

Speaker

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[Climate issues and How to be effective in climate change communication?The Example of Vietnam]

The weather in Vietnam in recent years has been increasingly unstable. The complicated developments of droughts, floods, landslides and storms causing serious effects to its economy which most depends on agriculture. In particular, due to the long coastline, Vietnam is considered as one of the most countries being affected by climate change.

In Vietnam, it is difficult not to be tempted to compare the COVID-19 crisis with the recent series of tropical storms that had ravaged the country's central region.

Nguyen Do Hoa Mi

The pandemic had killed so far 35 people while the storms caused over 250 casualties and affected directly about 1.5 million people during a few weeks in October and early November 2020. More than 100 reported dead or missing after two storms destroy homes and leave trail of destruction.

The economic losses associated with the pandemic containment measures had been substantial in 2020, leading to a projected 4.2 percent drop in GDP growth compared to the economic trajectory COVID-19. Meanwhile, the economic damages from the storms had been estimated in the range of USD 1.3 billion or approximately 0.5 percent of GDP.

The burden of climate change will be mainly on future generations, but the costs of inaction are already visible today. Beyond the damages associated with bigger and more frequent storms, the high level of air pollution in Vietnam's major cities is already causing the death of approximately 60,000 people per year according to the World Health Organization. The Mekong delta is an ecological disaster because of rising ocean waters and the exhaustion of cultivable land, leading to productivity losses in agriculture. I could easily multiply those examples, but my main message is that the current costs associated with environmental damages and climate changes can reach, when taken altogether, as much as 6-7 percentage points of GDP in Vietnam.

The latest edition of the Vietnam's Taking Stock report by the World Bank argues that the successful management of the COVID-19 crisis can inspire Vietnam to tackle better its environmental and climate challenges.

In the light of the ongoing climate crisis and the rise of climate strikes all over the globe, the contribution of journalists to informing public discourse should not be overlooked.

Nguyen Do Hoa Mi

Climate journalism fulfills a unique role in covering one of – if not the most – pressing issues of our time. It includes coverage of the latest environmental predictions and scientific data, as well as reporting from climate summits and conventions, thereby contributing to the public debate on climate crisis. Thus, climate journalists, serving as public watch dogs, join forces with environmental scientists and activists on raising awareness, advocating for solutions, and finding ways of overcoming the climate crisis.

It is imperative to fight the growing climate crisis with a multi-angle approach. The Climate journalism is particularly important in environmental policy-making. Climate journalists do well in their role not only to inform the public, but also to evoke effective environmental protection policies. Through the climate journalism, policy makers grasp hot issues that are of concern to the public, collect people's opinions to adjust policies appropriately.

In the world in general and in Vietnam in particular, the number of journalists working on climate change prevention is growing strongly. They have created a global network to support and help each other improve the efficiency of reporting and propaganda. In 2009, more than 1,000 television stations around the world endorsed the Paris Declaration on Broadcasting and Combat Climate Change by pledging to promote reporting on the topic and pay more attention to the voices of affected group.

In recent years, thanks to media, climate change has become the top concern of the Europeans, overcoming the subject of terrorism. According to the 2019 survey of the European Parliament, climate change has become the focus that set the stage for more effective policies to combat global warming and encourage businesses to take responsibility on the environmental consequence.

Nguyen Do Hoa Mi

An aware society is the best weapon against climate change. And this is where environmental journalists play a crucial role; they inform and they raise awareness among people. Sustainability, biodiversity and renewable energies are some of the topics covered by professionals that are increasingly more essential.

Sadly, people – and environmental journalism – sometimes place much more value on occasional catastrophic events than on phenomena that are so slow that they are almost imperceptible. Studies and reports on the environment prepared by the institutions are a great source of information. However, the problem here is that the media are limited in their sources of information about climate change. Therefore, media desk is in need of cooperation with climate authorities, experts and scientists. It is also necessary to build up a multidimensional relationship or establish climate change communication networks between journalists and the mentioned factors to access information and give the right direction on related issues.

It is the responsibility of climate journalists to know that climate journalism is a rights-based form of journalism. The climate crisis affects the most vulnerable first as well as the hardest. The ones most affected by this crisis are the ones who contribute the least to it, whereas the ones who have the most capacity to avoid the catastrophic results of the crisis are the ones who are most contributing to it in the first place. This also means, however, that the latter group are the ones with the most capacity to also fight against this crisis. Therefore, good and responsible storytelling is key to presenting the topic in a way that makes the public both aware and empowered to act.