage can be traced, even though news reporting has tended to focus more on pollution incidents and ecological disasters, rather than on the underlying social and economical problems and their causes (SustainAbility, 2002). These main waves are summarised below and illustrated in Figure 1 (see Appendix 1).**

**First wave (1961-1973)** - The first wave, also called the 'Limits' wave, built steadily from the early 1960s, with milestones including the formation of Amnesty International (AI) and the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) in 1961 and the publication of the book *Silent Spring* (Carson, 1962). From the mid-1960s, the work of Marshall McLuhan (1964) helped put the world of media under the spotlight. The wave really took off at the end of the decade, peaking from 1969 to 1973. The period saw: (i) the formation of Friends of the Earth in 1969, (ii) the establishment of *Earth Day* in 1970, (iii) the formation of Greenpeace in 1971, (iv) the publication of high impact reports like *Limits to Growth*, (v) the first UN Conference on the Human Environment, held in Stockholm in 1972, and (vi) the formation of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) shortly afterwards. The media story was largely one of looming crisis. Then in 1973-74 the first Arab oil crisis both underscored the natural resource arguments advanced by 'limits to growth' environmentalists and triggered a major recession, bringing the first wave's peak period to an end.

**First Downwave (1974-1987)** - The first great downwave ran from 1974 through 1987. Through the mid-1970s, a wave of environmental legislation swept across the OECD<sup>1</sup> region. Industry went into compliance mode. But there were strong pockets of resistance – and many failures. Acid rain had a major impact on EU politics in the early 1980s. The media focused on reporting accidents and disasters, with the Bhopal disaster in India in 1984, the Chernobyl (Ukraine) and Rhine (Germany) disasters in 1986, and the ozone hole surfacing as major issues from the mid-1980s. Mainstream pop artists tried to raise public concern and put pressure on politicians over famine and poverty in Africa with the *Live Aid* (UK) and *We Are the World* (USA) projects in 1984. But overall this was a period which saw a second oil crisis (1978), global economic recession and conservative politics (Reagan-Thatcher era), with energetic attempts to roll back the environmental legislation that had recently been adopted. However, 1987 marked a major turning point with the

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<sup>1</sup> Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development with 30 member countries (Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Korean, Luxembourg, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovak Republic, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, United Kingdom and USA).

publication of *Our Common Future* by the Brundtland Commission introducing the term 'sustainable development' into the political mainstream.

**Second wave (1988-1991)** - The 'Green' wave began to roll in 1988, with issues like ozone depletion and rainforest destruction fuelling a new movement: green consumerism - a movement boosted by the publication of *The Green Consumer Guide*. The peak of the second wave ran from 1988 to 1991. This was a period of political transformation with the end of the Cold War culminating with the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989. In 1990, *Earth Day* celebrated 20 years. Media stories this time were more diverse, embracing accidents (like the *Exxon Valdez* oil spill in 1989 in Alaska), pollution legacies (particularly in the former USSR), and the partial 'greening' of both politics (the prominence of the Green Party in Germany and Thatcher's 'green' speech in the Royal Society) and consumer markets.

**Second Downwave (1991-1998)** - The second great downwave began in 1991, sparked by the Gulf War (which gave CNN global recognition), and another oil crisis and global recession, and lasted through much of the decade. The UN Earth Summit in Brazil in 1992 delayed the impending downwave, triggering coverage spikes on issues like climate change, biodiversity, sustainable development and *Agenda 21*. However, the falling trend in media interest continued. That said, the overall level of coverage remained significantly higher than in the previous downwave period. In particular, 1995 saw a major spike in coverage, with Shell and Greenpeace in the media spotlight because of the *Brent Spar* and Nigerian oil controversies, and with reports on Moruroa Atoll (South Pacific) nuclear tests. Europe was rocked by such issues as 'mad cow' disease (1996), Nike sweatshops in developing countries (1996), the Kyoto Protocol (1997), and genetically modified (GM) foods (1998). The world saw the rise of a powerful tool for global networking: the Internet.

**Third wave (1999-2001)** - The start of the 'Globalisation' wave can be tracked back to the 'Battle of Seattle' in 1999, when a broad range of environmental, labour and social activists challenged the World Trade Organisation (WTO). The sustainable development agenda, with its triple bottom line (economic, social and environmental values), evolved rapidly, but the big media story was the anti-globalisation (or at least the anti-corporate-globalisation) movement. Millennial celebrations in the West and increasingly high profile protests against the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank, G8, World Economic Forum (WEF) and multinational high street corporations (such as MacDonald's, Starbucks and Gap) pushed the global governance agenda up the political priority list.

**A Third Downwave? (2001-?)** - The events of September 11 (2001) marked a major discontinuity, accelerating an economic downturn, already heralded by the collapse of the dot-com bubble. This period also saw the internet coming into its own as a critical tool for information and communication. At the same time, though, it is unclear whether the results would be an end to the 'third wave' - or a new boost for its momentum. The 2002 UN World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg promised to keep the agenda on the boil. However, the media paid little attention to the event, as they were obsessed with the threat of 'weapons of mass destruction' falling into the hands of Muslims terrorists, which culminated with the war on Iraq in 2003. On the other hand, media coverage of sustainable development issues since 2001 became more diverse, including biodiversity, child labour, climate change, corporate social responsibility, genetically modified foods, globalisation, green politics, the growth of megacities, ozone depletion, recycling, renewable resources, socially responsible investing, sustainable forestry, urban air quality, and health inequalities.

**Future trends** - During the next decade (the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development), the media's handling of the triple bottom line agenda (economic, social and environmental values) will help determine whether these priorities move into the political, economic and cultural mainstream. If they do, the likely result will be that future waves and downwaves will come faster, but the oscillations may well moderate somewhat. If they do not, with the triple bottom line agenda given a relatively low priority, the wave gradients are likely to be more extreme and less predictable, making any progress towards the goals of sustainable development increasingly difficult, protracted and costly (SustainAbility 2002).

### **The problems of getting media coverage of sustainable development**

For the reasons stated above, raising public consciousness about responsibility towards sustainable development issues is more critical today than ever before. The challenges facing the world are clear and inescapable. More than a quarter of humankind lives in conditions of chronic poverty. Famine, inequalities in health, military conflicts, human rights abuses, environmental degradation and climate change, all threaten human dignity – indeed, survival. The interlocking nature of these threats is becoming more apparent. Humanity is already experiencing the impact of the present unsustainable modes of development (Ikeda, 2005). However, it is fair to say that presenting sustainable development to the media (and indeed to the public through the media) poses a range of particular problems. Any strategy for getting better coverage of sustainable development work, both in developing and developed countries, will certainly need to address these problems.

**The first problem is that of understanding the meaning of (and the need for) sustainable development** (Leal Filho, 2000). It has taken the public a long time (1960s-1980s) to come to terms with the environmental agenda and just at the point (1992 Earth Summit in Rio) when the main issues were perhaps becoming clearer, the politicians, NGOs and activists introduced a new concept: 'sustainable development'. The fact that there are a number of contested definitions of this concept (and that the words 'sustainable' and 'development' are defined in dictionaries as opposites) hardly helps to overcome the barriers to adopting these new ideas. Every time the term sustainable development is mentioned, a sentence or more is needed for explanation, or the phrase is simply used unexplained, causing confusion to those who do not understand it (Voisey & Church, 1999). The term 'sustainable development' is used here in its broader context, which includes environmental, economical and socio-cultural aspects as well as global justice issues.

**The second problem is that sustainable development is often linked to environmental issues only.** Sustainable development first came onto the agenda through the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio. The environment is a key element to all work on this issue, and as a result almost all news stories in the field originate at the environment desk. There is some evidence (Voisey & Church, 1999) indicating that when journalists receive a sustainability story they automatically pass it over to the environmental correspondent – even if the story is more closely related to the other two key elements of sustainable development (economics and/or social). So environmental journalists are central to sustainable development work. Because most of the times environmental correspondents work for the national media (newspapers and television) they can influence not only the public and decision makers but also journalists in the regional media. National journalists contribute to set the media agenda.

A key issue is the relationship between environmental journalists and NGOs (Kunst & Witlox, 1993; Voisey & Church, 1999). Usually, journalists tend to slightly mistrust NGOs. They tend to see them as potentially unreliable sources of information. For example, on housing problems, journalists may be just as happy to listen to local or national government for a more balanced view. However, on environmental issues the situation is crucially different. The media and the public see the main environmental NGOs as the most reliable and trustworthy sources of information. This has led to a very well developed relationship between the leading environmental correspondents and senior campaign figures in a few key NGOs. It is fair to say that this relationship has done a lot to define environmental press coverage over the last 30 years. Despite a fall in overall coverage since the environmental media 'glory years' (the second upwave), when, for example, Friends of the Earth were mentioned on the front page of the British tabloids, there is still a great deal of environmental coverage, and the signs are that when there is a topical issue this will continue. This leads to particular problems for those working on sustainable development.

Most journalists recognise that sustainable development is a broader issue than the environment, but this rarely surfaces (Voisey & Church, 1999). There seems to be at least two direct reasons for this. Firstly, despite a commitment to sustainable development, the main NGOs, particularly in developed countries, are more likely to get their coverage of single issues, e.g. traffic, climate change. Few have time to spend on developing stories to sell the broader message of sustainability, especially where it links to social and economics sectors issues. The journalists, therefore, do not get a strong sustainable development message from their key contacts. Secondly, sustainable development activists are frequently aware of links with broader social and economical issues, but still focus their media approach on green ideas (even in developing countries), partly because they perceive getting media coverage of broader issues as difficult.

The situation where sustainable development is not covered by the media can lead to negative reinforcement: if it is not in the news, then it does not get wider coverage, and if it is not being widely reported, then clearly it is not newsworthy. In addition, many of the more innovative sustainable development stories relate to intersectoral work (e.g. environment and poverty). This means that journalists on either theme can refer the story onto the correspondent on the other issue, leading to it getting 'lost in the middle'. It seems that, for most journalists in other sectors, there is still a conviction that sustainable development equals environment (Voisey & Church, 1999).

**The third problem is that most sustainable development work is locally based.** Most sustainable development activities are based at local level and therefore local governments are the largest potential for news stories. However, this can be problematic on three fronts (Voisey & Church, 1999). Firstly, local government officials are quite often seen by environmental journalists as not very competent on environmental issues. They tend to be less trained or briefed on the issues than senior NGO staff. They are less likely to have a story that links to topical breaking national news, and they often lack access to up-to-date research and information on key issues. In developing countries, many lack access to the world wide web, and if they do have this, they may have no clear ideas on the best sources of up-to-date news and discussion. Also, some local officials do not have the skills or experience to write press releases that will interest the media.

Secondly, local governments are quite often seen by environmental journalists as 'the enemy', the ones who failed to live up to targets agreed in local Agenda 21 documents;

who support wholly unsustainable development projects; who take time to respond to local media requests for stories; who, because of a fear of bad publicity, are 'selective with the truth'. (Voisey & Church, 1999). In developed countries, the media, particularly at local level, do not want to be seen as the mouthpiece of government, but prefer to take the side of their communities (audience/readers). In some developing countries, on the other hand, the media are expected to 'patriotically' support any kind of government initiative towards development work, which makes it difficult to report about the social, economical and environmental implications of this development (Kunst & Witlox, 1993). These can make developing a working relationship between journalists and local government very difficult.

Thirdly, as local sustainability is very much about local level action, many stories will only be of interest to people in a particular locality. This requires a special focus on the local. Even if journalists and editors want to support and take forward sustainable development in their locality, after a while they may feel that the stories are very similar and it may be difficult to come up with a new angle to keep their audience interested. The media's desire for news is concentrated in two main areas of interest. Stories need to be **topical** (e.g. linked to national or international news from the broader arena) and/or **general** (likely to appeal to everyone). Stories on sustainable development have to compete for space with others that may be more topical (e.g. wages, health, education), with easier messages and less explanatory blurb, that may report controversy, crisis, significant action or changing circumstances. Despite the fact that the media always want a good story, sustainable development stories do not get past editors at local and national level unless they meet these criteria, and few do (Voisey & Church, 1999).

### **Constraints on reporting: journalists' point of view**

Sustainable development may be one of the world's most pressing issues, but, despite the high hopes of campaigners for creating awareness through the mass media, journalists throughout developing countries, like those in developed countries, still face a variety of journalistic constraints in practising their profession (Kunst & Witlox, 1993). To start with, some journalists believe that if they commit to cover sustainable development on a long-term basis they are putting their careers at risk, they are committing 'professional suicide' (Porter & Sims, 2003). In Finland, for example, journalists believe that the subject itself is not 'too sexy'; it does not draw the attention of readers or viewers automatically, so the content and style have to be well planned beforehand. These problems are not restricted to Europe. In Zambia, journalists claim that sustainable development stories are rarely lead items, and often amount to little more than the coverage of local events, where the guests usually receive more attention than the issues (Intermedia, 2002).

Also, journalists feel that there is a mismatch between sustainable development and some of the principles of journalism, making it a difficult subject to cover (Porter & Sims, 2003). The complexity of technical information – in both concept and jargon – is a significant barrier for journalists. That sustainable development issues involve not only technical information, but also financial, political and social considerations, adds to the complexity. Most small and medium sized publications in developed countries and the majority of publications in developing countries lack specialised reporters, and the general lack of understanding of broader issues creates a tendency towards relying too much on press releases and producing brief – sometimes inaccurate – stories on sustainable development issues.

Another problem is that sustainable development is often slow moving and complex, and making sense of it requires lots of context. Local, national or international political action required to address the problems behind sustainable development also moves slowly. And slow-moving events sit uncomfortably in the daily or weekly media timeframe. News editors decide what to publish or broadcast partly by asking what has happened this hour, today, or this week. With sustainable development the answer is often 'very little', which leads once again to the news media concentrating on events with an immediate impact – like environmental disasters (Intermedia, 2002). Journalists face the daily rhythm of the press, so they have little time to investigate complex stories. So lack of space and time to cover sustainable development stories in all their complexities, create a tendency towards crisis reporting (Kunst & Witlox, 1993).

Beyond these commonly shared problems, journalists, particularly in developing countries, also struggle with government censorship, high-level private interference (advertising and/or ownership), lack of space, editorial bias, lack of training in journalism, lack of expertise in sustainable development's triple bottom line agenda (economic, social and environmental issues), and the difficulty in locating reliable sources (Friedman & Friedman, 1989). Although some of these constraints are also found in developed countries, in almost every instance, they are more severe in developing countries.

Even though many journalists are willing to take up the task of creating awareness towards sustainable development issues, there are still some obstacles to overcome (Kunst & Witlox, 1993). Unlike in developed countries where freedom of the press is enjoyed, in most developing countries, the electronic media are government run and print media fall under some form of control (e.g. China, Jordan, Zimbabwe). Publications usually must hold licenses or permits that are issued by the government. Even where this is not the case, the government is often a major advertiser (e.g. Brazil) and could cause a publication to fail by pulling its advertising. When a government does not want a particular subject covered in a certain way – or, perhaps, at all – editors often bow to the pressure. This can also happen in developed countries (e.g. USA). Besides the pressure from governments, journalists are also pressured by powerful private individuals. For example, Indian newspapers are reluctant to write against industries for fear of libel action or physical violence against journalists (Friedman & Friedman, 1989).

Limited space and specific types of bias bring problems too. Journalists from developing countries have to face limited space available in the media. Because Latin American or Asian newspapers have fewer pages than is typical in North America or Europe, it is difficult to get stories in. With sustainable development low on the priority list of editors, this is a serious problem for environmental reporters who have to compete for space with other news of the day, including politics, crime and sports. Another reason for limited coverage of sustainable development issues may be what Friedman & Friedman (1989) calls a language bias, which is manifested when those who provide information to the media ignore native-language radio programmes or newspapers. Although many will agree that English-language news is important because it reaches important decision makers, it is the native-language news that carries the message to the majority of people. Additionally, many journalists have an urban bias, because most live in large cities and towns where their media offices are based. The majority of news events take place where journalists choose to cover. In that, more can be written about pollution and urban degradation than desertification and rural poverty.

All these constraints – and some not discussed, such as tight deadlines, low salaries, and lack of prestige – take their toll on environmental journalists, particularly in developing

countries. At the same time, the needs of journalists – environmental correspondents or not - have to be taken into consideration, although there is still little information about these issues.

### **Journalists' needs**

A relatively limited number of surveys (Friedman & Friedman, 1989; Voskey & Church, 1999; Tabakova & Antonov, 2002; Porter & Sims, 2003) have been carried out – most of the times at regional level - with journalists as an attempt to assess their needs in relation to reporting on sustainable development issues<sup>2</sup>. These studies have showed that journalists, particularly in developing countries, are generally aware of the need to enhance their professional skills. Three specific areas in which activities and services are needed to improve the quality of reporting were identified by research. These are the three pillars upon which any sustainable development communication strategy targeting at media professionals should be built: information, training and networking.

**The need for information** – the first pillar concerns with the need to provide new, clear, adequate and above all reliable information on sustainable development issues (Tabakova & Antonov 2002). Much of the technical information about sustainable development is difficult to understand, and frequently even reporters with science, sociology or economics backgrounds need help to get through the jargon-laden pages of sustainable development impact statements. Amid all the technical data, how is a reporter – even the environmental ones – to know what is important and how to determine the significance of the facts? Because so much is uncertain about sustainable development issues, they are hard to report. They are multifaceted, involving not just technical information but also financial, political, and social considerations. Much of what is covered can affect human health and involves evaluating costs and benefits. Often there are not just one or two sides to an issue but quite a number.

There is a long and tenuous string of interrelated concerns that all have an impact on people's lives, and journalists need to deal with all of them in order to cover a story properly. But to investigate all these aspects takes time – something a reporter frequently does not have (Friedman & Friedman, 1989). There are two main areas where sustainable development communicators can be instrumental. The first one is gathering, collecting, searching for information and providing it to journalists in a clear, jargon-free and concise manner. The second one is identifying independent and reliable sources of information and making them available to media professionals. To meet the media demands in this area successfully, sustainable development practitioners need to create and make widely available information resources specifically aimed at journalists (Tabakova & Antonov, 2002). There is a number of resources and websites that deal with a variety of issues and provide useful information (see Appendix 2). However, information packs, fact files, workshops and seminars are still very useful, particularly in developing countries, where sometimes the Internet is neither widely available nor technically reliable.

**The need for training** – the second pillar concerns raising the professional capacity of journalists – in particular, environmental correspondents (since they are the ones who are going to end up covering sustainable development stories anyway). Environmental journalists – even the most experienced ones – are aware of the need to enhance their

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<sup>2</sup> Currently, the International Federation of Environmental Journalists (IFEJ) is conducting an on-line survey with its members worldwide as an attempt to get a wider picture. The findings will be available in September 2005.

knowledge of the complex technical issues involved in sustainability. The findings from the surveys show that there are a number of particular areas that journalists feel they need training in:

- journalistic approaches and techniques in covering environmental/sustainable development problems;
- investigative journalism;
- handling sources, particularly NGOs and government institutions;
- key environmental/sustainable development problems at local and regional level; and
- identify and cross check broader aspects of sustainable development (economical, social and environmental).

Following upon these, sustainable development practitioners and communicators need to arrange professional training and other capacity-building activities for journalists, particularly in developing countries. One of the regions in most need of these activities seems to be South Eastern Europe<sup>3</sup>, where the media have been going through a major transformation since 1989 – shifting from serving as merely tools for political and state propaganda, towards media independence. The rapid expansion of the media market in the region has resulted in an influx of young, inexperienced and unqualified journalists, significantly deteriorating the quality of journalism in all fields, including the environment. Training is rarely available in the region (Tabakova & Antonov, 2002).

Even in countries where training is widely available, journalists may not feel encouraged to join in (Friedman & Friedman, 1989). In the USA, for example, several universities regularly organise training courses and workshops to aid journalists. However, the number of reporters who attend these events is usually very low. This reflects a widespread problem throughout the journalism profession – lack of emphasis on mid-career training for reporters. Some communication scholars believe that editors do not want to train their reporters in specialities because they feel the reporters will either leave for a better job or want to report about this speciality only and not general topics. Questioned directly, some editors have said their staff are either too small to give reporters time for training or that there is no need for such training because their newspapers/television/radio rarely cover speciality areas.

Just as important, more sponsors need to be found to fund mid-career training programmes for journalists in all specialities, but particularly those covering science, environment and sustainable development issues. A few industries have jumped in to fill the gap, but journalists on the whole are sceptical about such sponsorships, and this may be a factor in the low attendances (Friedman & Friedman, 1989). Alternative sponsors need to be found. Efforts also must be made to reach journalism students *before* they enter the professional world. Journalism educators need to realise that reporting on sustainable development should be an essential part of the curriculum and should be a required course at most journalism schools. Additionally, science courses should be available as 'optional' modules in journalism.

**The need for networking** – strengthening contacts and communication among environmental journalists from different regions emerges as another primary need of journalists, according to the surveys. Organisations of environmental journalists already exist in many countries and regional levels (see Appendix 3). However, some journalists

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<sup>3</sup> Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, FYR Macedonia, Romania, Yugoslavia and Kosovo

feel that these organisations are not active enough in promoting resources and training. Although these organisations are well known in their region, they fail to attract a huge amount of members. One of the problems is that most of them charge annual membership fees and although they claim they offer training and resources for members, in practice their activities are restricted to the organisation of annual conferences and meetings, also charged for. Not all journalists, particularly in developing countries, can afford to be part of these groups. Financial and budgeting constraints combined with insufficient opportunity to travel and establish contacts are among the possible reasons for low membership of these organisations. In some countries, however, journalists have managed to establish a network for the exchange of information and professional contacts. To increase the availability of information and professional debate, a group of regional journalists established in 1994, in Brazil, the Brazilian Network of Environmental Journalists. The group links through the Internet a pool of over 250 media professionals, specialised or interested in environmental issues. To join journalists need to send an email to one of the moderators introducing themselves and explaining how they expect to benefit from taking part of the group. The overall scope of this e-group is to provide not only a place where journalists can share knowledge, information and experiences but also a place where they can feel free to raise questions, queries and critiques about the relationship between media professionals and the environment, and/or the role of media professionals in raising awareness of environmental issues.

The need for information, training and networking predefines *encouragement* as the main feature of any sustainable development strategy focusing on journalists. Media professionals worldwide need to foster a sense of personal responsibility and greater motivation and commitment towards sustainable development. One way of achieving this is through public recognition of their professional contribution. A growing number of organisations are involved in the promotion of environmental/sustainable development quality reporting through the establishment of professional awards of international recognition, such as the WASH (Water, Sanitation and Hygiene) Media Award. Established in 2002 by the Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council (WSSCC), the WASH Media Award encourages investigative reporting on water issues by developing country journalists from a variety of media (print, on-line, radio and TV). In its first year, an international panel of judges evaluated more than 100 stories in English, French and Spanish from over 40 countries. Other initiatives include the Reuters Awards and Conservational International Biodiversity Awards (see Appendix 4).

## **Conclusion**

There is a need to develop a strategic approach to improve the links between the mass media and sustainable development. Television and newspapers serve as the first – if not the only one - source of information concerning sustainable development issues. The media influence, not only public opinion, but also decision makers, politicians and other journalists. Over the last few decades public interest in sustainable development issues – the vast majority environment related – has followed a certain trend of going up and down. Media coverage has followed much the same trend. A possible explanation for this is that sustainable development is a relatively new concept, often not clearly explained, full of complexities, and, most of the times, remotely related. As a consequence, sustainable development issues are treated as environmental issues and passed on either to environmental correspondents or to inexperienced reporters. Journalists, in turn, face a number of difficulties in reporting on sustainable development issues. Lack of time, space, understanding of issues, encouragement to investigate further, variety of sources are

some of the constraints. In addition to these problems, journalists in developing countries may face pressure from governments, advertisers and media owners, not to mention lack of appropriate resources to do their work. More information, training and networking are some of the most pressing needs for journalists reporting on sustainable development.

### Messages for action

Three key messages emerge from this report, which may indeed be regarded as some vital improvements for the work of journalists are:

- Media professionals need to understand sustainable development concepts and become aware how people's lifestyle, businesses' actions and governments' policies affect sustainable development. They need to understand the relationship between poverty, over-consumption, ruthless growth and environmental degradation, and other basic principles of sustainable development. Therefore, a broad understanding of sustainability issues is a pre-condition for successful sustainability reporting. One cannot report properly on something one is not knowledgeable about.
- Knowledge and skills should be transferred to media professionals through capacity building and training programmes, especially to ensure that journalists at local level become self-reliant. Training initiatives should include news editors as well. Therefore, capacity building programmes can be regarded as a further guidelines for successful sustainability reporting.
- The creation of e-forums should be encouraged at all levels (local, national, regional, international). Examples of good reporting should be widely available through them and officially recognised through appropriate awards sponsored by NGOs, media organisations and governments. Therefore, eforums should be used more intensively as a tool for information exchange and for reporting.

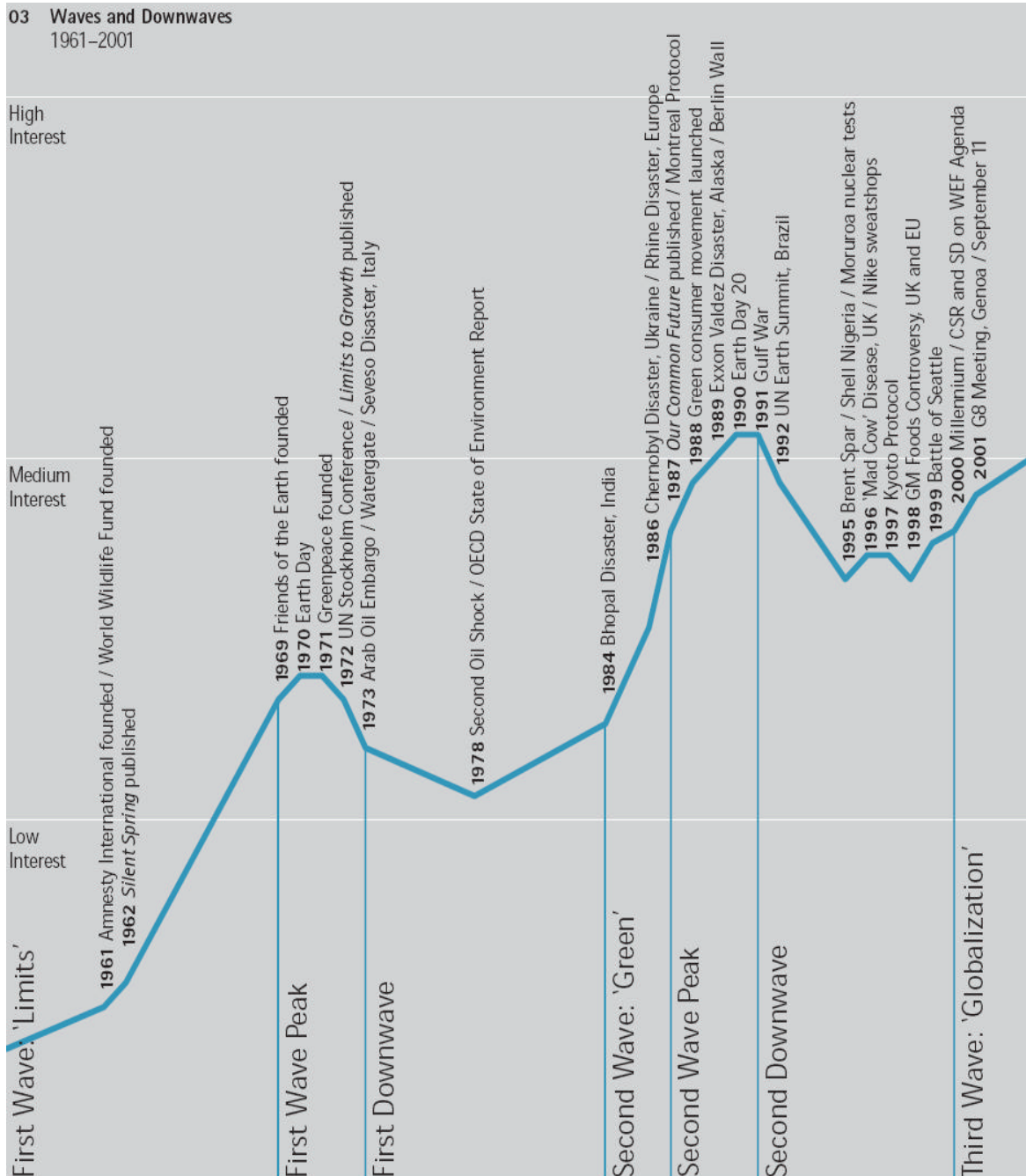
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## Appendix 1 – Media Coverage: Ups and Downs

Figure 1 - Media coverage of sustainable development



Source: SustainAbility (2002)

## Appendix 2 – Resources for Media Professionals

### *Publications*

#### **Mass Media and Environmental Affairs**

Allan, Stuart; Adam, Barbara & Carter, Cynthia (1999) **Environmental Risks and the Media**. New York: Routledge.

Anderson, Alison (1997) **Media, Culture and the Environment**. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Backes, David (1991) **Canoe Country: An Embattled Wilderness**. Minocqua, WI: NorthWord Press, Inc.

Chapman, Graham; Kumar, Keval; Fraser, Caroline & Gaver, Ivor (1997) **Environmentalism and the Mass Media: The North-South Divide**. London: Routledge.

Clow, Michael & Machum, Susan (1993) **Stifling Debate: Canadian Newspapers and Nuclear Power**. Halifax: Fernwood Publishing.

Dale, Stephen (1996) **McLuhan's Children: The Greenpeace Message and the Media**. Toronto: Between the Lines.

Friedman, Sharon; Dunwoody, Sharon & Rogers, Carol (1986) **Scientists and Journalists: Reporting Science as News**. New York: Free.

Gauntlett, David (1996) **Video Critical: Children, the Environment and Media Power**. Luton: John Libbey Media.

Hansen, Anders (ed.) (1993) **The Mass Media and Environmental Issues**. Leicester: Leicester University Press.

LaMay, Craig & Dennis, Everette (eds.) (1991) **Media and the Environment**. Washington: Island Press.

McKibben, Bill (1992) **The Age of Missing Information**. New York, Random House.

Nelkin, Dorothy (1987) **Selling Science: How the Press Covers Science and Technology**. New York: W.H. Freeman.

Neuzil, Mark & Kovarik, Bill (1996) **Mass Media and Environmental Conflict: America's Green Crusades**. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Priest, Susanna Hornig (2001) **A Grain Of Truth: The Media, The Public, and Biotechnology**. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.

Rose, Tom (1989) **Freeing the Whales: How the Media Created the World's Greatest Non-Event**. London: Birch Lane Press.

Rubin, David & Sachs, David (1973) **Mass Media and the Environment: Water Resources, Land Use and Atomic Energy in California**. London: Praeger.

Sandman, Peter; Sachsman, David; Greenberg, Michael & Gochfeld, Michael (1987) **Environmental Risk and the Press: An Exploratory Assessment**. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, Inc.

Shanahan, James & McComas, Katherine (1999) **Nature Stories: Depictions of the Environment and their Effects**. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press.

Smith, Conrad (1992) **Media and Apocalypse: News Coverage of the Yellowstone Forest Fires, Exxon Valdez Oil Spill, and Loma Prieta Earthquake**. Westport: Greenwood Press.

Smith, Joe (2000) **The Daily Globe: Environmental Change, The Public and the Media**. London: Earthscan.

Walters, L.M.; Wilkins, Lee & Walters, T. (eds.) (1989) **Bad Tidings: Communication and Catastrophe**. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Wilkins, Lee (1987) **Shared Vulnerability: The Media and American Perceptions of the Bhopal Disaster**. New York: Greenwood Press.

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## **Environmental Communication Skills**

Beamish, Richard (1995) **Getting the Word Out in the Fight to Save the Earth**. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Biodiversity Project (2002) **Ethics for a Small Planet: A Communications Handbook on the Ethical and Theological Reasons for Protecting Biodiversity**. Madison: Biodiversity Project.

Day, Brian A. & Monroe, Martha C. (eds.) (2000) **Environmental Education & Communication for a Sustainable World: Handbook for International Practitioners**. Washington: Academy for Educational Development.

Jacobson, Susan K. (1999) **Communication Skills for Conservation Professionals**. Washington: Island Press.

Jurin, Richard; Canter, Jeffrey & Roush, Donald (2000) **Environmental Communication: Skills and Principles for Natural Resource Managers, Scientists, and Engineers**. Boston: Pearson Custom Publishing.

Leal Filho, Walter (2000) **Communicating Sustainability**. New York: Peter Lang.

McKenzie-Mohr, Doug (1996) **Promoting a Sustainable Future: An Introduction to Community-Based Social Marketing**. Ottawa: National Roundtable on Environment and Economy.

McKenzie-Mohr, Doug & Smith, William (1999) **Fostering Sustainable Behaviour: An Introduction to Community-Based Social Marketing**. Gabriola Island, BC: New Society Publishers.

Oepen, Manfred & Hamacher, Winfried (2000) **Communicating the Environment: Environmental Communication for Sustainable Development**. New York: Peter Lang.

Parker, Lea J. (1997) **Environmental Communication: Messages, Media and Methods: A Handbook for Advocates and Organizations**. Dubuque: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Co.

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### **Environmental Journalism Handbooks**

Friedman, Sharon & Freidman, Kenneth (1988) **Reporting on the Environment: A Handbook for Journalists**. Bethlehem, PA: Department of Journalism and Communication, Lehigh University.

Frome, Michael (1998) **Green Ink: An Introduction to Environmental Journalism**. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press.

Goldberg, David (1999) **Covering Urban Sprawl: Rethinking the American Dream**. Washington: RTNDF.

Keating, Michael (1992) **Covering the Environment: A Handbook on Environmental Journalism**. Ottawa: National Roundtable on Environment and Economy.

Luechtefeld, Lori (2004) **Covering Pollution: An Investigative Reporter's Guide**. Columbia, MO: Investigative Reporters and Editors, Inc.

West, Bernadette; Sandman, Peter M. & Greenberg, Michael R. (1995) **The Reporter's Environmental Handbook**. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

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### **Related and/or Support References**

Black, Jay and Jennings Bryant. 1995. **Introduction to media communication**. 4<sup>th</sup> ed. Brown & Benchmark Publ., Madison, WI. 0-697-20124-4.

Kessler, Lauren and Duncan McDonald. 1992. **The search - Information gathering for the mass media**. Wadsworth Publ. Co., Belmont, CA. 0-534-16278-9.

### **Videos**

*Beyond the spotted owl: How to cover the environment in the '90s*. Radio & Television News Directors Foundation, Washington, DC.

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*Covering an environmental accident.* Rutgers University.

*Covering the Planet. Environmental journalists.* Dept. Communications, Loyola Univ., New Orleans, LA.

*How to cover today's top environmental health stories.* Radio & Television News Directors Foundation, Washington, DC.

*The Sting - Louisiana style.* Louisiana Environmental Action Network, Baton Rouge, LA.

*Whose land is it? A video briefing for journalists on property rights and environmental protection. Section 1. Property rights & the takings issue. Section 2. Endangered species. Section 3. Wetlands protection.* The Environmental Reporting Forum, a partnership of the Radio & Television News Directors Foundation and The Media Institute. Washington, DC.

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## **Newsletters**

***Center for Environmental Communications Studies Newsletter***, published quarterly by CECS, University of Cincinnati, P. O. Box 210184, Cincinnati, OH 45221-0184. 513 556-4440. E-mail: depoe@uc.edu.

***Environment Writer***, published monthly by the National Safety Council/Environmental Health Center, 1025 Connecticut Avenue NW, Suite 1200, Washington, DC 20036. 202 293-2270, ext. 469. E-mail: ehc@nsc.org. <http://www.nsc.org/ehc.htm>

***Environmental Education Advocate***, published quarterly by the National Environmental Education Advancement Project, University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, Stevens Point, WI 54481. 715 346-4179. E-mail: neeap@uwsp.edu.

***SEJournal***, quarterly published by the Society of Environmental Journalists.

## Useful Links

### Environmental Information and Resources

Directory of Environmental Resources on the Internet

<http://www.rain-org/scottj>

Environmental Index

<http://www.lib.kth.se/lq.html>

EnviroLink Home Page

<http://www.ecolex.org/envirohome.html>

Environmental Organization Web Directory

<http://www.webdirectory.com>

EcoNet.

<http://www.igc.apc.org/econet/>

EcoWeb

<http://ecosys.drdr.virginia.edu:80/EcoWeb.html>

Environet

<http://www.aspenlinx.com/environment>

Environmental Policy Project

<http://www.envpoly.org>

Environmental Support Center

<http://www.envsc.org>

Global Environmental Policy Research Tools

<http://www.princeton.edu/~mlevy>

Great Green Toolbox

<http://www.toad.net/~ggt/>

Global Response: Environmental Action & Education Network

<http://www.globalresponse.org>

ICE House (Information Center for the Environment, UC Davis)

<http://ice.ucdavis.edu:80/>

<http://ice.ucdavis.edu>

The Sustainable Earth Electronic Library

<http://environlink.org/pubs.index.html>

World Resources Institute

<http://www.igc.apc.org/wri>

World Watch Institute

<http://www.worldwatch.org>

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### **Sustainability/Sustainable Development**

Citizens Network for Sustainable development

<http://www.citnet.org/index.html>

Communications for a Sustainable Future

<http://csf.colorado.edu>

Sustainable America

<http://www.sanetwork.org>

Pacific Institute for Studies in Development, Environment, and Security

<http://www.pacinst.org>

Occidental Arts and Ecology Center (OAEC)

<http://www.oec.org>

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### **Media and Environment**

Living on Earth: National Public Radio's Environmental News Show

<http://www.loe.org>

Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR)

<http://www.fair.org>

The Media Education Foundation

<http://www.igc.org/mef>

The Media Foundation and Adbusters

<http://www.adbusters.org>

Environmental Filmography

<http://www.esf.edu/coce>

Bullfrog Films

<http://www.bullfrog.com>

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## **Environmental Organizations - Activist Groups**

Environmental Organizations Web Directory

<http://www.webdirectory.com>

Conservation International

<http://www.conservation.org>

Defenders of Wildlife

<http://www.dow.org>

Earth First!

<http://www.enviroweb.org/ef>

EarthForce

<http://www.earthforce.org>

Environmental Defense Fund (EDF)

<http://www.edf.org>

Friends of Earth

<http://www.foe.co.uk>

Global Green USA

<http://www.globalgreen.org>

Global Response: Environmental Action & Education Network

<http://www.globalresponse.org>

Greenpeace International Home Page

<http://www.greenpeace.org>

The Green Party

<http://www.greens.org>

<http://www.greenparties.org>

Institute for Deep Ecology

<http://www.deep-ecology.org>

League of Conservation Voters

<http://www.lcv.org>

Marine Mammal Commission

<http://www.citation.com/hpages/mmc.html>

The Nature Conservancy

<http://www.tnc.org>

The Ruckus Society

<http://www.ruckus.org>

Rural Advancement Foundation International (RAFI)

<http://www.rafi.org>

Sea Shepherd Conservation Society  
<http://www.seashepherd.org>

Sierra Club  
<http://www.sierraclub.org>

Student Environmental Action Coalition (SEAC)  
<http://www.seac.org>

The Wilderness Society  
<http://www.wilderness.org>

National Wildlife Federation  
<http://www.nwf.org/nwf>

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### **Research Institutes and Think Tanks**

World Watch Institute  
<http://www.worldwatch.org>

Earth Island Institute  
<http://www.earthisland.org>

Global Commons Institute  
<http://www.gci.org.uk>

The Green Environmental Coalition  
<http://www.greenlink.org/gec/index.html>

Community Environmental Council  
<http://www.grc.org/cec>

Center for Respect of Life and Environment  
<http://www.crle.org>

The Pacific Institute  
<http://www.pacinst.org>

Institute for Policy Studies: Green Policy Network  
<http://www.igc.org/ifps/>

Center for Policy Alternatives  
<http://www.cfpa.org>

Northeast Midwest Institute  
<http://www.nemw.org>

Institute for Local Self Reliance (ILSR)  
<http://www.ilsr.org>

The Trust for Public Land  
<http://www.tpl.org>

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Pacific Institute for Studies in Development, Environment, and Security  
<http://www.pacinst.org>

Rural Advancement Foundation International (RAFI)  
<http://www.rafi.org>

The National Safety Council - Environmental Health Center  
<http://www.nsc.org/ehc.htm>

Science and Environmental Health Network  
<http://www.selm.org>

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### **Environmental Education**

Second Nature -- Education for Sustainability  
<http://www.2nature.org>

North American Association for Environmental Education  
<http://www.naaee.org>

Environmental Education Exchange  
<http://www.eexchange.org>

Environmental Education on the Internet  
<http://www.nceet.snrc.umich.edu>

Environmental Education & Training Partnership  
<http://eetap.org>

Environmental Education - US EPA  
<http://www.epa.gov/enviroed>

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### **Courses, Training and Research Centres**

ICE House (Information Center for the Environment) - University of California, Davis  
<http://ice.ucdavis.edu:80/>  
<http://ice.ucdavis.edu>

Center for Environmental Communication - Rutgers University  
<http://www.aesop.rutgers.edu/~cec/home.html>

Center for Environmental Communication Studies - University of Cincinnati  
<http://www.uc.edu/cecs>

Environmental Communication Resource Center - Northern Arizona University  
<http://www.erc.nau.edu>

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Conference on Communication and Environment  
<http://www.esf.edu/coce>

Communications for a Sustainable Future - University of Colorado  
<http://csf.colorado.edu>

Environmental Journalism Home Page  
<http://www.sej.org>

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### **Environmental News Sources**

Earth Times Home Page  
<http://www.igc.apc.org/earthtimes>

Environmental Magazines. A selection of magazines from the American Journalism Review NewsLink.  
<http://www.newslink.org/mhea.html>

Environmental News Link  
<http://www.caprep.com/caprep>

Environmental News Network (ENN)  
<http://www.enn.com>

Living on Earth: National Public Radio's Environmental News Show  
<http://www.loe.org>

National Environmental Wire for Students  
<http://www.envirocitizen.org/news/index.asp>

Environmental Journalism Home Page  
<http://www.sej.org>

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### **Environmental List-Servs and Discussion Groups**

American Society for Environmental History.  
<http://tile.net/listserv/haseh.html>

Brownfields: Center for Environmental Public Oversight (CPEO)  
<http://cpeo-brownfields-subscribe@igc.topica.com>

Communication and Environmental Matters  
<http://www.usf.edu/coce>

Ecology  
<http://tile.net/listserv/ecology.html>

Environmental Ethics  
<http://www.cep.unt.edu/enviro.html>

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Green Politics  
[news://alt.politics.greens](mailto:news://alt.politics.greens)

Harvard's Environmental Discussion Lists  
<http://ecoethics.net>

Institute for the Environment  
<http://tile.net/listserv/greengrp.html>

List for Environmental Information  
<http://tile.net/listserv/envinfl.html>

International Federation of Environmental Journalists  
<http://tile.net/listserv/ifejlist.html>

## **Appendix 3 – Environmental Journalists Organisations**

### ***International Groups***

#### **International Federation of Environmental Journalists (IFEJ)**

Contact: Michael Schweres or Louissette Gouverne, Executive Directors  
Grande Rue Pierre d'Angle, 26400 Beaufort s/Gervanne – FRANCE  
Website: <http://www.iefj.org>

#### **The Society of Environmental Journalists**

Contact: Beth Parke, Executive Director  
P.O. Box 27280 , Philadelphia, PA 19118-0280 – USA  
Website: <http://www.sej.org>

#### **Asia-Pacific Forum of Environmental Journalists (AFEJ)**

Contact: Dr. Dharman Wickremaratne, Chairperson  
P.O. Box 26, 434/3 Sri Jayawardenapura - SRI LANKA  
Tel.: +94 1 829519  
Fax: +94 1 826607/869340  
E-mail: [afej@sri.lanka.net](mailto:afej@sri.lanka.net)  
Internet: [www.oneworld.org/slej/](http://www.oneworld.org/slej/)

*Below are countries affiliated with AFEJ:*

**East Asia** China, Republic of Korea, Japan, Macau-P.R. China, Mongolia

**South-East Asia** Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam

**South Asia** Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Iran, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka

**Central Asia** Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan

**West Asia** Albania, Algeria, Bosnia, Croatia, Cyprus, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, Slovenia, Syria, Tunisia, Turkey

**Pacific** American Samoa, Australia, Northern Marianas, Cook Islands, Micronesia, Fiji, French Polynesia, Guam, Kiribati, Nauru, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Niue, Mauritius, Papua New Guinea, Marshall Islands, Palau, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu

### ***Regional and Country Groups***

#### **Environmental Journalism Center, Radio & Television News Directors Foundation**

1000 Connecticut Avenue, NW Suite 615, Washington, DC 20036 - USA  
Phone: 202 659-6510 Fax: 202 223-4007 Website: <http://www.rtndf.org>

#### **Federation of African Environmental Journalists (FAEJ)**

Contact: Joshua Awuku-Apaw, President  
P.O. Box AN 16641, Accra - GHANA  
Tel.: +233 21 232 762  
Fax: +233 21 230 455  
E-mail: [greeneth@ghana.com](mailto:greeneth@ghana.com)

#### **Sub-Saharan Africa Forum for Environmental Communicators**

Contact: Emmanuel Koro  
Tel.: +264 4 732254/732625

**Caribbean Environmental Reporter's Network**

Contact: Zadie Neufville  
Tel.: +44 161 231 1724  
Fax: +44 161 231 0043  
E-mail: [zadien@madhousenet.co.uk](mailto:zadien@madhousenet.co.uk)  
Internet: <http://www.webgate.poptel.org.uk/zadie>

**The Commonwealth Environmental Journalists Association**

Contact: Quamrul Islam Chowdhury, Chairman  
42/1/Kha Segun Bagicha, Dhaka 1000 - BANGLADESH  
Tel.: +880 2 933 0354  
Fax: +880 2 933 6987  
E-mail: [fejb@bangla.net](mailto:fejb@bangla.net)

**Latin American and Caribbean Environmental Communication Network**

Website: <http://www.redcalc.org>

**Brazilian Environmental Journalists Network**

Website: <http://www.jornalismoambiental.jor.br>

**Green Press Pakistan**

Contact: Syed Masroor Gillani  
PO Box 1123 – Islamabad – PAKISTAN  
Tel.: +92-51-2270236  
E-mail: [greenpress@hotmail.com](mailto:greenpress@hotmail.com)

**Nepal Forum of Environmental Journalists (NEFEJ)**

Website: <http://www.nefej.org.np>

**Sri Lanka Environmental Journalists**

Website: <http://www.environmentaljournalists.lk>

**Japanese Forum of Environmental Journalists (JFEJ)**

Global Environmental Forum  
1-18-1 Toranomom, Minato-ku Tokyo, 105-0001 – JAPAN  
Fax: 03-3592-9737  
Noriko Sakurai E-mail: [gef-nsakurai@nifty.com](mailto:gef-nsakurai@nifty.com)  
Tomoko Hamabata E-mail: [tomoko\\_hamabata@nifty.com](mailto:tomoko_hamabata@nifty.com)

**Croatian Environmental Press Centre**

Contact: Verica Sinoka  
D. Neumana 2  
31000 Osijek – CROATIA  
E-mail: [centrala@zeleni.hr](mailto:centrala@zeleni.hr) Website: <http://www.media.rec.org/CEPC.htm>

## Appendix 4 - Awards for Excellence in Reporting

**Reuters-IUCN Award for Excellence in Environmental Reporting** - is a worldwide contest in environmental journalism to recognise excellence in professional reporting on environmental and sustainable development issues; and foster a dialogue between journalists and experts to encourage informative reporting based on sound scientific data. The Awards are open to journalists in print and online news services throughout the world. Journalists are invited to submit entries related to environment and sustainable development. The global winner, selected from six regional winners, receives a cash prize of US\$5,000. The six regional winners receive a trophy and a travel grant to attend the global awards ceremony. The last one was held during the Third IUCN World Conservation Congress in Bangkok, Thailand, in November 2004. For more details, please check the following website <http://www.iucn.org/reuters/2004/index.htm>.

The Biodiversity Reporting Award (DRA) - is an environmental journalism competition organized by Conservation International, the International Center for Journalists (ICFJ) and the International Federation of Environmental Journalists (IFEJ). The Award was founded in 1999 to recognize outstanding environmental reporting in biodiversity-rich countries. Initially held in Guatemala and Guyana, the Award has grown every year. During the 2004, the competition was held in Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Guyana, Madagascar and Peru. Last year Brazil was the first country to open the Award to television journalists. The Award has its own website in English, Spanish, Portuguese and French, and features more than 700 articles, all that have competed in the Award since 1999. The articles are available to researchers and journalists. For more details, please check [www.biodiversityreporting.org](http://www.biodiversityreporting.org)