Sustainable Development Reporting for Journalists

9th ASEF Journalists’ Colloquium
9–12 November 2013
Gurgaon, India
ASEF Media Handbook

Sustainable Development Reporting for Journalists

Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF)
About the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM)

The Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) is an intergovernmental forum for dialogue and cooperation established in 1996 to deepen relations between Asia and Europe, which addresses political, economic and socio-cultural issues of common concern. ASEM brings together 49 member states (29 European and 20 Asian countries), ASEAN, and the European Union.

For more information, please visit www.ASEMinfoBoard.org

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About ASEF

The Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) promotes understanding, strengthens relationships and facilitates cooperation among the people, institutions and organisations of Asia and Europe.

ASEF enhances dialogue, enables exchanges and encourages collaboration across the thematic areas of culture, education, sustainable development, economy, public health, and governance.

Founded in 1997, ASEF is a not-for-profit, intergovernmental organisation located in Singapore. It is the only permanently established institution of the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM).

Together with about 700 partner organisations ASEF has run more than 650 projects, mainly conferences, seminars and workshops. Over 17,000 Asians and Europeans have actively participated in its activities and it has reached much wider audiences through its networks, web-portals, publications, exhibitions and lectures.

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The contents of this Handbook are the direct results of exchanges on professional experiences and challenges by some 28 senior journalists from reputable media organisations across Asia and Europe.

The Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) organised the 9th ASEF Journalists’ Colloquium on the issue of Media and the Green Agenda: Reporting on Sustainable Development in Asia and Europe, and invited journalists dealing with sustainable development and environmental issues to share their challenges and experiences in reporting on this said issue. As a further enrichment, environmental and media experts also added input specifically on the Millenium Development Goals, its successor the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), energy, green growth and economy, and poverty reduction to further fuel the discussions between the participants.

ASEF has been organising media programmes such as this over the years in efforts to build networks amongst media professionals across the member countries under the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) framework, discussing issues of common concern, and how they approach such issues in their own respective media in their home countries. This serves as a good avenue to share ideas towards overcoming challenges, and consequently, improving how they work by listening to ideas that work.

We hope that this Handbook will be useful to all members of the media, not just those reporting on sustainable development. After all, the issues may be specific, but the challenges are similar across the board.
The term ‘sustainable development’ evokes diverse responses from journalists and members of the public. Combining the principles of social and environmental sustainability with economic development, the term ‘sustainable development’ has come to be a part of everyday speech that evokes an emotional response that can often polarise debate. It can be seen, and is often reported on as being green and left wing in political terms. At the 9th ASEF Journalists’ Colloquium on Media and the Green Agenda, participants expressed concerns that the term itself was politically and descriptively loaded and called for the coining of a new term that would better describe the nature of sustainable development issues, without the political and emotional impediments the term seems to carry. The term sustainable development was used in 1987 in the Brundtland Commission Report on Our Common Future. Since then, it has been used in international summits covering environmental and development issues. In June 2012 at the Rio+20 Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, the participating countries all agreed to develop a set of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to build upon and replace the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015. Therefore, the term sustainable development will only gain wider usage into the future and journalists need to apply the term in a meaningful manner, consistent with its internationally accepted meaning. Sustainable development is often interchanged with the word sustainability, to convey exactly the same meaning. In this Handbook, when either sustainable development or sustainability is used, it carries the same meaning.

The Independent Research Forum, which is an international collaboration of research institutes, published
a paper, *Post-2015: Framing a New Approach to Sustainable Development*. This paper states that “...sustainable improvements in human wellbeing are the ultimate purpose of all development effort. Achieving that purpose substantially depends on a foundation that binds together and gives balanced weight to economic progress, social equity, a healthy environment and democratic governance. These dimensions of development are too deeply intertwined to treat separately.”

This explanation, also published through the UN Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform, will be used as the definition for sustainable development throughout this Handbook.

Quality journalism requires us to reflect and report on society from a full and holistic perspective with core journalistic principles, including independence, accuracy, balance, impartiality, truth, and freedom of expression. In addition stories must appeal to our audiences and reflect the underlying values and aspirations of the diverse communities that journalists operate within. Journalists and media organisations are free to mediate the discourse within their communities and choose the topics and focus of the stories they carry. This means that journalists and media organisations have the capacity to significantly influence the nature of public discourse. By choosing what is in a story, how the story is told, and the diversity (or lack thereof) of stories, journalists and editors have the capacity to enhance or limit the information people will use to form opinions and make decisions.

The term sustainable development will only gain wider usage into the future and journalists need to apply the term in a meaningful manner, consistent with its internationally accepted meaning.
Journalism that restricts the diversity of stories may be out of balance, just as stories that lack diverse perspectives can be out of balance.

Sustainable development is one of the underlying principles of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and was a key component of the Global Reporting Initiative’s Media Sector Supplement (GRI MSS) published in 2012. Referring to the need for transparency and open reporting of sustainable development issues, the GRI MSS states “a globally shared framework of concepts, consistent language, and metrics is required.” Media organisations and journalists play a pivotal role in providing information, data and analysis that assists citizens in making decisions and choices in their daily lives. This includes information that has “the capacity to inform, create debate and engagement around key sustainability issues such as pressing environmental matters, human rights, economic and social justice, and wellbeing.”

Convening the 9th ASEF Journalists’ Colloquium on Media and the Green Agenda, the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) brought together journalists from 28 countries across Asia and Europe to focus on how to improve reporting on sustainable development issues in the lead up to the post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals being implemented as a result of the Rio+20 international agreements. For a full list of participants see p. xii-xiii.

Over two days, discussions focused on the key challenges that need to be addressed in order to improve the quality of sustainable development journalism. Participants focused on current limitations affecting reporting on sustainable development and developed objectives that would assist journalists in giving a balanced coverage of sustainable development issues that would be proportional to the importance of these issues on a social and environmental
level. The participants unanimously agreed on a set of broad guidelines that would assist journalists in meeting these challenges in their day-to-day working life.

This handbook summarizes the outcomes of the 9th ASEF Journalists' Colloquium and offers guidelines on how journalists may meet the objectives of balanced, proportionate and quality journalism relating to sustainable development. It is hoped that the principles and guidelines within this handbook will reach beyond specialised environmental and sustainable development journalism and be of use to a wider range of journalistic interests, including general reporters, editors, and stakeholders, as well as all people interested in quality journalism and its impact on societies.

"It is incumbent upon editors and journalists to ensure that balance is achieved whereby sustainable development issues receive coverage proportionate to their significance."

1

9th ASEF Journalists’ Colloquium on Media and the Green Agenda
9th ASEF Journalists’ Colloquium on Media and the Green Agenda

Background to the ASEF Journalists’ Colloquium

ASEF organises a Journalists’ Colloquium every second year, to run parallel with, and in the same city as the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) of Foreign Ministers. Part of the objective is to offer an opportunity for journalists, with diverse European and Asian perspectives, to consider some of the issues of importance that may be discussed at the ASEM meeting.

The 9th ASEF Journalists’ Colloquium, *Media and the Green Agenda: Reporting on Sustainable Development in Asia and Europe*, was convened by the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) to focus on the challenges for the media in reporting on sustainable development. In particular, the Colloquium was intended to focus on these challenges with respect to the looming expiry of the Millenium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2015 and its intended successor, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as well as the areas of energy, green growth and economy, and poverty reduction.

It was intended that Colloquium participants would discuss how these issues were viewed in different countries across Asia and Europe, how they were reported in the media, and explore the role of the media in bringing the stories to an interested and wider public.

The Colloquium was held in conjunction with the 11th ASEM Foreign Ministers’ Meeting from 9-12 November 2013 in Gurgaon, Delhi-NCR, India.

“Unanimously agreed – mainstream media does not give sufficient coverage to the environment and sustainability issues.”
Core themes from the 9th ASEF Journalists’ Colloquium

Journalists have impact and influence on society through their content. The Global Reporting Initiative Media Sector Supplement outlines that this “content can affect attitudes, behaviours and public opinion, which poses additional responsibilities on media organisations towards society.”

Recognising these responsibilities, participants at the 9th ASEF Journalists Colloquium reflected on media content with the objective of assessing how responsible sustainable development journalism was undertaken in each respective country. Consistent themes emerged relating to two particular aspects of media coverage within all 28 Asian and European countries that were represented. First, sustainable development reporting was not offering appropriate levels of coverage proportional to the number, significance and relevance of the issues to the diverse communities. Second, a disproportionate level of coverage was being given to minority and vested interests. Reflecting these themes, it was unanimously agreed that:

1. With the exception of dedicated social, scientific or environmental publications, mainstream media, through general news and programs, do not give sufficient coverage to the environment and sustainable development issues compared to economic, political and social activities (like sports). Although in some countries (e.g. Switzerland) and some general media outlets more emphasis is placed on global issues including sustainable development.

2. Media should have balance in approach to time / pages and significance given to sustainable development issues, but in seeking balance, not give disproportionate time or space to minority vested interest opinion.

The Colloquium participants cited the primary cause for insufficient coverage of environment and sustainable development issues being insufficient time given by journalists to undertake in depth, investigative content that would enable them to tell important sustainability stories in a highly compelling and relevant manner. It was acknowledged that modern media organisations, in order to maintain commercial and audience competitiveness, must be lean and resource-efficient. This means, that with few exceptions, fewer journalists were available to cover an ever-increasing number of stories at a local and global level, and therefore, journalists noted how many more stories each one of them must cover each day. This left less time for investigation and story development.
and an ever-increasing reliance on the “rip and read” opportunities given by the clever and sometimes well-crafted media releases from interest groups and organisations. Reliance on media releases as the basis of stories with no capacity for proper research meant that journalists believed they could not give balanced and realistic coverage to sustainable development issues and that this allowed interest groups to leverage a disproportionate amount of coverage by providing timely media releases and having their own spokespersons readily available to fill the ever-growing demand for journalistic content.

Colloquium participants identified a number of other factors that limited the amount of coverage of sustainable development stories. These included:

- Lack of understanding of editors about the merits of sustainable development stories;
- Difficulty of aligning sustainable development topics to editor and audience interests;
- Lack of knowledge and understanding of relevant sustainable development issues by most journalists;
- Information coming from NGOs, and other bodies and agencies working in sustainability perceived as not being frequently usable by journalists in their day-to-day publications;
- Story leads and the presentation of data and information packages from some environmental and social welfare organisations and NGOs being poorly constructed, making it difficult to develop stories that are relevant and interesting to audiences;
- Information from NGOs and environmental and social welfare organisations not offering the same level of content or quality of information as commercial, political and sport agencies.

"Vested interest groups leverage a disproportionate amount of coverage by providing timely media releases and having their own spokespersons readily available to fill the ever-growing demand for journalistic content."
The Colloquium discussed each of these factors and developed responses that form the basis for the guidelines presented in this booklet. Participants hoped that developing these guidelines would make a contribution towards improving the standards of quality sustainable development journalism and therefore lead to increased column space and airtime that would be proportionate to the importance and interest of such stories to their diverse audiences.

“There is a lack of understanding among editors about the merits of sustainable development stories.”

**Key Challenges Facing Quality Sustainable Development Journalism**

Reduction in resources and increased workloads for journalists do not sufficiently explain why there is such a widespread view amongst journalists about the level of reporting and balance of coverage of sustainable development issues being inadequate. There are indeed other factors limiting journalists’ capabilities with respect to providing high-quality, relevant, and adequate levels of content relating to sustainable development. Participants at the Colloquium identified the following 7 key factors that were leading to insufficient content and reduced quality of sustainable development journalism:

1. **Journalists need to have a greater understanding of sustainability principles and be able to investigate independently to ensure they can separate fact from opinion and differentiate between vested interest pushing their own agenda from real issues that impact on communities and the environment.**

2. **Business models in media seek popular content. Editors and**
managers do not see popularity in sustainability stories.

3 In the environment of increasingly tough, lean and efficient media business models, journalists seem to have less editorial independence to do the stories that matter to people in their daily lives.

4 The term ‘sustainable development’ is not widely understood and therefore, without increased popular usage and explanation, it is difficult to convey meaning, understanding and interest to audiences, reporters and editors.

5 It is very often that environmental and social impacts are only reported on after a disaster has struck, rather than building resilience into communities by proactive reporting of important social and environmental vulnerability issues.

6 The economy is often discussed in isolation, without any reference to its interdependence with social and environment issues. As a consequence, there is little social discourse about poverty reduction and improving human wellbeing.

7 There is a tendency to frame development stories in terms of economic issues and then relate them to technological progress. For example, a story about the social consequences of overpopulation and the consequent inability to produce sufficient food for all people around the world may be expressed in terms of the economic cost (or benefit) of increasing global food production. This might then be addressed by reporting on the ongoing commercial development of genetically modified products.

While this is by no means an exhaustive list of challenges facing quality sustainable development journalism, it does provide the collective and unanimous viewpoints of journalists from 28 different Asian and European countries who attended the 9th ASEF Journalists’ Colloquium.

Organisers of the 9th ASEF Journalists’ Colloquium

Partners

Supporters
2 Principles and Standards of Sustainable Development Reporting
Sustainable Development Reporting for Journalists

10th ASEF Journalists’ Colloquium: Media and the Green Agenda
The journalistic principles and standards for sustainable development reporting should be exactly the same as the standards, ethics, and principles that journalists should apply to all facets of their work and reporting. All reporting by journalists, including content produced about sustainable development issues, should be within these accepted standards. These standards require journalists to be truthful and balanced and to cover all issues of importance in our communities. Clearly not every journalist can or should cover all stories, but the balance of the content produced by journalists collectively should reflect a balance of issues proportionate to their significance and relevance in the community. Put another way, journalists, if they are operating within accepted journalistic principles and standards, need to not only provide balance within the stories they produce but also collectively, through their combined work within a community, provide balance between issues proportional to their significance, interest and relevance to their audiences.

Many countries have their own journalistic standards and codes of ethics, produced through journalism federations or alliances. In addition, some countries have “freedom of the press” or media freedom enshrined in their constitutions, as is the case with a large European country like Germany\(^7\), and a small Asian nation such as Bhutan\(^8\). However, as outlined in the GRI MSS, “with freedom comes responsibility, and responsibility requires ethical decision-making.”\(^9\) This applies to all journalists, as well as the media organisations that employ them.

While codes of journalistic ethics, principles, and standards vary to some extent from country to country, there are principles that are consistent across nearly all countries including fairness, truth/accuracy, reflecting the public interest and balance/being unbiased in reporting. The following table illustrates, as a non-comprehensive example, some of the clauses or phrases taken from several different nations’ journalistic codes:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Phrase from this Country’s Journalistic Code of Ethics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>1. “Report and interpret honestly, striving for accuracy, fairness and disclosure of all essential facts. Do not suppress relevant available facts, or give distorting emphasis.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cambodia</td>
<td>1.7. “Make the news coverage fair, neutral, balanced, and devoid of misleading information.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>Section 1: “Respect for the truth, preservation of human dignity and accurate informing of the public are the overriding principles of the press.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>1. “The primary responsibility of the Malaysian journalist is to report facts accurately and faithfully and to respect the right of the public to the truth.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Myanmar</td>
<td>1. “The journalist shall report the news with honesty, accuracy and balance – without distortion, manipulation or the omission of essential information.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>1. “I shall scrupulously report and interpret the news, taking care not to suppress essential facts or to distort the truth by omission or improper emphasis.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Journalistic principles and standards for sustainable development reporting should be exactly the same as the standards, ethics and principles that apply to all facets of journalism and reporting.
Recalibrating Balance – A Holistic Social Perspective

In addition, published international codes for journalists provide principles and standards that are intended to apply to all journalists across the globe. The International Federation of Journalists’ Declaration of Principles on the Conduct of Journalists outlines there should be “a free, independent media reflecting diversity of opinion” and that “the treatment of news and information as a commodity must not override or interfere with the duty of journalists to inform their audience.” 11 This clearly describes the responsibilities journalists have to provide diversity in their content, reflecting the broad interests and issues within their communities, despite the economic or business model constraints that might apply within their media organisations.

The importance of balanced coverage of all issues is also reflected in the ASEAN Journalists Code of Ethics Clause 4, which states, “the ASEAN journalist shall honestly report and interpret the news, making sure to the best of his/her knowledge and ability, not to suppress essential facts or distort the truth through exaggeration or through wrong or improper emphasis.” 12

EthicNet has published a collection of codes of journalism ethics from most European countries and has published International Principles of Professional Ethics in Journalism. 13 Principle I states, “people and individuals have the right to acquire an objective picture of reality by means of accurate and comprehensive information.” 14 Comprehensive information requires journalists to go beyond selection of mainstream news content and to look at the broad issues that affect society, taking a holistic perspective, reflecting balance both within stories and by balancing the diverse interests, needs, aspirations and concerns of the whole community. This requires a broad diversity of subject matter and sources.
People and individuals have the right to acquire an objective picture of reality by means of accurate and comprehensive information.
Sustainable Development Journalism in Asia and Europe

The Earth Journalism Network lists 25 journalism associations in Europe, Asia, Africa and the Americas that specifically focus on supporting and advocating for environmental journalism. The Asian Federation of Environmental Journalists’ Code of Ethics was ratified in 1998 in Sri Lanka at the 6th World Congress of Environmental Journalists in Colombo. The reality that there is a Federation of Environmental Journalists in Asia and that they have developed a code of ethics for environmental journalism in itself illustrates the importance many journalists place on environmental and sustainability reporting. Paragraph 1 in this code states “the right to a clean environment and sustainable development is fundamental and is closely connected to the right to life, good health and wellbeing. The environmental journalist should inform the public about the threats to the environment – whether it is at the global, regional, national or local level.”

By linking health and wellbeing to people’s right to know about sustainable development, the Asian Federation of Environmental Journalists’ Code of Ethics is in accord with the United Nations in positioning sustainable development as it relates to sustainable improvements in human wellbeing, which is described as the ultimate purpose of all development effort (see footnote 2). On this basis, sustainable development journalism is of very high importance to all societies. While developing countries face much bigger challenges, striving for improvements to wellbeing applies to all societies, in developing and developed countries alike. Whether it is health, education, free time, economic security, political stability, living in a safe and secure environment, or general states of happiness, all societies seek to improve human wellbeing. Following on from the principle that the purpose of all development effort is to improve human wellbeing, we need to also question what role sustainability plays in improving human development.

In a joint paper titled *How to build sustainable development goals: integrating human development and environmental sustainability in a new global agenda*, Claire Melamed from the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) and Paul Ladd from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) argue that “policies to promote human progress which do not take into account environmental limits will ultimately prove to be self-defeating.” They cite the Rio+20 outcomes noting that poverty eradication is linked to “changing unsustainable and promoting sustainable patterns of consumption and production and protecting and managing the natural resource.”
Considering all these factors, journalists can be confident of a number of aspects relating to sustainable development. These are:

- The UN will be using Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) post-2015 to replace the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the term “sustainable development” will increase in usage, globally;

- Sustainable development has the combined meaning of promoting human wellbeing as well as the sustainability of resources; these two principles are linked;

- The importance of sustainable development journalism is very high, as it relates to improving wellbeing in all societies;

- Journalists are responsible for ensuring that media in their communities give balanced coverage to diverse issues of importance and interest in their communities;

- Journalists from 28 different countries that attended the 9th ASEF Journalists’ Colloquium agreed that insufficient coverage was being given to sustainable development issues and limited editorial rigour was being applied to many of the sustainable development stories that were being produced.

Sustainable development is fundamental and closely connected to the right to life, good health and wellbeing.
Media Social Responsibility

The Global Reporting Initiative Media Sector Supplement (GRI MSS), published in 2012, has been developed to assist media organisations around the world demonstrate transparency and openness in describing how they undertake their business and how their output impacts on the communities in which they operate. In describing the rationale for developing a specific section for media reporting, the GRI MSS states “…Media organisations hold a powerful position in society through the impact and influence of their content. It is therefore essential that they are responsible, transparent, and accountable.”

In addition to the primary roles of informing, entertaining and connecting people, the GRI MSS also outlines other aspects of media’s key roles in society. Media organisations should contribute to society by facilitating freedom of expression, education, pluralism and diversity, cultural expression and social inclusion. Because of the high levels of freedom and influence they have and in order to demonstrate Corporate Social Responsibility, the GRI MSS states that media organisations should report openly to the community about how they are performing in these key roles.

It is also important for media organisations to not only act as a watchdog and hold other people and organisations to account, but also to demonstrate that they are acting in society as good corporate citizens. Corporate Social Responsibility relates to economic, environmental and social performance and is therefore closely linked with sustainable development. Journalists working for a media organisation that is acting as a good corporate citizen should find alignment with the values of their organisation and focus on undertaking quality, independent journalism, including proportionate coverage of sustainable development issues.
The importance of sustainable development journalism is very high, as it relates to improving wellbeing in all societies.

"The importance of sustainable development journalism is very high, as it relates to improving wellbeing in all societies."
3 Guidelines for Sustainable Development Reporting
The following guidelines are designed to assist journalists in making good editorial decisions, consistent with internationally accepted journalistic principles and standards that should lead to improved coverage of the extremely important, yet under-reported and under-resourced, subject genre of sustainable development.

These guidelines have been developed and endorsed by all participants at the 9th ASEF Journalists’ Colloquium on Media and the Green Agenda, from 9-12 November 2013 in Gurgaon, Delhi-NCR, India. The development of these guidelines followed rigorous debate and discussion using the combined knowledge and experience of the practicing journalists participating from 28 different Asian and European countries, as well as input from a range of key experts.

The principles guiding this Handbook have been adopted to ensure sustainable development issues receive coverage based on adherence to recognised journalistic standards and principles. Rather than advocating a special case that would disproportionately prioritise or escalate sustainable development issues above other content genres, this Handbook outlines that given the high significance and importance of sustainable development issues to all societies, the genre warrants significant coverage on its own merits. Good journalists, adhering to accepted journalism standards, will make informed decisions about what issues warrant coverage and how the stories should be covered in order to maintain a balance over their whole content portfolio, proportional to the merits of each subject. It is intended that these guidelines help to inform journalists to assist them in making the best editorial decisions.

"Journalists need to be proactive in uncovering issues of importance to our societies, not simply reactive to issues as they emerge."
Editorial Focus

In considering what types of stories should be covered, how they should be handled and what resources would be required when covering sustainable development issues, journalists and editors should always act and report in accordance with accepted standards and principles of good ethical journalism. Additionally journalists covering sustainable development should consider the following:

EDITORIAL GUIDELINES

1. Include sustainable development stories in mainstream content. Sustainable development is a mainstream and highly significant social issue and should be covered by general reporters, not just environmental journalists. It should have priority along with other key issues, such as politics and economics in mainstream news and content.

2. Make sustainable development stories matter to the audience. Journalists have a responsibility to make all their content compelling and of interest to their audiences. It is incumbent upon journalists to tell sustainable development stories in a compelling way that demonstrates how these issues matter to people in their everyday lives.

“Rather than advocating a special case that would disproportionately prioritise or escalate sustainable development issues above other content – the genre warrants significant coverage on its own merits.”
Journalists must tell sustainable development stories in a compelling way that demonstrates how these issues matter to people in their everyday lives.
Use the audience to help tell the story.
Many members of diverse communities have knowledge about sustainable development issues and interesting stories to tell about impacts in their own communities. Therefore, journalists should engage audiences as part of the storytelling process.

Speak with people about issues that matter to them.
In order to find out first-hand about what is really happening within communities, journalists need to connect with audiences within their communities. This requires time and effort to go out into the field and speak with audiences about sustainable development issues. In the field journalists should:

a. Look for grassroots stories;
b. Find out how people are being impacted;
c. Seek to discover how people feel about issues;
d. Ask about real concerns people have in their daily life;
e. Question diverse community members to find out people’s aspirations and hopes.

Test all assumptions with editorial rigour.
When connecting with communities, dig deeper into people’s viewpoints and feelings to test certain assumptions such as any link between sustainable development issues and community prosperity, or any link between sustainable development issues and disasters. Any claims need to be reported on and challenged with the same editorial rigour as every other story. While gaining diverse community opinion is important and assists in gauging the community viewpoints about major issues, gathering facts from key stakeholders, researchers and those with knowledge and experience adds to accuracy in reporting.

Use story-aids to make reporting simpler and more compelling.
Use new and existing tools, such as maps, graphs, graphic visualisations, multimedia, and data visualisation tools to make stories more compelling and understandable for audiences. Lack of interest and lower-than-warranted coverage of sustainable development stories can be partially attributed to lack of understanding, or indeed misunderstanding of complex matters. Tools that animate and simplify the process of explanation will assist reporters in telling their stories and audiences in actively consuming and processing the content. While it may seem difficult and time-consuming to find storytelling aids, experienced journalists argue that the benefit this effort brings to the richness of the story gives the content many more dimensions and makes it well worth the while. Use data effectively and
use comparison between numbers to effectively simplify and make sense of sustainability issues.

7 Relate economic stories to sustainable development and vice versa.

In most countries, the media focuses heavily on economic reporting. While there is no denying the high level of importance of economic issues, it is significant to note that an economy within a country refers to “the production and consumption of goods and services and the supply of money” and also “careful management of available resources.”

In every society, systems and issues interact with and influence each other. Economic issues relate to health, education, sustainable resource management, and wellbeing, to name but a few interacting issues. Therefore, when reporting on economic issues, journalists should:

a Link the issues such as climate change, sustainable resource management, environmental issues, agriculture and human development to the economy. By doing this other stories and issues may emerge that assist journalists cover issues such as poverty reduction and how people can improve wellbeing.

b Link sustainable development issues to economic consequences in the long term. Very often, latest economic indicators are used by journalists to cover immediate stories about current economic activity. Also focussing on long-term trends will assist journalists in telling stories more holistically about how the economy is impacting upon sustainable development matters and vice versa.

c When considering stories with economic issues, give equal emphasis to human, lifestyle, environmental, ecological and social consequences and impacts. It is often easier and faster to simply report on the cost of an incident or event, rather than also focus on the important social, human and environmental consequences.

d The economy in any country is not static, but rather developing all the time, just like other social systems. Therefore, as part of news, journalists should give appropriate balance to new models of investment and trading and new social forms of financing, such as World Bank initiatives, green and humanitarian investments and loan schemes, not just the mainstream stock and economic market reporting.

8 Be proactive in uncovering important issues.

Journalists need to be proactive in uncovering issues of importance to our societies, not simply reactive to issues as they emerge. Sustainable development issues, especially in developing countries, may often
Take a holistic approach with sustainable development stories.
To cover sustainable development issues effectively in mainstream content, journalists need to take a broad and holistic approach. To achieve this journalists should:

a Acquire usable information and data for more clear explanations and better storytelling. This will not only assist journalists and audiences but also assist people with an important and relevant story to provide their messages to the community.

b Journalists should pay attention to hidden costs. If you pitch successfully for a story over two working days and it takes four, you may not get a second opportunity. Field reporting can be costly with flights, crews, equipment time, and other resources. Good field and community reporting requires good and accurate story and resource planning.

c Be objective and use information and analysis to steer the debate. Don’t rely on only one source, but be wary of obtaining balance from people whose experience, and qualifications may not make them a suitable spokesperson for certain issues. Equally, be aware of the agendas and vested interests of many people who may put themselves forward for comment, or who you may find without knowing their
full background. Knowing the background of spokespeople and interviewees may be of high assistance in determining the best approach to achieving accuracy, impartiality and balance.

Use ongoing explanation and clarification to improve understanding.
Do not assume that the audience has the same understanding of certain terms as you do. Even though terms such as ‘sustainability’ and ‘sustainable development’ may become mainstream, they also need continuous explanation. In addition to these more technical terms, using other, everyday language terms in pitching and stories may deliver better meaning to the content and connect more effectively with audiences and editorial decision-makers.

Always maintain independence and focus on issues with diverse and broad perspectives. Opinions and interests surrounding sustainable development are often strongly polarised. Political parties, lobby groups, certain businesses, and some stakeholders may all seek to influence the community and journalists, through distortion of facts or by trying to limit the debate to narrow perspectives.

3 2
National and Cross-Border Partnerships

Many of the issues associated with sustainable development are not restricted by national boundaries. Social issues like poverty, famine and disease, as well as environmental issues such as drought, flood and erosion can often occur at a local level, across a nation, or at a multinational regional level. With this understanding, journalists covering sustainable development issues who want to tell stories from broad perspectives need to have networks that allow them to cover stories by accessing the experiences and events outside of their own coverage area.

Partnerships with journalists and arrangements with other contacts and stakeholders at a national or international level will be of great assistance to journalists. This is especially true for journalists operating in some countries where vested interest groups may threaten or harm journalists or their families if they report truthfully, without fear or favour. In such cases, journalists across borders may be able to publish what a threatened journalist cannot.

Journalists need to be proactive in seeking existing, or creating new networks, partnerships and contacts.
**PROACTIVE PARTNERSHIPS AND NETWORKS**

1. Create partnerships between media organisations across Asia and Europe and tap into existing global networks that deal with sustainable development journalism; the benefits include:
   a. Accessing stories from other organisations around the globe;
   b. Sharing major story concepts between countries, which can significantly enhance each story;
   c. Publishing stories in other countries and not being endangered by publishing in a journalists’ own country;
   d. Seeking local reaction to stories published in other countries;

2. Establish national environmental/sustainability/sustainable development news associations that are linked where possible to international umbrella organisations;

3. Tap into networks of international journalists to share best practices of sustainable development journalism;

4. Liaise with international journalists’ networks to develop standards for sustainable development journalism;

5. Use international journalism networks to run cross-border media projects on sustainable development;

6. Effectively utilise social media, crowdsourcing, and other platforms that can be consumed by audiences globally to assist journalists in covering issues accurately, without fear or favour, and offer audiences in all countries an opportunity to be informed about important issues that may not be covered accurately or extensively by their own local media.

"Whether through extensive experience, training or education, a journalist will be more likely to provide meaningful and accurate reporting to their audiences if they have a better understanding of the often complex subjects they cover."
Do not assume that the audience has the same understanding of certain terms as you do. Even though terms such as sustainability and sustainable development may become mainstream, they also need continuous explanation.
3 3
Journalist Knowledge, Capabilities and Training

Good journalists undergo a continuous, lifelong learning process. The nature of day-to-day work requires a journalist to use an enquiring mind, ask questions, seek diverse sources, and at times challenge existing systems and beliefs with well-researched and balanced reporting. Journalists also need to continuously develop new technical skills in order to present their content on the diverse and changing platforms audiences are using. It is not just a matter of publishing in print, broadcast, social, web-based or other emerging media platforms; it is also important for journalists to be adept at using media effectively to source diverse opinions and to find data and multimedia aids that will add richness to the stories they deliver.

At times, journalists also benefit from training in specific subject areas. Journalists specialising in economics, science, education, health and agriculture are likely to be more effective if they have a good understanding of the subject matter and issues being discussed. This also applies to sustainable development reporting. Whether through extensive experience or scientific or humanities training or education, a journalist will be more likely to provide meaningful and accurate reporting to their audiences if they have a better understanding of the often complex subjects they cover.

Learning opportunities journalists could consider include:

1. Training for early or mid-career journalists relating to informed, independent, evidence-based and balanced coverage of sustainable development issues:
   a. At an international as well as at a national level, where needed;
   b. Consider online/mobile training as one way of making learning more affordable and widely accessible.

2. Journalism training and education programmes in all countries (as an international standard) should emphasise principles, standards, ethics and independence of the media.

3. Course modules that specifically cover better methods for finding reliable and diverse sources.

4. Offer on-the-job learning opportunities by supporting and encouraging young journalists to actively research and report on sustainable development issues.

5. Journalism networks can be used to raise awareness and provide information relating to understanding the significance of sustainable development. (This is referring to the significance of covering sustainable development as a content genre, such as economics, politics, health
assist journalists avoid inadvertent bias. This will minimise any slant on the story resulting from a journalist’s own values and opinions. For these reasons journalists could:

- Carry out sustainability assessment of their own lives (e.g. What is their carbon footprint? What is their social contribution?);
- Identify personal beliefs, philosophies and allegiances that may influence a journalists approach to and handling of a sustainable development story.

Learn to walk in another person’s shoes, but not too far. The capacity to have empathy and understand the motivations, aspirations and circumstances of people within our communities is essential to creating good journalism that really matters to audiences. However journalists need to be aware that too much empathy could lead to a feeling of alignment or bias towards a particular individual or group. Therefore, in order to maintain balance and independence, it is important to develop an objective understanding of other people’s positions, rather than sympathy for their situation.

Examine and acknowledge examples of best practice sustainable development journalism that have made an impact on its community. This could be achieved through:

or sports, with the purpose of trying to ensure overall media coverage of sustainable development content is treated proportionally to its importance.) This can be aimed at three levels:

- Editors;
- Reporters;
- Audience.

Journalists need to learn better ways of interpreting media releases and leads given to them by inexperienced or unskilled media officers and sources. This is important in order to avoid being manipulated by vested interest groups that employ good writers and clever media officers who provide easy solutions to busy journalists and resource-poor editors. Journalists need to see each story on its merits alone and apply journalistic standards at all times. This means they need to look for any bias behind the so-called good writing style of a lobbyist and on the other hand, be able to see any potential merits behind a poorly-written or worded background from another source.

Self-awareness and self-assessment. It is important that journalists have a realistic perception of themselves in their work or daily life activities. Such self-analysis is important in assisting a journalist maintain independence and balance. Awareness of their personal values and viewpoints may
a A handbook and online portal from media organisations or professional journalism association;

b A listing of platforms of where people can find good journalism and debates relating to sustainable development. This could be published by media organisations or journalism associations.

Learn techniques to rapidly sift through vast amounts of information and publications available online, through social media, and from crowdsourced platforms. This will assist journalists canvassing diverse viewpoints, differentiating between hard facts, well-researched viewpoints, and personal opinion. The more journalists can canvass diverse sources of information and differentiate between the relative merits of each, the more likely they are to cover issues, accurately, without fear or favour, assisting citizens in making informed decisions.
Considerations for Editors
Editors have the capacity to determine the nature, style, diversity and quality of journalistic content and to allocate resources that go into the production of news and current affairs reporting. Through their publications and networks, editors have enormous freedom to steer significant components of public discourse. They therefore have enormous responsibility and accountability to the communities in which they operate to ensure their content reflects the standards and principles of quality journalism.

With respect to reporting on sustainable development issues, editors can make significant contributions to their communities by ensuring that these stories receive adequate resources and adequate column space or airtime, to reflect their relative merits, importance and interest to the communities in which they operate. This Handbook has been developed to assist journalists in improving the quality of sustainable development reporting and to offer suggestions as to how they can find ways to ensure relevant stories receive higher editorial priority and in the long term, appropriate airtime or column space, proportionate to their social significance. It is hoped that editors will also find this Handbook useful for the same purpose.
Editors have enormous freedom to steer significant components of public discourse. They therefore have enormous responsibility and accountability to the communities in which they operate.
5 Connecting with Communities
There are many reasons for journalists to have an effective and on-going connection with people living in a broad range of communities. Two of these factors lie at the core of good journalism. First, without good connections with people living and working in diverse community and business groups, journalists will be unable to find original stories and will be unable to seek plurality through the canvassing of diverse perspectives. Second, without good connections and good understanding of the people they are connecting with, journalists will not be able to produce content that reflects the interests and aspirations of their potential audiences.

Given that sustainable development is related to efforts to improve people’s wellbeing, journalists wishing to report effectively need to have an understanding of how people perceive their wellbeing in different social groups and what their aspirations are in order to improve their wellbeing. Clearly, there are objective measurements through statistics and analysis made by governments and agencies, but wellbeing also has some subjective elements to it, provided that people’s basic needs are being satisfactorily met. These relate to people’s state of mind and how they see themselves in comparison to other people and other sectors within a community. They also relate to other factors in a community that might not be measured and obvious from analysing data. For example, a community may have social indicators pointing to high incomes, good education levels, good employment, and good levels of health. Yet people’s perception of their own wellbeing may be poor, if they don’t feel that they can walk out their door because crime rates are too high, or their health is at risk because of high pollution levels, or they need to travel 3 hours a day in heavy traffic to get to and from work. Understanding a community is much more than analysing social indicators published by authorities, it is also about a journalists’ own capacity to connect with and understand the people within their communities.

Equally, it is important to expand connections with businesses, researchers, lobby groups, officials, subject experts and subject stakeholders in order to be able to canvass broad response relating to any particular issue. Simply relying on government reports,
official comments, expert opinions, or industry viewpoints as the sources for a story is only doing the story part of the way. Very often, when a science, economic or social story emerges, the media rely on the same people to give responses, over and over again. Very often, some of these people will have a vested interest and may slant a story a particular way. Diversity in organisational contacts allows journalists to seek a wider response and give more opportunity for pluralistic views. However care also needs to be taken not to inadvertently give voice to vested interest groups who may receive a disproportionate amount of coverage compared with spokespersons who may represent a view that is a consensus of the vast majority of professionals, scientists or subject experts. The best example of this is the disproportionate amount of column space and airtime given to people who deny climate change, compared to the scientists who express views held by a very high percentage of their colleagues. This disproportionate amount of space or time is often allocated in a journalist’s poorly-targeted attempts to achieve plurality and balance by seeking an opposing view. It is appropriate to give a voice to counter viewpoints, but not at a continuously disproportionate level, not if the counter viewpoint is based on erroneous reasoning or limited data, and not if the journalist continuously goes back to the same sources for counter viewpoint comment. Having wider connections and more people to call on will assist journalists in giving balanced and accurate information to their audiences, especially with respect to the often politically-charged and emotionally-charged issues surrounding sustainable development.

“Having wider connections will assist journalists in giving more pluralistic, balanced and accurate information to their audiences, especially with respect to the often politically and emotionally charged issues surrounding sustainable development.”
Social and Participatory Media

While it may seem to be self-evident that social media offers opportunities for journalists to connect with audiences in two-way dialogue, it is also important to consider that social media can be a powerful and persuasive tool that represents various subsets of a community. Not everyone is connected to the various social media platforms and viewpoints expressed may represent sectors within a community and therefore not reflect the full range of viewpoints on a subject.

With this in mind, journalists covering sustainable development stories should use social media platforms as a very powerful part of their toolset for connecting with communities. A diverse range of responses may be quickly obtained from journalists who Tweet or post Facebook or Weibo stories. A journalist who uses audience participation in addition to their other sources in telling a story should be able to produce more interesting and relevant content. However this should always be tempered with an understanding that social media content from audiences and community members is mostly unsubstantiated opinion and is not usually based on independent research and analysis.

Reaching Out to Communities

In reaching out to people within communities, journalists focusing on sustainable development stories may find some of the following considerations helpful.

1. Ask people what they want to know, and what they want the news organisation to find out for them:
   a. Using social media to connect more with people;
   b. Actively undertaking field research, field reporting and being on location where possible. Be in the community as much as possible and talk to people with open questions about the issues that are of concern to them;
   c. Going out into the community as a journalist and asking questions face-to-face;
   d. Connecting with universities and other research institutes to utilise community-based research already undertaken.

2. Reach out to specific groups within the communities; examples could be youth groups, senior citizens groups, women’s networks, clubs and societies, to name a few.
Connecting with Stakeholders

A stakeholder, who is someone who has an interest in a business, activity or industry, will usually have a defined position about particular issues and events. Stakeholders are therefore, by definition, partial and cannot be used as independent sources. Even if they are independent as a business entity or community-funded, stakeholders have their own interests and perspectives. Nevertheless they often have well-researched and highly-articulated positions about particular stories associated with social or environmental issues. A connection with a wide range of stakeholders will assist journalists’ fair, balanced, and well-researched stories about sustainable development issues. In maintaining and building links with stakeholders journalists can:

1. Use wide connections to find reliable sources; try and expand a stakeholder contacts list seeking people and groups that represent well-defined positions within a particular industry, movement or community sector.

2. Use multiple stakeholders’ perspectives to improve the balance of stories.

3. Establish connections with stakeholders to keep informed about issues in the sustainable development sectors; often groups who represent specific interests will find out about issues in advance or have input into research and community programmes.

Connect with and share information with experts in sustainable development fields, including:

a. Creation of web pages that allow scientific, stakeholder, journalistic and community input;

b. Creation of a journalist’s own online experts’ panel, allowing blogs, forums and debates about issues with experts and community members;

c. Establishment of gateways that allow online input from experts and scientists to publish directly to the public as well as through separate mediated pages.

“Social media content from audiences and community members is mostly unsubstantiated opinion and is not usually based on independent research and analysis.”
New Models for Sustainable Development Journalism
Sustainable Development Reporting for Journalists

9th ASEF Journalists’ Colloquium: Media and the Green Agenda
Participants attending the 9th ASEF Journalists’ Colloquium acknowledged that the proliferation of new media platforms and increased diversity in media options for consumers has meant that media companies are facing continuously more competitive pressure. This has led to rationalisation and shedding of journalism staff in many organisations and in most countries. With fewer resources, editors are less able to allocate resources for quality and investigative journalism and journalists are required to produce more stories on more platforms. As a result, capacity for quality journalism has been reduced.

Quality, balanced, independent and well-researched journalism is important, not just to cover sustainable development issues, but also to cover all matters of importance to contemporary communities worldwide. For this reason the Colloquium advocated that media organisations and editors explore and consider alternative business models that could assist them in undertaking higher quality and higher levels of investigative reporting. Journalists have a role in outlining these concepts to their editors and employers:

1. Media organisations could explore crowdfunding opportunities for raising funds to cover high-interest topics within communities. Using this method, with tiny individual contributions, communities could have some financial stake in ensuring that they have coverage of topics that they rate as having high importance;

2. Business profit is important to publishers and media organisations. Therefore journalists need to demonstrate to their editors and owners how sustainable development stories relate to audiences in a compelling way. Journalists can, in this way, relate business success to powerful storytelling;

3. Advocate triple bottom line or Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) reporting from all media organisations. CSR reporting includes environmental and social impact and reviews all business practices, including content development, distribution and impact on audiences.
“Business profit is important to publishers and media organisations. Therefore journalists need to demonstrate to their editors how sustainable development stories relate to audiences in a compelling way.”
Conclusion
Sustainable development is a term that is used to describe improvements to human wellbeing by a balanced focus on economic progress, social equity, a healthy environment and good governance. Stories relating to sustainable development should be considered as mainstream and be given sufficient coverage, proportional to the importance of sustainable development issues to the diverse communities in which journalists operate. It was unanimously agreed at the 9th ASEF Journalists’ Colloquium on *Media and the Green Agenda* that sustainable development issues were significantly underrepresented in mainstream content.

This Handbook has outlined that the application of editorial rigour and a more holistic approach to accepted editorial standards would improve the level and quality of stories relating to sustainable development. This would require journalists to engage with audiences more effectively and to understand the issues more thoroughly. It is also incumbent upon journalists to tell stories in more compelling ways so that the issues they report on will matter much more to their diverse audiences.

Editors will be much more likely to assign journalists to stories where there is a proven interest and appeal.

The recommendations and guidelines in this Handbook are designed to give journalists more tools to assist them in the objective of delivering balanced coverage of high-quality sustainable development stories, in compelling ways, proportional to their significance and audience appeal.
This Handbook is designed to assist journalists in the objective of delivering balanced coverage of high-quality sustainable development stories, in compelling ways, proportional to their significance and audience appeal.
List of Participating Journalists

There were 28 Journalists participating in the 9th ASEF Journalists’ Colloquium. 16 journalists were from Asia and 12 were from Europe.

Ms Amy BAINBRIDGE
ABC News
Australia

Mr Raimo POOM
Eesti Päevaleht
Estonia

Mr Ubaidillah bin MASLI
The Brunei Times
Brunei Darussalam

Mr Michael KNIGGE
Deutsche Welle
Germany

Mr Vassil SOTIROV
24 Hours
Bulgaria

Mr Chetan CHAUHAN
Hindustan Times
India

Mr CHHAY Sophal
Cambodia News
Cambodia

Mr Bagus Budi Tama
SARAGIH
The Jakarta Post
Indonesia

Ms WU Wencong
China Daily
China

Mr Stefano VALENTINO
Freelance Correspondent
Italy

Mr Stefanos EVRIPIDOU
Cyprus Mail
Cyprus

Mr Yasuhiko OTA
Nikkei
Japan
Mr Hyuntaek LEE
JoongAng Ilbo
Korea

Mr Ricardo GARCIA
Publico
Portugal

Ms Virginija VERVECKAITE
ELTA
Lithuania

Mr Constantín BALABAN
Agerpre
Romania

Ms Tengku Noor
SHAMSIAH
Bernama
Malaysia

Mr Igor ERMACHENKOV
Ria Novosti
Russian Federation

Ms Oyungerel
GALSANDAGVA
Unuudur
Mongolia

Mr Andrés ROJO
La Razón
Spain

Mr Myo LWIN
The Myanmar Times Weekly
Myanmar

Mr Richard WERLY
Le Temps
Switzerland

Mr Omar QURAISHI
Express Tribune
Pakistan

Ms Anchalee KONGRUT
Bangkok Post
Thailand

Ms Raydes BARCIA
The Manila Times
Philippines

Mr Aaron AKINYEMI
BBC World Service
United Kingdom

Mr Roman IMIELSKI
Gazeta Wyborcza
Poland

Ms PHU Ho Vinh
Vietnam Television
Vietnam
The following list of resources is designed to be a non-comprehensive sample of the types of resources available to journalists to assist them in producing high-quality, well-researched, balanced stories. These and similar tools will assist journalists determine the issues that reflect the interests and aspirations of their communities and to produce compelling sustainable development stories that are proportional to their significance and audience appeal.

**Source Verification**

- **Verification Handbook**
  
  [www.verificationhandbook.com](http://www.verificationhandbook.com)
  
  A definitive guide to verifying digital content for emergency coverage.

- **Public Insight Network (PIN)**
  
  [www.publicinsightnetwork.org](http://www.publicinsightnetwork.org)
  
  Provides journalists with the tools and training to tap PIN’s growing Network of sources, engage their own audiences, and produce high-quality journalism.

**Journalist Codes of Ethics**

- **Asia: Eye On Ethics**
  
  [www.eyeonethics.org](http://www.eyeonethics.org)
  
  A collection of various Journalist Codes of Ethics in Asia.

- **Europe: EthicNet**
  
  [www.ethicnet.uta.fi](http://www.ethicnet.uta.fi)
  
  A collection of various Journalist Codes of Ethics in Europe.
Information, Statistics and Surveys

a UN Statistical Commission
www.unstats.un.org/unsd
Statistics and Background information published by the United Nations. Also has separate sections relating to economic, demographic and social, and environmental and energy statistics.

b Statistical Offices and Publications (non-exhaustive)
A sampling of online resources providing statistical data on a global scale.
- World Statistics
  www.world-statistics.org
- Internet World Stats
  www.internetworldstats.com
- Gapminder
  www.gapminder.org

c WIPO GREEN
www.wipo.int/green
WIPO GREEN is the World Intellectual Property Organization’s (WIPO) interactive marketplace designed to help increase the use of green technologies.

d Survey Monkey
www.surveymonkey.com
A tool that allows journalists to construct and conduct their own surveys, to their own communities and audiences.

e Panda Project
www.pandaproject.net
A private data library for your newsroom and aids for data journalism.

Visualisation:
Maps, Charts, Diagrams

a Charts
Create charts to visualise your data.
- Online Chart Tool
  www.onlinecharttool.com
- Chartgo
  www.chartgo.com

b Maps
Create interactive maps for your story.
- TileMill Mapbox
  www.mapbox.com/tilemill

c Data Visualisation
Easily create visuals based on your data.
- Tableau
  www.tableausoftware.com/public
## Glossary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ASEF</td>
<td>Asia-Europe Foundation</td>
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<tr>
<td>ASEM</td>
<td>Asia-Europe Meeting</td>
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<tr>
<td>Colloquium</td>
<td>9th ASEF Journalists’ Colloquium on <em>Media and the Green Agenda</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crowdfunding</td>
<td>Raising many small amounts of money from a wide source of people, often via the internet, to fund projects</td>
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<tr>
<td>CSR</td>
<td>Corporate Social Responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental Journalism</td>
<td>A term that refers to journalism that covers sustainable development, especially as it relates to environmental matters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green Agenda</td>
<td>A term used by ASEF to describe issues surrounding sustainable development, especially with respect to Rio+20 and the post-2015 SDGs</td>
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<tr>
<td>GRI MSS</td>
<td>Global Reporting Initiative Media Sector Supplement</td>
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<tr>
<td>MDGs</td>
<td>Millennium Development Goals developed by the UN</td>
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<tr>
<td>SDGs</td>
<td>Sustainable Development Goals being developed by the UN as a result of the Rio+20 Conference, to replace the MDGs by 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainable Development</td>
<td>Referring to sustainable improvements, environmentally and socially, to assist the development of human wellbeing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainability</td>
<td>A term referring to environmental and socially sustainable practices, often interchanged with sustainable development</td>
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</table>
The Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) wishes to thank its partner in the Colloquium, the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India. Without the support and assistance provided by the Ministry before and during the Colloquium, it would not have been possible to host this important dialogue between Asian and European journalists.

ASEF was fortunate to have the expertise of a diverse group of speakers who addressed the 9th ASEF Journalists’ Colloquium with a wide range of environmental, social, and media issues. Guest speakers were:

- **Mr Navtej SARNA**
  Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India

- **Dr Prodipto GHOSH**
  The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI)

- **Dr Surendra SHRESTHA**
  United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) International Environment Technology Centre

- **Ms Emily BENSON**
  International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED)

- **Dr Leena SRIVASTAVA**
  The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI)

- **Mr Paranjoy GUHA-THAKURTA**
  Journalist and Media Educator

- **Ms Rina TSUBAKI**
  Project Manager – Emergency Journalism, European Journalism Centre (EJC)

- **Mr Jussi LAITINEN**
  Environmental writer

- **Mr Peter WILLIMOTT**
  World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO)

- **Mr Joydeep GUPTA**
  Third Pole Project, InterNews
ASEF would also like to acknowledge the following supporters who gave time and resources towards the Colloquium:

- Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) Media Programme Asia (Singapore)
- World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO)
- The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI)
- European Journalism Centre (EJC)

The Colloquium was moderated by Dr Mike McCluskey, International Media and Broadcast Consultant and Editor-in-Chief of this Handbook. The Rapporteur for the Colloquium was Ms Rina Tsubaki, European Journalism Center (EJC).

The ASEF team, Ms Theresa Cua, Ms Debasmita Dasgupta and Mr Rafael Secades, were responsible for the concept, development, and organisation of the 9th ASEF Journalists’ Colloquium, including the production of this Handbook.
The ASEF Media Handbook is written by journalists for journalists. It is a result of exchanges between Asia-Europe media professionals. The Handbook tackles a specific area of journalism and its challenges. It also presents suggestions for better quality stories based on experiences and insights shared during the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) media programmes.
So you want to be a better journalist?

1. Include sustainable development stories in mainstream content.
2. Make sustainable development stories matter to the audience.
3. Use the audience to help tell the story.
4. Speak with people about issues that matter to them.
5. Test all assumptions with editorial rigour.
6. Use story-aids to make reporting simpler and more compelling.
7. Relate economic stories to sustainable development and vice versa.
8. Be proactive in uncovering important issues.
9. Take a holistic approach with sustainable development stories.
10. Use ongoing explanation and clarification to improve understanding.

The following statements are excerpted from the ASEF Media Handbook: Sustainable Development Reporting for Journalists. The Handbook takes from discussions made by 28 journalists from Asia and Europe during the 9th ASEF Journalists’ Colloquium (November 2013, India).