

SUSTAINABLE JOURNALISM IN PRACTICE

CONFERENCE DATES 23 - 25 MARCH 2023, NAIROBI - KENYA



THE AGA KHAN UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF
MEDIA AND COMMUNICATIONS



Fojo Sustainable journalism



WITS CENTRE
FOR JOURNALISM

SUSTAINABLE
JOURNALISM
PARTNERSHIP

CONFERENCE REPORT



INTRODUCTION

Formed nine months ago, The Sustainable Journalism Partnership (SJP) has already gathered over 100 members from 63 countries. Members include senior researchers, academicians, and media leaders; strongly putting forwards a case for the need to investigate and speak to sustainable journalism across the globe. During the second conference held in Nairobi from Thursday, March 23, until Saturday, March 25, 2023, Lars Tallert, the President of SJP, reiterated these remarks as he opened the conference that brought together over 100 media stakeholders at Aga Khan University and over 20 virtual participants. The conference was convened to discuss new approaches to journalism that are constructive, sustainable, and actionable. Organized by The Aga Khan University's Graduate School of Media and Communications, Fojo Media Institute, and Wits Centre for Journalism, the conference framed the topic of sustainability around content and conversations with the aim of promoting and shaping conversations around content, business, environment, and representations, which are the pillars of sustainable journalism.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Sustainable journalism focuses on the following six core areas to derive a methodology that looks holistically at sustainability by bringing together not only journalists and media specialists but audience and consumers of media products. The aim is to create a model that is not only inclusive but relies on feedback to be sustainable.



Figure 1: Six core areas for sustainable journalism practices

The three days of the conference covered a variety of topics presented by the organisers the aim highlighting expertise in various area of journalism and media and coalescing these with the need for sustainability.

Churchill Otieno's presentation on the need for sustainable journalism in Kenya showed that collaboration and mergers can strengthen the market, while private investment drives sustainable journalism. Queenter Mbori's case study presentation on networked women advocates for gender balance. This is crucial for representing society and ensuring sustainable content. Hesbon Owilla's presentation on the GSMC Media Innovation Centre discussed the sustainability of media innovators who are changing African journalism with their sustainable approaches. Clare Mogere's added on the same focused on financial sustainability of start-ups that need to develop their business side, processes, and systems to create efficiencies that attract funding.

Dr. Ylikpski online presentation on climate journalism highlighted courses at Tampere University in Finland on sustainable journalism. The project covers sustainable development, journalism, and communication sustainability, and introduces students to sustainable journalism. Enoch Sithole's study on climate change journalism in South Africa found a dominance of foreign reports and insufficient local coverage. He recommended addressing the skill gap, providing training, and securing donor funding to boost local reports. Zeynab Wandati's discussed the need for science journalists to cover climate change and local analysis more effectively by incorporating strategies such as framing climate change with other issues and pursuing short courses for professional development.

Patric Hamsch's case study on the Swedish Premium Team, showcased successful digital journalism through collaborative teams. High-impact articles were generated, demonstrating the effectiveness of cross-functional teams and clear objectives. Rishad Patel's case study presented a successful model for Frontier Myanmar, a print magazine that transformed its finances by focusing on community engagement and membership. David Omwoyo's presentation on media regulation showed that regulation was effective for essential for sustainable journalism as it promotes democracy, social cohesion, and diversity. Joe Ageyo's presentation on newsroom reorganisation advises legacy media to prioritize their value proposition and consistently engage in conversations with their audience to understand their evolving needs. James Munyaneza's presentation on The New Times emphasised on challenges when the government stopped advertising in 2017 and the COVID-19 pandemic, resulting a shift to digital platforms, creating content for a younger audience, and improved internal operations.

Lindokuhle Nzuza's panel presentation on JamLab discussed three programs on innovation, grants start-ups and community meetups, all contributing to sustainable journalism across Africa. Emang Bokhutlo's case study on The Voice newspaper showed prioritization of marginalized voices and social issues can result in breaking barriers and challenging social stigmas. Bongwiwe Tutu's case study on The Africa-China Reporting Project (ACRP) showed support for African journalists & prioritization of African perspectives to empower women and youth, contributing towards development. Munyaradzi Dodo demonstrated how Magamba Network's programs supported entry level media practitioners and start-ups in Zimbabwe.

Ylva Bergman's case study on 'Sustainability Today,' highlighted its revenue generation through premium subscriptions, education services, and events. Linus Kaikai's presentation on Royal Media Services focused on diversification of platform and revenue streams to ensure sustainability. Dr. Borchardt's presentation on climate journalism advised using local case studies, highlighting benefits of change, and balancing doom and gloom with solutions. Rishad Patel's case study on digital journalism highlights the significance of understanding the problem and target audience. Niche content and user-centered approaches are the future of sustainable journalism. The final presentation was from Prof. Mutsvairo's who addressed

challenges in journalism, including news aggregators and declining trust. He encouraged engaging non-professional actors and including ordinary people in discussions promote media literacy and sustainability solutions. All the presentations showcased how they have uniquely contributed to sustainable journalism practices and viability.

On the final day, based on working groups presentations and the conference discussions, six action points were tabled and discussed. These included: i) Content- African start-ups to adopt premium team model, ii) Gender journalism that works- collaborations in action oriented research and training on gender sensitive reporting, iii) Education- develop partnerships for Undergraduate and Masters courses or incorporate sustainable journalism in existing courses, iv) Climate content- action EBU report recommendations in African context, v) Research- write journal articles for special issue in Journalism Practice Journal, Palgrave Macmillan and Brill Publishers that focus on sustainable journalism, and vi) Communication- engagement and case studies to be developed and shared on www.sustainablejournalism.se

As the conference drew to a close, the overarching agreement was that sustainable journalism should prioritize content that meets the audience's needs and goes beyond the norm. To achieve this, media practitioners need to leverage emerging digital platforms and listen to their audience, use data to drive decisions and operations, experiment and most importantly innovate faster and if they fail, fail cheaply. Several presentations were made to illustrate different approaches and cases in different regions. The need for contemporary media regulations that is alive to the current realities was also emphasised as critical for a framework that would support sustainable journalism and guarantee independence.

DAY 1: THE NEED FOR SUSTAINABLE JOURNALISM

Welcome Note from Key Convenors

- Prof. Nancy Booker, Dean, AKU Graduate School of Media and Communications
- Dr. Dinesh Balliah, Director, Wits Centre for Journalism
- Lars Tallert, President Sustainable Journalism Partnership

The key convenors of the conference set the backdrop of the conference by emphasising that newsrooms need to think about sustainability of journalism from a content perspective. They noted that the struggles in journalism revolve around creating valuable content for the ever-fleeting audience, which should contribute to media house revenues and sustainable societies. They further noted that sustainable journalism is important as traditional business models for journalism have crashed, requiring media houses to innovate and adopt new models quickly. Prof. Booker said that Journalism must address the realities of the environment and shape public discussions on environmental sustainability. She emphasised that sustainable journalism should also prioritise inclusivity and diversity by including women and young audiences in leadership roles.

Dr. Balliah borrowed from ChatGPT definition which viewed sustainable journalism as being financially secure and dependent on multiple revenue sources. Mr. Tallert said that even though the media industry equates sustainability to stable profits over time, emphasis need to shift from financial sustainability to models of sustainable journalism that impacts future generations and societies. He added that media organisations need to realise the era of gatekeeping is over, as people can build media start-ups from their phones and monetize them.

The convenors concluded their remarks by stating that for media practitioners to realise sustainable journalism, they must reconsider their business models, customer relations, content, and journalism's role in society. With the above, the key convenors opened the conference for discussions and emphasised that sustainable journalism is in everyone's hands, and everyone has a chance to shape its future.

Keynote Address: The Industry Perspective on the Need for Sustainable Journalism – Churchill Otieno, President Kenya Editors Guild (KEG).

Mr. Otieno stated that within sustainable journalism, the media industry is at the introduction stage of the product life cycle. He said that for sustainable journalism to work, media organisations need to encourage investments as they are crucial to building a stronger market for journalism that attracts audiences. He suggested that collaborations and investments with private players should be pursued by media houses to enable mergers or acquisitions. Adding that fewer media houses could result in stronger entities and players in the market. These can have a positive impact on the market and help overcome the inadequacies of national broadcasters like Kenya Broadcasting Corporation (KBC). In addition, the President of KEG urged newsroom editors and media leaders to prioritise the needs of news consumers. This prioritisation will bring about life-changing journalism, rather than making assumptions about what the audience want. He concluded by stating that sustainable journalism requires journalists to rebuild public trust as it enables the journalists to distinguish themselves from other forms of content.

A Case Study Panel Discussion: The Kenyan Example of Sustainable Journalism in Practice – moderated by Prof. Levi Obonyo.

- Queenter Mbori, Deputy Digital Editor / President Standard Group Women Network
- Clare Mogere and Hesbon Owilla – GSMC Media Innovation Centre

The moderator guided the discussion referencing the topics of who is taking care of sustainable journalism and whether sustainability issues are primarily business model problems or regulatory frameworks issues that possibly pose a danger to the practice of sustainable journalism. Drawing from the Standard Media Group experience, Ms Mbori talked about the formation of the Standard Group Women Network (SGWN), which advocates for diversity and inclusion in the newsroom through gender balance. Ms Mbori noted that diversity at Standard Group has proved to be very crucial in attaining sustainable journalism. Content is key and engaging women in collecting and producing the content is crucial as they represent the society.

Ms Mogere and Mr Owilla's discussion on sustainability of innovators highlighted how the Graduate School of Media and Communications' (GSMC) Media Innovation Centre (MIC) at Aga Khan University identifies individuals with innovative media ideas and supports them through training, coaching, and mentorship. Mr. Owilla mentioned an example from Minority Africa in Uganda which covers minority issues and brings them to the public sphere. He added that the organisation, just like many media start-ups incubated at the MIC has transitioned from the traditional business model that relies on advertisers to a social impact model of funding. He gave other examples from Tanzania, noting that Debunk Media in Kenya, Hamasa Media, Afyatoon and Ona Stories, all in Tanzania, have niche focuses and are sustainable through

innovative funding approaches that leverages partnerships and social impact funding models. Ona Stories uses virtual reality and augmented reality to create immersive and impactful stories that speak to their society in a sustainable way. Debunk Media which has recently partnered with Radio Africa Group to cover and focus on in-depth stories on the coverage of the Kenyan elections, climate change and the environment. The Media Innovation Centre, Mr. Owilla noted, has nurtured more than 13 media innovators who are at different stages of building media enterprises that are changing the face of journalism in Africa through innovative storytelling and novel business models. Ms. Mogere presented the successes of these innovators in residence in building on the seed grant from the donors of the Media Futures Project to diversified approaches that has seen them attract different revenue streams including other grants. She said that it is important to realise that innovation requires patience, therefore for innovators to attract funding, start-ups need to develop their business side, processes, and systems to create efficiencies and sustainability.

From this panel discussion and engagements Ms Mbori emphasised that with the unexpected migration to terrestrial digital broadcasting and prominence of the digital platforms in Kenya, media houses were confronted with two major challenges. First, was the content creation disruptions and uncertainties about their prospects of monetising content. And two the emergence of other content producers on the digital platform including bloggers, who became competitors for both audiences and advertising revenues. She advised that to reclaim the glory of media houses, journalists need to verify facts and produce accurate content and cement their position as credible sources of content trusted by their audiences. Ms Mbori emphasised that to realise sustainable journalism, media organisations should retrain their journalists on the latest trends, develop partnerships that go beyond the traditional ways of doing things, tell stories that the resonate with the audience, split revenue, and reskill their online content creators on ethics.

Mr Owilla added that partnerships between media organizations and journalists and experts and education institutions is important as it helps to create value through quality content from experts. Journalists get to learn from the experts who are subject matter specialist in areas that journalists may need empirical and expert information while organisations, institutions or projects where these experts work including educational institutions get the opportunity to be covered with some degree of editorial independence in the interest of the public and in an arrangement that could rake in revenues for media organizations. Ms. Mbori responded to a question about adoption of Artificial Intelligence (AI) by stating that revamping content packaging for target audiences is crucial in order to attain and maintain audience loyalty. She added that media houses need to conduct consumer surveys and produce quality content that satisfies the audience's demands and provide comfortable working conditions for employees. This means offering specialised content for niche audiences through platforms such as podcasts, TikTok, and soft copies, along with shorter stories and news bytes for younger audiences.

Panel Discussion: Climate Journalism: What Contributes to Sustainable Societies and Media Viability and What Does Not. – moderated by Prof. George Nyabuga.

- Dr. Mateleena Ylikpski – Journalism Researcher, Sustainable Journalism Master's Programme, Tampere University, Finland.
- Enoch Sithole – Wits Centre for Journalism, Climate reporting in South Africa.
- Zeynab Wandati – Climate Editor, Nation Media Group.

Prof. Nyaguba started the session by drawing a nexus amongst climate issues, climate reporting and education. He posed the question: Is it just a misunderstanding/conspiracy theory surrounding climate change that makes climate change reporting an uncomfortable subject that alarm media audiences?

Dr. Ylikpski discussed how in Finland they have a 3-year course composed of 3 modules at Tampere University on sustainable journalism that draws from themes on sustainable development and UN agency. The course uses 2 models (lectures and workshops) and covers: Year 1- covers sustainable development, Year 2- sustainability in journalism and communication, and Year 3- introduction to sustainable journalism. The course aims to teach sustainable development, media content creation with global perspectives, and emotional integration of local issues to captivate the audience. Promoting neutrality and diversity while discussing climate and sustainable issues involves questioning one's frame of reference, addressing misinformation, and understanding fears and worries. Climate Journalism equals Sustainable Journalism. Those were the key points presented by Dr. Ylikpski regarding the sustainable journalism master's programme.

Mr. Enoch Sithole presented a study on climate change journalism in South Africa. His study aimed to develop sustainable journalism concepts focused on climate change. His literature review indicated that foreign reports dominate climate change reporting, with less emphasis on local people's stories. He added that many climate change stories are behind paywalls, and there is a need for more coverage. Some of Mr. Sithole recommendations include addressing the skill gap in climate journalism, offer training courses and workshops that involve various parties, and donor funding for climate change journalists. He concluded that even though media coverage has improved, it is still insufficient as climate change affects every aspect of our lives and needs to be reported in news briefs. His study can be accessed from <https://fojo.se/publikationer/>

Ms. Zeynab Wandati clarified that science journalists tend to cover more health issues than climate change. She explained how local analysis stories are often ignored as media houses favour foreign coverage, which can be outdated. To ensure sustainable coverage, Ms. Wandati offered the following solutions: journalists should frame climate change in relation to other issues, use vertical integration to create exclusive content, make stories evergreen and

compatible with online platforms, work with editors to influence coverage, maintain positive relationships with researchers, and finally journalists should take short courses to upskill themselves.

Several perspectives emerged from the discussion where it was noted that it is important to move away from dogmatic thinking, recommending journalists to approach climate change as a human-created issue and provide in-depth disaster reporting. The panellists noted that climate change is a global issue, but its impact on the North and South differs. Mr. Sithole added that the South feels like a victim as they contribute only 3.8% of emissions and have different climate needs compared to the North. Dr. Ylikpski responded to the global issue by saying that reporting must be localised to resonate with the audience. Ms. Wandati remarked that climate change journalism should be integrated into other newsroom areas, do follow-up stories, report on innovative success stories, and use daily teasers online to drive debates. In conclusion, Ms. Wandati advised journalists to incorporate solution-based journalism to drive the agenda towards sustainable journalism by:

- ensuring journalists believe and understand the need for climate change coverage otherwise they will have a challenge and a bias in reporting it.
- understanding and differentiating between climate change and variability.
- developing partnerships, whereby organizations can work with media towards capacity building which assist with storytelling.

Case Study Presentation: The Swedish Business Example: Reorganising the Newsroom at a Local News Media into Premium Teams – led by Patric Hamsch, Deputy Editor in Chief *Nya Wermlands Tidningen* and moderated by Hesbon Owilla.

Mr. Patric Hamsch described the Swedish Premium Teams reorganisation of the newsroom where journalism and events can be done through social media sites, apps, and print media. In the case study, he explained that Premium Teams consist of reporters, digital editors, and marketing coordinators who work together to plan, produce and distribute/publish stories digitally. Adding that the story selection, timeframe, and objectives are shared within the team.

Premium Teams are organised in three levels: Small (sponsoring on social media), Medium (social media and digital story formats), and Large (planning, production, publication of stories with digital story format, reader engagement, and social media). Some of the high impact articles examples highlighted by Mr. Hamsch were:

- The "Ugly Tattoo," started with an article that generated 73K+ page views and 5 conversions, and a competition for the ugliest tattoo with almost 10K page views.
- The "Coach Potato" achieved 8 articles, 42K+ page views, and 24% page views within the targeted group.
- The "Graduation Student" yielded 32 articles, 186K+ page views, and 54 conversions on articles, with 69% page views from under 45 years.

Mr. Hamsch indicated that over 150 Premium Teams have been done, and they won a Mass Global Media Award. He concluded his presentation by saying that the following considerations need to be done to achieve sustainable journalism:

- Journalists need to curate stories digitally.
- A newsroom needs to create cross functional teams with editorial, marketing, and tech.
- Journalists need clear objectives around reach, conversion, and readers engagement.

From the interaction with the conference participants, Mr. Hamsch said that Premium Teams sustainability in addressing societal challenges can be achieved by journalists finding stories and topics that have high impact based on value driven campaigns and giving back to the society. On editorial independence, he explained that editorial decides, leads, and offers publishing insights while other team members can lead on how to achieve great impact on the stories and angles. With limited resources, efficiency can be achieved by looking for journalists who are competent in social media, and in good reporting in other areas such as education, health, etc as well. Mr. Hamsch suggested that journalists need to experiment and write stories that will lead to engagement and use reader's responses to create journalism around it. He concluded his presentation by saying that Premium Team concept can work in mainstream media by adapting it and making the content relevant to the target audience.

The moderator closed the session and the first day of the conference by asking conference participants to give their key takeaways for the day. They were:

- We need to shift from the traditional way of journalism and embrace new ways, we need to research what our audience are looking for and produce it, and create a balance amongst journalism, viability, and inclusion in our content.
- Driving sustainability in journalism requires a change in the narrative and different approaches such as Premium Team need to be replicated. Social media audience engagement is key to sustainable journalism.
- We need a radical approach starting from policy, and how to lobby policymakers on sustainability of journalism.

DAY 2

Building a Viable Media: Case Study and Panel Discussion – moderated by Prof. Nancy Booker.

- David Omwoyo, CEO Media Council of Kenya - The role of media regulation in building a viable media
- Joe Ageyo, Nation Media Group - Reimagining an established media organization
- Rishad Patel, Splice Media - The Asian business example
- James Munyaneza, New Times - The Rwandan business example

The moderator started off the second day of the conference by highlighting that successful companies vary their business approach based on size, audience, resources, and distribution, with regulation being a crucial factor and that effective news outlets prioritize financials like they do content.

All the panellists discussed different ways to achieve sustainable journalism in the face of challenges. Mr. Patel presented a successful model for a print magazine facing limited resources, which involves solving users' problems, creating valuable content, involving users in the process, and making it worth their while. Mr. Omwoyo emphasized that effective regulation is crucial for promoting democracy, social cohesion, and diversity, as it creates an equal and predictable playing field for the media. He warned that poorly executed regulation can be dangerous. Mr. Ageyo advised that legacy media should focus on their value proposition and adopt a data-driven approach that constantly reflects on the job their audience want them to do. He encouraged innovation but warned that if you are going to fail you need to do it fast and cheap. Mr. Munyaneza talked about The New Times faced significant challenges with the government stopping advertisements and COVID-19 caused a temporary suspension of printing. To stay afloat, they shifted their focus to the digital space and changed their storytelling approach to appeal to the younger audience, who make up 70% of the population. Internally, they've made changes by synchronizing the sales and editorial teams and forming partnerships with other media organizations.

Overall, the key themes for sustainable journalism practices from the panellists were solve audience problems, involve the audience in the process, adapt to change, and focus on the value proposition. Some of the key elements from their presentations included:

- Strengthening journalism and media diversity in Africa is a shared goal among many organizations. Programs that focus on providing grants, skills training, and networking opportunities for African journalists and media professionals have been successful in achieving this goal.
- Press freedom should not only benefit journalists' comfort but also provide valuable information to the public.

- Legacy media needs to constantly reflect on the value proposition they offer and their audience's evolving needs. Media must adopt a data-driven approach, prioritize experimentation, and build and test quickly and inexpensively.
- Adapting to changing circumstances and shifting focus can help media organizations stay afloat. Organizations like Frontier Myanmar and The New Times have successfully pivoted to digital platforms and changed their storytelling approaches to appeal to younger audiences.

The participants and panellists contributed to the achievement of sustainable journalism practices by adding that media platforms like TikTok are used for news but require specific training as each platform has a unique profile, audience needs must be put before advertisers' needs, and AI and machine learning aid in understanding audiences better. It is necessary to focus on quality over quantity, create engaging stories, use split revenue to compensate producers for their intellectual property. Finally, media regulations and ethics codes can help ensure independence from government revenue.

The Role of Content and Representation in Sustainable Journalism: Case Study and Panel Discussion – moderated by Dinesh Balliah.

- Bongiwe Tutu; Wits Africa-China Reporting Project
- Lindokuhle Nzuza; Wits Jamlab
- Munyaradzi Dodo; Magamba Network, Zimbabwe
- Emang Bokhutlo; The Voice, Botswana

In the discussions, the panellists highlighted various programs and initiatives that aimed to support and strengthen journalism in Africa. Ms. Nzuza from Wits JamLab outlined that their goal is to enhance African journalism and media diversity through three programs: Accelerator, Knowledge sharing, and Community of practice. The Accelerator program provides support to start-ups at any stage through a six-month program, while the Knowledge sharing program documents innovations and grants for Chinese in Africa. The Community of practice engages journalists and media makers, organizes monthly webinars and meetups, and an annual fintech festival. Grants and knowledge sharing support sustainable journalism across the continent.

Ms. Bokhutlo shared the story of The Voice Newspaper, one of the conference's case studies. In the case study, The Voice newspaper is described as the most decorated tabloid in Botswana. As a two-day newspaper, it focuses on telling in-depth stories behind the news and focuses on the why and how. The Voice Newspaper treated journalism as a service to the people, breaking barriers, and shattering stigmas. Ms. Bokhutlo said that initially the Newspaper faced criticism for catering to a specific community and for its coverage of women and children's issues. However, the Newspaper pivoted its approach to prioritize the voices of young people and women by listening to the concerns of the community. Through its

partnerships with the government during the HIV/AIDS era, the newspaper helped destigmatize the disease, leading to Botswana receiving free ARVs from USA. She concluded by explaining how the publication also gave a voice to the LGBTQI community, leading to the decriminalization of gay sex in Botswana.

Ms. Tutu discussed the Africa-China Reporting Project (ACRP), which aims to support African journalists, media professionals, and researchers by providing reporting grants, skills training workshops, networking opportunities, and other resources. She outlined how ACRP has become a valuable hub for policymakers, businesspeople, researchers, and media professionals. She elaborated how the project collaborates with China Dialogue and African journalists to report on climate change and its impact on communities in Africa adding that to date, over 300 reporting grants have been awarded to individuals in Africa and other parts of the world.

Mr. Dodo discussed the two programs of Magamba Network: Arts4Change and Digital X. Arts4Change has a music competition for democracy and a film fellowship for young filmmakers to create documentaries for young audiences. He played a music video that showcased how different young audience come together to highlight key issues, in this case deforestation. He explained how the network supports recent graduates in their transition to the industry through accelerator programs, grants, and training on how to run new media initiatives. He said the Hustle Fund provides micro-grants ranging from \$1,000 to \$10,000 to bridge the gap for venture capitalists and seed funders in Zimbabwe. Additionally, Expression Lab runs TV TV, a program that uses humor and satire to make serious conversations more engaging for young people. Finally, FeedZW focuses on climate change and produces short-format documentaries.

The common themes among the panellists included strengthening journalism and media diversity, creating a voice for marginalized communities, supporting sustainable journalism by providing resources such as grants, skills training, and networking opportunities. The projects discussed aimed at prioritizing African perspectives, amplifying the voices of young people and women, and contributing to development. The panellists also emphasized the importance of treating journalism as a service to the people, breaking barriers, and shattering stigmas. Additionally, the projects focus on providing resources and support to recent graduates and individuals in their transition to the industry, as well as addressing issues such as climate change and deforestation through creative storytelling.

The participants and panellists contributed to the discussion by adding that young people drive website traffic and technology uptake, making them important to advertisers. Grants must have specific KPIs for sustainability. In-depth investigative reporting contributes to conscious change in society. Finally, gender tracker is used for data-driven analytics. The principles of journalism remain the same, though the 5WsH are evolving.

Running Independent Media on Sustainability, Targeting the Business Community and Public Sector: Case Study Panel and Discussion – moderated by Pheladi Sethusa.

- Ylva Bergman, Editor in Chief Aktuell Hållbarhet / Sustainability Today - The Swedish business example
- Linus Kaikai, Royal Media Services, Director, Strategy & Innovation - The Kenyan business example

Ms. Bergman discussed the importance of journalism in promoting sustainability and how the largest media house in Sweden is providing support to small media businesses that focus on sustainability. Using a case study, she showcased the success of 'Sustainability Today', an environmental magazine, as a viable way to enhance sustainable journalism. She elaborated that the magazine's viability is based on a premium subscription model for online media. She broke down the revenue as follows: premium subscription contributed 40% of their revenue in 2022, advertising contributed 10%, events contributed 21%, and 29% came from the education business. She added that they are successful in both print (although they want to move digital) and online. She remarked that since businesses need to comply with regulations and reduce their carbon footprint, the magazine provides a growth opportunity for media companies as they provide useful information on sustainability. She said it is important for journalists to question politicians and businesses on how they plan to make the transition towards a more sustainable future. She emphasized that high-quality independent journalism is necessary for sustainable journalism, but media houses must also consider revenue streams to remain viable.

Mr. Kaikai emphasized the need for high-quality, independent journalism that is credible, transparent, and ethical for sustainable journalism in Kenya. He warned that the line between business and journalism is becoming blurred, and media houses are chasing revenue based on audience reach and ratings. He advised that media companies need to diversify into new areas, such as travel, own advertising agencies, and use video-on-demand platforms to increase revenue. Both speakers highlighted the importance of diversification and innovation for commercial sustainability. They concluded that for sustainable journalism, commercial advertisers are buying associations, partnerships, and collaborations, and finally, digital and legacy media need to complement each other and not compete.

Numerous perspectives were contributed by the participants and panellists during this session. Mr. Kaikai cautioned that premium advertising can lead to being unethical, therefore news and commercial elements need a clear separation, where the news takes a break and commercials are run. Can going niche can lead to sustainability? Mr. Kaikai said that media urban concentration is due to logistics and technical services costs, elaborating that Royal Media Services have local bureaus teams that do sales and gather the news. Ms. Bergamn added that

for Sustainability Today magazine, they were able to survive due to having a niche and the opportunity for a large media house to buy them and build on their business viability. They concluded that going niche can be a flagship but may not be recommended for large media organisations as it is restrictive. On editorial independence, Mr. Kaikai warned that the editorial should never be compromised as it will have a negative effect on the bottom line. He noted that national radio stations are becoming smaller while community based are becoming popular, however the revenue model for the community-based radios needs to be reviewed.

Presentations from Working Groups – moderated by Dr. Dinesh Balliah.

Each group was expected to discuss and present innovative ideas, and how to put them into practice in sustainable journalism. The key thematic areas were Content, Business, Production & distribution, Gender & inclusive organisations, Education, and Research.

Team Yellow focused on the importance of community engagement and understanding to create quality content. They highlighted the benefits of partnerships and collaboration with experts to address audience needs and generate revenue. They also emphasized the importance of inclusivity in content generation, leveraging technology and partnerships, and creating platforms for audience diversity.

Team Red stressed the need for universities to produce job-ready journalists by proactively using research and industry insight to inform the curriculum and providing specialized training. They also suggested incorporating business based KPIs in newsrooms and implementing quality policy changes to attract and retain audience in the digital space.

Team Orange highlighted the importance of digital platforms and partnerships with members to produce sustainable environments. They proposed a viable business model of monetizing through apps like podcasts moderated by journalists who fact check content. They also suggested working with citizen journalists can lead to sustainability, but they need training.

Team Pink identified challenges such as high levels of illiteracy and poverty. They proposed solutions such as adapting content to the targeted audience, reviewing education curricula frequently. They also proposed forming partnerships with telecommunication companies to provide journalists with revenue splits for their content.

Team White proposed sustainability through innovative ideas such as visual content, including infographics and videos, that are more engaging and shareable on social media. They suggested collaborations with professionals, charging fees for unique and high-quality content, and using free trials to attract subscribers. They emphasized the importance of good journalism as it sells itself and can lead to bundled subscriptions and premium rates.

Team Blue highlighted the need for media houses to develop various revenue streams such as revenue share with quick-tech companies, advertising, membership, subscriptions, merchandising, and events. They also stressed the importance of diversification in digital spaces and using investigative journalism to attract funds. Good management aids sustainable journalism, and media houses need to check on the overall health of the workforce.

From the general discussions with the conference participants, it was highlighted that to engage with the audiences in the future, journalism needs to adopt a more holistic picture and reduce monopolisation, citizen journalism will flourish, and two-way relationship between the

media and its audience will be important. There was also the realisation that technology such as algorithms and AI will play a key role in journalism. At BBC Africa, they have recognised that their media audience's median age is 19 years and are transitioning to make their stories more relevant to them. It was also recommended that media companies need to develop human capacity by hiring new skill sets such as fundraising and compensating for quality journalism. Other sustainability measures suggested included: executing sustainability aspects while writing to donors, investing in other businesses that can complement journalism, using gaming as a tool for impact, and covering positive stories about women not just their victimisation. An example of The BBC's 50/50 project that aims to feature more female voices on air was highlighted. Finally, it was suggested that governments could offer tax incentives to organisations that fund philanthropies and NGOs to support sustainable journalism.

DAY 3

Sustainable Journalism Practices; wrap-up panel discussion – moderated by Lars Tallert.

- Dr. Alexandra Borchardt - Climate journalism that works.
- Rishad Patel - How to make digital journalism viable.
- Prof. Bruce Mutsvairo - A Pan-African perspective on sustainable journalism.

Dr. Borchardt shared the EBU news report and said it important to craft journalism about climate change which resonates with people that include impactful practical case studies. She added that the single most important thing is to motivate humans to do something by doing something ourselves. She recommended that journalists should focus on stories on the here and now, with local context, emphasise the benefits of change, and where people find agency and solution. Lastly, she emphasised that journalists need to approach different audiences differently. Mr. Patel recommended a sound business strategy to secure funding, with a focus on niche content that serves the audience, adding that the future of media is user centred, demand driven, and interest based. Prof. Mutsvairo highlighted challenges faced by journalists in today's rapidly transforming environment, including news actors and aggregators, and a lack of trust in journalism. He suggested engaging non-professional players to counter misinformation and promote media literacy and including ordinary people in discussions to ensure viable solutions for sustainability.

All panellists emphasized the importance of tailored messages and focusing on local context to engage audiences. They said that media professionals need to be aware of the challenges faced by journalism in the digital age, including the spread of misinformation, and the need for inclusivity in reporting. Also, media leaders should view their industry as a service industry and be willing to adapt and change to remain viable in a rapidly transforming environment. Dr. Borchardt and Mr. Patel stressed the need for impactful storytelling, with a clear understanding of the problem being solved and for whom.

During the discussion with the participants, Dr. Borchardt advised that when it comes to fact checking models, there was no one size fits all model, as it mostly depends on the region the story is being published. In conclusion, Prof. Mutsvairo noted that debates lead to call to action, therefore it is important that the stories are reported that lead to debates which make it to the political and business spheres. In these spheres people with power can influence change and policies.

Deciding the Way Forward for Sustainable Journalism Partnership: Panel Discussion

- Lars Tallert, President Sustainable Journalism Partnership
- Prof. Nancy Booker, Dean, AKU Graduate School of Media and Communications
- Dr. Dinesh Balliah, Director, Wits Centre for Journalism

The final component of the conference was on six action points that discussed and suggested the way forward. The discussions were spearheaded by the key convenors and the conference participants contributed to the following key areas:

1. Content/Business Octopus Media (working Title)

It was suggested that new start-ups to be developed using the sustainable journalism platform. It was suggested that this can be done by adopting the Premium Teams model in an African context, developing a proposal and look for funding. It was further suggested that Jamlab can incubate it, while AKU can support media start-ups, train, coach and offer mentorship. Everyone (conference participants and SJIP members) who is interested can participate in developing a new start-up pilot, based on all the good ideas that we have discussed during this conference.

2. Gender/Research/Business “Gender journalism that works”.

Report on what kind of gender-sensitive journalism engages the audience and provides revenues. Participants can also follow up on WAN-IFRAs baseline research, cooperating with them. Participants can see how to incorporate sustainable journalism modules in the short courses and then seek additional resources (from other donors) to conduct research on the relationship between gender and sustainability.

3. Education

Partners to develop MA courses, undergraduate courses (including MOCCs) and training modules for working journalists on sustainable journalism. We can co-create modules with Tampere, Linnaeus (including Fojo) and Umeå, Wits, Aga Khan and Pula universities. Developing collaborations with the engaged institutions to incorporate sustainable journalism modules in our existing programmes. GSMC is happy to do this in their MA in Digital Journalism and their Master’s in Media Leadership and Innovation. Additionally, offer faculty and student exchange programmes between universities in Nordic countries and Sub-Saharan Africa. It was further recommended that to be competitive, the programs created should involve stakeholders on course development, address the skill gaps and launch online instead of duplicating it in different universities. Finally, to the course include an introductory module on what sustainable journalism is and mental health.

4. Climate/Content/Business

It was suggested that the EBU report recommendations to be actioned in the in Nordic, East and Southern Africa contexts. As this is being done, the case studies can be developed to showcase how it worked, create more knowledge, and share experiences.

5. Research

Partners to collaborate to write journal articles on sustainable journalism. Some of the suggestions included: Special issue in Journalism in Practice Journal on sustainable journalism, Prof. Bruce Mutsvairo added that he was working on a Palgrave Macmillan book series project, which is an opportunity for a research-based publication. Brill Publishers also have a call on technology, power and society where sustainable journalism articles would be a fit. Partners have a researchers' group in the Nordics already, and we want to open it up for new participants. Additionally, partnership between the industry and academic research can be undertaken to focus on market and audience research.

6. Communication

Participants can develop additional cases of sustainable journalism, based on the format of the six case studies made by NMG. Adding that Sustainable Journalism Partnership can work with NMG, RMS, AJEN, EACA and SACOMM to reach educators in Africa. The purpose is to leverage on their conferences/meetings and to showcase sustainable journalism models. Conference participants were encouraged to register for membership on sustainablejournalism.se. and engage with others in the platform.

Some of the suggestions from the participants included using emotional intelligence to rebuild societal trust as it promotes a futuristic mindset. Other suggestions included more inclusive sustainable journalism initiatives, such as in warzones and francophone speaking countries. Journalists could engage with youth and communities through clean-up initiatives, building their capacities and sharing their stories. The Kibera News Network (an initiative of journalists and AKU) trains youth on citizen journalism, research, and data collection was highlighted as an example of an engagement initiative with the youth. It was suggested that the 50/50 BBC project can be used as an example of gender inclusivity approach. Finally, it was recommended that the implementation of the action points, annual conferences and regional network conversations can be shared and used for benchmarking. This can be done on the sustainablejournalism.se website.