



TRAINING THE MEDIA TO SUPPORT LOCALLY LED ADAPTATION IN BANGLADESH

PROJECT REPORT APRIL 2024



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ADAPTATION



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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BBC Media Action is the BBC's international charity, founded in 1999 to support media and communication for public good, and to work towards a world where informed and empowered people live in healthy, resilient and inclusive communities. Reaching more than 130 million people in some of the world's poorest and most fragile countries, the projects and programs of BBC Media Action save lives, protect livelihoods, counter misinformation, challenge prejudice and build democracy by supporting people to have their say, understand their rights, responsibilities and each other, and take action to transform their own lives.

BBC Media Action recognizes the important role of the media in promoting awareness to drive behavioral change and social transformation, and for galvanising communities to address underlying causes of vulnerability. The work of BBC Media Action is informed by the following principles:

- **People-centred.** Communities are at the heart of the work of BBC Media Action, along with equity and gender sensitivity.
- **Trustworthy.** Honest and open, sharing information and acknowledging mistakes.
- **Creative.** Innovative, adaptable and creative, making lasting improvements to people's lives.
- **Respectful.** Respect for audiences, partners and colleagues, while seeking to understand context, and to encourage diversity.
- **Collaborative.** Support, challenge and value colleagues and partners, learn from each other, mobilize local resources, and involve communities in designing and delivering projects and programs.
- **Effective.** Impact through evidence-driven learning, research, expertise and innovation for appropriate and lasting solutions.



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About the Global Center on Adaptation

The Global Center on Adaptation (GCA) is an international organization, hosted by the Netherlands, which works as a solutions broker to accelerate action and support for adaptation solutions from the international to the local, in partnership with the public and private sector, to ensure we learn from each other and work together for a climate resilient future. Learn more at www.gca.org or follow at @GCAdaptation.



INTRODUCTION

As 2023 was declared the warmest year on record at around 1.45°C above average pre-industrial levels by the World Meteorological Organization, the impacts on poor and vulnerable populations, including food insecurity and population displacement, continue to be of mounting concern. Weather and climate hazards are exacerbating slow onset climate impacts such as sea-level rise, rising salinity levels, and reduced soil productivity. Globally, around 3.6 billion people live in areas that are highly susceptible to climate change.

Bangladesh is ranked the seventh most climate-vulnerable country in the world, increasingly at risk from powerful cyclones, floods, sea level rise, and other extreme weather events. About 90 million citizens live in highly exposed areas, particularly in the country's coastal areas. The government of Bangladesh is committed to addressing these challenges with a wide range of adaptation strategies. As recognized in Bangladesh's *National Adaptation Plan 2023-2050*, adapting to the impacts of climate change is a high priority, particularly to protect these vulnerable populations.

Vulnerable populations often lack the resources – and the political voice to muster support and resources – to tackle climate impacts on their own. A “whole of society” approach is necessary, where the communities lead in designing and implementing locally contextualized adaptation responses, with the full support of national and local governments, and of agents of change – including not just non-government and academic organizations, but also the media.

The media can also connect local adaptation practitioners around the world by cross-fertilizing locally led adaptation (LLA) solutions between communities facing similar climate threats. Moreover, they can support progress and accountability towards implementing the eight Principles for Locally Led Adaptation, for more effective local climate action.

Research conducted for the Global Center of Adaptation (GCA) by Thomson Reuters Foundation in Bangladesh in 2022 found, however, that while global climate negotiations and climate-related disasters and hazards receive widespread media coverage, the day-to-day climate-related struggles of poor communities, their innovations to overcome them, and changes required in national systems to support them effectively receive little attention. This is both, because these local stories are a low priority for national media outlets, and because journalists lack the understanding and skills to analyze and report on local adaptation efforts.

To support local journalists in building this skill and capacity, the GCA's Global Hub on Locally Led Adaptation, inaugurated by H.E. Sheikh Hasina, Prime Minister of Bangladesh in 2022, organized training for journalists in 2022 (with Thomson Reuters Foundation, for journalists from 12 countries) and in 2023 (with BBC Media Action, for local journalists and young content makers from Bangladesh). This brief focuses on the 2023 training by BBC Media Action.

WHAT IS LOCALLY LED ADAPTATION?

Locally Led Adaptation (LLA) refers to the shifting of power to local stakeholders to design, implement, and monitor adaptation responses to limit the impacts of climate change, and to catalyze adaptation that is effective, equitable, and transparent. The Global Commission on Adaptation developed the following eight LLA Principles to guide efforts to Implement LLA:

- **Devolving decision-making to the lowest appropriate level:** Giving local institutions and communities more direct access to finance and decision-making power over how adaptation actions are defined, prioritized, designed, implemented; how progress is monitored; and how success is evaluated.
- **Addressing structural inequalities faced by women, youth, children, disabled, displaced, Indigenous Peoples and marginalized ethnic groups:** Integrating gender-based, economic, and political inequalities that are root causes of vulnerability into the core of adaptation action and encouraging vulnerable and marginalized individuals to meaningfully participate in and lead adaptation decisions.
- **Providing patient and predictable funding that can be accessed more easily:** Supporting long-term development of local governance processes, capacity, and institutions through simpler access modalities and longer term and more predictable funding horizons, to ensure that communities can effectively implement adaptation actions.
- **Investing in local capabilities to leave an institutional legacy:** Improving the capabilities of local institutions to ensure they can understand climate risks and uncertainties, generate solutions, and facilitate and manage adaptation initiatives over the long term without being dependent on project-based donor funding.
- **Building a robust understanding of climate risk and uncertainty:** Informing adaptation decisions through a combination of local, traditional, Indigenous, generational and scientific knowledge that can enable resilience under a range of future climate scenarios.
- **Flexible programming and learning:** Enabling adaptive management to address the inherent uncertainty in adaptation, especially through robust monitoring and learning systems, flexible finance, and flexible programming.
- **Ensuring transparency and accountability:** Making processes of financing, designing, and delivering programs more transparent and accountable downward to local stakeholders.
- **Collaborative action and investment:** Collaboration across sectors, initiatives and levels to ensure that different initiatives and different sources of funding (humanitarian assistance, development, disaster risk reduction, green recovery funds, etc.) support each other, and their activities avoid duplication, to enhance efficiencies and good practice.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

With support from GCA, BBC Media Action trained and mentored 40 journalists and 24 young content creators from six climate-vulnerable districts (Gaibandha, Kurigram, Rangpur, Bhola, Patuakhali, and Bagerhat) between July 2023 to April 2024, to produce engaging and analytical stories on local climate adaptation efforts. The six districts were chosen based on their climate vulnerability, and the diversity of adaptation challenges (related to coastal issues of salinity and sea level rise in the south, for instance, and of flood in the north).

BBC Media Action conducted the following activities under the project:

1. Formative research, to understand key barriers and opportunities, and to inform the design of the training module.
2. National consultations, to engage with decision-makers in media outlets based in Dhaka.
3. Selection, training and mentoring of 64 journalists and young people.
4. Content production and dissemination, on national TV, social media sites like Facebook and YouTube, and the Global Hub on LLA.

Formative Research

During this stage, in-depth interviews and focus group discussions were conducted with local journalists, content creators, representatives of government and non-government organizations, and representatives of vulnerable communities in Patuakhali, Bhola and Gaibandha (three of the six districts covered under the project). The interviews focused on understanding climate change impacts in these districts; documenting local adaptation practices led by communities for use as case studies during the training; exploring the extent and nature of media coverage of climate impacts and community responses; and investigating barriers and

opportunities for increased coverage.

The following key research findings informed the design of the training process:

- Media coverage of climate change in Bangladesh is led by the decisions of editorial desks in Dhaka, and (as indicated by earlier research by Thomson Reuters Foundation) focused mainly on climate-related extreme events (such as floods, cyclones, and landslides), international climate events, and corruption related to the utilization of climate funds.
- Editorial staff working for television outlets in Dhaka lack opportunities to understand the important role that the media can play in empowering local communities to lead on adaptation. They are therefore more likely to reject proposals by local journalists for stories on local adaptation efforts and innovations. Sensitizing these gatekeepers is critical to increase coverage of locally led adaptation.
- Local journalists cover issues related to extreme and slow onset climate-related events (such as rising salinity levels and the use of saline resistant crops), but lack knowledge, understanding, and access to experts and data to make strong links to climate change.
- Communities lack information on climate change, and sometimes mistrust journalists and are unwilling to speak to them.
- There are few female journalists at the district/ local levels, and they face security challenges in travelling to vulnerable areas.
- Young content creators generally focus on social media content that is trending with their peers, which sometimes includes live updates of climate-related disasters. They lack training in producing quality visual content (photos and videos). Training on climate change, production of visual content, monetizing social media content,

and networks to provide access to data and information can support both in increasing coverage of local climate impacts and innovations, and in generating employment for youth.

- Adaptation needs and practices vary considerably in the districts/ different geographical areas. Examples of LLA included plinth housing, floating gardens, seed preservation techniques, and drought and salt-tolerant agriculture and livestock.
- Not all local adaptation efforts supported by government and NGOs are locally led, however. Local government bodies, for instance, often prioritize infrastructure over building social capacity to practice LLA. Barriers to LLA also include community tension, and lack of documentation of indigenous and traditional adaptation practices.

The research also sought to develop tools to support future trainees to understand, plan and report on adaptation. For instance, seasonal calendars for disasters were created, location-specific adaptation practices were identified, and climate impacts on health and livelihoods in different seasons were documented, to help future trainees to plan content in advance.

National Consultations

Following the recommendation of the research that editorial staff at national desks should also be engaged in the training to create more buy-in for local adaptation stories, two national-level consultations were organized – on 13 August 2023, and 9 August 2023. 24 senior journalists heading editorial desks of 17 national TV channels participated in these consultations, indicating that they have not had the opportunity to reflect on the importance of covering local adaptation stories, and that the quality of the stories they receive from their local correspondents is often poor.

“This is the first time that the heads of the national desks, who make the decision on which stories should be covered, have been invited to a workshop to orient us on the importance of reporting locally led adaptation efforts,” said Prashanta Adhikary, Joint News Editor, Ntv Online.

“Such training opportunities should not only be limited to local correspondents, but include the entire chain, from those who take decisions on which stories are published, to those who write the scripts and edit footage,” said Dilshad Jahan Any, Deputy Chief News Editor, Deepto TV.

The consultations also highlighted the importance of providing more training to local journalists to produce better adaptation stories. Participants of both workshops committed strongly to prioritize and ensure better coverage of climate adaptation.

Selection, training and mentoring

The selection process was initiated through a call for applications from local journalists and young content creators in Bangladesh in July 2023. Over 124 applications were received from journalists, and 64 from young people. 40 journalists and 24 young people were selected, based on their experience, understanding and commitment to cover climate change issues, and credibility.

Training for the journalists was delivered through a residential training workshop, and focused on the role and importance of public interest journalism in communicating local adaptation needs and efforts; sourcing data, information and quotes from government and non-government stakeholders for stories; and packaging stories to increase their chances of being selected for broadcast by national editors. The training for youth focused on the technical aspects of digital content production, audience engagement techniques, and digital

safeguarding in addition to understanding the principles of LLA.

Both included modules on creating more engaging and effective visual content. They also included speakers from government and non-government organizations.

Dr. Md. Abu Sayem Deputy Director, Agriculture Extension Division, Rangpur, described the efforts of the Government of Bangladesh on climate-smart agriculture techniques such as the provision of drought/flood/heat tolerant crop varieties and training on soilless and floating agriculture, that local farmers are increasingly using to tackle the impacts of climate change.

Kazi Amdadul Hoque, Senior Director, Friendship, described LLA interventions by communities living in Bangladesh's chars (riverine islands) to deal with the constant threat of flooding; and pointed to sources of data and information for journalists to develop more insightful stories. Rigorous in-person and virtual mentoring was provided to the trainees after the training, for each stage of content production – including scripting, shooting, including community voices, storytelling, and postproduction. The mentors reported improvements in scripting, storytelling, and content quality after the training program,

along with a better understanding of LLA.

The young content creators received separate training on monetizing social media content, including online revenue generation techniques, community guidelines, digital safeguarding, and audience engagement techniques for better reach and sustainability.

Content creation and broadcasting

With continuous mentoring support, the trainees have produced more than 125 stories that have been broadcast so far, and still counting. In addition, the trainees also produced *100 Voices of the Vulnerable* – video shorts of representatives of vulnerable communities describing the impacts of climate change on their lives, and their responses, for the December 2023 Climate Change Conference in Dubai, UAE.

Of the 125 stories, 71 were produced by the journalists and 54 by the young trainees. The stories produced by the journalists were aired on 20 national TV channels, viewed by millions, and on the official social media platforms of these channels. The content produced by the young trainees was uploaded on social media platforms (Facebook and YouTube), and was viewed by around five million people.

KEY OUTCOMES

- 64 trainees developed a comprehensive understanding of the role of the media, including social media, in supporting local communities in their efforts to adapt to climate change. They also learned how to produce engaging and relevant content on local climate adaptation efforts.
- Journalists and young trainees produced *100 Voices of the Vulnerable*.
- Six young trainees received job offers from local media outlets.
- 15 young trainees successfully monetized their social media platforms for better reach and engagement.

KEY TAKEAWAYS



- Additional skills are required for journalists and communicators to report better on climate change. Journalists and communicators at all levels, local and national, have a key role to play in improving accountability for LLA and supporting the flow of information from the national to the local and local to national. However, they have a limited understanding of climate change and of LLA, and of the importance of amplifying local voices. They need more opportunities to engage in climate-related training and discussions.
- Young people have an important role to play in supporting LLA through sharing of information. In this booming era of social media, young people have a critical role to play in disseminating lifesaving information within and between vulnerable communities, and advocating for LLA. To maximize this role, they need training to understand climate change, and to improve skills to produce more engaging and effective content.
- Mentoring after training is essential for capacity-strengthening initiatives, to support more sustainable impact and shifts in behavior and practice.
- A focus on employment-generation and monetization during training and mentoring provides additional incentives to trainees. The training on social media monetization was highly appreciated, and became a motivation for the young trainees to produce better and more engaging content.
- Climate-related knowledge, information and data networks for local journalists and young content generators are essential, to support more informative and reliable content and media coverage. Creating and strengthening networks between local adaptation practitioners, journalists and communicators, government and academic organizations, and climate experts can fill data and information gaps.
- While a focus on local journalists is essential for LLA, particularly since they have fewer opportunities for such training, training for national journalists is also important, for them to understand why coverage of local adaptation efforts is important, and to prioritize such content provided by their local correspondents. Incentives, such as rewarding good reporting on local adaptation efforts, can also motivate creation and airing of more content on local adaptation practice.
- In addition to television and social media, engaging content creation for community radio is an area for future training.

COMPLETION CEREMONY



An experience sharing event and completion ceremony was organized on 30 April 2024 in Dhaka. Attended by the trainees, the event celebrated the completion of the year-long training program. The trainees received completion certificates during the event, which was attended by over hundred media and civil society representative.

“There is no dearth of stories on adaptation to report on in Bangladesh,” said Saber Hossain Chowdhury, Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, congratulating the trainees during his speech at the event. “Communicators just need to start looking at development issues through a climate change lens. They have an important role in our collective effort to shift the narrative of climate change in Bangladesh from one of vulnerability, to one of resilience and prosperity.”

Mr Chowdhury noted that his government is currently developing a national climate communication strategy, and welcomed inputs from the trainees.

“There is no better way to communicate the urgency of a truly big issue, affecting hundreds of thousands of people, than by connecting with communities at the grassroots,” said Prof. Dr. Patrick Verkooijen, GCA CEO, who attended virtually. “The more you and I make those connections, the more we can put not just the harsh reality of things like losing your home to rising sea levels and land erosion, but also the positive stuff that is happening thanks to the power of local people, then the greater our ability will be to influence global leaders to take action.”

“Media plays a crucial role in shaping public



discourse on climate and the UK is very pleased to be supporting this initiative through GCA and BBC Media Action. It is really important that the journalists and content makers are able to bring voices of those at the frontline of climate change to help inform policy discussions – and also help monitor implementation within their local communities,” said Alex Harvey, Team Leader, Climate and Environment, British High Commission Dhaka.

“It is crucial that we acknowledge the important role of the media not only in raising public awareness on climate change impacts, but also in showcasing innovative actions taken by affected communities to adapt to these impacts,” said Md. Al Mamun, Country Director, BBC Media Action in his opening remarks.

Mir Md. Arafat Rahman, Project Manager, BBC Media Action, presented an overview of the training process, which included initial research on the current state of reporting on locally-led adaptation efforts, to inform the content of the training; discussions with the heads of editorial desks in Dhaka, who make decisions on which stories to air; and training for the young communicators on how to monetize their skills through social media platforms like YouTube and Facebook.

“Local journalists cover issues related to extreme and slow onset climate-related events (such as the use of saline-resistant crops to battle rising salinity levels) but lack knowledge, understanding, and access to information to link this reportage to climate change,” said Bishawjit Das, Advisor, BBC Media Action. “The training provided them with a better understanding of climate change, and connected them to experts to reach out to in future, for more information.”

“This is the start of a longer journey together – we will continue to work with the alumni in future, providing them the knowledge resources they need to strengthen their coverage of locally led adaptation efforts,” said Shahrin Mannan, Program Officer, GCA. She said the GCA’s Global Hub on Locally Led Adaptation will continue to be a source of stories for the communicators, and will also support them in the dissemination of their stories to a wider global audience.

Some of the trainees described their experience during the training. Afroza Luna, Local Correspondent, Ekushey TV, Gaibandha said the training inspired her to look beyond the conventional climate victim narrative and focus more on the positive role of communities as agents of change, implementing adaptation solutions using their own knowledge and resources.

Kallal Roy, a young content creator from Kurigram, said he started carrying more stories on local adaptation on his Hamar Kurigram (Our Kurigram) Facebook page and to his surprise, they received a lot of traction. The story of a local fisherman who gave up his traditional livelihood because it was no longer profitable and started a small business received over four thousand views within days.

Yameen Ali, Local Correspondent, Jamuna TV, Bagerhat said the training inspired him to do a three-part series on female farmers in Bagerhat practising integrated farming by growing vegetable on raised beds to adapt to the rising levels of salinity in soil and water.

Khademul Rashed, a trainee of GCA's 2022 Media Training Program, reported that the skills developed through the training enabled him develop and secure funding for a USD 3

million project on "Scaling up Inclusive Climate Resilience of Vulnerable Communities through Locally led Adaptation". Under the project, 400 young people were supported to lead campaigns on promoting locally led adaptation.

Members of the audience proposed the use of Climate Communicators, an existing WhatsApp group, as a platform to connect stakeholders; and highlighted the role of the government in sensitizing media leaders to the importance of carrying content on climate change adaptation. Appreciating the efforts of BBC Media and the generous support of the UK Government, Dr. M Feisal Rahman, Interim Country Manager, GCA Bangladesh, said lessons from this initiative can inform the communication strategy being prepared by the Government for the National Adaptation Plan and Mujib Climate Prosperity Plan.

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