



Energy for Sustainable Development – Issues for Public Action

Bringing the Message Home Through Journalists & Opinion Leaders

Commission on Sustainable Development

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What is the role of journalism?

People have an intrinsic need, an instinct, to know what is occurring beyond their direct experience.

Journalists answer this need and it should be expected of journalists that *their first obligation is to the truth.*



The role of journalism (cont'd.):

According to the Committee of Concerned Journalists:

- **Journalists' first loyalty is to the citizenry.**
- **Its essence is a discipline of verification.**
- **Its practitioners must maintain an independence from those they cover.**
- **It must serve as an independent monitor of power.**



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The role of journalism (cont'd.):

- **Journalism must provide a forum for public criticism and compromise.**
- **It must strive to make the significant interesting and relevant.**
- **It must keep the news comprehensive and proportional.**
- **Its practitioners must be allowed to exercise their personal conscience.**



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Why energy journalism?

It is in society's best interest for the public to be well-informed about what is happening in the energy sector:

- **About energy shortages—from lack of fuelwood to fierce competition for the world's oil resources—threaten livelihoods.**
- **About surging energy prices are making energy unaffordable to all but the well-to-do.**
- **About the economic, social and environmental impacts of energy projects.**

People are anxious about energy—demonstrations in Bolivia, guerilla action in Nigeria, concerns about modernization in Mozambique.

Energy journalists inform and educate:

- **Journalists inform citizens, utilities and governments of public issues and concerns.**
- **They inform the public of what decisions are being contemplated, how international interests are shaping the energy sector, what solutions have been found in other parts of the world.**

An informed public is more able to:

- **Deal with contentious issues and see long term benefits.**
- **Make productive contributions and provide useful feedback to government.**
- **Understand the potential for a better standard of living and potential reduced spending on energy.**
- **Understand gender roles to gain more productive input.**

Journalists in the developing world face many challenges:

- Uneven ability to writing honestly about power persons and entities.
- Lack of the luxury of an 'energy' beat in which they can continue to develop and build their expertise and contacts in one key subject area.
- Lack of the luxury of resources and time to do thorough investigative reporting.
- Difficulty in finding reliable, comparable and comprehensive sources of data.

How can we strengthen or support energy journalism?

- Build in-country expertise
- Journalists network (like SAFEJ)
- Data access (media toolkit to be discussed later)
- How might support be different for urban vs. Rural reporters, press vs TV vs radiio etc.?
- Web resources – portals on websites (e.G., GVEP) or stand-alone
- Other ideas: we will discuss at the end of this session.