



STATE OF ENVIRONMENTAL JOURNALISM IN AFRICA

2025 Report

Findings from a survey of journalists
across 47 African countries



Africa 21 Association
2025

For African journalism
committed to the planet

State of environmental journalism in Africa

2025 Study Report

Africa 21 Association

Findings from a survey of journalists across 47 African countries

Author: Julien Chambolle

Date: 4 July 2026

Location: Geneva

© Africa 21 Association – 2025

All rights reserved.

Reproduction of this publication, in whole or in part, is authorized provided that the source is acknowledged.

The photographs featured in this publication were taken during field missions conducted by the Africa 21 Association as part of its **African Journalists' Network on Sustainable Development and Climate Change** programme throughout 2025.

The views and opinions expressed in this report are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Africa 21 Association.

Table of Contents

Foreword	6
Who are the journalists covering sustainable development?	8
A Survey Covering a Large Part of the African Continent	8
Professional Status of Respondents	9
Working conditions.....	12
Economic Situation of Journalists.....	14
A profession facing severe economic fragility	14
Journalists Proposing Solutions to Strengthen Media Economic Viability	20
Journalists also proposing solutions to improve their own professional situation	23
The right to practice journalism in Africa	27
The main rights recognized for journalists	27
A relatively comprehensive African legal framework	28
The State of Journalists' Rights and Press Freedom in 2025	28
A Concerning Assessment of Press Freedom	33
A Profession Undergoing Profound Change	34
Trends Identified by Journalists.....	34
The journalist of tomorrow: more versatile, more technological, and more resilient	38
The Use of Social Media in Journalistic Work.....	39
New Tools and New Journalistic Practices.....	41
Special Theme of the 2025 Edition: Combating Disinformation in Africa	44
Media and Information Literacy: A Major Democratic Challenge	44
Misinformation, Disinformation, and Malinformation: Three Distinct Concepts.....	45
A Good Understanding of Malinformation, but Uneven Mastery of the Concepts	46
Tools and Methods for Detecting Fake News	51
Training in media and information literacy: an issue widely recognized by journalists	54
Coverage of Environmental Issues in African Media	58
Barometer of Environmental Coverage in African Media.....	58
Barriers to the Production of Environmental Content in African Media	60
...But also barriers to publishing content	65
Some topics remain difficult to cover.....	68
A Need for Continuous Training	72
Journalistic areas to explore in 2026	75
Recommendations.....	83
Stay Connected & Support Our Work.....	88
Partners: Join Us!.....	88



Foreword

Since 2019, the **Africa 21 Association** has been supporting the development of a pan-African network of journalists specializing in sustainable development and climate change. This initiative was born out of a simple observation: as environmental challenges continue to grow in importance, African journalists need better access to expertise, reliable sources of information, specialized training, and the international forums where public policies are shaped.

With this objective in mind, Africa 21 established the **African Journalists' Network on Sustainable Development and Climate Change** (for more information, please visit www.africa21.org). The network seeks to strengthen the professional capacities of media practitioners, encourage the exchange of experiences among African journalists, and improve the quality of media coverage of sustainable development and environmental issues across the continent.

Today, the network brings together more than **1,100 journalists** from **47 African countries**. Its members represent a wide range of media outlets, including print newspapers, radio, television, news agencies, and digital media platforms. Nearly **40%** of its members are women, and the network includes both staff journalists and freelance media professionals.

This report is the **second edition of the State of Environmental Journalism in Africa**. Following the first survey conducted in 2024, this edition is based on responses collected from **171 journalists** in 2025. The increased number of participants enhances the significance of the

findings presented in this report and provides a more comprehensive understanding of the changes shaping the profession.

Beyond providing a snapshot of environmental journalism across Africa, this report pursues two main objectives: to gain a deeper understanding of the professional realities faced by journalists and to identify the key challenges they are likely to encounter in the years ahead. The findings are also intended to inform the work of organizations, institutions, and development partners committed to strengthening media capacity and promoting high-quality environmental journalism across the African continent.



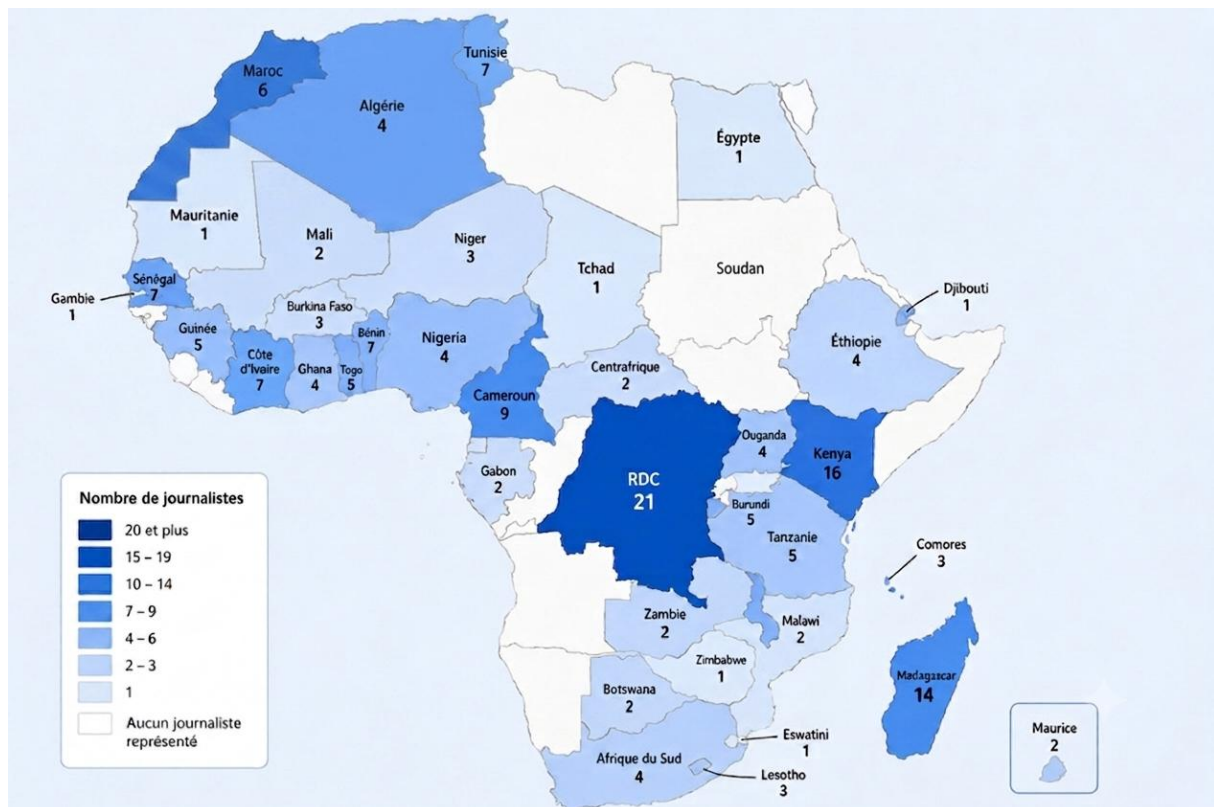
Who are the journalists covering sustainable development?

Before examining the survey findings, it is useful to present the profile of the journalists who participated in the study. Their geographical, professional, and editorial diversity is one of the survey's greatest strengths and provides essential context for interpreting the findings presented in the following pages.

A total of 171 journalists from 37 African countries took part in this second edition of the survey. To ensure that participants could express themselves freely, all responses were collected anonymously.

A Survey Covering a Large Part of the African Continent

The survey gathered responses from journalists working across all regions of the African continent. This broad geographic representation provides a particularly comprehensive picture of the state of environmental journalism in Africa, although some countries are naturally more strongly represented than others, reflecting the current composition of the network.



This distribution demonstrates **Africa 21's** ability to engage journalists working in a wide range of political, economic, and media environments across the continent. It is one of the survey's key strengths and significantly enhances the depth and relevance of the analysis presented in this report.

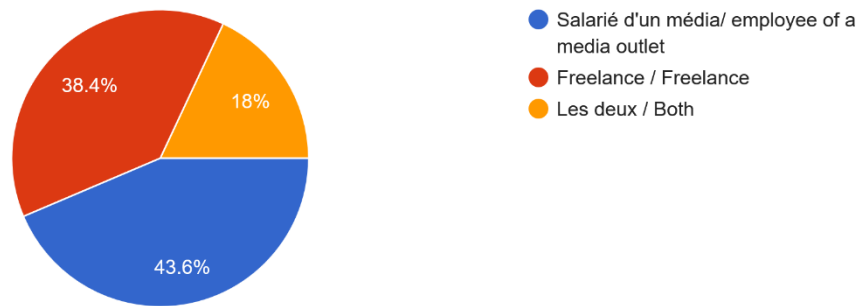
By region, the respondents were distributed as follows:

- **North Africa:** 19 respondents;
- **West Africa:** 48 respondents;
- **Central Africa:** 35 respondents;
- **East Africa:** 54 respondents;
- **Southern Africa:** 15 respondents.

The survey also reflects a relatively diverse gender composition, with **65 women (38%)** and **106 men (62%)** participating in the study.

Professional Status of Respondents

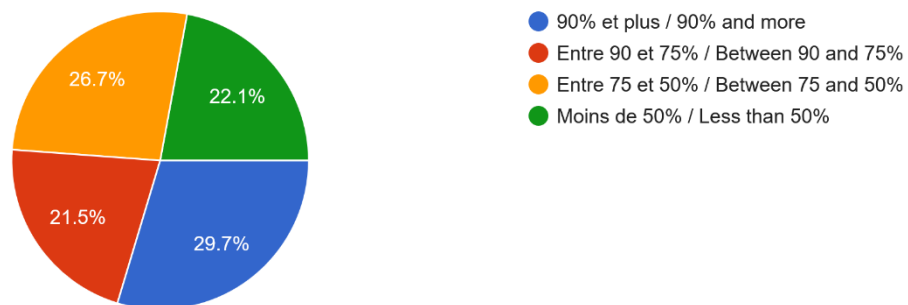
The journalists who participated in the survey work under a variety of professional arrangements, reflecting the diversity of journalism practice across Africa.



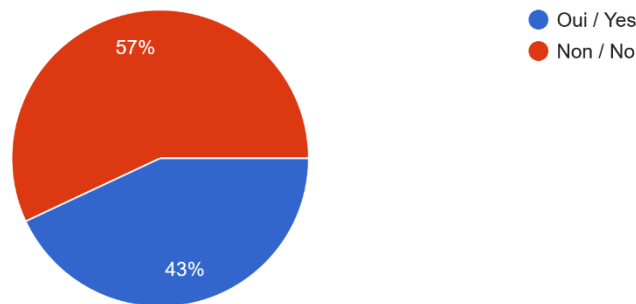
For reference, an independent journalist (or freelancer) works on a self-employed basis. They may collaborate with several media outlets and define, with each one, the terms of their assignments and compensation.

By contrast, an employed journalist works for a media organization, while still being able, when permitted by their contract, to undertake occasional collaborations with other editorial teams. These additional activities often serve as a way to diversify their income, but also to broaden their professional experience and increase their visibility.

The situations are particularly varied among journalists who work for several employers. In response to the question, “What proportion of your workload is accounted for by your main employer?”, 51.2% of respondents stated that their main employer represents at least 75% of their working time. This finding shows that, even when collaborating with several media outlets, the majority still retain a primary employer or client.



Another significant finding from the survey concerns the practice of an additional professional activity. Nearly 43% of the journalists surveyed report that they work in another profession, a particularly high proportion.



This choice may be voluntary, particularly when these activities are considered complementary to the journalism profession, such as teaching, training, or communication consulting. For others, it is primarily a response to economic constraints and serves as a way of supplementing sometimes insufficient income.

Among the 88 journalists who specified the nature of this second activity, the responses reveal a wide range of situations. The most frequently mentioned activities include teaching and training, event moderation or hosting, services directly related to journalism (photography, video production, content creation), as well as communication assignments for organizations. Other respondents also reported activities in agriculture and livestock farming, the restaurant industry, retail, wellness professions, or professional roles within associations.

Journalists working across all media platforms

The survey also reflects a wide diversity of media outlets. All major types of media are represented among the respondents:

- 36.6% work in print media;
- 34.9% work for a radio station;
- 10.5% work for a news agency;
- 42.4% work for an online news website;
- 12.2% work for a YouTube channel or podcast.

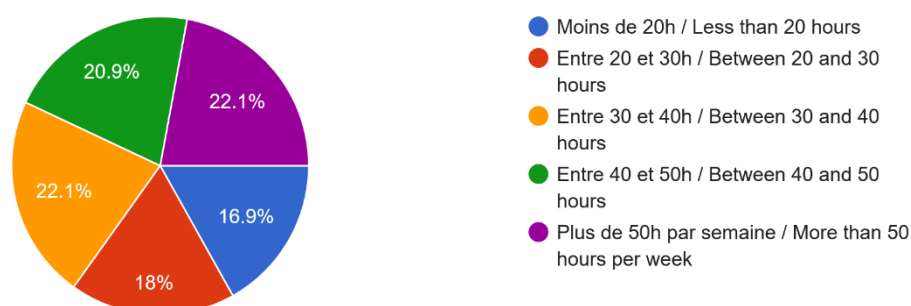
These categories are not mutually exclusive. Many journalists work across several platforms simultaneously, for example combining print and digital media, radio and podcasts, or photography, video production, and online content creation. This versatility highlights the evolution of journalistic practices and the way professionals are adapting to new patterns of information consumption.

Working conditions

Beyond their professional profile, journalists were asked about several aspects of their working conditions. The survey particularly focused on their working hours, their involvement in professional or community organizations, as well as their participation in organizations advocating for journalists' rights and environmental issues. These elements provide a better understanding of the context in which they practice their profession.

Working hours

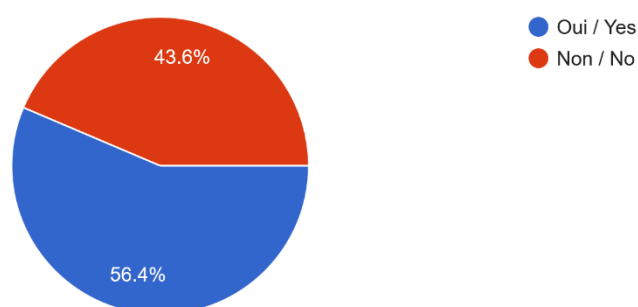
Respondents were asked to estimate their average weekly working hours.



This first indicator provides insight into the workload of the journalists surveyed. It also helps to better interpret some of the responses provided later in the survey, particularly those relating to the versatility of journalistic professions, the combination of multiple professional activities, and the use of digital tools.

Membership in a journalists' union

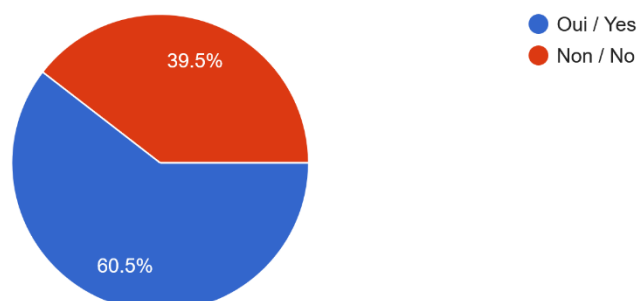
The survey also examined the level of involvement of journalists in a professional union.



Membership in a trade union is an interesting indicator of the level of professional organization within the field. It can also facilitate access to training opportunities, legal assistance, or mechanisms for protecting journalists' rights.

Membership in an organization dedicated to defending journalists' rights

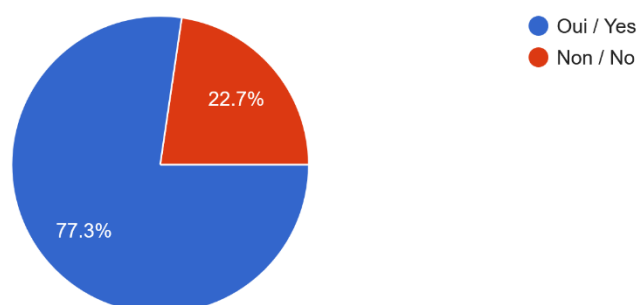
Journalists were also asked about their involvement in an organization dedicated to defending press freedom and journalists' rights.



These organizations play an important role in supporting professionals facing pressure, threats, or infringements on their freedom to practice their trade. The results provide insight into the extent to which respondents are integrated into these support networks.

Commitment to the environment

Finally, the survey sought to determine whether the journalists were members of an association dedicated to environmental protection or the promotion of sustainable development.



This indicator provides additional insight into the profile of the respondents. In particular, it makes it possible to distinguish between journalists who cover these themes as part of their professional activity and those who are also personally engaged in organizations working for the environment or sustainable development.



Economic Situation of Journalists

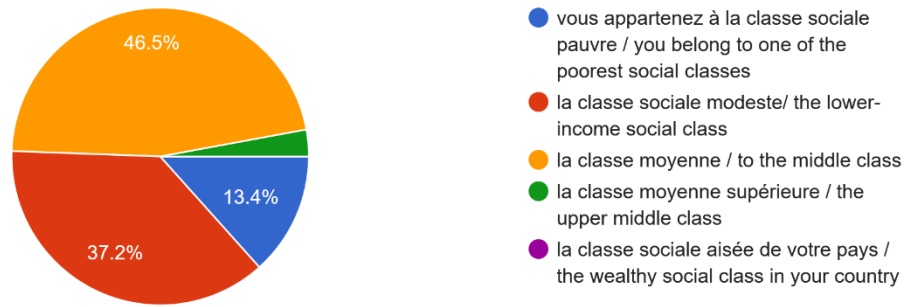
A profession facing severe economic fragility

The responses gathered highlight a widely shared reality: many journalists practice their profession in a context of economic fragility. This is reflected in income levels deemed insufficient, limited material resources to carry out their work, and the financial difficulties faced by the media outlets that employ them or with which they collaborate.

The results presented in this section provide a better understanding of the main factors currently influencing the economic conditions under which journalism is practiced in Africa.

A majority of journalists consider themselves to be in a precarious situation

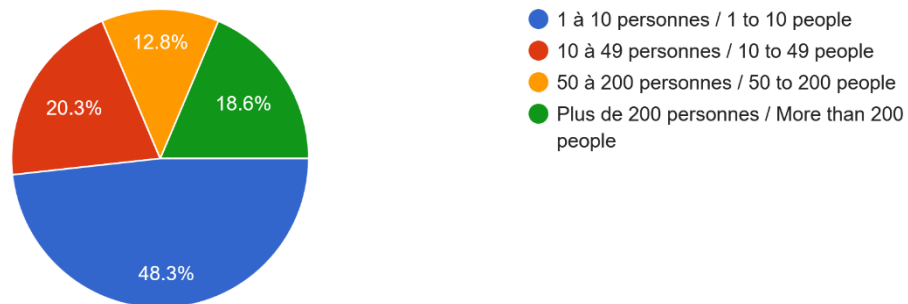
Respondents were asked to assess their own economic situation.



The results show that a significant portion of the surveyed journalists consider themselves to be in a situation of precariousness or economic fragility, confirming the difficulties regularly mentioned in the testimonies gathered throughout this survey.

Journalists often working in small-scale structures

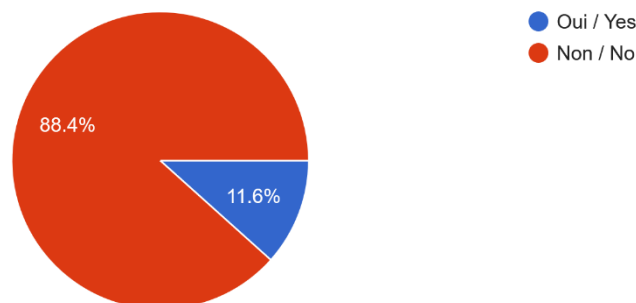
A large majority of respondents work as freelance journalists or within a small-scale media outlet.



This characteristic is important, as small structures generally have more limited financial resources and are more exposed to advertising market fluctuations, difficulties accessing funding, and economic crises.

Resources often insufficient to practice the profession

Journalists were also asked about the resources available to them to properly carry out their professional activity (equipment, travel, field access, etc.).

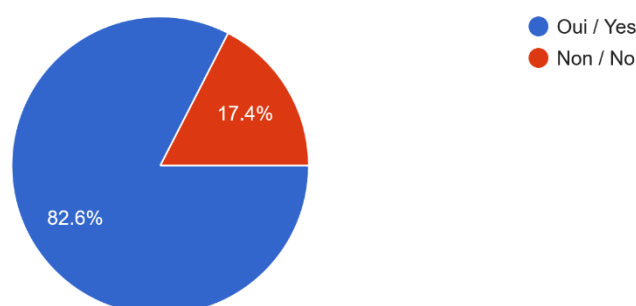


A very large majority believes they do not have the necessary resources to practice their profession under good conditions. This situation limits the capacity of journalists to cover

certain topics, particularly those requiring travel, long-term investigations, or the use of specialized equipment.

Media outlets themselves weakened

Economic difficulties do not only concern journalists. They also affect media companies.



A very large majority of respondents indicate that their media outlet has experienced financial difficulties over the past three years or believe that their remuneration remains insufficient. These two realities are closely linked: the economic fragility of media companies has a direct impact on the conditions under which the profession is practiced.

To better understand these difficulties, journalists were asked to explain the main factors that have affected their media outlet. The 140 responses collected reveal eight main causes.

1. The collapse or insufficiency of advertising revenue

This is, by far, the most frequently mentioned difficulty. Journalists describe an advertising market undergoing profound transformation, marked by a decline in traditional advertisers, their shift toward digital platforms, a scarcity of advertising contracts, and increasingly frequent payment delays. Several respondents also denounce what they deem to be an unfair distribution of advertising revenue.

A few testimonies illustrate this reality:

“Media outlets no longer live off advertising. Therefore, it is difficult to work on important topics.”

“Absence of advertising revenue, very significant deficit in the sale of newspapers and magazines.”

“Difficulties due to the decline of traditional advertising.”

2. The decrease in funding and donor withdrawal

Many independent media outlets still depend on technical and financial partners. Respondents highlight the decrease in international funding, the closure of several support programs, the withdrawal of certain donors, and the difficulty of identifying new partners capable of sustainably supporting their projects.

A few testimonies illustrate this situation:

“The main difficulty came from the loss of key funding. We had a project funded by USAID, but after President Donald Trump's announcement regarding the restriction/ban of USAID, this funding was discontinued.”

“The withdrawal of several donors and the war.”

“We are an independent, self-funded media outlet. The difficulties stem mainly from the lack of paid partnerships and financial partners interested in investing in our projects.”

3. Low income and the precariousness of journalists

Respondents also mention insufficient remuneration, payment delays, low-value freelance rates, a lack of bonuses, and, for freelance journalists, highly irregular income. These difficulties contribute to the long-term weakening of the conditions under which the profession is practiced.

“Irregular income, delayed payments (...), rates are very low compared to the activities to be carried out.”

“Insufficient salary compared to the work provided. High cost of living in the country. Our incomes are generally low.”

“As a freelance journalist, I think the main problem is that clients want quality work while paying very little.”

4. Inflation and rising production costs

Journalists regularly mention the increasing cost of living, rising production costs, services, fuel, electricity, and taxes. In several countries, these difficulties are part of an already severely degraded economic context.

Representative testimonies:

“Inflation and rising production and distribution costs have severely strained available resources.”

“Economic collapse in Kenya.”

“Low advertising revenue and high costs for public services, fuel, electricity, and taxes.”

5. Armed conflicts, political instability, and insecurity

In several countries, particularly in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Sahel, and other regions in crisis, armed conflicts significantly worsen the economic situation of media outlets. Respondents mention the departure of financial partners, bank closures, travel difficulties, and the impossibility of maintaining certain activities.

Representative testimonies:

“War is also a factor. All partners have left the region.”

“In Bukavu (...) banks remain closed to this day (...) This financial situation puts journalists and their families in difficulty.”

“Armed conflicts and humanitarian crisis.”

6. The cost of equipment and lack of technical resources

Many journalists highlight the high cost of audiovisual equipment, internet subscriptions, travel, and printing. The lack of modern equipment limits their ability to produce quality content and cover certain events.

Representative testimonies:

“Website hosting, internet connection fees, difficulties securing partnerships.”

“Lack of audiovisual equipment to produce quality content.”

“Low coverage area due to outdated equipment, few partners, and no operating budget.”

7. Internal management difficulties

Finally, a few respondents mention governance or management issues within their media outlet. Although less frequently cited, this problem is identified as an additional factor contributing to economic fragility.

Representative testimonies:

“Bad management by the newspaper's managers.”

“Poor administration management.”

“Mismanagement of revenue by the Director.”

8. The lasting consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic

Several journalists consider that the economic effects of the pandemic continue to weigh heavily on their activities. In particular, they mention a lasting decline in advertising revenue, job cuts, and a prolonged slowdown in media activity.

Representative testimonies:

“COVID-19.”

“The weakness of advertising revenue and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic have significantly slowed down activities.”

“I lost my job at a media company during the COVID-19 pandemic.”

A profound mutation of the media economic model

Taken as a whole, these testimonies show that the economic difficulties faced by journalists are part of a broader context of transformation within the media sector. Added to the decline in advertising revenue are the reduction of certain international funding, rising production costs, the consequences of economic or security crises, and, in some countries, the still perceptible effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

These various factors accumulate and sustainably weaken the practice of the profession, particularly within independent media and small newsrooms. They largely explain the difficulties expressed by journalists throughout this survey and constitute one of the main challenges that the sector will have to face in the years to come.



Journalists Proposing Solutions to Strengthen Media Economic Viability

Beyond the observation of economic difficulties, the surveyed journalists were invited to formulate their proposals to improve the situation of African media. The responses gathered reflect a particularly rich reflection and converge toward a central idea: the sustainability of media outlets requires a profound transformation of their economic model.

The respondents draw a widely shared conclusion. According to them, the sector remains marked by an excessive dependence on advertising revenue, an insufficiency of sustainable funding, and a continuous increase in operating costs. In this context, they believe that media resilience will rely on a combination of several levers: the diversification of revenue streams, the strengthening of media company governance, the acceleration of the digital transition, and greater support from public authorities, international partners, and the private sector.

The main proposals formulated can be grouped around six key pillars.

1. Diversifying economic models

The most frequently mentioned priority consists of reducing the media's dependence on advertising revenue. Journalists propose developing new sources of funding, particularly

through digital subscriptions, donation systems, crowdfunding, clearly identified sponsored content, or editorial partnerships.

They also recommend better monetizing digital content, developing new formats (podcasts, videos, specialized newsletters), and diversifying media activities by offering services in audiovisual production, training, or consulting.

2. Strengthening public and institutional support

Respondents call for an evolution of public policies in favor of the media. They want press subsidy mechanisms to be more transparent, equitable, and better adapted to the needs of independent media outlets.

Several proposals return regularly: the creation of support funds, tax incentives, facilitated access to institutional advertising, and the improvement of the regulatory framework to guarantee a more balanced competition among the various actors in the sector.

3. Developing partnerships and external funding

Journalists also emphasize the importance of strengthening collaborations with international organizations, foundations, NGOs, universities, and the private sector.

These partnerships could take various forms: funding for editorial projects, reporting grants, co-productions, content commissions, or technical support, particularly on subjects of general interest such as the environment, sustainable development, or human rights.

4. Accelerating the digital transition

Digital transformation appears to be an essential lever to ensure the economic sustainability of media outlets.

Respondents insist on the necessity of investing in digital tools, strengthening the presence of media on digital platforms, better monetizing online content, and adapting productions to new news consumption habits.

5. Professionalizing the management of media companies

Beyond journalistic skills, many respondents believe that media outlets must strengthen their capacities in terms of management, strategy, and development.

In particular, they advocate for developing the skills of media executives in the areas of management, marketing, entrepreneurship, financial planning, and governance. The

development of more robust business models is considered an essential condition for the long-term viability of media companies.

6. Improving the conditions under which the profession is practiced

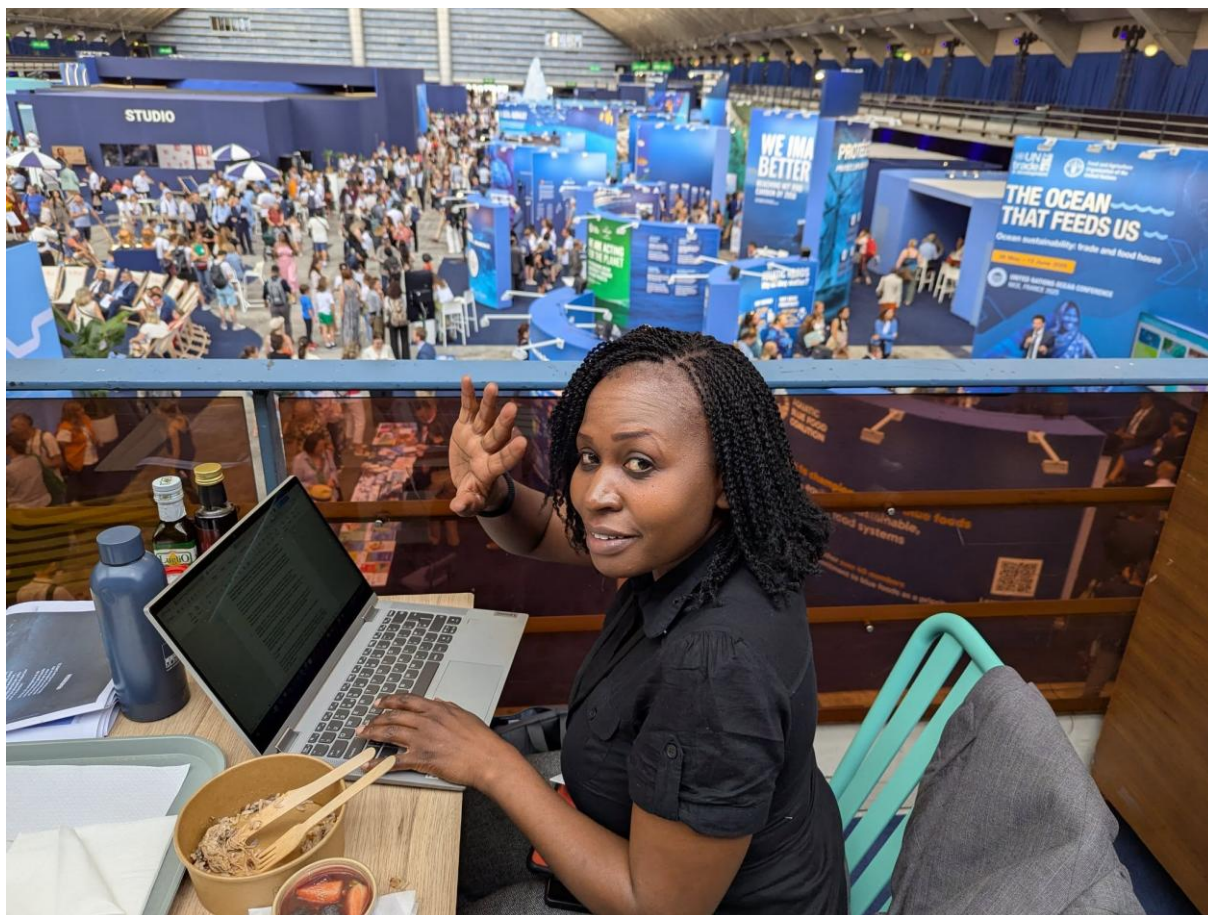
Finally, journalists reiterate that the economic solidity of the media also depends on an improvement of working conditions. They mention the need for fairer remuneration, better access to professional equipment, and greater job stability.

They also highlight the importance of strengthening press freedom and better recognizing the role of the media in the democratic functioning and development of African societies.

A global vision for the transformation of the sector

Beyond the diversity of the proposals formulated, a common message emerges: journalists do not limit themselves to observing the difficulties they face. They propose a coherent vision for the future of African media, based on more diversified economic models, better governance, a mastered digital transition, and a more favorable institutional environment.

These proposals show that the challenges facing the sector are not solely a matter of funding. They also question the organizational models of media companies, their capacity for innovation, and the place that public authorities, technical and financial partners, as well as the private sector, wish to accord to the media in the years to come.



Journalists also proposing solutions to improve their own professional situation

Journalists were also invited to identify measures that would allow them to improve their own economic and professional situation. Their responses highlight a persistent precariousness, marked by remuneration deemed insufficient, often non-existent social protection, unstable employment contracts, and limited career development prospects.

Beyond the issue of salary alone, respondents plead for a comprehensive approach, combining better recognition of the profession, the strengthening of social rights, skills development, better access to funding, and a more favorable environment for the practice of journalism.

The main proposals can be grouped around six key pillars.

1. Increasing salaries and improving working conditions

Improving remuneration is, by far, the most frequently expressed demand. Many journalists believe that their income no longer allows them to cope with the cost of living or to practice their profession under satisfactory conditions.

They call for better application of collective bargaining agreements, the implementation of more transparent salary scales, and remuneration based more on skills, experience, and responsibilities. Respondents also insist on the need to guarantee more stable working conditions and to combat unfair dismissals.

Representative quotes:

“Burundian media have very limited financial resources; journalists receive paltry salaries. As a solution, increase salaries to cope with skyrocketing inflation.”

“In my opinion, employers need to be transparent and pay journalists according to their skills.”

“A journalist should be fairly compensated, receive a good salary, and get it on time.”

2. Better protecting journalists and securing their professional status

Respondents consider that economic difficulties are worsened by weak social protection and the frequent absence of formal employment contracts.

They plead for better application of labor law, effective access to social protection mechanisms (health insurance, retirement, unemployment), and stronger institutional recognition of the journalism profession.

Representative quotes:

“Establish a clear professional status for journalists (stable contracts, respect for labor law). Strengthen access to social protection: health coverage, unemployment insurance, retirement.”

“Many journalists still practice without social coverage or job security.”

“Change the laws, and require private entities to pay journalists well while preserving their rights.”

3. Strengthening skills and promoting professionalization

Training appears to be an essential lever to sustainably improve journalists' career prospects.

Respondents wish to develop their skills in areas such as digital journalism, data journalism, and multimedia, but also in project management, fundraising, and media entrepreneurship. For many, these skills are now a determining factor for employability.

Representative quotes:

“Strengthen continuous training to allow journalists to diversify their skills (digital, data, multimedia) and increase their employability.”

“Train them in grant-seeking so they can improve their skills and sell them to other media outlets.”

“Continuous training is also an important lever for strengthening the skills and employability of journalists in a changing media landscape.”

4. Developing support mechanisms directly intended for journalists

Many respondents call for the creation of mechanisms specifically tailored to journalists, particularly freelancers and young professionals.

They notably propose the setting up of support funds, reporting grants, production subsidies, or international programs to fund investigations and reports on subjects of public interest.

Representative quotes:

“The State should set up a specific support fund intended not only for the media, but also directly for journalists.”

“The implementation of an independent international support fund for media outlets that stand out on lesser-covered topics.”

“To improve the situation, production grants for the benefit of journalists are needed.”

5. Encouraging journalistic entrepreneurship and revenue diversification

Journalists also believe they should be able to develop complementary activities and build economic models that are less dependent on traditional press revenues.

They mention, in particular, the creation of journalist cooperatives, the development of independent media, content production for different partners, and a better economic monetization of digital content.

Representative quotes:

“Encourage the creation of cooperatives or press companies led by the journalists themselves.”

“In Madagascar, the low remuneration of journalists is a central issue. We must promote access to better-valued assignments, encourage the creation of monetizable content, and strengthen editorial entrepreneurship skills.”

“Empower journalists and allow them to have a complementary activity.”

6. Strengthening professional networks and recognition of the profession

Finally, several respondents highlight that the improvement of their economic situation also depends on the recognition granted to journalism in society.

They call for the strengthening of unions and professional associations, the development of international networks between journalists, better protection of press freedom, and an increased appreciation of the media's role in public debate.

Representative quotes:

“Strong unions are needed to defend journalists' salaries.”

“Offer journalists training and connect them with other media professionals in Africa, Europe, America, and Asia to develop their full potential.”

“Valuing the profession of the journalist.”

A global vision of the profession

The proposals formulated show that journalists do not reduce their difficulties to the issue of income alone. They reflect a broader consideration of the conditions under which the profession is practiced, the recognition of their role in society, and the transformations necessary to make the profession more attractive and sustainable.

Taken together, these recommendations emphasize that improving the economic situation of journalists requires a concurrent evolution of media business models, better protection for professionals, and increased investment in skills and innovation. Respondents thus defend a vision of journalism as a profession that must be better recognized, better protected, and more supported in order to fully fulfill its information mission.



The right to practice journalism in Africa

Before presenting the survey findings on journalists' rights, it is useful to recall the legal framework and the main principles governing the practice of journalism. These are recognized in several international and regional legal instruments, which affirm the essential role of journalists in democratic societies and the protection of press freedom.

The main rights recognized for journalists

Although there is no single international treaty specifically dedicated to journalists, several fundamental legal instruments guarantee the rights necessary for the practice of journalism. Before examining the violations of these rights, it is important to recall the legal foundations that protect the profession.

These instruments recognize, in particular:

- **Freedom of expression and access to information**—the right to seek, receive, and impart information without interference—as enshrined in Article 19 of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* and Article 19 of the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*, to which all African states, with the exception of Eritrea, are parties;
- **The right to practice journalism safely**, free from intimidation, threats, or violence;

- **The protection of journalists' sources**, a cornerstone of press freedom;
- **The right of access to public information**, subject to limitations established by law, such as those relating to national security or the protection of privacy;
- **The protection of journalists during armed conflicts**, guaranteed in particular by Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions;
- **Labour rights**, including freedom of association, the right to safe working conditions, protection against discrimination, and the right to fair remuneration, as recognized by the conventions of the International Labour Organization;
- **Editorial independence**, which is essential to preserving media pluralism and protecting journalists from political, economic, or commercial pressure.

In return for these rights, journalists are also expected to comply with the ethical principles of their profession, including accuracy, fact-checking, independence, fairness, and respect for human dignity.

A relatively comprehensive African legal framework

Several regional instruments complement this international framework across the African continent.

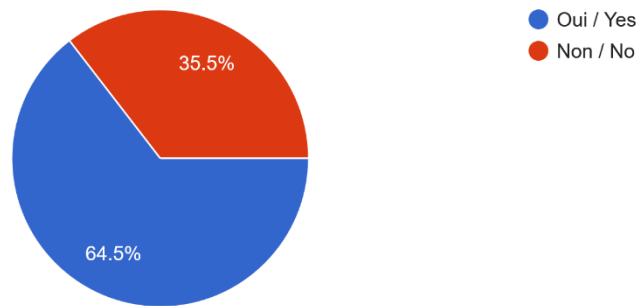
The *African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights* guarantees, under Article 9, both the right to receive information and the right to express and disseminate opinions within the limits of the law.

The *Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression and Access to Information in Africa*, adopted in 2019 by the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, further clarifies states' obligations regarding the protection of journalists. It emphasizes the need to prevent violence and intimidation, investigate attacks against media professionals, safeguard media independence, protect the confidentiality of journalistic sources, facilitate access to public information, and uphold press freedom in the digital environment.

Taken as a whole, the African legal framework is relatively comprehensive in terms of the principles it establishes. However, its implementation remains highly uneven across countries, which partly explains the difficulties reported by journalists in the following sections.

The State of Journalists' Rights and Press Freedom in 2025

The survey findings show that the challenges faced by journalists extend beyond economic constraints alone. More than 60% of respondents reported having experienced at least one violation of their rights in the course of their professional activities during the past three years.



The testimonies collected describe a professional environment marked by recurring violations of press freedom, physical violence, arbitrary arrests, restrictions on access to information, and political, economic, or administrative pressure. In several countries, journalists work in contexts of armed conflict, political instability, or shrinking civic space, where reporting the news can expose them to significant personal risks.

Beyond these direct threats, respondents also denounce the precariousness of their working conditions, violations of their labour rights, and more subtle forms of censorship that restrict their ability to fulfil their role of informing the public.

The situations described can be grouped into six main categories.

1. Physical violence, arrests, and intimidation

Violence is the category of violations mentioned most frequently. Respondents report physical assaults, arbitrary arrests, detention without due process, kidnappings, acts of torture, and several killings of journalists. These incidents occur primarily while covering demonstrations, armed conflicts, or investigations into sensitive issues, extending far beyond environmental reporting alone.

Several testimonies illustrate this reality:

“I was subjected to physical and psychological torture in the course of my work, which profoundly affected my safety and my freedom to practice journalism.”

“Some colleagues were covering a peaceful opposition march. Despite being clearly identified by their press cards, they were arrested, imprisoned, and tortured.”

“Journalists were beaten by police while covering demonstrations calling for social justice in Kenya.”

“One journalist was kidnapped in my province (...) and another was later found dead.”

2. Restrictions on press freedom and censorship

Journalists also report numerous forms of both direct and indirect censorship. In several countries, political, administrative, or military authorities restrict coverage of certain topics, suspend media outlets, shut down newsrooms, or exert pressure that leads journalists to practice self-censorship.

The testimonies also highlight particular restrictions in conflict zones, where information is often tightly controlled by the various parties involved.

“We are forced to work according to the wishes of those currently in power.”

“The authorities censor information. There is a red line that we must not cross.”

“Mali is experiencing an unprecedented deterioration of press freedom, marked by arrests, the disappearance of journalists, and severe institutional restrictions.”

“My country is under military rule, which has shut down independent media. Some journalists are in exile, while others have disappeared.”

“Journalists are no longer allowed to remain neutral by the warring parties.”

3. Difficulties accessing information and official sources

Access to information remains a major obstacle for many journalists. Several respondents explained that they are excluded from press conferences, denied access to official sources, or prevented from covering certain events, particularly when working for private or independent media outlets.

These barriers directly limit their ability to inform the public effectively and contribute to widening inequalities between media organizations.

“I still do not have access to official sources simply because I work for a private media outlet.”

“A minister refuses to provide information to private media.”

“Journalists are not free to express themselves (...) and face enormous difficulties in accessing sources.”

4. Political, judicial, and administrative pressure

Journalists also describe various forms of pressure exerted by public authorities or political actors to influence their work.

The testimonies refer in particular to legal proceedings, summonses by intelligence services, orders to remove published content, threats to close media outlets, as well as surveillance and online harassment.

“I was questioned by the media regulatory authority over an article I had published and was ordered to remove it.”

“The editor of newspaper XXX was detained for several months without trial because of a published article.”

“Today, the main source of violations lies in cyber threats and online harassment targeting journalists.”

“Journalists who exposed corruption had their equipment confiscated.”

5. Precarious working conditions and violations of labour rights

Beyond attacks on press freedom, several respondents highlighted violations of their social and labour rights.

They reported unpaid salaries, unfair dismissals, the absence of social protection, inadequate working conditions, and, more generally, widespread non-compliance with labour legislation, further weakening the profession.

“Journalists have months of unpaid salary arrears.”

“Journalists have no social security coverage.”

“My employer decided to dismiss me without any compensation.”

“The owner paid extremely low salaries while demanding complete control over all journalistic activities.”

6. Armed conflict, insecurity, and the inability to work in certain areas

Journalists working in conflict zones describe particularly severe constraints. They report threats from armed groups, restrictions imposed by military authorities, the impossibility of accessing certain areas, and, in some cases, the need to leave their region—or even their country—to ensure their safety.

These situations illustrate the serious risks that many journalists continue to face across several regions of the continent.

“Because of my reporting and analysis of the war in eastern Congo, I was forced to flee for my safety, crossing several African countries.”

“In Casamance, Senegal, it is almost impossible to work as a journalist in certain areas controlled by rebel groups.”

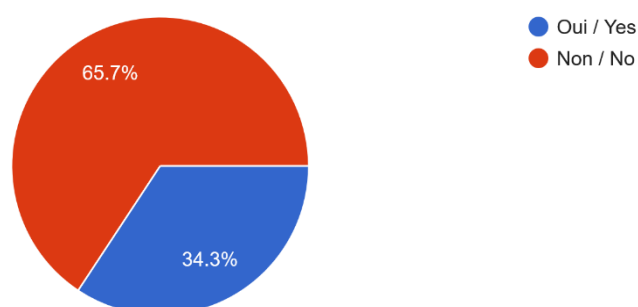
“One of our correspondents was held captive by the intelligence services.”

“We are under constant threat.”

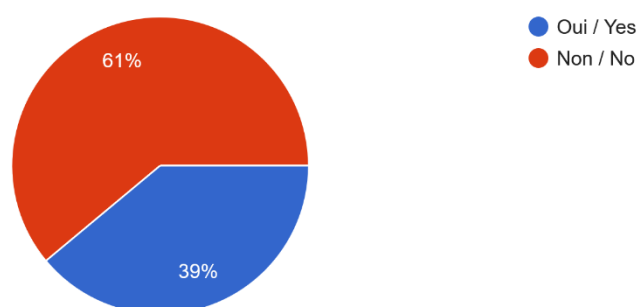
Findings confirmed by the quantitative data

To further explore some of the issues highlighted in the testimonies, journalists were asked several specific follow-up questions.

Have you experienced a situation of censorship during the past three years?



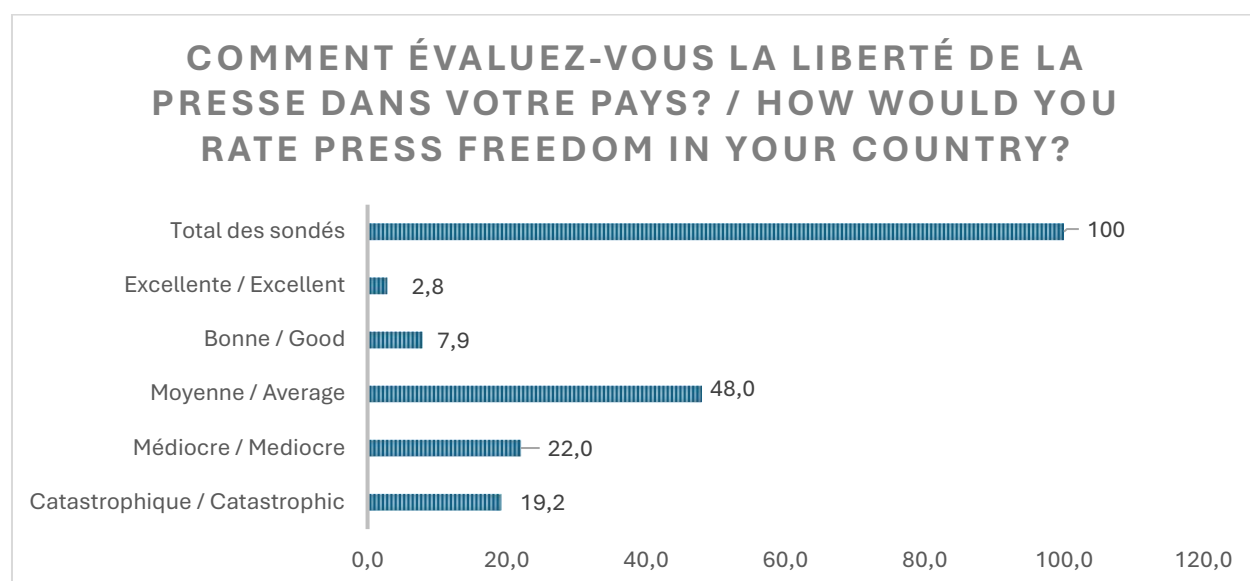
Have you experienced intimidation or physical threats in the course of your work during the past three years?



The responses to these questions complement the testimonies by providing quantitative evidence of certain forms of rights violations. Although not all journalists have experienced these situations, more than one-third of respondents nevertheless reported having been subjected to censorship, intimidation, or threats during the past three years. This proportion remains particularly alarming.

A Concerning Assessment of Press Freedom

To conclude this section of the survey, journalists were invited to provide an overall assessment of the state of press freedom in their country.



The results reflect a largely concerning perception. Only 10.7% of respondents consider press freedom in their country to be good to excellent, while 41.2% rate it as poor to catastrophic.

This assessment is consistent with the overall findings presented in this chapter. The difficulties described by journalists do not relate solely to isolated incidents; rather, they point to a professional environment often characterized by insecurity, pressure, and restrictions on the practice of journalism. They highlight that, despite the existence of a relatively protective legal framework in many African states, the effective realization of these rights remains a major challenge for a significant proportion of the profession.



A Profession Undergoing Profound Change

Trends Identified by Journalists

Beyond their current situation, journalists were invited to share their vision of how their profession will evolve over the next five to twenty years. Their responses portray a profession undergoing profound transformation, driven by technological changes, evolving patterns of information consumption, and economic shifts affecting the media sector.

Despite significant differences between national contexts, a broad consensus emerges. Journalists believe that the coming years will be primarily shaped by the development of artificial intelligence, the widespread adoption of digital technologies, the growth of new distribution formats, the increasing influence of social media, and the need to strengthen professional skills. They also anticipate a more competitive environment, in which credibility, specialization, and the ability to adapt will become decisive assets.

The main trends identified can be grouped into eight major areas.

1. Artificial intelligence: a major transformation of the profession

Artificial intelligence is by far the most frequently cited factor likely to transform journalism in the coming years. Respondents perceive it both as a significant opportunity and as a major challenge.

They believe it will facilitate the automation of repetitive tasks, the analysis of large volumes of data, investigations, translations, transcriptions, and information verification. At the same time, they highlight the risks it poses to employment, the spread of misleading content, and the growing difficulty of distinguishing between content produced by journalists and content generated automatically.

Several testimonies illustrate this perception:

“Artificial intelligence is set to improve and profoundly transform the way journalists work.”

“The integration of artificial intelligence into newsrooms will become increasingly widespread.”

“With the rise of AI, misinformation, and disinformation, journalists will no longer simply write or distribute information; they will also have to verify, analyze, visualize, secure content, and engage more closely with their audiences.”

“The future of journalism will depend on the ability to combine technology and creativity.”

2. An irreversible digital transition

Journalists consider that digital transformation is now firmly established. Digital platforms, mobile phones, and social networks are gradually becoming the main channels through which people access information. This shift is weakening traditional models, particularly print media, while creating opportunities for new business models and new editorial practices.

“Digital-first publishing models and mobile journalism will experience significant growth.”

“The digital space will continue to expand rapidly and will permanently transform the media landscape.”

“The development of digital journalism could lead to the disappearance of many traditional media outlets.”

3. Social media, influencers, and new information actors

The rise of social media is profoundly transforming the media ecosystem. Journalists observe growing competition between traditional media outlets, content creators, influencers, and various forms of citizen journalism.

According to respondents, this development reinforces the need to better promote information quality, fact-checking, and professional credibility, while also investing more actively in digital spaces where audiences are increasingly present.

“Artificial intelligence, citizen journalism, and content creation by influencers will occupy an increasingly important place.”

“Today, anyone can publish content produced or enhanced by artificial intelligence.”

“The difficult-to-control dominance of social media, often in the hands of people without journalistic training, represents a major challenge for the profession.”

4. Press freedom remains fragile

Beyond technological developments, many journalists express concerns about the evolution of the political environment in several African countries.

They mention increasing restrictions on freedom of expression, pressure on media organizations, arrests of journalists, stricter legislation, and growing difficulties in accessing information. For several respondents, these developments represent a direct threat to the future of journalism.

“Journalists must be able to practice their profession freely, without constraints or censorship.”

“The freedom to tell true and meaningful stories must be preserved.”

“The future of authentic journalism is seriously threatened in our country.”

“Cybercrime legislation has been tightened by the military junta.”

“Press freedom remains fragile, subject to political pressure and recurring disruptions of digital services and the internet.”

5. An economic model still requiring consolidation

Economic difficulties remain among the main concerns expressed by respondents.

They point to declining media revenues, low levels of remuneration, the closure of some newsrooms, and the departure of many journalists toward other sectors. Several believe that the sustainability of journalism will depend on the ability of media organizations to develop more diversified and sustainable business models.

“Journalists must be properly compensated in order to reduce the risks of corruption and preserve their independence.”

“The economic viability of the media sector is a major challenge for its future.”

“Many media organizations risk closing due to the continuous decline in their revenues and profitability.”

6. Continuous training as a condition for adaptation

Journalists believe that ongoing transformations will require a constant renewal of skills.

They emphasize the importance of continuous training, the development of digital skills, thematic specialization, and stronger professional networks to support the rapid changes affecting the sector.

“Training, training, and more training.”

“Continuous training and specialization will be decisive elements for the future of the profession.”

“The rapid evolution of technologies, particularly artificial intelligence, requires constant upgrading of media professionals’ skills.”

“Increased funding and capacity-building programs are needed to support journalists facing the sector’s transformations.”

7. The growing importance of data journalism and fact-checking

Faced with the proliferation of automatically generated content and disinformation, several respondents believe that the added value of journalists will increasingly lie in their ability to verify information, analyze data, and provide audiences with the necessary context and understanding.

Data journalism, fact-checking, open-source investigations, and solutions journalism are therefore expected to play an increasingly important role in the years ahead.

“Information verification will become even more central.”

“Data journalism and open-source investigations will become increasingly important.”

“Prioritize solutions journalism and data journalism.”

“Credibility will become the journalist’s greatest asset.”

8. New formats for telling stories

Finally, journalists anticipate changes in storytelling methods and distribution formats.

Audiovisual content, podcasts, videos, interactive formats, and multimedia productions are expected to play an increasingly important role. Respondents believe that future journalists will need to produce content adapted to multiple platforms and audiences.

“Reports will include more video content.”

“Multimedia storytelling.”

“Immersive, interactive, and mobile formats.”

“Using videos, podcasts, and other techniques beyond writing.”

The journalist of tomorrow: more versatile, more technological, and more resilient

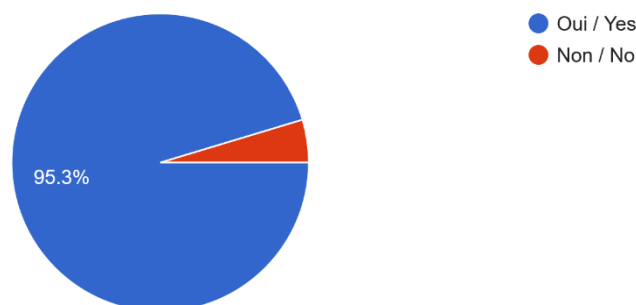
Taken as a whole, the testimonies collected portray a profession undergoing major transformation. Journalists do not view technological developments as an inevitable threat, but rather as a transition to which they will need to adapt by developing new skills and practices.

They anticipate a profession that will be more versatile, more focused on digital tools, data analysis, information verification, and multimedia content production. In an environment shaped by artificial intelligence, competition from new information actors, and fragile economic models, they believe that credibility, expertise, ethics, and the ability to innovate will be the key assets of tomorrow’s journalist.

Beyond technological transformations, respondents also emphasize that the future of the profession will depend on the ability of governments, media organizations, international partners, and professional associations to preserve press freedom, strengthen journalists’ skills, and guarantee the conditions necessary for the practice of free, independent, and high-quality journalism.

The Use of Social Media in Journalistic Work

The use of social media is now widespread in the professional practices of African journalists.



The responses collected show that these platforms have become fully integrated working tools, involved at every stage of the journalistic process: from information gathering to content distribution, including fact-checking, exchanges with sources, and interaction with audiences.

The most frequently mentioned use concerns content distribution. Journalists primarily use Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), WhatsApp, LinkedIn, Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube to share their articles, reports, videos, podcasts, or multimedia publications. Social media enables them to increase the visibility of their work, reach new audiences, and disseminate information rapidly, including beyond their national borders.

As one journalist explains:

“Social media has become indispensable in journalism today. Instant distribution makes it possible to bring information to the general public within minutes of an event taking place.”

Another adds:

“In order to reach a wider audience, we offer different content formats adapted to social media.”

A third respondent states:

“It allows us to reach a large number of readers and provide information beyond our borders.”

Social media also serves as a permanent monitoring and information-gathering tool. Journalists use these platforms to identify emerging topics, follow public reactions, consult statements from public figures, access official announcements, or issue calls for witnesses. They have therefore become a privileged space for observing current affairs and public debate.

However, respondents emphasize that information collected through these platforms must always be verified before publication.

One journalist notes:

“Social media is a gold mine of information. But it must always be verified afterwards.”

Another stresses the need to process such content “in accordance with ethical and professional standards,” while a third explains:

“Generally, when there is major news, I look at reactions from public figures on social media.”

Digital platforms also play an important role in information verification. Several journalists explain that they use them to cross-check sources, verify photographs or videos, discuss the credibility of certain information with colleagues, or confirm details before publication.

Social media has also become a space for interaction with audiences. It allows journalists to gather reactions from readers or listeners, maintain direct dialogue with their communities, and identify new expectations regarding information.

As a radio journalist explains:

“On air, we give our phone number to listeners, and afterwards they send us their feedback while our programmes are being broadcast live.”

Beyond audience interaction, these platforms also facilitate professional networking, collaboration between journalists, identification of experts, and the search for partners or funding opportunities.

For many respondents, social media is now fully integrated into the journalistic production process. It is used to organize newsroom activities, exchange documents, transfer reports, hold remote meetings, and coordinate teams.

One journalist summarizes this everyday use:

“For everything: writing reports, taking pictures, transferring reports to the newsroom, online meetings...”

Finally, several journalists highlight that social media also serves as a tool for awareness-raising and advocacy. They use these platforms to provide information on climate issues, raise public awareness, combat misinformation, and encourage public debate.

As illustrated by these testimonies:

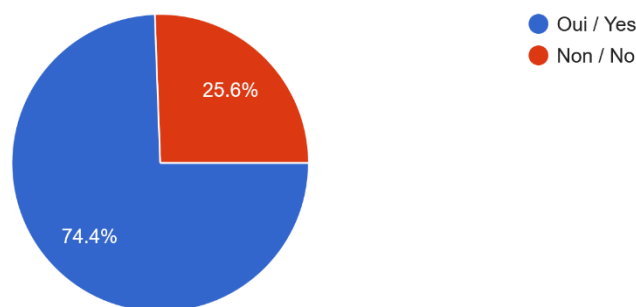
“To raise awareness and mobilize communities around climate issues.”

“To share information as objectively as possible, provide analysis, and restore the truth in the face of misinformation.”

Overall, the responses show that social media is no longer merely a complementary distribution channel. It has become a structural component of contemporary journalistic practice. Journalists now use these platforms to gather information, verify sources, produce content, engage with audiences, and increase the reach of their work. This development confirms that mastery of digital tools has become an essential skill for practicing journalism in an ever-changing media environment.

New Tools and New Journalistic Practices

African journalists appear to be largely open to adopting new tools and new professional practices.



Beyond the uses of social media described above, the responses highlight a profound transformation in working methods. They portray a form of journalism that is increasingly mobile, digital, and versatile, in which technological tools play a central role.

The smartphone perfectly illustrates this evolution. Once simply a communication device, it is now used to record interviews, capture images, edit content, write articles, and distribute reports.

As one journalist explains:

“With a simple smartphone, I can film, edit, and quickly publish my content.”

Another adds:

“I mostly work with my phone, both to make calls and verify information, as well as to write articles.”

This versatility allows journalists to become more autonomous, responsive, and connected to the field, while reducing their reliance on specialized equipment.

Journalists also mention the growing use of numerous digital tools: audio and video editing software, collaborative platforms, note-taking applications, online storage solutions, data journalism tools, graphic design software, interactive infographics, and tools designed to strengthen digital security.

These developments reflect an increasingly technical profession, in which mastery of digital tools has become as essential a skill as traditional journalistic expertise.

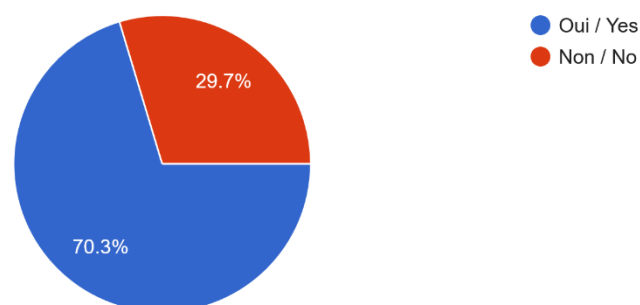
In an environment where information circulates ever more rapidly, respondents describe a profession requiring constant adaptation, the ability to produce content for multiple platforms, and continuous renewal of skills.

Taken together, these developments portray a form of journalism that is more agile, more connected, and firmly oriented toward innovation.

Artificial intelligence: a tool already widely integrated into journalistic practices

Given the growing importance of artificial intelligence in the information sector, several specific questions focused on its use.

The results show that journalists are already making extensive use of these tools in their professional activities.



The responses reveal a wide diversity of uses. However, artificial intelligence is rarely presented as a substitute for journalists. It is primarily perceived as an assistance tool, designed to improve work efficiency, save time, and facilitate certain tasks, while leaving journalists with editorial responsibility for the content produced.

The first area of use concerns information gathering and research. Journalists use AI to quickly explore a topic, access additional information, identify research leads, or gain deeper insight into complex issues.

The second most common use relates to content writing and improvement. Respondents explain that they use artificial intelligence to correct spelling and grammar, rephrase sentences, improve writing style, or simplify texts. AI thus appears as a genuine writing assistant, helping to enhance editorial quality while accelerating production.

Journalists also use artificial intelligence for information verification. Several respondents mention its use in fact-checking, source verification, identifying misleading content, or detecting disinformation campaigns. In this area, AI is mainly viewed as a decision-support tool that complements the verification work carried out by journalists.

The responses also highlight its usefulness for transcription, translation, and the processing of audio and video content. Journalists use these tools to transcribe interviews, translate documents, convert audio files into text, or facilitate the processing of multilingual content, representing a particularly significant time saving.

Another rapidly developing area concerns data analysis and investigative journalism. Several respondents indicate that they use artificial intelligence to analyze large volumes of information, identify trends, organize research, or exploit data from open sources. These capabilities strengthen investigative capacity and enable journalists to handle complex topics more effectively.

Artificial intelligence is also being used for multimedia content creation. Journalists mention, in particular, the generation of illustrations, the creation of visuals, video editing, synthetic voice production, and the use of graphic design tools such as Canva. These practices reflect the gradual expansion of the skills expected within newsrooms.

Finally, many respondents consider AI to be a driver of efficiency and creativity. It is used to generate story ideas, suggest angles for coverage, create headlines, or structure article outlines. Several journalists nevertheless emphasize that their use remains cautious, occasional, or limited, with some indicating that they do not yet use these tools.

Overall, the responses show that artificial intelligence has already become part of the daily practices of a significant number of African journalists. It appears less as a technology intended to replace journalistic work than as a set of tools that strengthens capacities for analysis, production, and information dissemination. However, its development also raises new challenges in terms of training, ethics, content verification, and responsible use, which will continue to shape the profession's evolution over the long term.



Special Theme of the 2025 Edition: Combating Disinformation in Africa

Media and Information Literacy: A Major Democratic Challenge

In recent years, media and information literacy (MIL) has gradually emerged as one of the main tools for combating disinformation. Faced with the profound transformation of information ecosystems, driven by the rise of social media, artificial intelligence, and the mass production of digital content, this approach is now at the heart of the strategies developed by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

MIL aims to enable citizens to search for, understand, analyze, evaluate, and produce information in a critical and responsible manner. It has become an essential tool for strengthening freedom of expression, the quality of public debate, civic participation, and the resilience of societies against information manipulation.

In Africa, this issue is particularly significant. As highlighted in previous chapters, digital usage is expanding rapidly across the continent, while social media is becoming a preferred source of information for a growing share of the population. This development facilitates broader

access to information but also accelerates the spread of misleading content, particularly during elections, public health crises, armed conflicts, or environmental disasters.

UNESCO therefore supports numerous programs aimed at strengthening the skills of journalists, teachers, students, and citizens more broadly, in order to promote reliable, pluralistic, and fact-based information.

This strategy directly contributes to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, particularly Goal 4 on quality education, Goal 13 on climate action, and Goal 16, which promotes effective institutions, access to information, and peaceful societies.

It is also based on several key reference documents, including the UNESCO Media and Information Literacy Curriculum, the Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence, and Global Media and Information Literacy Week.

Environmental issues now occupy an increasingly important place within this strategy. Faced with the growing spread of false information related to climate change, UNESCO considers MIL to be an essential tool enabling both journalists and citizens to identify reliable scientific information, distinguish facts from opinions, and better understand environmental challenges.

This approach is particularly aligned with the Paris Agreement, whose Article 12 highlights the importance of education, awareness-raising, and access to climate information, as well as with the ESD for 2030 framework dedicated to education for sustainable development.

For the African continent, which is particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, the development of media and information literacy therefore represents a major challenge. It can help strengthen the quality of environmental information, combat information manipulation, and promote informed citizen participation.

Misinformation, Disinformation, and Malinformation: Three Distinct Concepts

Within the framework of its activities, UNESCO relies on the now widely recognized concept of **information disorder**, which distinguishes three main forms of problematic content circulation according to their nature and the intentions of those who create or share them.

- **Misinformation** refers to the spread of false or inaccurate information without the intention to cause harm. This may include a mistake, a rumor, or content shared in good faith by someone who believes it to be true.
- **Disinformation** refers to the deliberate creation or dissemination of false or misleading information with the aim of manipulating, influencing, or deceiving an individual, a group, or public opinion.
- **Malinformation**, on the other hand, is based on accurate information that is used maliciously, for example by taking it out of context, disclosing private information, or presenting it in a way that causes harm to an individual, an organization, or a community.

In this context, the role of journalists appears more essential than ever. Their mission no longer consists solely of producing information, but also of contributing to a better understanding of information manipulation processes and strengthening citizens' ability to distinguish facts from misleading content.

This issue is also an important focus of the training activities conducted by the Africa 21 Association on behalf of UNESCO, particularly in the field of environmental and climate disinformation.

A Good Understanding of Malinformation, but Uneven Mastery of the Concepts

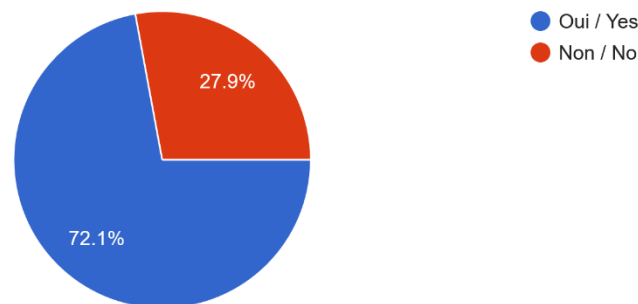
Let us now turn to another essential concept in media and information literacy: **malinformation**. Applying the same analytical framework used for disinformation, based on UNESCO's reference definition, the results appear more encouraging.

- Approximately 55 to 60% of respondents provide a definition consistent with the one adopted by UNESCO.
- Approximately 20 to 25% provide a partially correct definition, referring, for example, to "information taken out of context" or "true information used to cause harm," without including all the criteria that characterize malinformation.
- Finally, approximately 20 to 25% of journalists provide an incorrect definition, equating malinformation with disinformation, misinformation, a simple journalistic error, incomplete information, or a failure to verify sources.

These results show that this concept is generally better understood than disinformation. However, they also confirm that further clarification efforts remain necessary, including

among information professionals, in order to better distinguish between the different forms of information disorder.

We then sought to determine whether the journalists surveyed had already encountered situations of disinformation in their professional practice, either as witnesses or as targets.



The results are unequivocal: a very large majority of respondents report having already encountered situations of disinformation in the course of their work. This finding illustrates the extent to which this phenomenon has become a daily reality for many African journalists.

They were then asked to analyze the forms of disinformation they encounter.

The analysis of the responses shows that, for journalists, disinformation goes far beyond the simple dissemination of “fake news.” It is perceived as a set of mechanisms designed to manipulate information, shape public perceptions, and, in some cases, influence individual or collective behaviour.

The first characteristic highlighted is its intentional nature. Respondents describe information that is deliberately altered, incomplete, or biased in order to influence the understanding of an event or shape public opinion.

Several journalists refer to information that is “*deliberately distorted or taken out of context*,” while another summarizes this mechanism as the act of “*presenting the truth differently from what is actually true*.” Others mention the dissemination of “*false data*,” “*manipulated statistics*,” or “*biased narratives designed to influence public opinion*.”

Social media appears as the main channel through which disinformation spreads. Facebook, WhatsApp, and other digital platforms are regularly cited as spaces where misleading content circulates most rapidly, through viral sharing, fake accounts, and certain content creators.

Journalists point out that disinformation is spread “*on social networks, partisan media, or private messaging platforms*,” that it circulates “*through rapid sharing in WhatsApp groups*,” or that it is amplified by “*avatar profiles [fake profiles], highly followed pages, and content creators*.”

Respondents also emphasize that disinformation often relies on the manipulation of authentic content. The most frequently cited methods include statements taken out of context, altered videos and photographs, truncated quotations, sensationalist headlines, or the selective presentation of otherwise accurate data.

One respondent describes *“photos or videos removed from their original context, truncated quotations, and the selective highlighting of certain facts,”* while another refers to *“the dissemination of edited audio or videos intended to make people believe something different from what actually happened.”*

Journalists also consider that disinformation rarely follows an accidental logic. It is most often used as a tool of influence, serving political, economic, ideological, or strategic interests.

Respondents believe it is used to *“deceive public opinion for the benefit of a particular party,”* to *“confuse public opinion,”* or to *“harm and mislead public opinion.”* Some even refer to a genuine *“propaganda machinery”* designed to construct narratives favourable to certain actors or to discredit their opponents.

Finally, journalists emphasize that disinformation does not originate from a single category of actors. While political figures are the most frequently mentioned, respondents also cite influencers, bloggers, certain media outlets, pressure groups, private companies, state actors, and armed groups.

The many examples collected can be grouped into six major categories, illustrating the diversity of contexts in which disinformation occurs.

1. Political and electoral disinformation campaigns

The largest number of examples concerns election periods and political life. Journalists describe campaigns aimed at influencing voters, discrediting candidates, fuelling tensions, or legitimizing certain political narratives.

The most representative testimonies include:

“During elections, a candidate may mislead voters by claiming that the CENI [Independent National Electoral Commission] has been corrupted in order to push supporters toward violence against the electoral commission.”

“During the previous local elections, disinformation circulated announcing that a candidate had withdrawn from the race, even though the candidate was still running.”

“A media organization aligned with a political party produced and disseminated misleading content that influenced voters and contributed to the defeat of its opponent.”

2. Armed conflicts and security issues

Armed conflicts constitute the second most frequently cited area, particularly in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sahel countries, and the Great Lakes region. Journalists describe competing narratives, contradictory figures, and propaganda campaigns conducted by the various parties involved.

The testimonies collected illustrate this reality:

“The capture of the city of Uvira in South Kivu by the M23.”

“The government and rebel groups each have their own figures and analyses, which are disseminated to the public through the media.”

“Social media reported that terrorists were being supplied by the French army in the Sahel.”

3. Rumours targeting public figures

Another important category concerns false information relating to political leaders or well-known personalities. False announcements of deaths, fake statements, and manipulated images are among the most frequently encountered examples.

Journalists particularly mention:

“The announcement of the death of President Alassane Ouattara with the France 24 logo.”

“The death of Paul Kagame was announced, even though it was false.”

“A rumour announced the death of Donald Trump.”

“A photo of Ali Bongo claiming that he was participating in the vote.”

These examples illustrate how quickly false information concerning public figures can become viral.

4. Health-related misinformation

Public health issues represent another area particularly vulnerable to disinformation.

Journalists mention, in particular:

“False messages claimed that Covid-19 vaccines caused infertility or rapid deaths.”

“People vaccinated against Covid-19 were allegedly responsible for the spread of mpox in Kenya.”

“A fake doctor spread the rumour that watermelons sold in Tunisia were carcinogenic.”

“An error concerning the number of deaths linked to bubonic plague caused widespread concern.”

These testimonies highlight that health-related disinformation can have direct consequences on individual behaviour and undermine public health policies.

5. Manipulation of media content

Several journalists describe manipulations directly targeting media productions themselves: fake newspaper front pages, edited materials, falsified logos, or diverted content.

Examples cited include:

“A fake front page of Standard Media Group circulated widely on social media.”

“The front page of the newspaper Le Soleil was used to publish messages contrary to its editorial line.”

These responses illustrate the rise of manipulated content and the new challenges created by digital technologies, particularly image-generation tools and artificial intelligence applications.

6. Environmental and climate-related issues

Finally, several journalists identify environmental issues as an area where disinformation is rapidly increasing.

Respondents cite, in particular:

“Some people claim that climate change does not exist.”

“False information circulates about climate disasters, accompanied by manipulated photographs.”

“The Ivorian government presented an oil deposit as being ‘carbon neutral’.”

“The information war between supporters of plastic recycling and those advocating for reduced plastic production.”

These examples show that environmental and climate issues are now fully affected by disinformation phenomena. They also confirm the need to strengthen journalists' skills in this area, both to verify scientific information and to explain complex issues to the public, as these topics are particularly vulnerable to manipulation.

Tools and Methods for Detecting Fake News

The survey then examined the methods used by journalists to identify misleading content and detect instances of disinformation.

The responses reveal a particularly clear consensus: for the journalists surveyed, the fight against disinformation relies above all on a rigorous journalistic approach, rather than on the exclusive use of technological tools. While digital solutions are becoming increasingly important in their practices, they are primarily considered as support tools that complement the fundamentals of the profession: fact-checking, cross-checking information, critical analysis, and knowledge of the field.

The responses can be grouped around several main areas.

Verification and cross-checking of sources: the first professional reflex

The theme that overwhelmingly ranks first among the responses is the systematic verification of information through multiple sources. Journalists consider that the best protection against disinformation consists in comparing each piece of information with reliable, independent and, whenever possible, official sources.

Several respondents summarize this approach through simple but revealing statements:

"I take the time to verify; I never publish information as soon as I come across it."

Or:

"I cross-check with reliable sources."

Others emphasize the need to *"compare several reliable media outlets," "triangulate information,"* or *"verify with the relevant institutions."*

These responses show that, for journalists, fact-checking is not limited to the use of specialized tools. It is above all a working method based on cross-checking sources, caution, and respect for the fundamental principles of journalism.

The growing use of digital verification tools

The second area concerns the increasingly frequent use of specialized digital tools to verify the authenticity of content circulating on the Internet.

Journalists report using reverse search engines and various verification platforms in particular to analyse photographs, videos, or documents.

The tools most frequently mentioned are Google Images, Google Lens, Yandex, TinEye, and InVID. Some also mention platforms specialized in fact-checking or applications that allow the examination of metadata from digital content.

As one respondent explains:

“Checking images, videos, metadata and using reverse searches.”

These tools make it possible, in particular, to identify old photographs reused in another context, manipulated videos, or content that has been digitally generated or modified.

Developing a critical reading of content

Beyond technical tools, journalists emphasize the importance of adopting a critical reading of the information circulating online.

They explain that they look for a number of indicators likely to reveal manipulation: sensationalist headlines, factual inconsistencies, internal contradictions, the absence of identifiable sources, unverifiable figures, or wording intended to provoke a strong emotional reaction.

Several respondents explain that they systematically check *“the title, the date, the location, the author, and the associated images”*, while another recalls that particular vigilance is required when *“the content appears too sensational, too viral, or perfectly aligned with a bias”*.

For some journalists, virality itself constitutes a first warning sign.

One of them summarizes this cautious approach:

“When information is very viral, I tell myself that I need to try to verify it first.”

This approach reflects the development of a genuine culture of professional scepticism when faced with content circulating on digital platforms.

Knowledge of the field remains an irreplaceable asset

The responses also highlight a less visible aspect of the fight against disinformation: the importance of knowledge of the local context.

Many journalists explain that their field experience enables them to quickly identify certain unreliable pieces of information because they contradict the realities they observe on a daily basis or the knowledge they have acquired throughout their professional practice.

As one of them summarizes:

“I live in the country, I know the realities on the ground.”

Another points out that:

“Experience helps identify contradictions or distortions in the presentation of facts.”

Respondents also emphasize the importance of consulting direct witnesses, experts, or the stakeholders concerned in order to compare the information being circulated with the reality of the situations observed.

Fact-checking training: a skill that has become essential

The responses finally show that many journalists attribute their ability to detect disinformation to the training they have received in recent years.

Some respondents simply write:

“Thanks to fact-checking training.”

Or:

“Through training.”

For many, mastering verification techniques has now become an essential skill in the journalism profession. In an environment marked by the multiplication of manipulated content, artificial intelligence-generated images, and disinformation campaigns, continuous training appears to be an indispensable lever for maintaining the quality of information.

A comprehensive approach combining journalistic methods and digital tools

Beyond the diversity of techniques mentioned, the responses converge towards the same conclusion: no single method can, on its own, identify a situation of disinformation with certainty.

Journalists favour a comprehensive approach that combines the fundamentals of the profession — source verification, cross-checking information, critical analysis, and knowledge of the field — with new digital verification tools and the support of experts when necessary.

As one respondent summarizes particularly well:

“The best approach is a combination of critical thinking, content analysis, and investigation into the origin and behaviour of the actors who disseminate the information.”

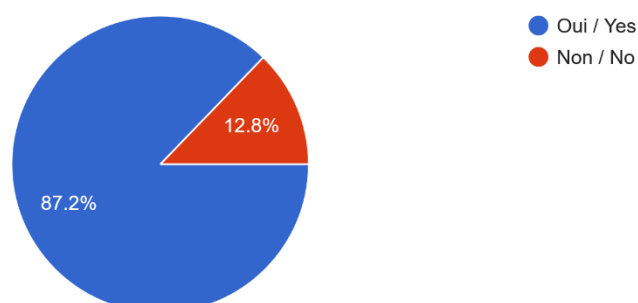
This conclusion is undoubtedly one of the main lessons of the survey. While technological innovations today offer new possibilities for detecting manipulated content, they do not replace the fundamental principles of journalism. For the professionals surveyed, the fight against disinformation relies first and foremost on the rigour of the journalistic approach, the quality of investigative methods, and the constant exercise of critical thinking.

Training in media and information literacy: an issue widely recognized by journalists

Among the responses proposed to address disinformation, UNESCO places media and information literacy (MIL) at the heart of its strategy (see the presentation at the beginning of this chapter). This approach aims to strengthen the ability of citizens, as well as information professionals, to identify misleading content, exercise critical thinking, and produce reliable and responsible information.

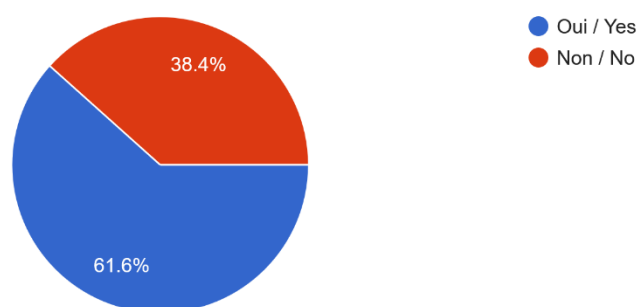
We sought to assess the level of awareness of this approach among the journalists surveyed.

Do journalists know what media and information literacy (MIL) is?



Beyond this general awareness, we asked them whether they had already received specific training in media and information literacy.

Have they ever received training in media and information literacy (MIL)?



To explore this issue further, journalists were then asked about the training they had received in combating disinformation.

The responses highlight a particularly dynamic training landscape, supported by a broad network of international organizations, African NGOs specializing in fact-checking, journalism schools, national professional organizations, and programmes funded by international partners.

They also reveal an evolution in the content of these training programmes. Beyond traditional information verification techniques, they now cover emerging topics such as climate disinformation, environmental journalism, verification of digital content, and the responsible use of artificial intelligence in journalistic practices.

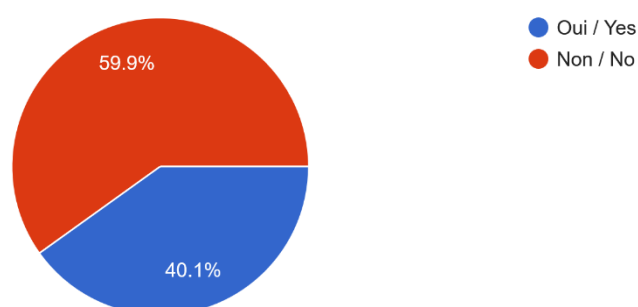
Respondents nevertheless point out that these opportunities remain unevenly distributed across countries and territories. Several journalists, particularly those working in rural areas or the most fragile regions, report having limited access to these training opportunities, despite the fact that they have become essential to the practice of the profession.

The responses highlight a core group of organizations that are particularly active in strengthening the capacities of African journalists.

Organisation	Observed frequency
UNESCO	★★★★★
Code for Africa	★★★★★
CFI Médias	★★★★☆
Internews	★★★★☆
AFP	★★★☆☆
Google News Initiative	★★★☆☆
Africa Check / DUBAWA / PesaCheck	★★★☆☆
Africa 21	★★☆☆☆
Deutsche Welle Akademie	★★☆☆☆
BBC	★★☆☆☆
GIJN	★★☆☆☆
ICFJ / IJNet	★★☆☆☆

We asked the same question regarding training specifically devoted to media and information literacy.

Which organizations provide training in media and information literacy (MIL)?



The responses show that media and information literacy (MIL) now relies on a particularly diverse ecosystem bringing together international organizations, African NGOs, media organizations, universities, public institutions, and civil society organizations.

UNESCO remains by far the organization most frequently mentioned. Journalists also highlight the growing role of African organizations such as Code for Africa and Africa 21, alongside international actors such as Internews and Deutsche Welle Akademie, as well as numerous national initiatives.

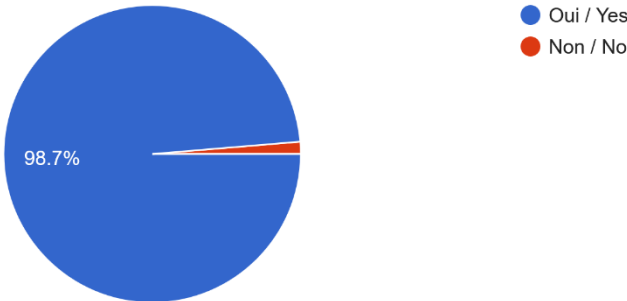
One particularly interesting finding of the survey lies in journalists' perception of MIL itself. It is not viewed solely as a tool for media professionals. Respondents also describe it as a genuine approach to citizenship education, developed in schools, universities, local authorities, and communities to strengthen the public's critical thinking in the face of information

manipulation. This dimension appears particularly important in the fields of the environment and climate change, where journalists believe that MIL can help improve understanding of scientific issues and strengthen the resilience of populations to disinformation.

The organizations most frequently mentioned are the following:

Organisme	Observed frequency
UNESCO	★★★★★
Code for Africa	★★★★☆
Africa 21	★★★★☆
Deutsche Welle Akademie	★★★★☆
BBC	★★★★☆
Internews	★★★★☆
Media Foundation for West Africa	★★★★☆
MONUSCO / Radio Okapi	★★★★☆
ICFJ / Reuters Facebook Journalism Project	★★☆☆☆
Search for Common Ground	★★☆☆☆

Finally, we sought to determine whether journalists would be willing to participate in training in media and information literacy if such an opportunity were offered to them.



The results are particularly encouraging. A very large majority of the journalists surveyed state that they would like to take part in such training. This interest confirms that information professionals are fully aware of the new challenges posed by disinformation and of the need to update their skills on a regular basis.

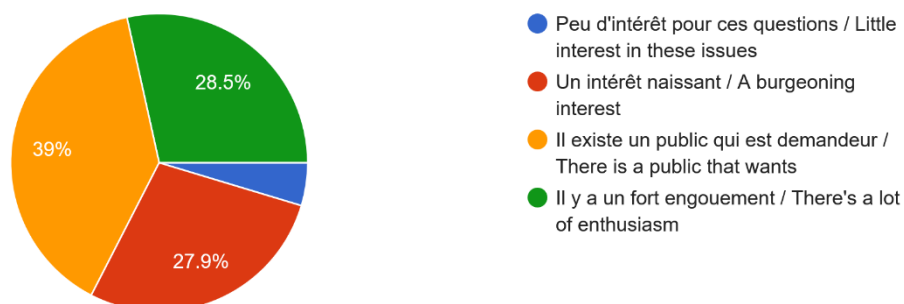
It also sends a strong signal to training organizations and technical and financial partners. In a context marked by the rapid expansion of digital technologies and artificial intelligence, the demand for capacity-building now appears to far exceed the training opportunities available in several African countries. Developing programmes that are accessible, adapted to local realities, and open to the widest possible audience therefore constitutes a major challenge for supporting the evolution of journalistic practices and strengthening the quality of information across the continent.



Coverage of Environmental Issues in African Media

Barometer of Environmental Coverage in African Media

As in the previous edition of this survey, we asked journalists about their perception of public interest in environmental issues. The results show that 67% of respondents believe that these topics generate genuine interest, or even strong interest, among their audiences.



Beyond this overall result, the responses provide a better understanding of the environmental concerns that currently engage African audiences. Although realities vary across countries and territories, journalists identify five major groups of themes that structure public attention.

Climate change clearly emerges as the dominant issue. It is mentioned in a very large majority of responses and has now become the main lens through which environmental issues are addressed. Journalists emphasize that the public is primarily interested in the concrete consequences of climate change: rising temperatures, changing rainfall patterns, droughts, floods, coastal erosion, sea-level rise, and the increasing frequency of extreme weather events such as cyclones and heatwaves. Issues of adaptation and resilience also recur frequently, reflecting a strong demand for solutions and practical information.

The second major theme concerns agriculture, water, and food security. In many African countries, environmental issues are directly linked to people's livelihoods. Journalists refer to the effects of climate change on harvests, cropping calendars, soil fertility, irrigation, as well as the development of agroecological and climate-smart agricultural practices. Water shortages, water stress, and threats to food security also rank among the concerns most frequently mentioned. This strong emphasis confirms that environmental issues are widely perceived through their economic, social, and food security implications.

The protection of forests and biodiversity constitutes a third major area. Respondents refer to deforestation, bushfires, charcoal production, illegal logging, poaching, and the protection of endangered species, mangroves, and protected areas. Several journalists also observe growing public interest in reforestation policies, ecosystem restoration, and the conservation of natural resources.

Issues relating to pollution and waste management also occupy an important place, particularly in urban areas. Journalists regularly mention plastic pollution, household waste, air, water, and soil pollution, wastewater, industrial waste, and recycling. These issues are frequently associated with their consequences for public health, urban sanitation, and the improvement of living conditions.

Finally, the exploitation of natural resources and the ecological transition are attracting growing interest. Respondents mention mining activities, oil extraction, artisanal gold mining, hydrocarbons, as well as carbon markets, carbon credits, renewable energy, the green economy, and the blue economy. The responses also reflect increasing attention to the governance of natural resources, conflicts over resource use, and issues of environmental justice.

Beyond these five major themes, journalists identify several more specific concerns that are closely linked to national or regional contexts. These include coastal erosion, the disappearance of mangroves, marine pollution, illegal fishing, human–wildlife conflicts, environmental crime, weather information, and the links between the environment and health.

Taken together, these responses show that African audiences are primarily interested in environmental issues when they have direct consequences for their daily lives. The topics that

attract the greatest attention are those that affect living conditions, economic activities, health, food security, or people's safety.

The survey therefore confirms that environmental issues are no longer perceived as exclusively scientific or ecological concerns. They are now approached as issues of development, resilience, and quality of life, at the intersection of economic, social, and health dimensions. This evolution is an encouraging signal for African media, which has a genuine opportunity to develop environmental journalism that is more firmly rooted in the everyday concerns of citizens.

Barriers to the Production of Environmental Content in African Media

Producing high-quality reporting on environmental issues remains a demanding task for a large proportion of African journalists. The responses collected show that the obstacles they face do not stem from a single difficulty, but from a combination of mutually reinforcing constraints: limited funding, difficulties in accessing information and the field, a lack of specialized expertise, political pressure, and security risks.

This accumulation of constraints partly explains why environmental issues remain underreported in some media outlets, despite growing public interest.

1. Lack of funding and logistical resources

Limited financial resources are by far the most frequently cited obstacle. Environmental reporting often requires lengthy investigations, travel to rural, forested or protected areas, specialized equipment, and significant time for fieldwork, while newsrooms generally have only limited budgets available for this type of reporting.

Some illustrative testimonies include:

"The main challenge is funding for travel, because our media organizations do not finance our reporting, even though most environmental stories are not covered in cities but rather in rural areas."

"Environmental journalism requires substantial financial resources and logistical support, which journalists generally do not have."

"Funding constraints also limit the depth of investigations, particularly for reports that require travelling to communities or remote areas."

Beyond travel costs, several respondents also mention the lack of technical equipment, audiovisual resources, Internet access and appropriate digital tools.

2. Difficult access to data, sources and experts

The second major obstacle concerns access to reliable information. Journalists explain that they often struggle to obtain up-to-date environmental data, consult official statistics or gather information from the relevant public authorities.

They also point to the difficulty of identifying scientists or experts willing and available to explain issues that are often highly technical.

Some quotations include:

"The lack of access to reliable and up-to-date data makes fact-checking difficult."

"Authorities are slow to respond to requests, and some information is simply not accessible to the public."

"Difficulty finding appropriate scientists and experts."

"Scientists are afraid to speak to journalists."

"The lack of environmental data and the refusal of some officials to grant interviews."

The absence of accessible data and diversified sources limits journalists' ability to produce well-documented, balanced and evidence-based reporting.

3. Difficulties accessing the field

Many of the main environmental challenges are located far from urban centres: forest areas, mining sites, agricultural zones, protected areas or regions affected by natural disasters.

These locations are often difficult to reach because of poor infrastructure, remoteness or the high cost of travel.

Journalists explain, for example:

"These stories often require frequent travel to the field, sometimes to isolated or hard-to-reach areas."

"Poor Internet connectivity and road conditions when travelling to forest and mining areas."

4. Political and economic pressure and lack of transparency

Journalists point out that environmental issues frequently involve major political and economic interests, including mining, hydrocarbons, deforestation, large-scale development projects and tourism.

In this context, access to information may be restricted, and some journalists report pressure intended to limit their investigations.

The testimonies are particularly explicit:

"Political sensitivity whenever stories involve powerful economic or government actors."

"Political or economic pressure that may limit freedom to investigate."

"Lack of transparency on the part of authorities and companies."

"Hostility from the authorities towards the press."

"I work for a public media outlet, and the government is often opposed to this type of reporting."

5. Insecurity and risks faced by journalists

In several countries, particularly those affected by armed conflict, terrorism or the illegal exploitation of natural resources, journalists emphasize that their personal safety constitutes a major obstacle to covering environmental issues.

Beyond physical risks, they also mention intimidation, threats and psychological pressure.

Some examples include:

"The deteriorating security situation, intimidation and threats."

"Working conditions can be dangerous in remote areas."

"Access to areas where natural resources are illegally exploited by criminal groups."

"Protecting the physical, psychological and legal integrity of journalists."

6. Environmental issues remain a low editorial priority

Several journalists regret that environmental issues continue to receive secondary treatment in some newsrooms. They rarely benefit from the same level of resources as political, economic or security stories and sometimes struggle to secure a place in editorial agendas.

Some testimonies include:

"Major environmental events are relegated to the background."

"A lack of interest from the editorial team. They believe these are not issues that appeal to the general public."

7. A shortage of specialized expertise

Reporting on environmental issues requires scientific, legal and economic knowledge that few journalists have had the opportunity to acquire during their initial training.

Respondents therefore emphasize the need to strengthen the specialized skills of media professionals.

They mention in particular:

"Skills and mastery of the subject."

"Limited access to training and capacity building."

"There is a critical shortage of specialized training in environmental journalism."

This challenge is becoming even more significant as the subjects covered—including climate change, biodiversity, carbon credits, carbon markets and natural resource exploitation—are becoming increasingly technical.

8. The complexity of environmental issues

Even when information is available, several journalists stress that these topics remain difficult to make accessible to the general public.

They require considerable efforts in science communication and popularization in order to explain complex scientific processes without oversimplifying them.

Some quotations include:

"It takes much more time to cover a subject in depth."

"People want to read stories with a human dimension... it is difficult to communicate about concepts such as 'net zero emissions'."

"We need to shape stories in ways that capture the interest of all audiences."

9. Uneven public awareness

Finally, some journalists believe that, despite growing interest, environmental issues are still not regarded as a priority in every country or by every audience.

They note in particular that:

"Limited public awareness and engagement can make it difficult to sustain attention on environmental issues."

"Low levels of environmental awareness among the public."

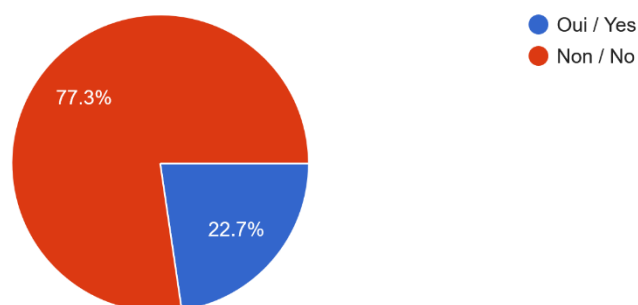
Overall, the survey shows that the obstacles to producing environmental reporting are both structural and editorial in nature. They relate to financial resources, access to information, professional capacities, working conditions and, in some contexts, the very safety of journalists.

These findings suggest that the development of environmental journalism in Africa does not depend solely on the commitment of journalists and newsrooms. It also requires sustained strengthening of the media ecosystem through improved working conditions, better access to public data, expanded specialized training, greater support for field reporting, and effective protection of press freedom. These are all essential levers for enabling the media to respond to citizens' growing interest in environmental issues.

...But also barriers to publishing content

We also asked journalists about the difficulties they face not in producing, but in publishing and disseminating their environmental reporting.

The following figure shows the proportion of journalists who report encountering obstacles to publishing their work.



The responses show that the challenges do not end with the production of environmental reports. Their publication also represents a significant hurdle. Journalists describe a media environment in which environmental issues struggle to compete with topics perceived as more newsworthy or more profitable. In addition to these editorial priorities, they point to economic constraints, political pressure and, in some cases, forms of censorship or self-censorship.

1. Environmental issues remain a low editorial priority

The most frequently cited concern relates to the place given to environmental issues in editorial decision-making. Journalists explain that newsrooms generally prioritize political, security, economic or sports stories, which are perceived as more attractive to audiences and advertisers.

Several journalists explain:

"Environmental issues are relegated to the background."

"The media are more interested in political issues."

"Limited public awareness and engagement can make it difficult to sustain attention on environmental issues."

"Environmental reporting is often not treated as a priority (...) It usually ends up on the last pages."

This hierarchy of news limits publication opportunities, even when reports have already been completed.

2. Environmental reporting is perceived as insufficiently profitable

Several respondents believe that environmental content is sometimes regarded as less profitable than other types of editorial production. As a result, media outlets are often reluctant to devote time or space to these topics because they are perceived to generate lower advertising revenue or attract smaller audiences.

Some journalists also refer to "pay-to-publish" practices, which further complicate the dissemination of investigations, particularly for freelance journalists.

These economic considerations constitute an additional barrier to the visibility of environmental issues in the media.

3. Political pressure, censorship and self-censorship

Journalists point out that environmental issues can quickly become sensitive when they involve public authorities, companies or powerful economic interests.

They mention, in particular:

"The risk of censorship and torture."

"Government censorship."

"Some stories are, in one way or another, 'buried' when they expose failures on the part of the authorities."

"With the military in power... it can be difficult."

"Media outlets (...) that publish stories exposing powerful political or economic interests sometimes face editorial resistance or discreet censorship for fear of reprisals, loss of advertising revenue or political pressure."

These testimonies show that the publication of certain content is sometimes determined more by the political or economic context than by its journalistic quality.

4. Editorial decision-making within newsrooms

Beyond external pressures, several journalists highlight decisions made within newsrooms themselves. They believe that editorial managers still devote limited attention to environmental issues, which are often perceived as too technical, insufficiently appealing or disconnected from the immediate news agenda.

The following testimonies are particularly revealing:

"Editors-in-chief often reject environmental stories on the grounds that they are too complex for the average citizen."

"Editors-in-chief are primarily interested in stories driven by the immediate news cycle."

"The editor-in-chief shows less interest in environmental reporting than in general news reporting."

These responses highlight the need for greater awareness and training not only among journalists but also among editorial decision-makers.

5. Economic constraints faced by journalists, particularly freelancers

Freelance journalists emphasize that completing an investigation does not guarantee its publication. Finding a media outlet willing to publish environmental reporting often remains difficult, especially when it requires substantial editorial investment.

They note, in particular:

"The difficulty of obtaining freelance assignments and the small size of many newsrooms."

"It is sometimes difficult to find a media outlet willing to support applications for grants or reporting projects."

Limited funding therefore affects the entire production chain, from conducting investigations to securing their publication.

6. More favourable situations in specialized media

Conversely, several journalists working for specialized media outlets or operating their own publishing platforms report encountering far fewer difficulties.

They explain:

"I work for a media outlet dedicated to environmental protection."

"Because I am the publisher of my own media outlet."

"I have a website for my newspaper, which allows me to publish my articles online."

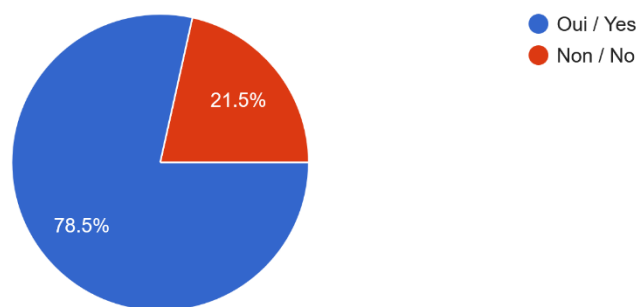
Although these situations remain in the minority, they demonstrate that editorial independence and media specialization significantly reduce barriers to publishing environmental content.

Overall, these findings show that the challenges faced by journalists concern not only the production of information but also its ability to reach the public. A report may be produced under favourable conditions without necessarily securing a place within a media outlet's editorial priorities.

The survey therefore highlights an often overlooked issue: the development of environmental journalism depends not only on journalists' skills or the resources devoted to investigative reporting, but also on the willingness of media organizations to recognize environmental issues as full editorial priorities. In this respect, raising awareness among editorial managers, supporting specialized media outlets and promoting economic models that better value environmental reporting appear to be essential levers for improving its visibility among the public.

Some topics remain difficult to cover

Are there any specific environmental issues that you have been unable to cover due to a lack of resources or external constraints?



The responses collected show that many environmental issues considered priorities by journalists remain insufficiently covered, not because of a lack of editorial interest, but because they require long, costly and sometimes risky investigations. Financial constraints appear to be the main obstacle, but they combine with other difficulties: limited access to the areas concerned, lack of reliable data, limited availability of experts, reluctance from public authorities, or the presence of economic and political interests likely to hinder investigations.

Journalists therefore identify several areas that, in their view, deserve much greater media coverage.

1. Environmental crimes and illegal exploitation of natural resources

The most frequently mentioned topic concerns environmental crime. Journalists would like to investigate more extensively the networks involved in the illegal exploitation of natural resources, but they point out that these issues are particularly complex to document. They often involve powerful actors, difficult-to-access areas and significant security risks.

The topics most frequently cited include:

- Illegal timber trafficking;
- Poaching;
- Illegal mining;
- Trafficking of protected species;
- Criminal networks linked to natural resources.

Some testimonies illustrate these difficulties:

“Investigations into rhino poaching, smuggling and the activities of criminal networks.”

“Conducting in-depth investigations into transnational environmental crimes in the region is often difficult.”

“The illegal timber trade and the gradual disappearance of classified forests; investigating the link between climate disruption, food insecurity and political and security instability in Mali.”

These responses show that environmental crime remains a blind spot in African media coverage, even though it represents a major challenge in terms of governance, security and development.

2. Deforestation, biodiversity and protected areas

Ecosystem protection constitutes the second major area that remains insufficiently covered. Journalists express strong interest in issues related to biodiversity, the loss of natural habitats and the management of protected areas, but explain that these topics require field reporting and specialised expertise that are rarely available.

The most frequently mentioned themes are:

- Deforestation;
- Mangroves;
- Wetlands;
- Classified forests;
- Nature reserves;

- Conflicts between human activities and wildlife.

Some representative quotes:

“Biodiversity loss, such as the disappearance of wetlands due to intensive agricultural activities.”

“Reports on mangrove forests, maritime issues (or oceans), and droughts or floods.”

“Deforestation in the Okapi Wildlife Reserve.”

“The destruction of crops by protected animals.”

These testimonies highlight the importance attached to conservation issues, while also revealing the difficulties involved in documenting ecosystem transformations on the ground.

3. Pollution, waste and environmental health

Pollution-related issues also rank among the topics journalists would like to cover more extensively. Respondents highlight plastic pollution as well as electronic waste, industrial pollution and their health consequences.

Some testimonies:

“Waste management and plastic pollution, which are highly visible in cities.”

“The long-term impacts of toxic emissions from the burning of electronic waste require sustained investigations.”

“Pollution of Lake Kivu and the impact of plastic waste on aquatic production.”

These responses show that journalists seek to better document the concrete consequences of pollution on public health, natural resources and local economic activities.

4. Local impacts of climate change

Although climate change is widely covered in the media, journalists believe that its local consequences remain insufficiently documented. They would like to produce more reports focusing on the direct effects of climate disruption on communities, agricultural activities and natural resources.

The most frequently mentioned topics include:

- Droughts;

- Floods;
- Desertification;
- Erosion;
- Decline in fish stocks;
- Agriculture;
- Food security.

Some illustrative testimonies:

“I wanted to cover a story about the decline of fish populations in our lakes, as well as the impact of climate on crops and medicinal plants.”

“Climate change and the destruction of coral reefs.”

“Travelling to a drought-affected area such as the Karamoja region in order to investigate how communities are adapting to climate change.”

“Combating desertification and protecting the environment in the regions of Diffa and Agadez.”

The responses show that journalists favour a practical approach to climate change, focusing on its social, economic and territorial consequences.

5. Emerging environmental themes

Finally, several respondents wish to develop coverage of topics that are still relatively underrepresented in African media but are expected to become increasingly important in the coming years.

The most frequently cited themes are:

- Carbon markets;
- Carbon credits;
- Critical minerals;
- Strategic minerals;
- Bioeconomy;
- Oceans;
- The polluter-pays principle.

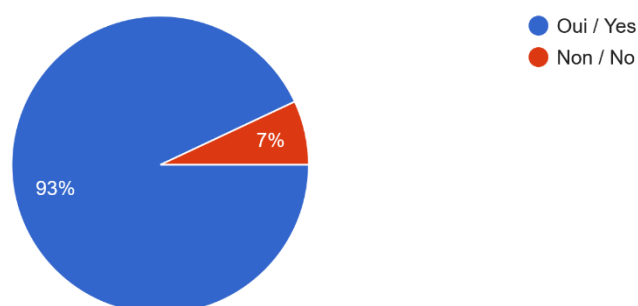
The emergence of these topics in the responses reflects a gradual evolution in journalistic priorities. Beyond traditional environmental issues, professionals are increasingly interested in the economic, geopolitical and financial dimensions of the ecological transition. This

evolution also highlights a growing need for specialised training to address topics that are often complex and still insufficiently mastered within newsrooms.

Overall, this question highlights a paradox already observed in previous sections: journalists clearly identify the environmental issues they consider priorities for their audiences, but economic, material, institutional and sometimes security-related constraints significantly limit their ability to cover them in depth. The topics that are least covered are precisely those requiring the most time, travel, expertise and investigative resources, confirming that the main challenge facing environmental journalism in Africa today is less a lack of interest than a lack of production capacity.

A Need for Continuous Training

Faced with the rapid complexification of environmental issues and the constant evolution of journalistic practices, the demand for training emerges as one of the most consensual results of this survey. Nearly 93% of the surveyed journalists state that they wish to strengthen or update their knowledge on issues related to sustainable development, a sign that these topics are now perceived as full-fledged professional skills.



Beyond this near-unanimous endorsement, the responses outline a demanding conception of training. Journalists are not merely asking for additional knowledge on climate or biodiversity. They express the need for a true professional development pathway, combining the mastery of scientific knowledge, the strengthening of journalistic methods, the appropriation of digital tools, facilitated access to data, and support in their career progression. This global vision reflects the profound transformation of environmental journalism, which now mobilizes increasingly diversified scientific, technical, digital, and editorial skills.

Better understanding scientific issues

The first need expressed unambiguously concerns the strengthening of scientific knowledge. Many journalists recognize that environmental issues today touch upon particularly complex

fields—climate, biodiversity, carbon markets, mining, sustainable agriculture, or international policies—which require a better mastery of concepts and data. Beyond acquiring knowledge, respondents above all wish to be capable of translating this scientific information into content accessible to the general public, without oversimplifying the stakes.

Strengthening investigative capacities

Journalists also consider that environmental issues require specific investigative methods. Environmental crimes, natural resource trafficking, conflicts of use, or the local impacts of climate change demand long-term, often interdisciplinary, and sometimes cross-border investigations. Respondents thus wish to deepen their skills in documentary research, source protection, information verification, and collaborative investigation. Several also emphasize the value of mentorship from experienced journalists in order to acquire working methods directly applicable in the field.

Developing data journalism

Data analysis now appears to be an essential skill. Journalists wish to learn how to exploit the numerous available databases on climate, biodiversity, or natural resources, but also how to produce maps, infographics, and visualizations to make this information understandable. Many also mention the use of satellite imagery, geographic information systems (GIS), or remote sensing tools, the use of which is growing rapidly in environmental investigations.

Mastering new digital tools

The responses also confirm the growing integration of digital technologies into journalistic work. After widely adopting social media as tools for information gathering and dissemination, journalists now wish to better master artificial intelligence, search platforms, fact-checking tools, drones, or open databases. This demand is part of a broader desire to adapt professional practices to the technological evolutions currently transforming the profession.

Making environmental topics more accessible

Journalists do not only want to better understand environmental issues; they also want to tell their stories better. Many of them express the need to develop new forms of storytelling to transform complex scientific topics into accessible, humanized, and engaging narratives. They wish to learn how to identify original angles, develop innovative formats, strengthen solutions journalism approaches, and better convince their newsrooms of the editorial value of these subjects. This expectation reflects a growing awareness: the quality of environmental information depends as much on scientific rigor as on the ability to spark public interest.

Gaining easier access to resources and networks

The difficulties encountered by journalists are not solely due to a lack of training. Many highlight that it remains difficult to identify reliable data, contact researchers, or reach specialized interlocutors. Respondents thus wish to benefit from professional networks that facilitate access to experts, universities, civil society organizations, and research centers. They also plead for the development of communities of specialized journalists to enable experience sharing and regional cooperation.

Making training an ongoing process

Finally, the responses show that journalists do not conceive of training as a one-time event but as a continuous process. Given the rapid evolution of scientific knowledge, digital technologies, and environmental policies, they wish to benefit regularly from updates, practical workshops, specialized training, and exchanges with international experts. This demand reflects a true culture of lifelong learning, now considered indispensable to the practice of the profession.

Securing the practice of environmental journalism

Finally, several journalists reiterate that certain environmental investigations can expose them to significant risks, particularly when they concern the exploitation of natural resources, extractive industries, or economic and political interests. They therefore wish to strengthen their skills in physical security, digital protection, environmental law, and risk management, in order to be able to practice their profession under better conditions.

Supporting career pathways

Finally, journalists do not dissociate training from their career development. They mention the need for mentorship, editorial coaching, access to international networks, but also support in seeking funding, partnerships, and degree-granting training programs. This dimension shows that expectations go far beyond the framework of technical upskilling: they reflect a desire to structure genuine professional pathways in a rapidly expanding field.

Ultimately, the responses collected bear witness to a strong dynamic of professionalization in environmental journalism in Africa. Journalists are not just asking for more training; they are calling for the construction of a comprehensive ecosystem combining knowledge acquisition, pedagogical innovation, professional support, access to resources, and the development of specialized networks. This ambition reflects the now-central place that environmental issues occupy in the contemporary transformations of the journalistic profession.



Journalistic areas to explore in 2026

In the final section of this survey, journalists were invited to identify the environmental issues they would like to cover during 2026, as well as the major international events they would like to report on.

The responses reflect a significant shift in editorial priorities. While local concerns remain central—agriculture, water, pollution, forests and biodiversity—they are now viewed within a much broader understanding of environmental issues. Journalists are showing growing interest in the economic, geopolitical and social dimensions of the ecological transition, including climate finance mechanisms, international negotiations, carbon markets and issues of environmental justice.

This evolution reflects a profession seeking to better connect the realities experienced by African populations with the major international debates. Respondents therefore aspire to produce journalism that is more explanatory, investigative and solutions-oriented, capable of shedding light on the concrete impacts of environmental policies on communities.

1. Climate change: documenting impacts and adaptation

Climate change remains, by far, the leading editorial priority for the journalists surveyed. However, their expectations extend well beyond covering international conferences or

extreme weather events. Above all, they want to document the concrete impacts of climate change on communities and highlight local adaptation initiatives.

The topics most frequently mentioned include:

- Community adaptation and resilience;
- Impacts on agriculture and food security;
- Droughts, floods and sea-level rise;
- Natural disasters;
- Impacts on women, young people and vulnerable populations;
- Climate-related mental health;
- Climate migration;
- Climate-smart agriculture.

This focus confirms the growing interest in solutions journalism centred on local responses.

2. Biodiversity, forests and ecosystem restoration

Protecting ecosystems is the second major area of interest. Journalists wish to expand their coverage of deforestation, landscape restoration and biodiversity conservation, while paying greater attention to the conflicts that sometimes arise between nature conservation and economic development.

The main topics mentioned are:

- Deforestation;
- Reforestation;
- Protected areas;
- Forest governance;
- Poaching;
- Wildlife trafficking;
- Mangroves;
- Coral reefs;
- Endemic species;
- Conflicts between conservation and natural resource exploitation.

Several respondents also expressed a desire to investigate the environmental impacts of mining activities and illegal logging.

3. Water: a strategic resource

Water emerges as one of the most cross-cutting issues for the coming year. Journalists intend to address both access to safe drinking water and the geopolitical dimensions of shared water resources.

The topics most frequently cited include:

- Access to safe drinking water;
- Integrated water resources management;
- Droughts;
- Transboundary river basins;
- Hydro-diplomacy;
- Wastewater;
- Water-use conflicts;
- Water security;
- Dams;
- Wetlands;
- Water pollution.

Several respondents wish to devote investigations to the Nile, the Congo Basin, Lake Kivu and the Comoé River.

4. Pollution and the Circular Economy

Combating the various forms of pollution also ranks among the journalists' key priorities. They wish to provide greater coverage of the health, economic and environmental consequences of poor waste management, while highlighting local recycling initiatives and circular economy solutions.

The main topics identified include:

- Plastic waste;
- The circular economy;
- Recycling;
- Household waste;
- Electronic waste (e-waste);
- Wastewater;
- Industrial pollution;
- Marine and chemical pollution.

5. Sustainable Agriculture and Food Security

Agricultural issues occupy a central place in journalists' concerns, reflecting their economic and social importance across the African continent.

Respondents expressed a particular interest in covering:

- Agroecology;
- Climate-smart agriculture;
- Agroforestry;
- The resilience of farming systems;
- Irrigation;
- Desertification;
- Soil fertility;
- Food security;
- Land-use conflicts.

This priority reflects a desire to better explain the links between climate, the environment and rural development.

6. Energy Transition and the Green Economy

The energy transition is gradually emerging as a new area of journalistic investigation.

Journalists wish to devote greater attention to:

- Renewable energy;
- The energy transition;
- Green hydrogen;
- Sustainable cities;
- Electric mobility;
- Green technologies;
- Energy efficiency;
- Public-private partnerships.

Several respondents also mentioned green jobs and the challenges of ensuring a just transition.

7. Climate Finance and Carbon Markets

International climate finance mechanisms are among the topics attracting the fastest-growing interest.

Journalists wish to gain a better understanding of, and explain:

- Climate finance;
- Carbon credits;
- Carbon markets;
- International financing mechanisms;
- Loss and damage;
- Green investments;
- Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs).

Many acknowledge that these issues remain complex and are still insufficiently understood by both journalists and the general public.

8. Environmental Diplomacy and Global Governance

The responses also reveal growing interest in the geopolitical dimensions of environmental policies.

Journalists wish to follow more closely:

- International negotiations;
- Environmental agreements;
- African regional cooperation;
- Water diplomacy;
- Global climate governance;
- Biodiversity agreements;
- North-South relations.

In particular, they would like to gain a better understanding of Africa's role in major international negotiations.

9. Extractive Industries and Environmental Justice

Natural resources remain a major area of investigation.

Journalists wish to report more extensively on:

- Artisanal mining;
- Gold mining;
- Critical minerals;
- Hydrocarbons;
- The environmental impacts of extractive industries;
- Mining pollution;

- Resource-related conflicts;
- The rights of local communities;
- Environmental corruption.

These issues are frequently approached through the lenses of governance, transparency and corporate accountability.

10. Climate Justice and Environmental Justice

The social dimension of environmental issues has now become a concern in its own right.

Journalists wish to document:

- Inequalities in exposure to climate impacts;
- The situation of the most vulnerable populations;
- Indigenous peoples;
- Environmental migration;
- Environmental rights;
- The social consequences of the ecological transition.

This evolution reflects a more inclusive approach to environmental journalism, centred on people and communities.

11. Technological Innovation and New Tools

Journalists also show growing interest in technological innovations that support the ecological transition.

They wish to explore:

- Artificial intelligence;
- Satellites;
- Drones;
- Precision agriculture;
- Remote sensing;
- Digital mapping;
- Technologies designed to combat climate change.

These tools are viewed as new means of documenting environmental change with greater accuracy.

12. Local Governance and Public Policies

Finally, several respondents expressed a desire to strengthen their coverage of environmental public policies and their implementation.

The topics most frequently mentioned include:

- National climate strategies;
- The enforcement of environmental laws;
- Climate budgets;
- Local government environmental policies;
- Corporate accountability;
- Environmental public policies.

This orientation reflects a willingness to assess public action more systematically and evaluate its impacts on communities and territories.

Major International Events Journalists Wish to Cover

Beyond thematic issues, journalists identified several international events that they consider priorities for 2026.

Unsurprisingly, **COP31** was by far the most frequently cited event. Respondents expressed a strong interest in covering negotiations on countries' commitments, climate finance, loss and damage mechanisms, carbon markets, and the concrete implications of the decisions adopted for African countries.

International biodiversity negotiations also attracted significant interest, particularly the implementation of the **Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework**, conservation policies, and commitments aimed at protecting species.

Discussions surrounding the **Global Plastics Treaty** emerged as another growing priority. Journalists wish to explain its implications for African countries while highlighting the solutions being developed across the continent.

Climate finance mechanisms and carbon markets were also identified among the most anticipated topics, alongside negotiations on water governance, transboundary river basins, and hydro-diplomacy.

Finally, several respondents expressed a desire to follow African climate conferences more closely, particularly the **Africa Climate Summit**, as well as international negotiations on combating desertification and restoring degraded land.

Taken together, these responses demonstrate that African journalists increasingly seek to position their work within both local and global perspectives. While remaining firmly rooted in the realities of their communities, they aspire to provide deeper explanations of the major mechanisms shaping global environmental policies and their implications for African societies. This evolution confirms the emergence of a more specialized, more strategic, and increasingly internationally connected form of environmental journalism.



Recommendations

At the conclusion of this survey, one finding stands out: the challenges faced by African journalists are largely structural. They concern not only the conditions under which journalists work, but also media business models, access to information, the safety of media professionals, training, the fight against disinformation, the adoption of new digital tools, and the coverage of environmental issues.

The different sections of the report reveal a strong convergence in the needs expressed by journalists. Above all, respondents call for greater resources to conduct investigations, improved access to data and sources, continuous professional training adapted to the evolving demands of the profession, a more protective legal environment, and greater recognition of the strategic role of environmental journalism in African societies.

These expectations extend far beyond the responsibility of journalists themselves. They call upon all actors within the information ecosystem: public authorities, media organizations, universities, professional associations, international donors, research institutions, civil society organizations, and technical partners. Building a strong environmental journalism sector requires a comprehensive approach that combines human investment, financial support, capacity building, editorial innovation, and effective guarantees for press freedom.

Based on the findings of this survey, twenty-one priority recommendations can be proposed.

1. Establish an African Environmental Journalism Fund

Financial constraints emerge as the primary obstacle to producing environmental reporting. Creating a permanent funding mechanism would support field investigations, long-form reporting, and cross-border investigations into major environmental issues.

2. Expand Reporting Fellowships

Journalists expressed a strong need for time and resources to conduct investigations. Expanding dedicated reporting fellowships would encourage coverage of complex topics such as biodiversity, climate change, extractive industries, carbon markets, and environmental crime.

3. Support Cross-Border Collaborative Investigations

Many environmental issues transcend national borders. Encouraging networks of journalists from different countries would improve reporting on timber trafficking, illegal mining, transboundary pollution, and wildlife trafficking.

4. Develop an African Mentorship Programme

Capacity-building needs concern both early-career journalists and experienced professionals. A mentorship programme would facilitate the transfer of expertise in investigative journalism, science journalism, data journalism, and storytelling.

5. Strengthen Scientific Knowledge

The survey shows that journalists wish to improve their understanding of climate, biodiversity, oceans, natural resources, carbon markets, and international negotiations. Regular training would enhance the scientific quality of environmental reporting.

6. Promote Environmental Data Journalism

The use of data, satellite imagery, geographic information systems (GIS), mapping technologies, and artificial intelligence represents a major opportunity to strengthen environmental investigations. Their wider adoption should be encouraged.

7. Improve Access to Environmental Data

Access to information remains a significant obstacle. Governments, public institutions, research centres, and international organizations should make more environmental data available in open, regularly updated, and media-friendly formats.

8. Strengthen Links Between Journalists and the Scientific Community

Creating platforms for dialogue between journalists, researchers, and experts would facilitate access to reliable sources, improve science communication, and strengthen the quality of environmental reporting.

9. Support Specialized Media Outlets

Journalists working for specialized media report fewer difficulties in publishing environmental stories. Supporting these outlets, as well as dedicated environmental sections within general news organizations, would increase the visibility of environmental issues.

10. Raise Awareness Among Newsroom Editors

The survey shows that editorial priorities remain a significant barrier. Editors-in-chief and editorial managers should be encouraged to give greater prominence to environmental issues within their editorial agendas.

11. Encourage Solutions Journalism

Journalists wish to highlight local initiatives, African innovations, and community-driven responses to environmental challenges. This approach can help strengthen public engagement with environmental issues.

12. Strengthen Journalists' Digital Presence

Social media, newsletters, podcasts, video production, and digital platforms have become central tools of the profession. Dedicated training would enable journalists to expand their audiences while strengthening their financial independence.

13. Promote Excellence in Environmental Journalism

Developing awards, competitions, festivals, and dissemination platforms dedicated to environmental journalism would enhance recognition of the field and encourage professional excellence.

14. Improve Journalists' Economic Conditions

Precarious working conditions remain one of the greatest obstacles to quality journalism. Improving salaries, social protection, employment contracts, and overall working conditions should therefore be a priority.

15. Strengthen the Protection of Journalists

More than six out of ten journalists reported violations of their professional rights during the past three years. Governments are encouraged to fully implement international and African instruments relating to press freedom, journalist protection, and access to information.

16. Develop African Professional Networks

Strengthening regional networks would encourage the exchange of experiences, joint training initiatives, editorial collaborations, and resource sharing among journalists.

17. Foster Innovation in Media Business Models

Given the financial fragility of many media organizations, efforts should be made to diversify revenue streams through digital subscriptions, events, editorial partnerships, audiovisual production, and crowdfunding.

18. Support Journalists Working in Rural Areas and Conflict Zones

Journalists operating in remote or conflict-affected regions face multiple challenges simultaneously. Dedicated funding, equipment, security measures, and logistical support would help reduce these inequalities.

19. Build Sustainable Partnerships

Partnerships between media organizations, universities, international organizations, NGOs, the private sector, and research institutions can support reporting, training, and the development of new tools, provided that editorial independence is fully safeguarded.

20. Position Environmental Journalism as a Driver of Transformation

The survey findings confirm that environmental journalism now extends far beyond reporting on environmental news. It contributes to public awareness, monitoring public policies, combating climate disinformation, strengthening democratic participation, and advancing the Sustainable Development Goals. The journalists surveyed expressed a clear willingness to contribute to this transformation.

21. Establish an African Environmental Journalism Capacity-Building Programme

Finally, in light of the needs identified throughout this survey, it would be appropriate to establish an **African Environmental Journalism Capacity-Building Programme**, led by a consortium bringing together **Africa 21**, **UNESCO**, other international organizations, universities, research centres, journalist networks, and international development partners.

Through an integrated approach, the programme could combine the key priorities identified by respondents: continuous professional training, mentoring, reporting fellowships, data journalism, access to scientific expertise, support for cross-border investigations, digital skills development, entrepreneurial support, and the defence of press freedom. Such an initiative would provide a coherent response to the needs expressed by journalists and help anchor the development of African environmental journalism within a sustainable long-term strategy.



Stay Connected & Support Our Work

Do you have comments, suggestions, or questions about this report? We would be delighted to hear from you. Please do not hesitate to get in touch to continue the conversation.

Partners: [Join Us!](#)

Sustainable development in Africa cannot be effectively documented without strong, independent, and locally rooted voices. **Africa 21** invites organizations, institutions, and development partners to actively support our journalism programme.

Why partner with us?

- **Support local expertise:** Help strengthen rigorous, field-based journalism across Africa.
- **Leverage our network:** Create meaningful opportunities for African journalists and engage them directly in your climate and sustainable development initiatives.
- **Maximize your impact:** Increase the visibility of your programmes and initiatives through high-quality, professional media content.

🤝 **Let's team up.** Together, let's fund the most crucial projects and provide experts and journalists with the means to act.

Contact Details:

Email: journalist@africa21.org

Website: www.africa21.org

Address: Africa 21 Association, c/o Maison Kultura, Rue des Savoises 15, 1205 Geneva, Switzerland.