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Media Coverage of Climate Change in Africa

A Case Study of Nigeria and South Africa

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to God, the giver of wisdom, and to my little daughter, Oluchi, whom I left behind at a very critical stage in her life to do the RISJ programme.

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I owe my deepest gratitude to the Reuters Institute, for giving me this rare opportunity. Enormous appreciation goes to all the members of staff of the Institute for their extraordinary friendliness and for the huge understanding shown to me particularly at the beginning of this programme. I am heartily thankful to my erudite supervisor, Paddy Coulter, for providing me with wonderful guidance.

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Chapter One

Introduction

'The issue of climate change is one that we ignore at our own peril.' Barack Obama[1]

Africa presents a number of intriguing contradictions which in many ways capture its development challenges. It is the world's second largest continent in size. Home to about one billion people with an annual population growth of 24 million, the continent boasts the world's highest birth rate and is projected to hit two billion by 2050[2]. Sub-Saharan Africa has the world's most youthful population which is likely to stay that way for decades[3].

Yet Africa is the only region in the world becoming less and less able to feed itself. According to the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) of the United Nations, one in three people living in sub-Saharan Africa were chronically hungry in 2007[4]. The region is also hardest hit by extreme poverty, harbouring 75 percent of people worldwide that live on less than a dollar a day. Running out of food is common in Africa because crops often fail when rains do not come.

Experts say climate change will have a significant impact on Africa's already compromised food security[5].The relationship between climate change and food security in Africa is complex. Many factors influence food security, which means that often the link is not even made between failed crops and changing weather patterns. But these changing weather patterns or extreme weather events, such as floods or droughts, have had very debilitating consequences on African agricultural production in the last three decades.

As a result, many people have less access to food, which forces them to buy food products. This affects their financial situation. It also influences their health as people often buy cheaper food frequently less nutritious. This is particularly the case for those who need a nutritious diet- the chronically ill. A visit to the drought-ridden West African country of Niger, parts of eastern

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1 Barack Obama, April 3, 2006-speech on "Energy Independence and the Safety of Our Planet" http://obamaspeeches.com/060-Energy-Independence-and-the-Safety-of-Our-Planet-Obama-Speech.htm
2Population Reference Bureau- 2009 Population reference data sheet -www.prb.org
3 International Youth Foundation- Fact Sheet, Youth Reproductive Health-Sub-saharan African, p 1. The Population Reference Bureau, in page 3, the report indicates that a large proportion of youthful population will be of working age by 2050, willing and desirous to raise a family of their own and the question is whether the economic condition of their countries will enable them meet those expectations.

4 Food and Agricultural Organisation-Briefing paper: Hunger on the rise, 17 September, 2008 http://www.fao.org/newsroom/common/ecg/1000923/en/hungerfigs.pdf
5 Nicholas Stern-Blue- print for a safer planet, 2 April 2009.

Africa or the oil-rich Niger Delta region of Nigeria would show visible traces of the complex mix of dwindling agricultural yields and a changing climate.

Since 2007, erratic rainfall has led to increased food shortages in southern Africa where droughts damaged and destroyed maize crops in Lesotho, Namibia, Mozambique, Swaziland, Zimbabwe and South Africa. Increasing food shortages have become a trend, according to the Climate Systems Analysis Group (CSAG), a climatology research group based at the University of CapeTown, South Africa[6].

Scientists[7] say the consequences of climate change will not be equally distributed. While some scientific uncertainties remain about the character, magnitude, and rates of future climate change, there is widespread consensus in scientific and policy communities that planetary warming will have significant impacts on sea levels, weather systems, eco-systems, public health, and economic development.

Until recently, Africa's climate, more than that of any other continent, has been generally uniform. This is due to the continent's position in the tropical zone, the impact of cool ocean currents, and the absence of mountain chains serving as climatic barriers. However, across Africa, the landscape is changing.

The snowy caps of Mount Kilimanjaro are melting and the shorelines of Lakes Chad, Tanganyika and Victoria are receding[8]. The once mighty Lake Chad is half the size it was 35 years ago. These and many other changes have led to unreliable farming seasons and low water supplies - a serious problem for a continent almost entirely dependent on rain for its agriculture. The dry and wet seasons are becoming increasingly difficult for peasant farmers in West and Central Africa to determine.

Based on scientific research including interviews with farmers in Southern Africa, the CSAG predicts that within the next three decades, the rainy season in Zimbabwe and the adjoining Limpopo province of South Africa will start more than a month later, in December instead of in late October.

Many climate change commentators emphasize the likelihood of conflict over increasingly scarce resources, such as water, food and land. Already, some of the political rhetoric has become very heated. For example, at an African Union summit in 2007 Yoweri Museveni, the

[6] Sepo Hachigonta- Climate Systems Analysis Group (CSAG), in an article published by Inter press Service news Agency. http://www.ipsnews.net/africa/nota.asp?idnews=45458

[7] UNDP Human Development Report, 2007/2008.

[8] Prof. Lonnie Thompson of Ohio State University and a lead author of study published in National Academy of Science Journal. See also http://www.independent.co.uk/environment/climate-change/climate-change-will-melt-snows-of-kilimanjaro-within-20-years-1813631.html

President of Uganda, called climate change an 'act of aggression' by the developed world against the developing world and demanded compensation for the damage global warming would cause African nations. A couple of months later, Kaire Mbuende, the Namibian representative to the United Nations, called the developed countries' emissions of greenhouses tantamount to 'low intensity biological or chemical warfare'. According to 2007 data, per head emission of carbon dioxide (CO_2) for all Africans stood at 1 ton (1 tCO_2), in comparison to US average figure of 19.9 tCO_2[9].

To limit the risk of increase in malnourishment and check the reverse in human development gains that have been made in Africa and other developing countries, science has offered the global community an option of cutting emissions by 80% by 2050 in comparison with the 1990 level by industrialized nations (HD Report)[10]. Another option is to provide resources and technological support for African and other poor nations by developed countries for adaptation to the impacts of climate change[11]. Unfortunately, the much heralded 2009 Copenhagen summit, hitherto seen as an opportunity for greater progress for climate agreement, ended without a strong binding accord.

Many experts have emphasized the need to communicate better to policy-makers about the future climatic changes so as to influence appropriate agricultural policies and adaptation strategies. The media can play a crucial role in disseminating useful climate information to effectively guide public debate and understanding about the weather and climate change. Regular and accurate communication about climate change is the first step towards developing coping mechanisms in Africa. Adaptation has been implicitly and explicitly linked with development-focused action, particularly as scientists have underscored that developing countries are disproportionately vulnerable to climate change and lack adaptive capacity.

According to Patrick Luganda, chairman of the Network of Climate Journalists of the Greater Horn of Africa (NECJOGHA)[12], millions of farmers are grappling with the changing climate around them but are starved of real, timely information on what their options are. The current reality is that climate change challenges are known but only when they get at the crisis stage. While mitigation has traditionally been the pivotal issue for many experts, adaptation to the effects of climate change is now acknowledged as necessary for responding effectively and equitably to the impacts of both climate change and climate variability.

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[9] Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report- contribution by working group 1 to its Fouth Assessment Report, 2007

[10] See the executive summary of the 2008 UNDP Human Development Report

[11] Stern's review report on Economics of Climate Change- full executive summary http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+/http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/media/3/2/Summary_of_Conclusions.pdf

[12] Patrick Luganda, communicating climate information http://www.climateadaptation.net/docs/papers/Luganda%20paper.pdf

This research seeks to explore and analyze the media coverage of climate change in Nigeria and South Africa, using the two countries as case studies to assess what the trend is in Africa as a whole. Other aims of this work will be to find answers to the following major questions, namely:

How well do the media cover climate change in Africa?

What gets covered and what is driving the changes in that coverage?

What are the most challenging difficulties the climate change journalists face?

What are the personal attitudes of these journalists to climate change issues and how have these attitudes shaped their reportage of climate change?

Chapter Two will examine what science predicts will be the impacts of climate change on Africa (with a special focus on Nigeria and South Africa), in terms of agriculture, food security, health and general environmental reality. The same chapter will assess the evidence of this climatic forecast based on the daily experience of people and discover whether what science predicts is already coming true on the ground. It will also examine what the politicians at the various seats of government are doing.

Analysis and data presentation of findings from content analysis of four national newspapers, two each from Nigeria and South Africa, on the quantity of climate change coverage, what is covered, followed by a short reflection on what the trend looks like in the Ghanaian media, will be presented in Chapter Three. Chapter Four will look at the media landscape, examining in particular the nature of news, opportunities and challenges of climate change journalists and how these factors can shape the approach of climate change reporting in each of countries chosen.

The academic literature in this area is quite limited. There is considerable research published on media coverage of climate change in many developed countries like the USA, the UK and even on some developing countries like China, India and Latin America[13]. Studies have also been done on climate change impact, mitigation and vulnerability in Africa but very little on media coverage. This paper will carry out a review of the existing literature and complement this with personal findings and interviews with journalists and editors from Nigeria and South Africa.

The ambition of the study is to establish the relevance or otherwise of greater coverage of climate change in the African media and the sustainability of progress in the fight against poverty, and to show how present challenges in this regard might be overcome. It is hoped that

[13] See, Maxwell T. Boykoff and J. Timmons Roberts-Media coverage of climate change: Current Tends, Strengths, Weaknesses, 2007/2008. James Painter-Climate Change Latin America and the Media, 7 November, 2008

a correlation might be established between the value attached to climate change issues by media professionals and enhanced media reportage on the one hand and better policy and general government attention to climate change on the other.

Chapter 2

Climate Change in Africa

'History does not have an agenda on which items can be prioritised. Either you deal with the events it throws at you or they deal with you'. Tom Burke, founding director of E3[14].

2.1 The Science

Over the past 30 years, evidence that human activities are affecting the climate has accumulated inexorably, and with it has come ever greater certainty across the scientific community about the reality of recent climate change and the potential for much greater change in the future. Scientists are more confident now than ever that humans have interfered with the climate and that further human-induced climate change is on the way.

Although a 2007 report published by the Inter-Governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) finds that some of these further changes are now inevitable, its analysis also confirms that the future, particularly in the longer term, "remains largely in our hands". The magnitude of expected change depends on what humans choose to do about greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.[15]

Greenhouse gases are gases that trap heat in the atmosphere. The principal greenhouse gases that enter the atmosphere because of human activities are: carbon dioxide (CO2), methane, nitrous oxide, and fluorinated gases[16]:

Carbon Dioxide (CO2): Carbon dioxide enters the atmosphere through the burning of fossil fuels (oil, natural gas, and coal), solid waste, trees and wood products, and also as a result of other chemical reactions (e.g. manufacture of cement). Carbon dioxide is also removed from the atmosphere when it is absorbed by plants as part of the biological carbon cycle.

Methane (CH4): Methane is emitted during the production and transport of coal, natural gas, and oil. Methane emissions also result from livestock and other agricultural practices and by the decay of organic waste in municipal solid waste landfills.

Nitrous Oxide (N2O): Nitrous oxide is emitted during agricultural and industrial activities, as well as during combustion of fossil fuels and solid waste.

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[14] The war passes: The climate change is for Ever, The Independent Commentators, 4 January edition http://www.independent.co.uk/opinion/commentators/tom-burke-war-passes-the-climate-is-for-ever-1224210.html. The Physical Science of Climate Change, William Collins, Robert Colman et al, ientific American, October 2008

[15] Climate Change, IPCC Fourth Assessment Report, 2007

[16] Politics of Climate Change, Tim O' Riordan & Jill Jagar, 1996; US EPA Inventory of GHG Emission 2010

Fluorinated Gases: Hydrofluorocarbons, perfluorocarbons, and sulfur hexafluoride are synthetic, powerful greenhouse gases that are emitted from a variety of industrial processes. Fluorinated gases are sometimes used as substitutes for ozone-depleting substances (i.e. CFCs, HCFCs and halons). These gases are typically emitted in smaller quantities, but because they are potent greenhouse gases, they are sometimes referred to as High Global Warming Potential gases "High GWP gases".

2.2 The Politics

African and other developing countries have long argued that since the major industrialized nations have contributed the most to global warming, they should shoulder most of the costs. But the political torpor round climate change has left the global community with policies too weak to stem emissions. The gap is consistently growing between what scientists say is necessary to avoid dangerous climate change and what politicians are willing to do. The world's climate policies, at their current level of ambition, are simply too weak to stem the onrushing tide of emissions[17].

At the December 2009 UN Climate Change Conference (COP 15) in Copenhagen, African countries, together with other developing countries went into the conference with a united front and wanted strong action that would support adaptation to climate change, with adequate funding assurance and technology transfer from industrialized countries. The continent also wanted an ambitious deal on the Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD) programme that would pay forest nations to reduce emissions from deforestation.

However, a number of issues punctured Africa's hopes. Apart from failing to get a fair deal, Africa also had difficulties maintaining a strong united front because of the widely varying needs of its different states in their different groupings. According to Chukwumerije Okereke[18]who attended the climate conference, there are Least Developed Countries (LDC) as well as OPEC countries within Africa and each of the two groupings believe that they would be affected differently by strong climate action and therefore approached the 2009 climate change negotiations with that understanding. Chukwumerije identified another dividing factor in Africa: regional groupings such as the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), in each of which Nigeria and South Africa play leading roles[19].

On the whole, Africa got very little from COP15 despite the efforts by its component states to overlook their differences and maintain a strong front. The Copenhagen Accord, the name given to the agreement reached at the end of climate change negotiations, was widely considered to be very weak with very little to offer to developing countries including African countries for a number of reasons.

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[17] The World and Climate Change: All Together Now, Tom Burke, December, 2007, http://www.opendemocracy.net/article/globalistion/global_deal/planetary_emergency

[18] Chukwumerije Okereke is an expert in International Climate Governance and a research fellow at the Smith School of Enterprise and the Environment, University of Oxford. He has written The Politics of Interstate Climate Negotiations - In Politics of Climate Change, co-authored by Maxwell Boykoff et al, November 2009- Routledge,

[19] Interview with Chukwumerije Okereke, Oxford, May 25, 2010, University of Oxford

Firstly, the Accord is not binding. Among other things, the Accord contains two different financial pledges by developed countries to fund adaptation in the vulnerable countries- 'fast track' US$30 billion for the period of 2010 to 2012 and another larger financial support package of $100 billion from 2020. However, no clear details was given on the modality for providing the two raft of funding, whether this would come in the form of existing aid, loans or grants or entirely new money.

Negotiations for funding also triggered the fury of the Pan African Climate Alliance (PACJA) against President Meles Zenawi of Ethiopia, Africa's chief negociator. PACJA, an African civil society coalition on climate change and sustainable development, accused Zenawi of abandoning the agreed African demand for 5% per cent of Annex 1 countries' GNP (about US$2 trillion) to address the climate crisis in favour of the pledges of $30 billion in short term financing and $100 billion in the long term. Mithika Mwenda, the coordinator of PACJA, said the position of African's chief negotiator was in stark contrast with position he was charged to defend.

The transparency of the Accord as well as the funding pledges by developed countries was questioned by many experts as it appears that the package had been well thought out ahead of the Copenhagen summit by only a few select member countries. By the end of April 2010, after another UN climate change conference, this time, in Bonn, it was still unclear how the funding would be raised. At the Bonn meeting, some governments argued that some of the money should be packaged as aid or worst still offered as a loan instead of being an obligation under the UNFCCC. Such an approach was likened by Oxfam International to "crashing your neighbour's car and then offering a loan to cover the damages". While the future still looks bleak on how to resolve the global climate challenge, Chukwumerije worries that the longer it takes to reach a fair climate regime, the worst the conditions in most vulnerable regions like Africa become.

One of the lessons of Copenhagen, according to Brahma Chellaney of the Center for Policy Research, New Delhi, is that climate change is a matter not only of science, but also of geopolitics. Without an improved geopolitical strategy, there can be no effective fight against climate change. "The climate-change agenda has become so politically driven that important actors have tagged onto it all sorts of competing interests, economic and otherwise. That should not have been allowed to happen, but it has, and there can be no way forward unless and until we confront that fact[20]."

2.3 The Environment, Today's Reality

From prolonged droughts to melting glacier to heavy flooding and unpredictable weather patterns, it can be argued that climate changes are already wrecking lives in Africa. A December 2009 estimate puts the number of people facing starvation across East Africa at 23 million as a result of successive failed rainy seasons.

Drought is one of the most serious hazards for Africa's agricultural sector in certain areas. In the Nigerian states of Borno, Kebbi, Kano, Nassarawa and Katsina, all in the country's core north, drops in

[20] Project Syndicate, April 28, 2010, www.projectsyndicate.org

crop yields have been reported in the last five years, as a result of irregular rainfall pattern[21]. By 2100, regions of arid and semi-arid land are expected to expand by 5-8 per cent, equivalent to 60-90 million hectares, resulting in agricultural losses of between 0.4 and 7 per cent of GDP in northern, western central and southern Africa[22].

A reduction in land suitable for rain-fed agriculture and crop production is also expected by the 2080s. In southern Africa, this could lead net crop revenues to drop by as much as 90 per cent. However, climate adaptation could reduce these effects. "This issue is so crucial that it requires full cooperation because if the North does not cooperate with the South it means all of us are going to be victims. All of us are going to be losers," Raila Odinga, the Kenyan Prime Minister, said in a Nairobi conference ahead of Copenhagen[23].

Basic scientific research on climate change

- Suggests a global temperature increase of 1^0 to 6°C (2^0 to 10°F) from 1990 to 2100, with warming in most of Africa expected to be even higher
- Shows that climate change will have major effects on precipitation, evapotranspiration, and runoff — and ultimately on Africa's already depleted water supply
- Predicts the net impacts of a doubling of atmospheric CO2 concentrations on Africa's agriculture as a whole are likely to be huge.
- Indicates climate change will lead to substantial sea-level rise along much of the coastline cities and towns in Africa, due mostly to thermal expansion of the oceans.

The very real possibility exists that warming over this century will jeopardize the integrity of many terrestrial ecosystems and will pose a threat to our Africa's biodiversity[24].

2.4 **Agriculture and Food Security**

Agriculture, according to the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), is the main employer, job creator, and export in most African countries. Historically, agriculture has driven economic performance in Africa, generating growth that has been shown to be at least twice as effective in reducing poverty as growth in other sectors. Investment in agricultural and rural development is therefore vital to food security and sustainable economic development[25].

The importance of rain-fed agriculture varies regionally, and is most significant in sub-Saharan Africa. Here, it accounts for about 96 per cent of total cropland[26]. In order to lift Africa out of poverty and ensure food security, a sustained effort is needed to develop Africa's agriculture and the associated

[21] ThisDay, December 12, 2009
[22] IPCC Climate Assessment Report, 2007
[23] Guardian Nigeria assessment of UNFCCC COP12, Nairobi 2006
[24] The Science of Climate Change, Tom Wigley National, Centre for Atmospheric Research, March 17,2005 http://www.ucar.edu/news/releases/2005/change.shtml
[25] Change Africa from Within, Kanayo Nwanze, April 2010
[26] Climate Mitigation in Africa, World Bank Institute, 2008

infrastructures – notably roads, telecommunication, and energy – needed to unleash agricultural potential. Strengthening agriculture is one of the best investments any African country can make.

At Copenhagen, Africa, through its chief negotiator, proposed the establishment of a start-up fund of $10 billion per annum for the three years of 2010–2012, to be used to address urgent adaptation and mitigation tasks, including forestry, and to prepare plans for more ambitious programmes in the future. The continent also demanded that 40 per cent of the start-up fund be earmarked for Africa[27].

On long-term finance, the continent's position is that a $50 billion annual fund for adaptation and mitigation is needed from 2013 and $100 billion annually from 2020. The African Union (AU) is of the opinion that no less than 50 per cent of the fund should be allocated for adaptation to vulnerable and poor countries and regions, such as Africa and the small island states.

2.5 Health and the Daily Living of Africans

Climate change presents a "global ethical challenge" as most of its health impacts will be felt in countries least able to face them and least responsible for causing them, say researchers. According to the World Health Organization estimate, human-induced climate change already causes 150,000 deaths a year[28].

The two main ways that climate change affects health are: directly, through heat waves and droughts; and indirectly, by increasing the spread of infectious diseases. About 300,000 people died in a prolonged drought in the Sahel during the 1970s. Until recently the scientific community attributed that drought to the severe loss of vegetation accompanying such factors as overgrazing and overpopulation; according to this model, the reduction in vegetation meant greater reflectivity of the Earth's surface and less moisture being returned to the atmosphere, with a net drying effect. But now, scientists think that drought was driven by changes in ocean temperatures.

"The critical challenge in terms of climate change in Africa is the way that multiple stressors--such as the spread of HIV/AIDS, the effects of economic globalization, the privatization of resources, and conflict--converge with climate change," says Siri Eriksen, a senior research fellow in sociology and human geography at the University of Oslo. "It is where several stressors reinforce each other that societies become vulnerable, and impacts of climate change can be particularly severe." She cites the example of the 2002 drought-triggered famine in southern Africa, which affected millions due partly to the population's coping capacity being weakened by HIV/AIDS[29].

With the latest statistic of 284,000 deaths of newborns annually, Nigeria ranks number one in the region in terms of child deaths. Malaria remains the single biggest cause of death in Africa. Among the children

[27] Africa Renewal, January 2010
[28] WHO world health report 2002
[29] Environmental Health Perspective, Volume 113, Number 8, 2005

that die before age 5, more than 70 per cent are killed by malaria[30]. South Africa has made significant gains in terms of addressing the issue of malaria but HIV/AIDS remains one of the highest killers of its citizens reversing whatever gains are made in tackling malaria. As gloomy as the health situation may already appear in Africa, scientists say the current experience may just be the tip of an iceberg compared to what the future holds if nothing is done to mitigate the rate of global warming.

According to Michael A. McGeehin of the U.S. Center for Disease Control and Prevention's Division of Environmental Hazards and Health Effects, "there are some health effects from climate change that we are comfortable in predicting. We will see an increase in the intensity, duration and frequency of heat waves around the world. We will see more severe precipitation events, both heavy rainfall and severe droughts.[31]"

Is Africa Really Vulnerable?

Multiple stresses make most of Africa highly vulnerable to environmental changes, and climate change and lack of resources for resistance to its effects will only compound this vulnerability. A 2009 study on climate change conducted by the Nairobi-based International Livestock Research Institute warns that hotter weather and shifting rainfall patterns could ruin as many as one million square kilometers of marginal farmlands in sub-Saharan Africa by 2050[32].

A similar study conducted by Prof. Kerry Cook of the Department of Geological Geosciences at the University of Texas, United States, expressed similar concern. "In Africa we have a special concern about abrupt climate change, because we know from the records of past climate that it's possible for climate to change abruptly in this region," noted Professor Cook[33].

Cook's climate models predict that by the end of the 21st century, Africans will experience more hardship due to increased temperatures, droughts, and flooding. If these climate changes come abruptly, she worries that the continent will be left with little time to mitigate the impact.

African Eco-systems are very fragile and cannot absorb the shocks that climate change introduces. Most countries have no insurance, very little bank lending, no storage facility, a dysfunctional agriculture extension system, poor market assess, poor quality inputs, and poorly coordinated research system. The continent mainly relies on rain-fed agriculture which depends absolutely on weather, according to Wale Adekunle, an agricultural scientist[34]. Poor implementation of policies on adaptation strategies and good governance remain the key challenges that make the already complicated climate change situation in the region even messier[35].

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[30] United Nation Children's Fund
[31] Science of Climate Change in Africa: Impacts and Adaptation, 2009, Gordon Conway, Imperial College, London
[32] VOA News, June 3, 2009
[33] Earth Sky magazine, January, 2010
[34] Wale Adekunle is an agriculturist with Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA) who was contacted through an online interview for his input.
[35] Interview with Gloria Ujor of the Nigerian Federal Ministry of Environment, Urban and Rural Development, May 23, 2010 by e-mail

Chapter Three

3.1 Newspaper Coverage of Climate Change in Nigeria and South Africa

The media in Africa - particularly in Nigeria and South Africa, the principal countries of focus in this study - has evolved significantly in the last 100 years. At the dawn of the 20th century, there was only one form of media available on the continent, that of newspapers and other printed material. The history of the Nigerian press dates back to 1859, when in Abeokuta, a city in the country's west, Henry Townsend, an Anglican missionary, released '*Iwe Iroyin fun Awon Ara Egba ati Yoruba*' (The Newspaper for the Egbas and Yorubas). It was a bilingual newspaper published both in Yoruba and in English. This newspaper spearheaded the attack on slavery.[36] As the country grew, so did the amount and variety of forms of media. Today, in addition to print, there are radio, television, and more recently, online media.

When it comes to public policy, the media, according to James Wilson (one of the founding fathers of the United States and a major force in drafting the US constitution), is supposed to function in three roles. These roles are those of "gatekeeper, scorekeeper, and watchdog for the government."[37] The gatekeeper role is that of introducing or keeping a topic in the national mindset. It is this duty which gives the press its influence in the conduct of human affairs. This influence, argues Martin Walker, a British journalist and author of *Powers of the Press*, "is the power, by right of publication, to impose a newspaper's values and concerns upon society's attention."[38]

The German sociologist and political scientist, Max Weber, defined power as "the possibility of imposing one's will upon the behavior of other persons." [39] If this is power, then surely the media has power. Its influence on every society, democratic or autocratic, is pervasive. For good or ill, the media, through its various channels, 'imposes' its decisions, views and opinions on the rest of society. It dictates public taste. It decides what the public should know and how and when it should know it. Perhaps, this is a narrow concept of power. Perhaps, there is something much more fundamental. Perhaps, this is rather the myth about power rather than power itself. Whatever the opinion, one fact seems obvious – information, written or spoken, is a power instrument for social dynamics.

For years, daily newspapers were the major source of information about government and public issues. Government officials paid heed to the news and opinions they found on their doorsteps each morning. To do otherwise was to risk appearing ill-informed or, worse yet, accused of being out of touch. Have those days gone? According to a Guardian Nigeria editorial, "even if it is ever going to happen it will take a long time".[40]

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[36] Newspapers as Instruments for Building Literate Communities, Emmanuel Babalola, 2002
[37] The Works of James Wilson. edited by Robert Green McCloskey, vol 1-2, the Belknap Press of Harvard University Press
[38] Newswatch magazine review of The Power of the Press, September 14, 1987
[39] Essays in sociology, Max Weber: , 2009 edition
[40] BusinessDay Nigeria, December 22, 2008.

How the media presents an issue goes a long way to determine how the public sees the issue and how it reacts to it. Recently climate change has become a topic of remarkable global importance particularly in the Western media. This can be found in all aspects of the media: movies (like *Inconvenient Truth*, the Oscar-winning documentary by Al Gore, former U.S Vice President)[41], books, blogs, topics talk radio, newspaper editorials and others.

It is common in Africa to link the changing climate to related weather events and blame the causes on activities that take place within the confines of the local environment like pollution or deforestation by tree felling for domestic fuel. According to work by Joseph Yaro of the University of Ghana[42], the word 'climate change' lacks a unifying definition in the African context. It is usually defined according to its different impacts. Local farmers define climate change as when the rain is too little or too much. Fishermen understand it as increasing high stormy weather and rough seas that disrupt fishing activities.

Globally, the media's role of setting the context and thereby shaping the way the public understands issues like those of climate change science, the politics of it, its impact and the need for action, dates as far back as the 1930s when it was mentioned in an article published in New York Times that "the earth must be inevitably changing its aspect and its climate"[43]. The coverage has since grown, particularly in the last two decades. But according to Allan Bell[44] there remains a considerable mismatch between the media reporting of this fundamentally scientific information, its impact and public understanding of what is communicated.

The quantity of climate change coverage in African media is disproportionate to level of threat it poses to the continent.[45] A report released by BBC World Service Trust aptly captured its findings on public understanding of climate change in Africa under the title 'Least responsible, most affected, least informed'.[46] "African citizens are at humanity's climate change frontline, yet they are also among the least informed about human-induced global climate change, its causes and its consequences," the report stated.

Broader public understanding of a range of climate change issues is required if Africa is to respond and adapt to climate change. Better public understanding will also be necessary to enable those most affected by climate change to communicate their perspectives and experiences to those most responsible for causing it. As the BBC report further stated, the information flow on climate change in Africa to date has principally been from the rest of the world to Africa. "It needs to be replaced by a sustained dialogue and two-way flow of information that empowers African citizens and ensures publics and politicians in countries mainly responsible for causing climate change are better informed of African realities and perspectives," it advises.

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[41] http://www.climatecrisis.net/
[42] Stakeholders on Climate Change: North & South Perspectives, Cere 21, Joseph Yaro; University of Ghana, 2009, Cere21 http://www.ceres21.org/media/UserMedia/Ceres21%20Stakeholders%20on%20Climate%20Change%2014%20des.pdf-
[43] Media Coverage of Climate Change: Current Trend, Strengths, Weakness M. T Boykoff and J.T Roberts 2008.
[44] Climate of Opinion: Public and Media Discourse on the Global Environment, Allen Bell, Discourse& Society , Vol. 5, 1994
[45] Media Coverage of Climate Change in Non-industrialized countries, Mike Shanahan, 2009 www.iied.org/pubs/pdfs/G02512.pdf
[46] BBC World Service Trust Public Briefing #3, October 2009

Indeed, more concerted, better organized and researched information and communication efforts will be essential if African citizens are to have the capacity and opportunity to respond effectively to impact of climate change. This chapter takes a look at how climate change is reported in four African newspapers, examining the quantity of coverage, what is reported and the factors that are shaping the trend of coverage.

3.2 Media Selection, Country Cases and Analytical Presentations

As mentioned in previous chapters, the main media examined in this study were those of the Nigeria and South Africa. They were chosen for two major reasons:

1) In addition to the large size and strength of their economies, both countries have the most robust media in Africa. 2) In the 2008 UNDP Human Development Report the two countries were identified among the countries that will be hard hit by the impact of climate change. Specifically, the report projects that Lagos and Cape Town, two very important coastal cities in these countries, could be inundated by 2080 if measures are not taken.

In Nigeria, the national newspapers selected were the Guardian and Vanguard, two widely circulating dailies. Both newspapers have their head offices in Lagos, with outstations in the six geopolitical zones of the country.

Vanguard is a national daily published in English. It has a circulation of 20,000 in Lagos and 12,000 copies in Abuja, the capital of Nigeria. Within the six geopolitical zones in Nigeria, the paper circulates 15,000 copies in the South-West, 25,000 South-South, 15,000 copies South-East, 18,000 copies North Central, 7,500 copies North-East and 7,500 copies North-West which amounts to total of 120,000 copies in all with a print run of 130,000 copies daily.[47] The Guardian, fondly described by some of its alumni as 'the flagship of modern newspaper journalism in Nigeria' circulates between 120,000 and 140,000 daily. The newspaper targets A and B class groups (high and middle income groups)

The Star, very much like The Guardian, covers the elites of South Africa, targeting upper and middle class income earners. Readership and circulation are 840,000 and 168,268 respectively. 32.5 per cent of the readers are within LSM 9 and LSM 10 (where LSM=living Standard Measure), 48 per cent are within LSM 6 to 8 and another 19.5 per cent readers fall within 1 to 5 LSM (LSM 10 and LSM 1 stands for highest and lowest Living standard respectively)[48]. The Mail & Guardian is a weekly newspaper. Its circulation ranges between 25,000 and 40,000 per edition. It also operates a good functional online version.

It should be noted here also, that, at the tail end of the analysis of Nigerian and South African media, are results from a separate half year content analysis using four Ghanaian newspapers- Daily Graphic, Daily Guide, The Ghanaian Times and Business & Financial Times (October 2008 to March 2009). These have been included to serve as a lens with which to capture typical coverage trends in a sub-Saharan African country with a smaller population and economy than Africa's giants, Nigeria and South Africa.

[47] - http://www.vanguardngr.com/about/
[48] http://www.thestar.co.za/index.php?fSectionId=2498

Period Selected

This study looked at the coverage during two separate first quarters- January to March 2009 and January to March 2010. As December 2009 was the month that the United Nations Copenhagen climate change conference was held in Copenhagen, the choice of these two periods was made, among other things, to compare these newspapers' reportage in the months ahead of the Copenhagen conference with their reportage in months immediately afterward.

Method of Data Collection

The research was based on a primary set of data generated from internet picks of online versions of the climate change stories in each of the newspapers and organized through content analysis. Only articles that discussed climate change and reflected that in their headlines were considered. Articles with focus on a other related environmental issues, such as, e-waste or the food crisis but which made a brief reference only to climate change, were not considered. There are some limitations associated with this research. Some of the newspapers' archives were not well structured, so there was the possibility that some articles that ought to have been included were omitted. Also, in both countries, and especially in Nigeria, more people tend to consume their news through television or radio hence broadcast media would have been more appropriate for the study. But collecting data on broadcast coverage would have been very difficult to track down given the limited time for completion of this study.

3.3 Results from Nigerian Media

Quantity of Coverage

At the end of first quarter of 2009, The Guardian had a total of 28 articles on climate change and 21 articles within the same period in 2010. Vanguard had 13 and 17 articles during the two periods respectively. In six months (i.e. the two quarters combined), The Guardian published a total of 49 articles and Vanguard 30 articles. The months with the largest coverage in The Guardian were in March 2009 (15 articles) and January 2010 (9 articles). For Vanguard, the month of March marked the peak of its coverage during the two quarters (7 and 11 articles respectively).

Both newspapers published an average of 64 pages per day, 3 articles per page (in The Guardian) and 58 pages per day, 5 articles per page (in Vanguard). So, out of 35,721 articles published by The Guardian, during the two 3-month period, only 0.14 per cent focused specifically on climate change and 0.05 per cent in Vanguard out of 50,220 articles. In six months, the two newspapers together published 79 climate change stories out of 86, 760 articles, and equivalent of 0.19 per cent (see table 1)

Table 1: **Breakdown of Number of Climate Change Stories in Nigerian and South African Media**

Name of Newspapers	Total average pages	Average number of stories per	Total average stories per	Total in a	Total in six months	Number of climate change	Total percentage climate

	published per day	page	day	month		stories published in six months	change coverage in six months
The Guardian	64	3	192	5,760	34, 560	49(28, 21)	0.14
Vanguard	58	5	290	8700	52, 200	30 (13,17)	0.05
Nigeria Total	113	8	383	1570	86,760	79	0.091
S.A Media							
M & G	50	3	150	600	3,600	85 (23, 63)	0.3
The Star	35	4	140	4200	25,200	21 (2, 19)	0.58
S.A. Total	85	7	190	4800	28,800	96	0.33

Chart 1: Quantity of Coverage in The Guardian & Vanguard

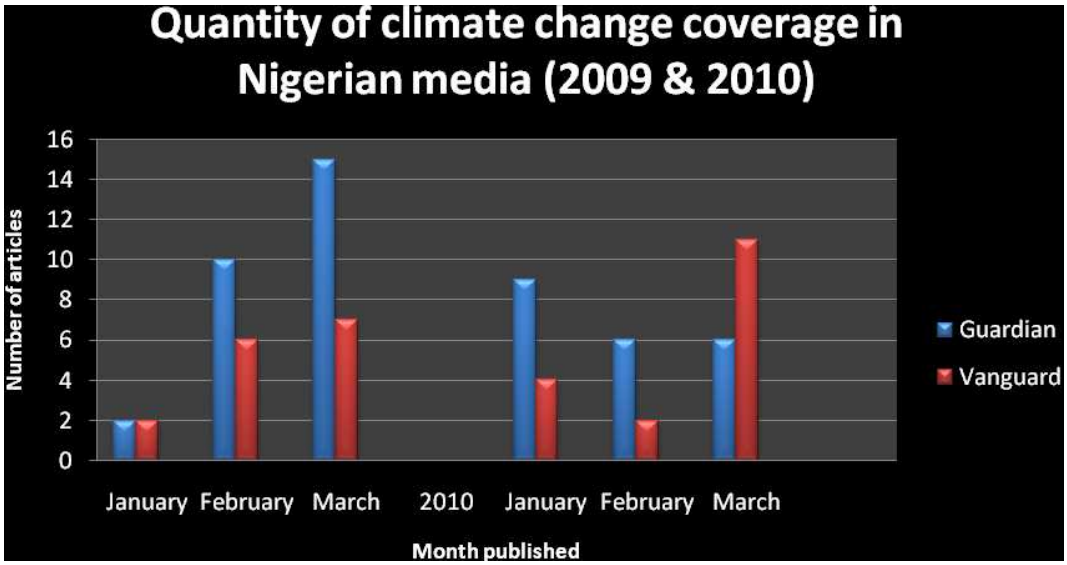
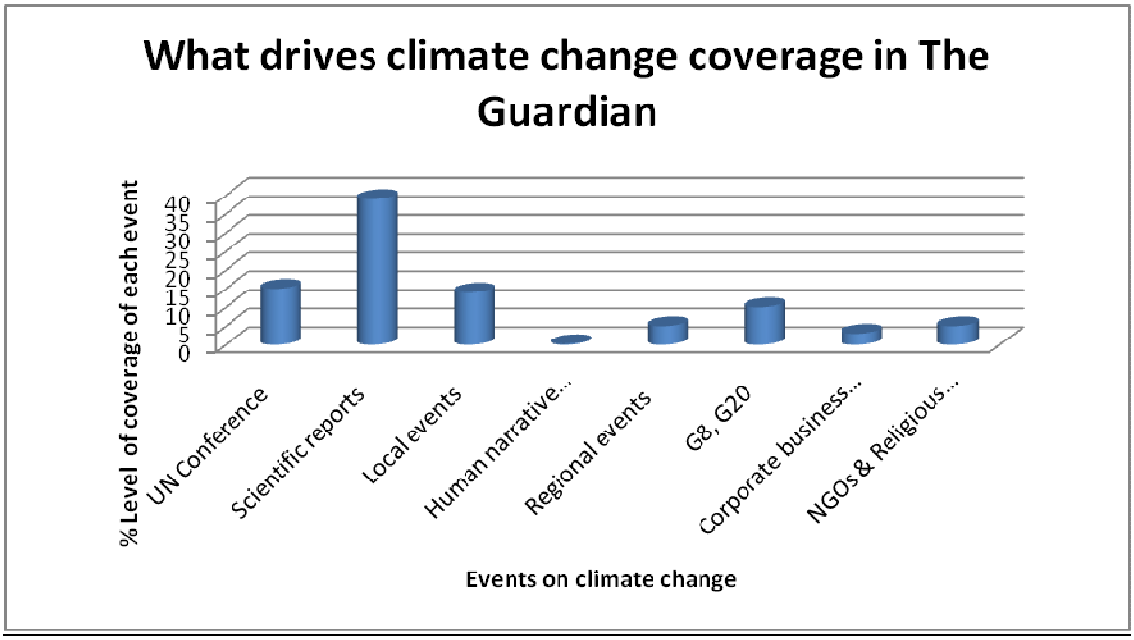
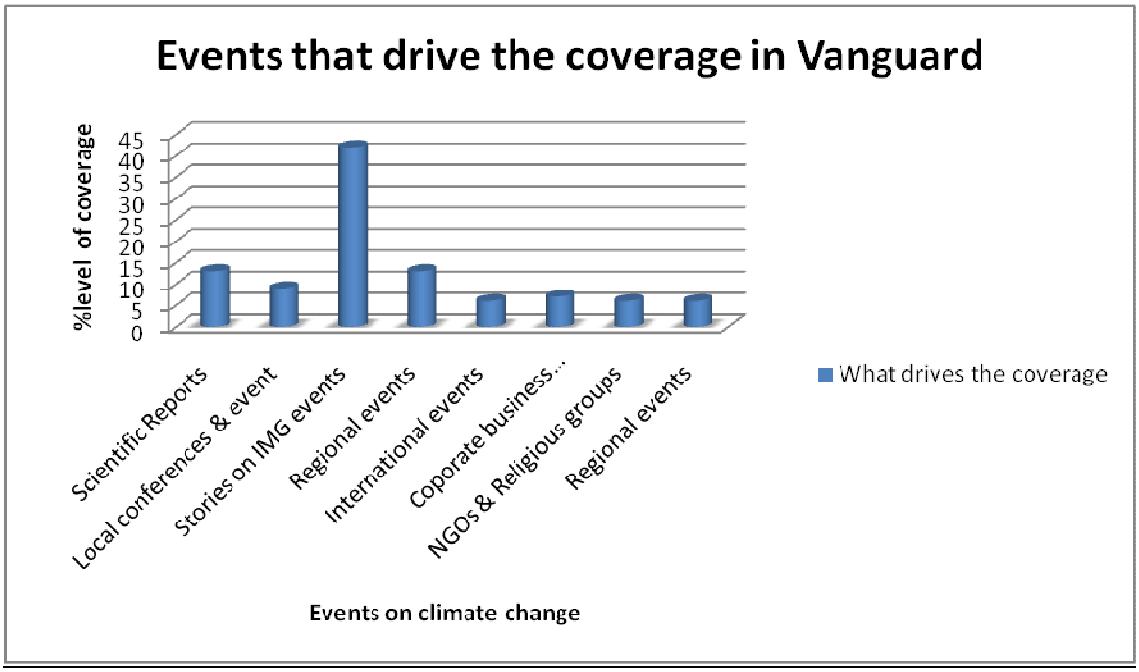


Chart 2: Topics Driving the Coverage of Climate Change in Nigerian Media



About 65 per cent of climate change articles in The Guardian dealt with international scenarios and gave little or no Nigerian context. The December 2009 United Nations conference accounted for 18 per cent of the total number of articles, whilst 21 per cent were based on scientific reports from various institutions like the Centre for International Climate and Environmental Research, Oslo (CICERO) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) like WWF. Other international events like G8 and a major UN Environmental Programme (UNEP) meeting in Kenya in February, 2009 were behind by 11 per cent. Event held by NGOs and religious groups lead to a 5 per cent growth in coverage, business organisations (5 per cent), and local events (8 per cent). Stories with a human angle accounted for only 2 per cent of the coverage. The Guardian also reported on these issues but took the majority of other climate change stories from the foreign media.

Chart 3: What drives coverage in Vanguard



Vanguard had fewer stories during the same period but coverage in the newspaper was shaped more by domestic events organised either by the Nigerian government or by Nigerian climate change campaign groups. About 42 per cent of articles were tied to such events. Narrative stories and interviews initiated by reporters accounted for 13 per cent of coverage, the United Nations conference at the Copenhagen (13 per cent), and scientific reports in climate change (9 per cent), and regional events (6 per cent). Other international conferences contributed to 7 per cent and 6 per cent of coverage respectively. Workshops by business organisations and NGOs also accounted for 6 per cent each (see Chart 2 and 3 above). Unlike The Guardian, coverage in Vanguard was largely dominated by domestically driven climate change events. This may provide the explanation why the curve of graphs for the coverage trend in these newspapers showed a different shape compared to that of South African newspapers (see Chart 4 below)

Chart 4: The Trend of Climate Change Coverage in Nigerian Media

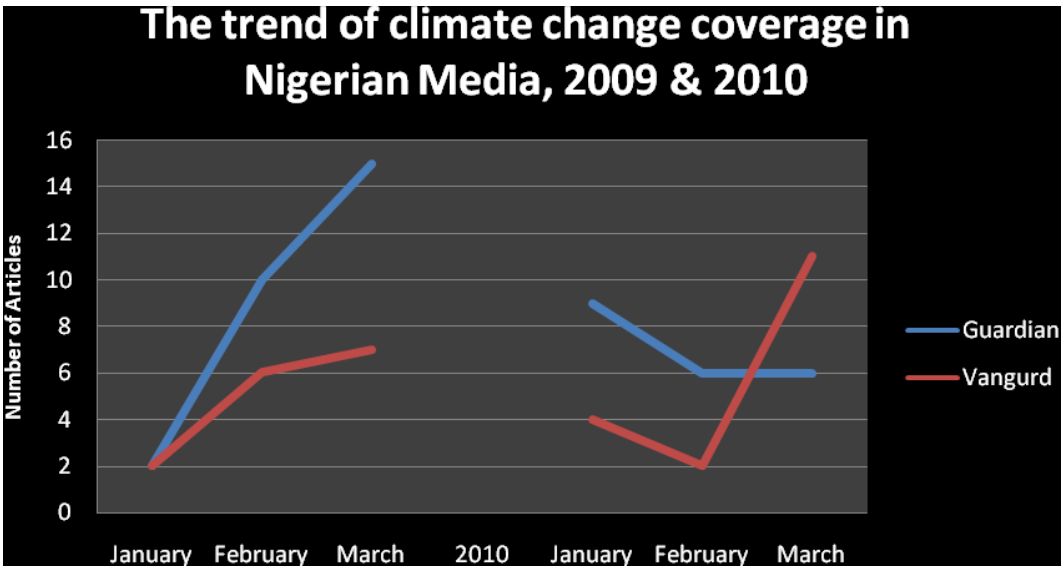
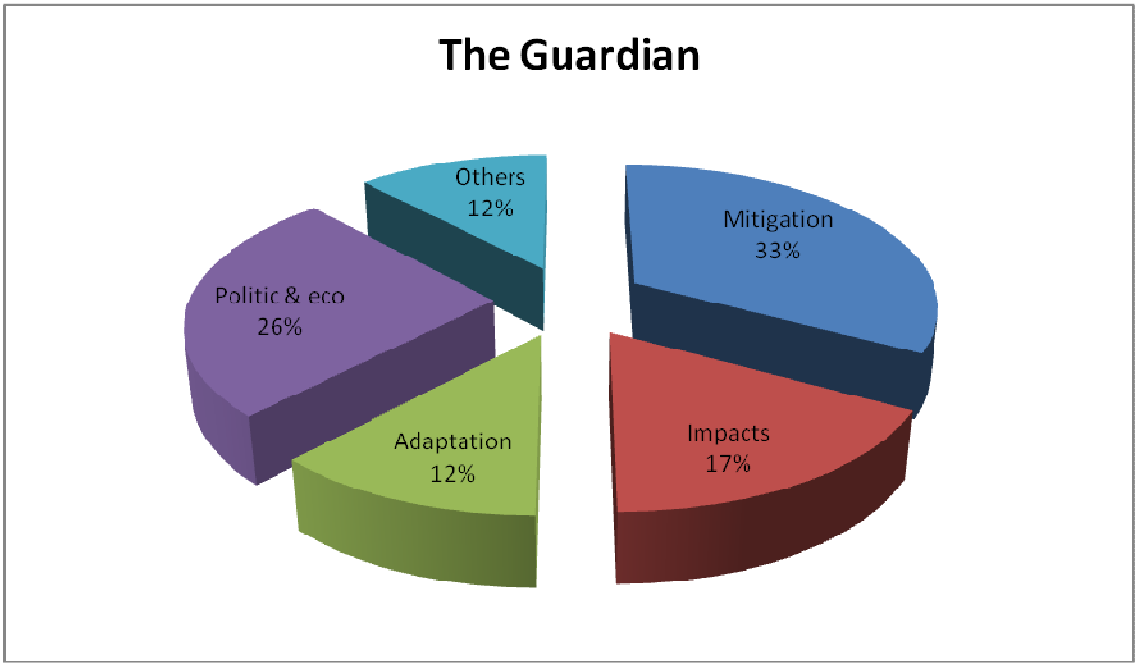
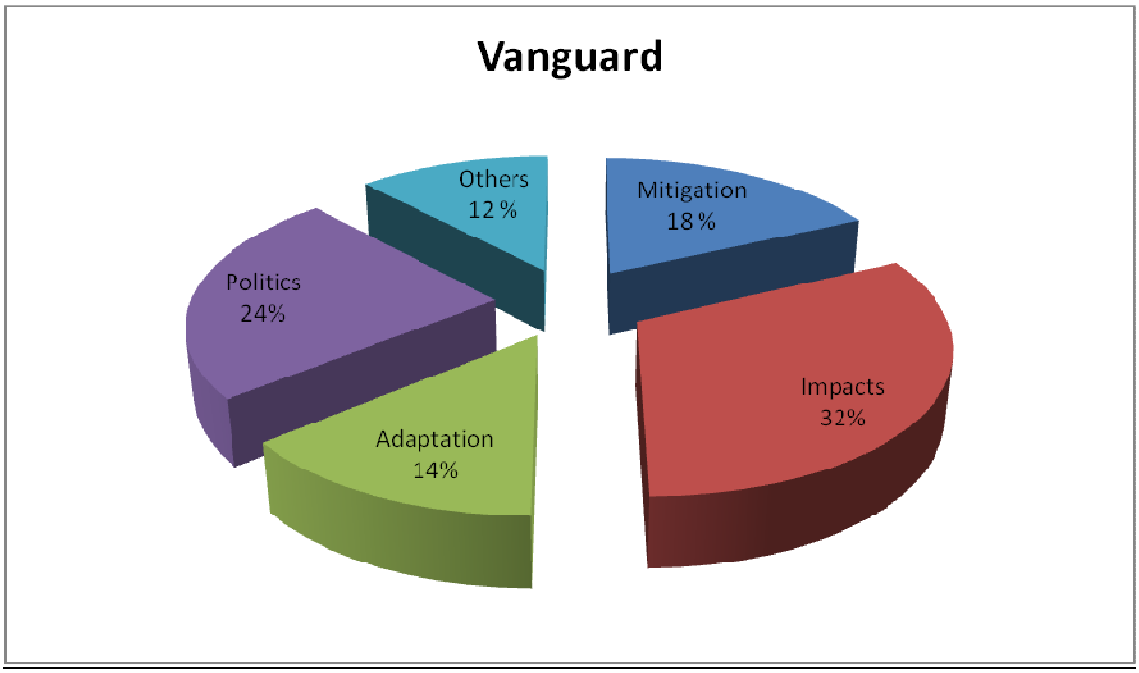


Chart 5: How Climate Change Articles were framed in Nigerian Media



Framing, according to Goffman [49], is the process whereby some parts of information about a subject of matter for a discourse get highlighted and made more memorable for the audience. Within the total 64 articles in the two Nigerian newspapers which were tied to various climate change reports, events and interests of the reporters most concentrated on politics and science. The science framing was usually highlighted in the stories about impacts and emission mitigation. In The Guardian 39 per cent of the articles framed climate change as a political issue while 34 per cent and 17 per cent concentrated on emissions reduction and impacts respectively. The adaptation context was quite minimal constituting less than 10 per cent of what was covered.



In Vanguard, as mentioned earlier, because of the greater attention given to the local issues, stories revolving around the local impacts of a changing climate accounted for 32 per cent of the articles; 18 per cent and 14 per cent centered on mitigation and adaptation respectively. Politics still got significant attention in terms of framing, accounting for 24 per cent. In both newspapers, negligible attention was given to controversies around the leaked emails from the University of East Anglia (UEA) and reports of the IPCC (the so- called 'Climategate' and 'Himalayagate.

3.4 Results from the South African Media

The two newspapers from South Africa published 0.88 per cent of the 28,800stories in the six months period analysed about climate change. In 2009, the quantity of climate change coverage in The Star newspaper stood at 7, 8, and 8 articles for January, February and March respectively. In 2010, during the same months, the coverage stood at 19, 18 and 27 articles. In all, this represents a near doubling in the number of articles compared to first quarter of 2009. As anticipated, the coverage in this period was

[49]The Framing Analysis, Goffman E. (1974)

dominated by stories from Copenhagen. The Mail & Guardian had only 2 articles (in March) in 2009. But in 2010, boosted by Cop15, the newspaper recorded a total of 19 articles on climate change which is a huge increase against 2009, though still a very low coverage overall (see Chart 7 below).

Chart 6: The Quantity of Climate Change Coverage in South Africa Media, January to March

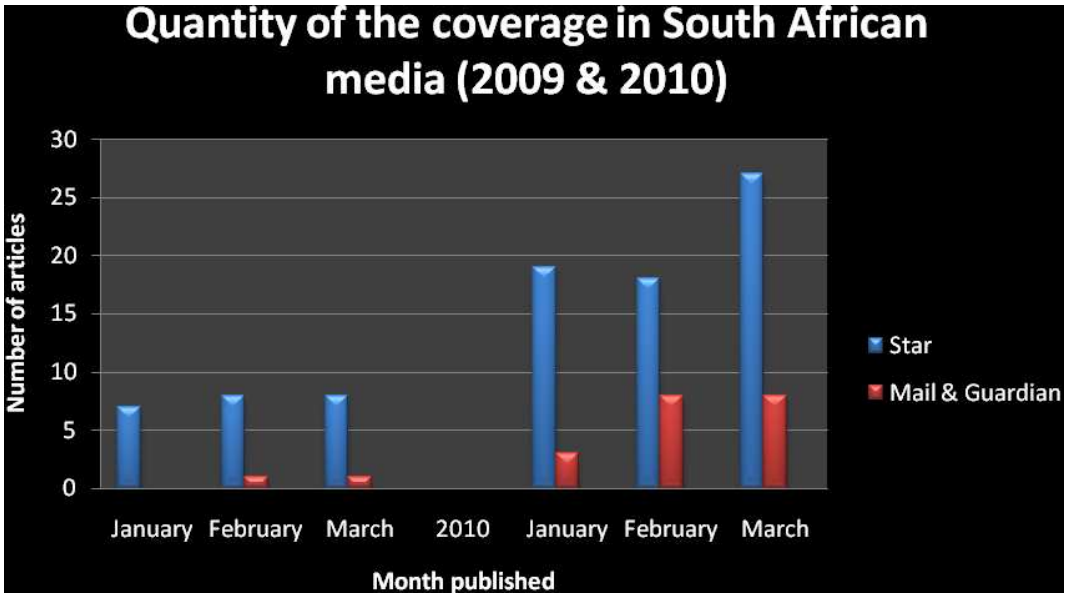
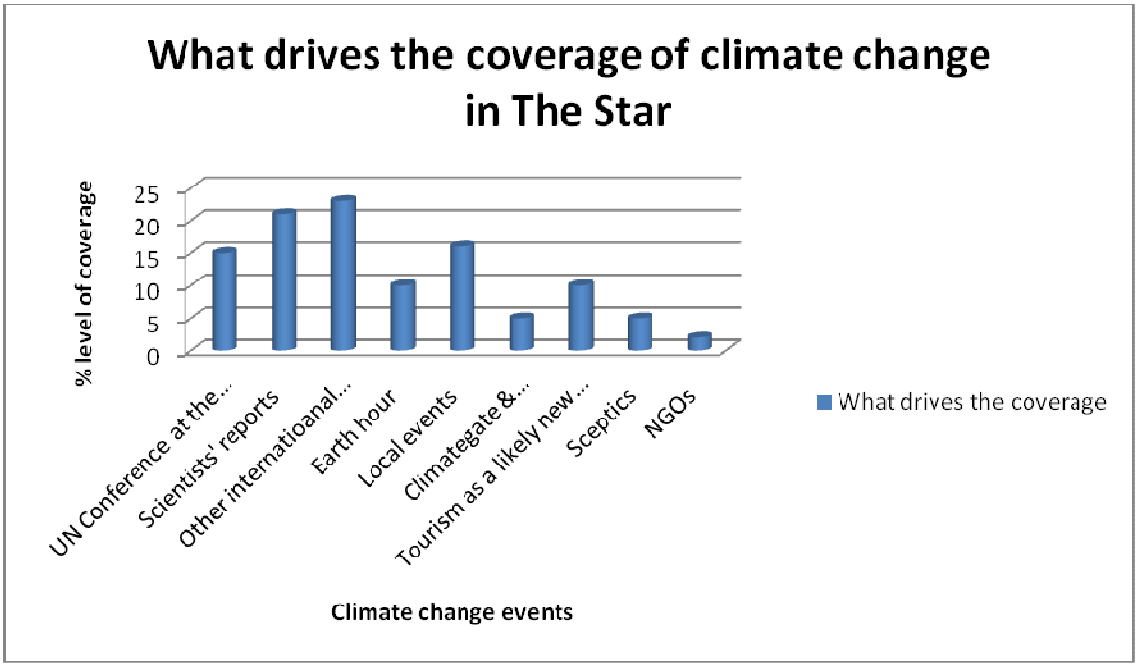
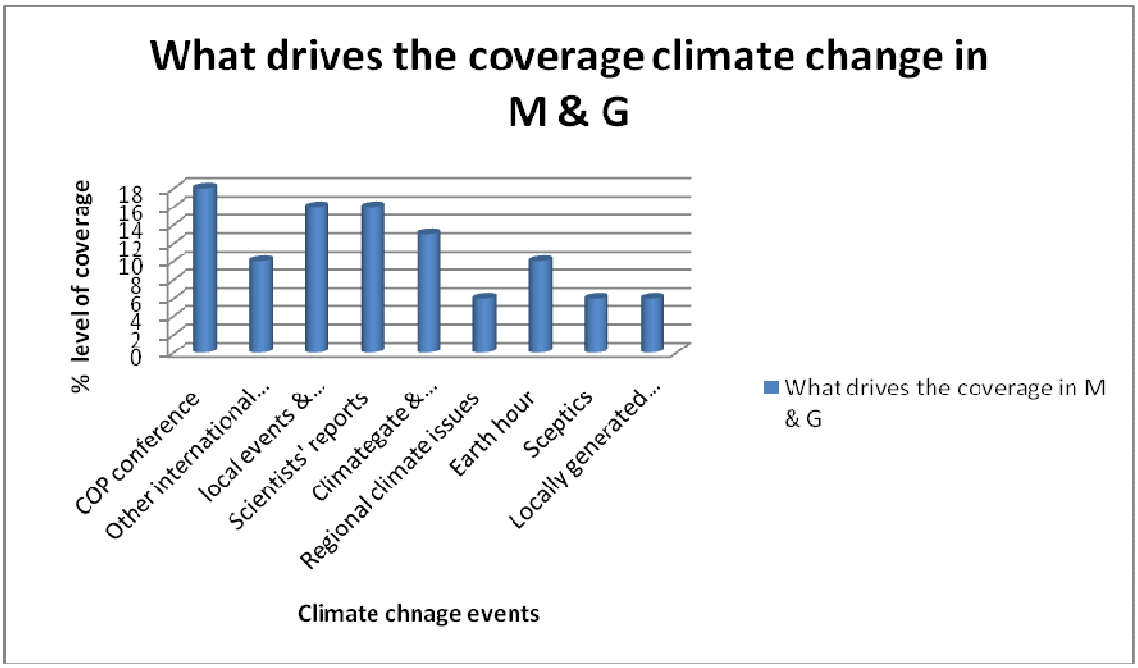


Chart 7: Sources of Climate Change Stories in South African Media.

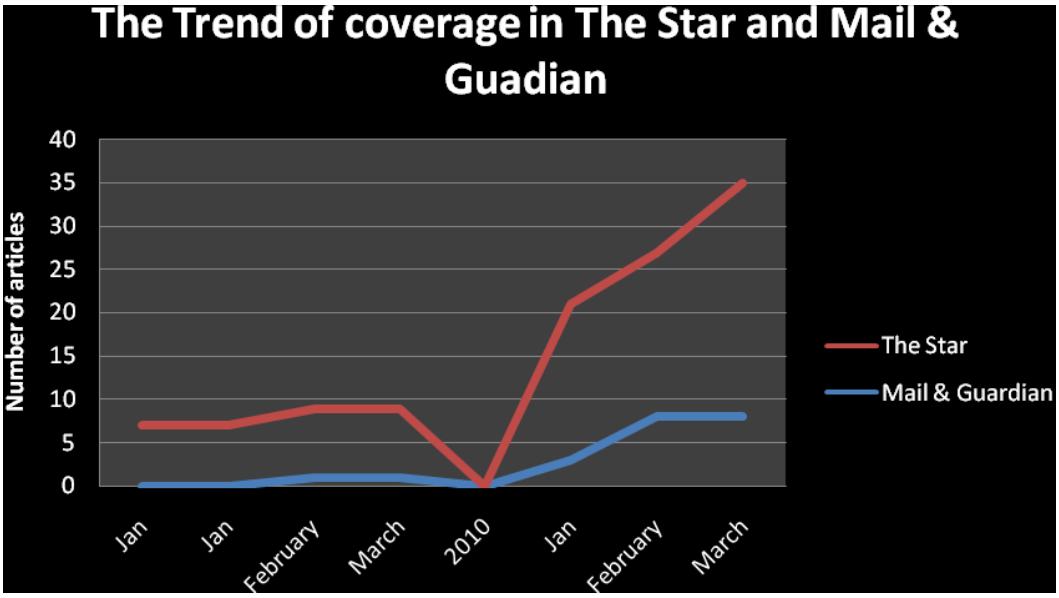


Similar to the sources of the climate change articles in the Mail & Guardian, the majority of the articles in The Star were tied to the international events and taken mainly from the Reuters news agency. Many such stories were about climate change impacts outside South Africa e.g in Australia. 23 per cent of the reportage was about international conferences other than the COP15 conference. Scientists' reports accounted for 21 per cent, the December 2009 UN conference determined 15 per cent of the articles. Earth Hour (a global event organized by World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) and is held on last Saturday of March annually, accounted for 10 per cent. The Himalayan glacier controversy and the furor over leaked IPCC emails from the University of East Anglia were covered more in The Star. It contributed to a 5 per cent increase in the number of climate change articles. Speculation about the South African Minister of Environment, Marthinus van Schalkwyk, becoming the successor to the retiring UN climate change chief, Yvo de Boer, made climate change a regular item in headlines in March 2010, with stories about the challenges that come with the job dominating news reports, rather than the issues of climate change.



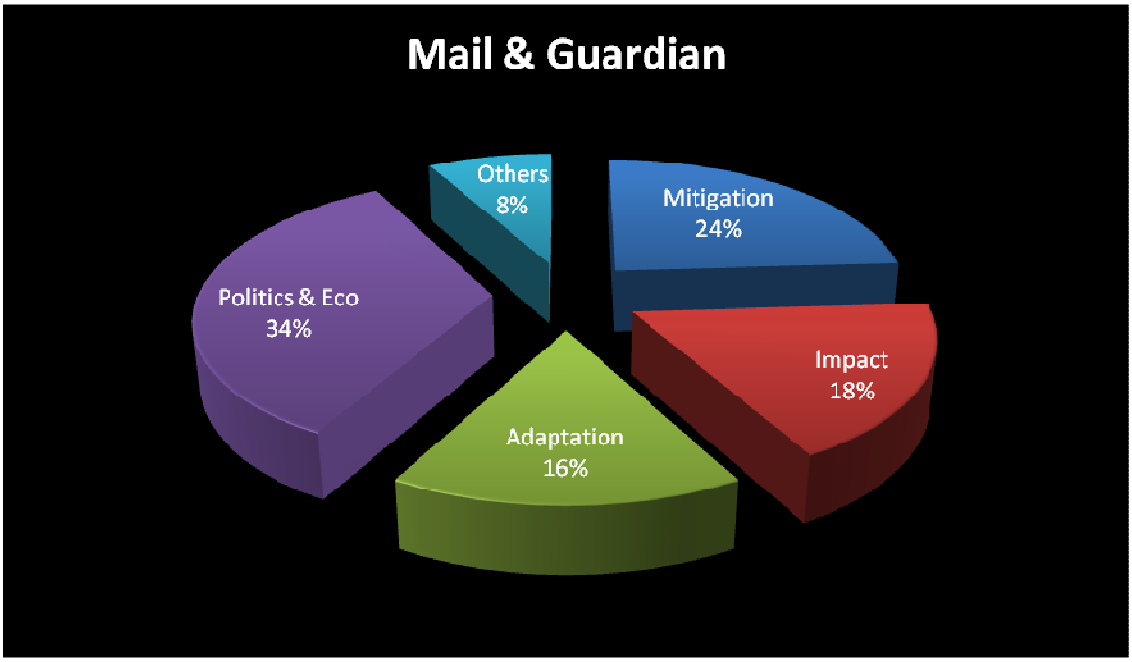
More than 70 per cent of the Mail & Guardian articles were tied to international events with neither a South African nor an African background. 18 per cent of the stories were generated from the Copenhagen conference, 10 per cent were from other international events. Scientists' reports drove the 16 per cent of the coverage, 'Climategate' and 'Himalayagate' 16 per cent of the coverage, Earth Hour 10 per cent. Regional climate issues like stories on Egypt's Nile Delta attracted 6 per cent of coverage, local events-16 per cent. Stories and interviews originated by reporters accounted for 6 per cent of the coverage.

Chart 8: The trend of Coverage in South Africa



Media

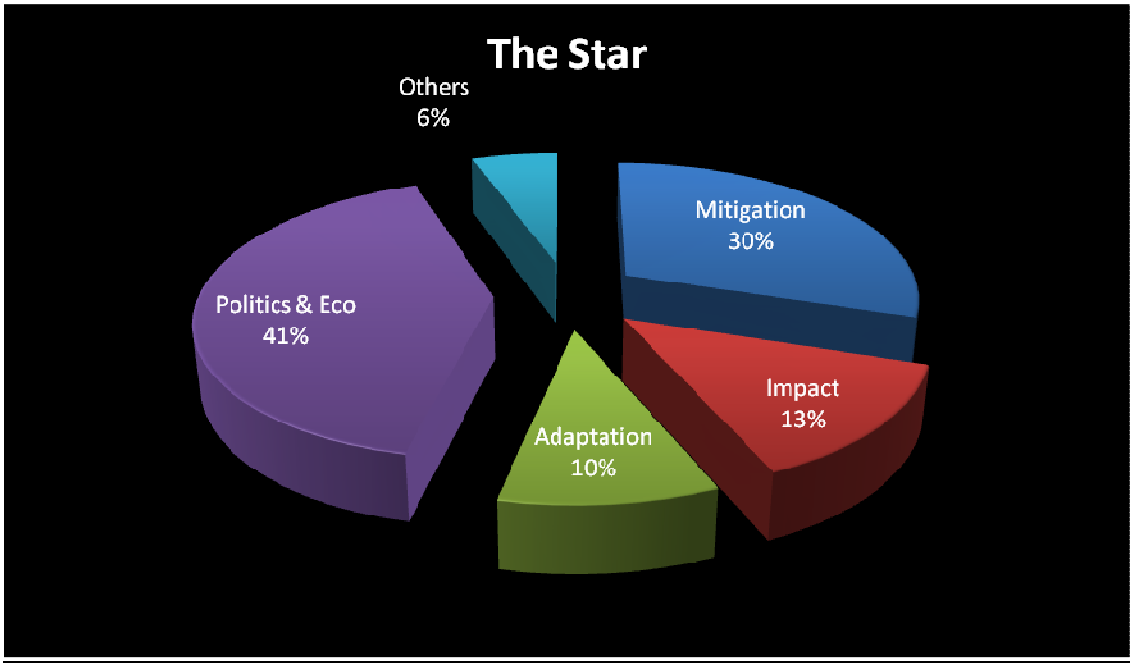
Chart 9: How Climate Change Stories were framed in Mail & Guardian



In the Mail & Guardian, 34 per cent of the stories presented climate change as a political issue, whilst mitigation accounted for 24 per cent. Reports on adaptation mechanisms represented 16 per cent of

the coverage, while those on the impact of climate change 18 per cent. 8 per cent of the articles placed more emphasis on other aspects of climate change (see chart 10 above)

Chart 10: How Climate Change Stories Were Framed in The Star



In The Star, 41 per cent and 30 per cent of the stores focused on politics and mitigation respectively. 13 per cent centered on impact. Adaptation received marginal attention- only 10 per cent while 6 per cent centered on other issues such as gender (see chart 11 above)

In terms of the quantity of coverage, the two South African newspapers studied recorded a higher number of articles than their Nigerian counterparts with the Star being the leader in this respect. Overall, the extent of coverage in both countries was very low. The news framing was virtually uniform in all the newspapers, making political and scientific aspects of climate change more salient in the information contained in all the articles. There was a marginal increase in the quantity of coverage in the first quarter of 2010 compared to that 2009 but the relevance of what is communicated to an average rural farmer who is most vulnerable to impact of global warming was barely mentioned.

The framing of the news sometimes depicts the issue of climate change as a concern only for the elites and those in government. The dominance of international framing in the newspapers used here, with little human angle to the stories, reflects similar results in studies done in this area by other researchers. One example is work by Carolyn Marie Cramer on the South African media[50]. Cramer examined media coverage of climate change from January 2005 to December 2005 in three daily newspapers from the Western region of South Africa (the Cape Times, the Cape Argus and Die Burger). The three newspapers

[50]Framing of Climate Change in Three Daily Newspapers in the Western Cape Province of South Africa, Carolyn Marie Cramer, March 2008.

published 507 articles in all. Out of the 507 stories, more than 45 per cent had no South African or African context. Human interest stories accounted for only 10 per cent of the articles.

3.5 Results from the Ghanaian Media

This study also looked at four Ghanaian newspapers (Daily Graphic, Daily Guide, Ghanaian Times and Business & Financial Times), and their coverage of climate change from October 1, 2008 to March 31, 2009. The period under review represents the six months after the UNFCCC meeting in Accra in August 2008. The Daily Graphic and Ghanaian Times, the two dailies with the largest circulation, published only 3 articles each on climate change during the period, while Daily Guide, the third most read newspaper in the country, had only one article on the subject.

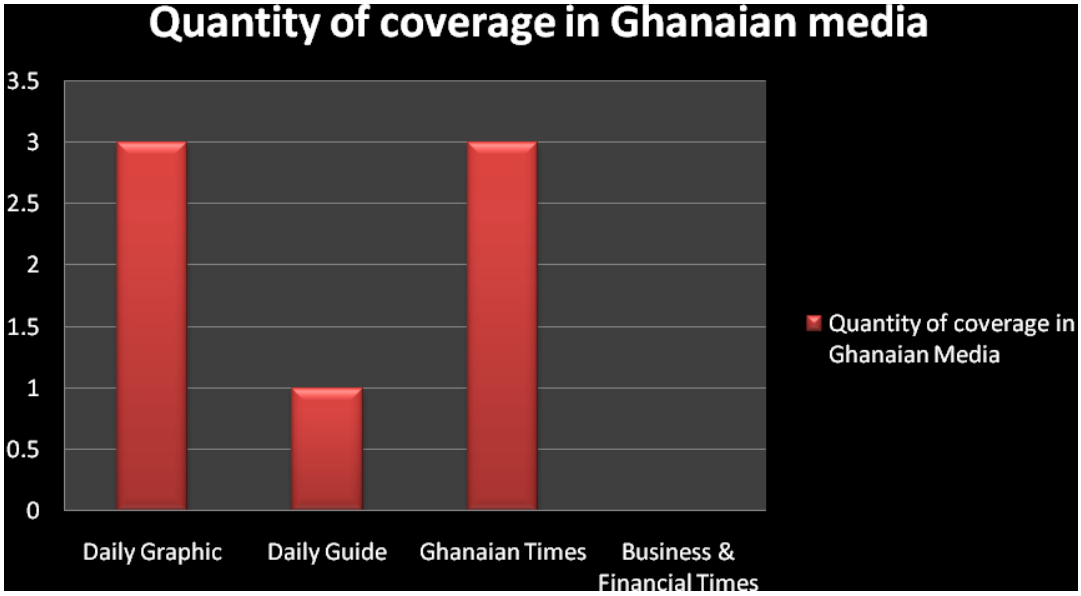
The Business and Financial Times had nothing at all on the issue throughout the period. The framing of what was covered and the context of the stories were similar to those of Nigeria and South Africa. At periods when there were no UN climate change conference, or any other international events on climate change, coverage was basically non-existent, a situation indicative of a wider trend of coverage in the media of most African countries. (See Table 2 and Chart 11 below)

Table 2: Content Analysis of Climate Change Coverage in Ghanaian Newspapers

(October 1, 2008 - March 31, 2009)

Name of Newspapers	Total average pages Published per day	Average number of stories per page	Total average stories per day	Total in six months	Number of climate change stories published in six months	Total Percentage coverage in six months
Daily Graphic	60	3	180	32,400	3	0.009
Daily Guide	24	3	72	12,960	1	0.007
Ghanaian Times	32	3	96	17,280	3	0.017
Business & Financial Times (weekly)	35	3	96	6,300	0	0
Over all Total	144	12	432	68,940	7	0.01

Chart 11: The Extent of Coverage in Ghanaian Media



Climate change is a serious problem for Africa and many observers expect that it should command commensurate coverage in the media. Findings from this research have shown otherwise. The use of foreign reports, mostly from international wire services, even though it has helped to somewhat keep climate change in the news in most African countries, has meant that African media owners and managers cared little about developing the capacity of their own reporters to cover the subject. The majority of the stories were press releases initially produced by other organizations and circulated. This is what Audrey (2009) refers to as reutilized stories[51].

Improving media coverage of climate change issues is critically important for tackling the challenges of climate change. Stories on politics, corruption, entertainment and business sell newspapers better and so naturally command the lead in news placements. But there should be more to the lack of priority attached to climate change stories in African newspapers than consideration of the financial return from stories. There is also a question of capacity in terms of training for journalists and the lack of visibility in media of African scientists and researchers working on climate change. These issues will be addressed in the next chapter.

[51] See Audrey Gadzekpo, 2009- ESCAPING CLIMATE CHANGE Climate Change in the Media: North & South Perspectives, Cere21-page 18, 19 http://www.ceres21.org/Webcontrol/UploadedDocuments/Ceres21%20Escaping%20Climate%20Change.pdf

Chapter Four

4.1 Upholding trust

There is something universal about the concept of press freedom as a desideratum for journalism. On December 14, 1946, the General Assembly of the United Nations affirmed "freedom of information is a fundamental human right, as well as the touchstone of all freedoms to which the United Nations is consecrated." Similarly, as the Commonwealth Press Union acknowledged in its 1965 Conference in London, "the freedom of the press is not a special privilege of newspapers but derives from the fundamental right of every person to have full and free access to the facts in all matters that directly or indirectly concern him, and from his equal right to express and publish his opinion there on; and to hear and read opinion of others[52]."

What follows from the above is a universal recognition that an unfettered press makes for a healthy society. While this might seem not to have a direct correlation with the issue of climate change, it is important to state that the struggle before the media institutions in Africa is the battle to free itself from the grip of the vocal minority and seek to protect the greater good of the majority. Journalism is an unwritten and unspoken covenant between its practitioners and the public. It is a public trust which should not be betrayed or abused. Journalism should be constantly in search of the greatest good for the greatest number of people.

Since it is a trust held on behalf of people, it often plays the role of a catalyst for social change and the orderly progress of society. It constantly seeks a new and better deal for society. It is unrelenting in canvassing for the enthronement of a state of general wellbeing of the people. According to Ladi Lawal, former chairman of the Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ) Lagos Council, "journalists ought to be unrepentantly committed to the attainment of quality of life and living for people, demanding at every turn a fair deal to all concerned in societal development.[53]"

It is against this background that the important role of the African media in providing the right amount of information on climate change, a phenomenon that has the capacity to redraw the geographical map of the continent, ought not to be compromised. Here again the statement of the BBC World Service Trust report, is pertinent: "African citizens are at humanity's climate change frontline, yet they are also among the least informed about human-induced climate change, its causes and its consequences. Broader public understanding of a range of climate change issues is required if Africa is to respond and adapt to climate change.[54]"

4.2 Research Findings

[52] Redefining Journalism: A Journalist's view, Babatope Segun 2002
[53] Redefining Journalism in a Democracy; publication by Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ), 2002
[54] BBC World Service Trust Public Briefing #3, October 2009

Generally, the findings of this study have showed that, Nigerian and South African media coverage of climate change, though not particularly outstanding, compares favorably with the negligible coverage in Ghanaian's media in the last quarter of 2008 and first quarter of 2009. In Ghana there seems to have been a marginal growth in coverage in contrast to the earlier study by Audrey Gadzekpo in first half of 2008 (January to June) which showed virtually nothing on stories focused specifically on climate change. By way of contrast, in many industrialized countries the first 'post-Copenhagen' quarter of 2010 was marked by a very noticeable downturn in the level of coverage of climate change[55].

This was also a time when seasoned media professionals in the West found climate change an extremely sensitive a topic to comment on with predictable attacks from climate change deniers. The Western media have been accused by some observers of contributing significantly to the uproar around the leaked e-mails from the University of East Anglia's Climate Research Unit.

The effect of the release of the hacked e-mails has been to created considerable confusion around the science of climate change made it controversial for the Western media to cover. At one point, James Randerson[56], the environment editor of the (UK) Guardian, called 'climate gate' a "distraction too difficult to deal with" because of the way the issue led to almost total switch-off from the real issues of climate change and hampered journalists from being multi-dimensional in their reports . In February 2010, a poll by Populus, commissioned by the BBC, showed that the proportion of British people who think climate change is a fallacy stood at 25 per cent, a 10 per cent increase since the same poll was conducted in November 2009, while the number of those who said climate change was real dropped to 75 per cent from 83 per cent. According to Richard Black, BBC News environment correspondent, 'climategate' and the weak outcome of Copenhagen convention dampened an earlier plan by some climate change journalists to do a lot of background stories on the topic after the Copenhagen conference and changed the way editors of most western media wanted their reporters to cover the topic[57].

For Africa, the controversies about climate change science in the Western media due to 'Climategate' and 'Himalayagate' could be said to have made only a very slight impact on climate change coverage in the continent's media during the period this survey was carried. This is a somewhat surprising finding given that the bulk of stories on climate change in the African media are usually taken straight from international wire services. On the other hand, the little attention these issues received in many African media can also be said to have accounted for, to some extent, the absence of a major decrease in coverage in Nigeria and South Africa in the immediate post-Copenhagen period.

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[55] 2004-2010 World Newspaper Coverage of climate Change or Global Warming, 2010, Max Boykoff and Maria Mansfield

[56] James Randerson is an editor of environmentguardian.co.uk and one of the panelists in a discussion titled: Climate Change- The Forgotten Crisis, organized by the Frontline Club in association with the Global Campaign for Climate Action and Communications in London on 18 May 2010

[57] Richard Black, BBC environment correspondent was commenting as one of the panelists in the Frontline Club discussion.

The trend of coverage in both countries also slightly differed from the results of the research by Boykoff and Mansfield [58] in which Africa is included. This disparity could be basically because; while the period of survey here is shorter and focused on more populist newspapers (the Mail & Guardian and The Star in South Africa, and The Guardian and Vanguard in Nigeria, Boykoff and Mansfield included two specialised papers (BusinessDay and Financial Mail, both financial newspapers in South Africa) over a longer period of time.

The massive climate change campaign mounted around the globe as a build-up to the 2009 Copenhagen conference helped to move climate change up the ladder of most media agenda, including in Africa. The near total absence of climate change contrarians in African media is also an opportunity that allows African journalists to concentrate on telling the story without distractions. This is one reason why there is a glimmer of hope that it may be possible to increase the presence of climate change stories in the African media in the future.

However, the biggest challenge has remained the wide disconnect between what is communicated to the public about climate change and the true reality about the impact of the changing climate in the region. The use of foreign reports, mostly from foreign wire services, even though this has helped to keep climate change in the news in most African countries, has meant that little of the real situation on ground is reported. According to Audrey Gadzekpo, the lack of original local stories - stories giving an African context, stories with a strong human angle - further suggests that the African media acts as cheerleaders and amplifiers of messages from others, rather than as independent actors who set the agenda and promote debate on the issue[59].

4.3 Poor reportage in Africa

There is a virtual consensus from the South African and Nigerian editors interviewed that climate change by its nature is not a front page subject except when -there is a strong local political and economic dimension to it, which is rarely the case. For instance, Chinedum Aniegbunam, the assistant environment editor of The Guardian (in Nigeria), believes that climate change has become a strong development issue but has been overshadowed by other pressing issues which are more visible to the public.

Lack of understanding of the issues in climate change makes it difficult for most African journalists to do a good job of reporting it. Understaffed newsrooms constitute a big challenge too. None of the newspapers included in this study has more than two reporters on the environment. In the UK, the Guardian has up to six reporters assigned to handle environment issues including climate change.

[58] Max Boykoff and Maria Mansfield, ibid.

[59] Audrey Gadzekpo, 2009- ESCAPING CLIMATE CHANGE Climate Change in the Media: North & South Perspectives, Cere21- page 22, http://www.ceres21.org/Webcontrol/UploadedDocuments/Ceres21%20Escaping%20Climate%20Change.pdf

For most local journalists climate change is a complex science story that cannot be properly accommodated in their daily routine because of the deadline culture of their newsroom. "We don't understand the science of it the way scientists do", says Nehemia Owusu Achiawa, senior correspondent with the Daily Graphic, Ghana[60]. According to Owusu, the nature of climate change makes it difficult for people to identify with the story. Climate change is like a "cancer, a slow poison, it takes the eyes of experts and the informed to see it", he said and in this sense, it does not make economic sense to spend resources and time dealing with an issue that is a hard sell, except in exceptional cases when there is global event like UN conferences and workshops.

Though communicating climate change comes with a peculiar challenge globally due to the difficulty in untying the mystery of uncertainty surrounding the issue, journalists in Africa seem to face an even more complicated challenge due to the development issues the region is already grappling with.

Herman and Chomsky[61] identified ownership, profit orientation, advertising as a primary income source, reliance of the media on information provided by experts funded by agents of power, as essential ingredients or sets of news filters that narrow the range of issues that can become subject for 'big news' in the global media. The power of these political economic factors or macro-scale factors, as they are called by Boykoff and Robert[62], influences what gets covered in the media. The way and manner these factors play out differ in each country, shaped by countries' cultural and political backgrounds.

The turbulent political history of many African countries strongly influences the type of priority given to environmental issues such as climate change. As pointed out in the BBC World Service Trust's Policy Briefing, the beginning of the last two decades was when concerns about the changing climate started filtering into most Western media in a major way and began to attract wide public debate. But paramount in the agenda of South African media then was political freedom and the fight for fair treatment.

Apartheid lasted for 50 years (1948-1994) in South Africa and caused deep-seated lawlessness, high crime rates and loss of education. So, over a decade after the apartheid government was abolished, these social issues still command the lead in news placements. In addition, cultural complexity is very common in all African countries. For example, 11 languages are officially recognized in South Africa. And so to do justice to climate change communication in a society like that of South Africa, journalists will have to find an appropriate, concise, simple and straightforward way of presenting climate change coverage in each of the 11 languages. The need for balance and variety for different types of readers is also in higher demand. According to the Deputy Editor of The Star, Jovial Rantao, "The media publishes or broadcasts news and features to meet the needs of their readers, listeners and viewers. In executing

[60] Interview with Nehemia Owusu at The Graphic's head office, Ogbobloshie, Ghana, November, 2009
[61] Manufacturing Consent: Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky: Pantheon Books 1988
[62] Maxwell T. Boykoff and J. Timmons Roberts: Media Coverage of Climate Change: Current Trends, Strengths, Weaknesses, 2007/2008 page 11

this delicate task, editors have to strike a balance, on a daily basis. And this means that the environment will be part of the mix and not the sole content in the newspapers or bulletins"[63].

Nigeria too has diverse languages. But in addition, from 1960 when it gained independence until today, its government has changed hands 14 times: three times from soldiers to civilians, three times as the army handed it back to them, three times as civilians succeeded civilians and five times as the military wrested power from its own class in palace coups or through death by natural and unnatural causes[64]. According to the World Bank, Nigeria has within the last three decades earned over $500 billion from oil revenues but as a result of misappropriation, more than 70 per cent of Nigerians still live on less than US$1 a day. This power struggle, lack of accountability, and weak institutional structure are more visible and pressing issues in most African countries and dominate news stories in its media. But experts repeatedly warn about the danger of relegating climate change to the background in African media when all other aspects of development in the continent hinge on the issue[65].

4.4 Summary and Conclusion

Apart from being a disposable beat, climate change is a relatively new subject in many African media. Less than 30 per cent of climate change journalists interviewed during the course of this research have reported the subject for more than three years. Of these 60 per cent identified a lack of training and time pressures as major reasons why the topic has rarely generated coverage commensurate to its significance for the continent's future prosperity. Very few African journalists or their editors have a good understanding of the science that is at the heart of many climate change stories.

Lack of resources is yet another restriction. Most journalists on the continent are largely under-resourced. Some are not paid for months. In such instances, priorities swing from development issues to those reports that provide immediate rewards for the reporter. There is also the question of priority given to the subject by editors and owners of newspapers. Climate change stories are considered a hard-sell compared to politics and entertainment even though the concept has so many dimensions that could excite public interest as much as traditional politics and corruption stories.

Climate change includes the physical sciences, economics, the environmental and social issues, and of course the domestic and foreign policy dimensions. Many would argue that this is more than enough to make front-page stories. However, because of the general apathy on the part of the gatekeepers, not many African journalists want to commit to personal development in their understanding and reportage of the issue. There is limited local expertise on the subject but how many local African scientists do

[63] Interview with Jovial Rantao, 6 July 2010

[64] Nigeria: Ten Years of Democracy - Special Lecture on Government in Africa, University of Oxford, General Muhammadu Buhari May 10, 2010

[65] United Nations Development Programme, Human Development Report, 2008. In the introductory section of Chapter One, it was pointed out that the impact of climate change is already slowing down the progress towards achieving Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and deepening inequality within and between countries, in Africa and globally.

research on climate change? The bulk of the publications on the subject even in African newspapers and magazines are culled from foreign institutions and researchers. The problem is that much-needed local angles to the issue are often left out.

It is not a completely gloomy picture. Some African media organizations in collaboration with development partners, individual reporters and interest groups have done comparatively well in making climate change a major discourse. But the media can do a lot more in shaping public understanding of climate change and public policies. The poor perception of the subject by both editors and journalists can be reshaped through training and workshops. The gap between science and journalism needs be narrowed. The scientific community should work with journalism schools and professional societies to ensure that journalism training programmes include some grounding in what science is, and particularly climate change. Science and journalism are not alien cultures. They are built on the same foundation: the belief that conclusions require evidence.

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