

Global Climate Journalism Insights:

Asia

7th Edition • July 2025



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Introduction

Asia stands on the frontlines of climate disruption. In 2024, record-breaking heatwaves scorched Southeast Asia, prompting school closures and health warnings in countries including Thailand, Malaysia and the Philippines, while typhoons intensified by warming oceans battered coastal communities across Japan and Vietnam (WMO, 2024). At the same time, millions in Mongolia and Central Asia faced worsening drought and water scarcity, threatening traditional livelihoods (UNESCAP, 2024). Despite growing public concern, climate journalism often struggles to keep pace, squeezed by political sensitivities, funding gaps, and the persistent challenge of making stories resonate across linguistically and culturally diverse audiences. In this context, the role of journalism is more vital than ever: not just to report the facts, but to help the public reimagine (and navigate) life in a rapidly changing world.



Vang Vieng, Laos,
boudewijn_huysmans / Unsplash

At climateXchange (cXc), we believe that climate is culture. This belief drives our mission to empower newsrooms with the tools and strategies to tell stories that resonate deeply with their audiences and inspire meaningful action. Building on the insights from previous knowledgeXchange workshops in Singapore and Thailand, our 2025 workshop held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia brought together journalists, editors, and media leaders from Hong Kong, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Mongolia, Philippines, and Taiwan to reflect, collaborate, and expand on the challenges that continue to shape climate journalism in the region.

KnowledgeXchange workshops embody cXc's principle of radical collaboration: a process that ensures newsrooms are not just participants but co-creators of the solutions they need. By revisiting the findings from 2024, participants uncovered deeper nuances and shared practical insights based on their direct experiences in climate journalism, regionally. This iterative approach keeps our strategies dynamic, responsive, and grounded in the realities of the region's media and climate landscape.

This report distills the key findings from the 2025 Asia knowledgeXchange workshop into four core challenges, each presented with practical solutions and actionable insights for newsrooms. You'll find a detailed look at the core tensions holding back climate journalism across Asia: from the access and connection gap that isolates journalists and fragments capacity, to the struggle to make climate stories feel relevant in the daily lives of audiences; from the operational and funding misalignments that constrain editorial independence, to the difficulty of telling climate stories that help people imagine what's coming next—before crisis makes it undeniable. These findings lay the groundwork for the forthcoming *Make Climate Pay: Asia* (7th edition), which will transform these challenges into innovative prototypes that empower newsrooms to overcome barriers and elevate their climate reporting. Together, these insights reports aim to inspire meaningful change through shared ownership, collective thinking and action, and a commitment to building a culture of impactful, climate-conscious journalism.

Published quotes have been anonymised.

Some quotes have been edited slightly to correct for grammar and sense.

The editorial responsibility for the report lies entirely with the authors.

● CHALLENGE 1

The access and connection gap

In many parts of Asia, climate journalists are working in silos: isolated from one another, cut off from knowledge networks, and often navigating resource-scarce environments without meaningful institutional support. The disconnect isn't only about money, though that's a significant factor. It's also about uneven access to expertise, opportunities, and even each other.



Shanghai, China
Luca Daesti / Unsplash

Without spaces to compare challenges, share insights, or co-develop solutions, journalists risk duplicating effort, missing context, or burning out. This is not just a structural problem; it's a systemic one that directly affects the quality, confidence, and consistency of climate reporting across the region.

Fragmented knowledge and training ecosystems

While training opportunities are available in many countries, they are often ad hoc, donor-driven, or limited to select urban hubs. As a result, journalists in rural or marginalised areas (especially those without English fluency) are less likely to access these resources, even when climate impacts in their regions are profound. This reinforces disparities and knowledge gaps in coverage.

Disconnected peer networks

One of the most echoed frustrations in the knowledgeXchange workshop in Kuala Lumpur was the lack of a common space for regional journalists to connect. Participants spoke of not knowing who else was reporting on climate in their country or region, or how to tap into existing expertise or even opportunities. This absence of informal knowledge exchange contributes to duplicated effort and missed collaboration.

Overload without orientation

For some, the issue isn't too few resources but too many, with no guidance. From webinars and toolkits to new research platforms, climate journalists are being bombarded with material. But without time, context, or community to help them navigate what's truly useful, the abundance becomes overwhelming rather than empowering.



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“It’s not that training
and resources don’t exist...
they do.

But without a connected
community or a peer
network to help you
navigate it,
it’s overwhelming.
You don’t know where
to start,
or who to turn to,
so you miss opportunities
that might actually help.”

Editor, local media organisation, based in Mongolia

Solutions for this challenge should include a combination of the below:



Climate ‘matchmaking’ hubs: build or support regional peer directories or Slack-style spaces where journalists can find others reporting on similar topics, climates, or beats. This supports direct, decentralised knowledge exchange.



Micro-grants for connection, not just content: offer small-scale grants to support relationship-building, like funding a journalist to visit another newsroom, co-report with a peer in a neighbouring country, or attend a relevant community event. Connection is also capacity.



Story-agnostic collaboration sprints: instead of only partnering on full investigations, invite journalists to collaborate on narrower tasks, such as framing headlines, refining leads, or translating a story into another language, making collaboration lighter and more accessible across capacity levels.



Guangdong, China / netograph.capture, Unsplash



● CHALLENGE 2

The crisis of climate relevance

Climate journalism in Asia struggles to cut through. Even in countries where the effects of the climate crisis are visibly escalating (such as devastating floods, food insecurity, or severe urban heat) audiences often scroll past, switch off, or disengage.

The challenge is not just about reach, but resonance. Many participants in the KL workshop pointed to the sense that climate news feels distant, depressing, or disconnected from daily life, especially in urban settings, where environmental damage is harder to see or feel. Rather than sparking action, climate stories are often aligned with feelings of dread, fatigue, or futility.

Climate coverage that weakens, rather than builds, agency

Participants noted that the ‘doomscrolling effect’ of climate news can desensitise readers, especially younger ones. Stories that highlight destruction without surfacing possibility can feel overwhelming and demotivating, leading to passive or avoidant behaviours. This is not a demand for falsely optimistic stories, but for those that name agency, possibility, and pathways to change.

A mismatch between climate storytelling and reader priorities

In the current media economy, climate news often loses out to more ‘clickable’ topics. Stories that make readers feel informed and empowered (about personal finance, health, or local issues) are more likely to be prioritised in editorial calendars. Yet climate intersects with all of these, and participants questioned why the climate angle is often treated as an add-on/optional rather than a starting point.



*Titiwangsa Lake Garden in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
malaysiaguy, Adobe Stock*

Lack of emotional and cultural relevance

For many audiences, especially those not yet directly affected by climate-related disasters, climate stories still feel too abstract. The language is too technical, the framing too global, and the consequences too far away. Without strong emotional and cultural resonance, the stories feel like someone else’s problem.

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“Readers tell us climate stories are too depressing; they doomscroll past them, or disengage entirely. It’s hard to build a loyal audience when your content makes people feel hopeless.”

*Journalist, national media organisation,
based in Malaysia*

● SOLUTIONS - CHALLENGE 2

Solutions for this challenge should include a combination of the below:



Audience-centred relevance mapping: develop internal heatmaps of what your readers care about most (e.g. cost of living, health, transport) and explore how climate intersects with those themes. This can help guide more audience-relevant climate pitches without compromising integrity.



Test 'co-emotion' framing experiments: instead of leading with fear or urgency, experiment with climate stories that pair emotions (e.g. anxiety + humour, anger + hope) to help audiences sit with complexity rather than shut down.



Embed climate into explainer formats: draw readers in with formats that already perform well (FAQs, how-to guides, local explainers) but build in climate-related context. For example: "What's making groceries more expensive?" with a section on climate's role in food inflation.

The crisis of climate relevance



China Town, Kuala Lumpur / Anthony Shaw; Adobe Stock

The cost of operational misalignment

From budget approvals to editorial agendas, climate journalism in Asia often runs into misalignment at every operational level.

Journalists may be committed to meaningful reporting, but the systems around them (funders, editors, business models) aren't always pulling in the same direction. In a context where climate journalism is still underdeveloped, stories get rejected not on merit, but on misfit: it's too expensive, too 'niche', or doesn't serve the funder's ESG goals. KnowledgeXchange participants shared how grant conditions can feel creatively constraining, or worse, can steer stories toward corporate-friendly narratives. At the same time, editorial reluctance (whether from burnout, uncertainty, or outdated assumptions about audience interest) means powerful stories can die at the pitch stage.



Sri Lanka / eranda, Adobe Stock

Editorial bottlenecks and internal blockers

Journalists shared examples of impactful climate pitches being shelved because editors didn't see them as commercially viable or aligned with broader priorities. In some cases, stories required field reporting that was deemed too costly; in others, editors weren't confident they would get good traffic.

Funding narratives driven by ESG optics

Several journalists described receiving grants with vague or restrictive mandates that prioritised visibility over substance. In these cases, the editorial freedom to investigate deeply or challenge greenwashing was undermined. There was a clear call for more values-aligned funding relationships, built on trust and editorial independence.

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“Grants come with invisible strings. Sometimes it feels like what we’re funded to cover is more about ticking boxes than actually helping people understand the climate crisis.

It’s a tricky balance between keeping the lights on and ensuring journalism reaches its audience effectively.”

*Collaboration Director, local media organisation,
based in Indonesia*

Solutions for this challenge should include a combination of the below:



Editorial 'yes funds' for story risks: develop small, internal newsroom funds that editors can use to greenlight climate pitches with high potential but uncertain returns. This encourages bolder reporting and makes it more likely that climate story ideas get approved and developed.



Impact-first commissioning templates: develop editorial planning tools that start with potential public benefit ("What will this story help people do, change, or understand?") instead of the usual focus on format or headline. It shifts value systems inside commissioning processes.



'Soft climate' story experiments: encourage teams to explore subtle, adjacent storylines (like food prices, commuting, or air conditioning) that are tied to climate without being branded as such. These stories often slip past editorial blockers and reach wider audiences.

The cost of operational misalignment



When tomorrow feels too far

The climate crisis demands long-term thinking. But across much of Asia, both audiences and news organisations are trapped in cycles of immediacy.

Urgent issues (cost of living, political instability, conflict) crowd out stories that appear too abstract, too slow-moving, or too far away. For journalists, this creates a difficult balancing act: how do you justify covering something that is critical but not always immediate? The truth is: climate change doesn't feel urgent until it hits. But by then, it's often too late to tell the deeper story. The media ecosystem reinforces this short-termism: news is expected to respond to today's events, not anticipate tomorrow's realities.



Reactive over proactive

In many Asian newsrooms, climate reporting only breaks through when disaster strikes. This makes it difficult to cover early signals, preventive action, or long-term risks that don't yet feel urgent.

Lack of narrative tools for the future

Telling stories about the future requires more than data. It requires language, formats, and techniques that help people relate to what hasn't happened yet. Journalists often feel unequipped to do this convincingly.

Audiences focused on survival

For many news consumers, daily life is already precarious. When the present is overwhelming, it's difficult to ask people to care about 2030. Climate futures can feel too distant, too technical, or simply out of reach.

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“In the Philippines, climate stories only make the headlines after tragedy strikes, like floods, lives lost, devastation.

Until then, it's like climate just doesn't register. It shows how reactive our coverage still is, and how hard it is to get ahead of the story.”

*Managing Director, local media organisation,
based in the Philippines*

● SOLUTIONS - CHALLENGE 4

Solutions for this challenge should include a combination of the below:



Translate adaptation into everyday terms: reframe climate futures around practical, tangible questions: how will climate affect school hours, food prices, weddings, or jobs? Use these everyday hooks to make the future feel real, not remote.



Community futures workshops: host listening sessions with specific groups (farmers, students, informal workers) to explore their visions of the future. Use these conversations to source and shape stories that centre their agency, anxieties, and aspirations.



Test 'future flashbacks' as a narrative device: try reversing the usual story arc: open with a scene from an imagined future, then trace the chain of decisions and events from today that led there. This can help readers emotionally connect with foresight journalism.

When tomorrow feels too far



Conclusion and next steps

As we conclude the Asian regional report of our ongoing Global Climate Journalism Insights series, we revisit the promise made in our opening pages: to not only chart the challenges but to begin crafting the bridges to overcome them. Our journey through the landscape of climate reporting across Asia has revealed a range of insights, signalling the onset of a broader discourse:

1. **The access and connection gap:** climate journalists across Asia often work in isolation: cut off from peer networks, resource-sharing ecosystems, and the chance to learn from others' work or insight.
2. **The crisis of climate relevance:** even in the face of visible climate impacts, many audiences tune out climate stories that feel abstract, emotionally draining, or disconnected from their lived concerns.
3. **The cost of operational misalignment:** from restrictive grants to editorial scepticism, journalists face structural barriers that limit bold, independent climate reporting.
4. **When tomorrow feels too far:** both audiences and newsrooms are caught in short-term cycles, making it difficult to report on slow-burning climate risks or help people connect with the future before crisis hits.

What comes next builds directly on these insights. Our upcoming publication (July 2025), also inspired from the discussions in Asia, will explore financial prototypes and ideas, building the momentum of innovative thoughts in financing climate journalism.

Over the past two years, we have been laying the groundwork for a forward-thinking plan, which aims to transform the impact and sustainability of climate journalism, across Asia and beyond. climateXchange and its growing network of partners are committed to converting passive concern into lasting impact.

Acknowledgements

We extend our sincere gratitude to WAN-IFRA and journalists across Hong Kong, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Mongolia, Philippines, and Taiwan, for their invaluable contributions. Their dedication and the time and energy invested have been pivotal in crafting the rich discourse that formed the backbone of this report.

Reimagining narratives: movies as metaphors for Asia's climate journalism odyssey

How can the power of storytelling transcend the traditional boundaries of news reporting?

As an ice-breaker at knowledgeXchange Asia, we asked the teams to dream up the next blockbuster movie with a theme rooted in climate or the environment. The response was a showcase of movie ideas. All were rich in metaphors and reveal the deep struggles in conveying urgent environmental stories, and set the scene for the four Asian challenges that emerged, and are introduced in this report.

*Visuals on this page are AI generated
(ChatGPT and Adobe Firefly)*

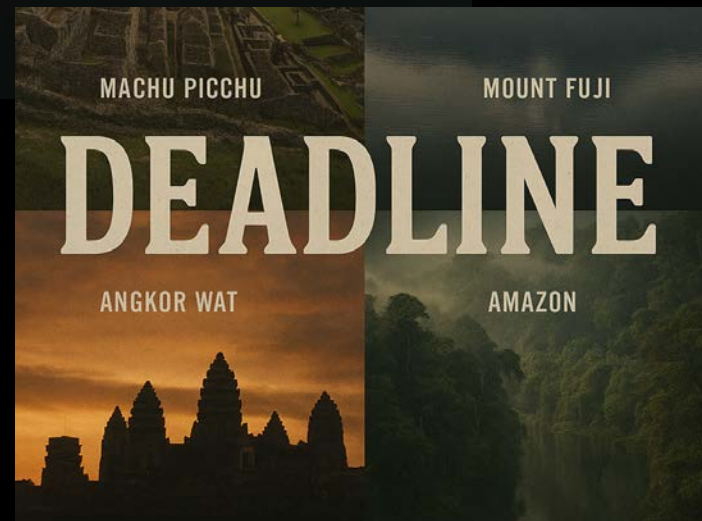


Doomsclock (Thriller)

In this gripping global thriller, a glowing digital clock ticks ominously at 11:55 - five minutes to planetary self-destruction. The film follows four parallel stories across the world: a young climate negotiator in Delhi, an activist in Jakarta, a policy analyst in Tokyo, and a teenage inventor in Manila. Each holds a piece of the puzzle, but time is slipping. As they race to act, argue, and adapt, the clock keeps ticking. Doomslock is a high-stakes metaphor for collective urgency and fractured responsibility and asks the hardest question of all: what if we wait too long?

Deadline (Documentary)

A cinematic love letter to vanishing beauty, Deadline is a two-hour documentary that takes viewers to four iconic landscapes at risk of disappearing within a generation: Machu Picchu, Mount Fuji, Angkor Wat, and the Amazon. Combining haunting visuals with expert insights, the film explores how deforestation, overtourism, and climate chaos are pushing these places past their tipping points. But more than just a warning, Deadline invites reflection on the role of memory, loss, and preservation in a warming world.



Dumpocalypse (Satire / Mystery)

Set in Jakarta but echoing across cities worldwide, Dumpocalypse unpacks the untold story of food waste as a climate villain. Through a mix of humour, horror, and investigative grit, the film follows a rogue journalist tracking methane leaks in a mega landfill, only to discover a deeper conspiracy linking discarded meals to rising emissions. With surreal visuals and a pulpy plot, Dumpocalypse is a messy, mordant take on consumption, decay, and what we choose to bury.



Climate Karma (Horror / Fantasy)

In the haunted jungles along the Malaysia-Indonesia border, something ancient has awakened. When a crew of illegal loggers disturb a sacred grove, the forest begins to fight back - with blood. Inspired by Southeast Asia's horror cinema and rooted in real-world deforestation, Climate Karma is a terrifying allegory of environmental backlash. Think spectral vines, sentient roots, and uncanny retribution, all underscored by a deeper truth: when nature is pushed too far, it doesn't just wither. It bites back.



About us

About Syli

Syli is a CIC non-profit organisation, founded in London by Tom Trewinnard and Fergus Bell. Syli supports mission-driven journalism in service of informed audiences around the world by fostering new and forward-looking concepts, identifying sustainable financial models for journalism, and creating a healthier, more sustainable media ecosystem.

More information can be found [here](#).

About climateXchange

climateXchange (cXc) is Syli's groundbreaking new global initiative aimed at increasing the impact, reach and sustainability of climate journalism. cXc are reframing the climate conversation as a culture-first narrative is not just a media challenge, it's an opportunity. It's a chance to redefine how we, as a society, relate to the environment and world around us. cXc stands on three pillars of complementary activities:

- **contentXchange** — Upskilling and capacity building that offers co-creation of culture-first climate content and best practice in culture-first climate narrative story kits including our IMERCS editorial methodology.
- **regionalXchange** — Facilitation of cross-regional thought leadership and storytelling. Where we are conduits in cross-regional community meet-ups and networks, host think tanks, and support local market training sharing between regions.
- **knowledgeXchange** — Impact, research and business development. Home of kXc for sustainable business models. Access to Theory of Change Consultancy, and assistance in securing financial support.

About cXc Evaluation and Research

We are dedicated to evaluating and advancing climate journalism's impact. We value the stories behind the numbers and the numbers behind the stories, embracing mixed-methods research with a deep appreciation for both qualitative and quantitative data. Our aim is to lend an ear to the local storytellers, understand their struggles in reaching people's hearts and minds, and measure the change they're driving.

Our Theory of Change defines desired changes, measurable steps, and methodologies for impact measurement. We're excited to build a global network of research partnerships with a core goal to amplify the effects of local, climate-conscious journalism.

Our findings reach our community via cXc Digest, research-driven thought-leadership pieces that underpin partnerships and steer dialogues in global forums; cXc Global Climate Journalism Insights, detailed post-event reports that distil discussions from our events; and the cXc Annual Impact Report, an in-depth yearly review spotlighting the efficacy and reach of climate-conscious reporting.

About the Authors

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