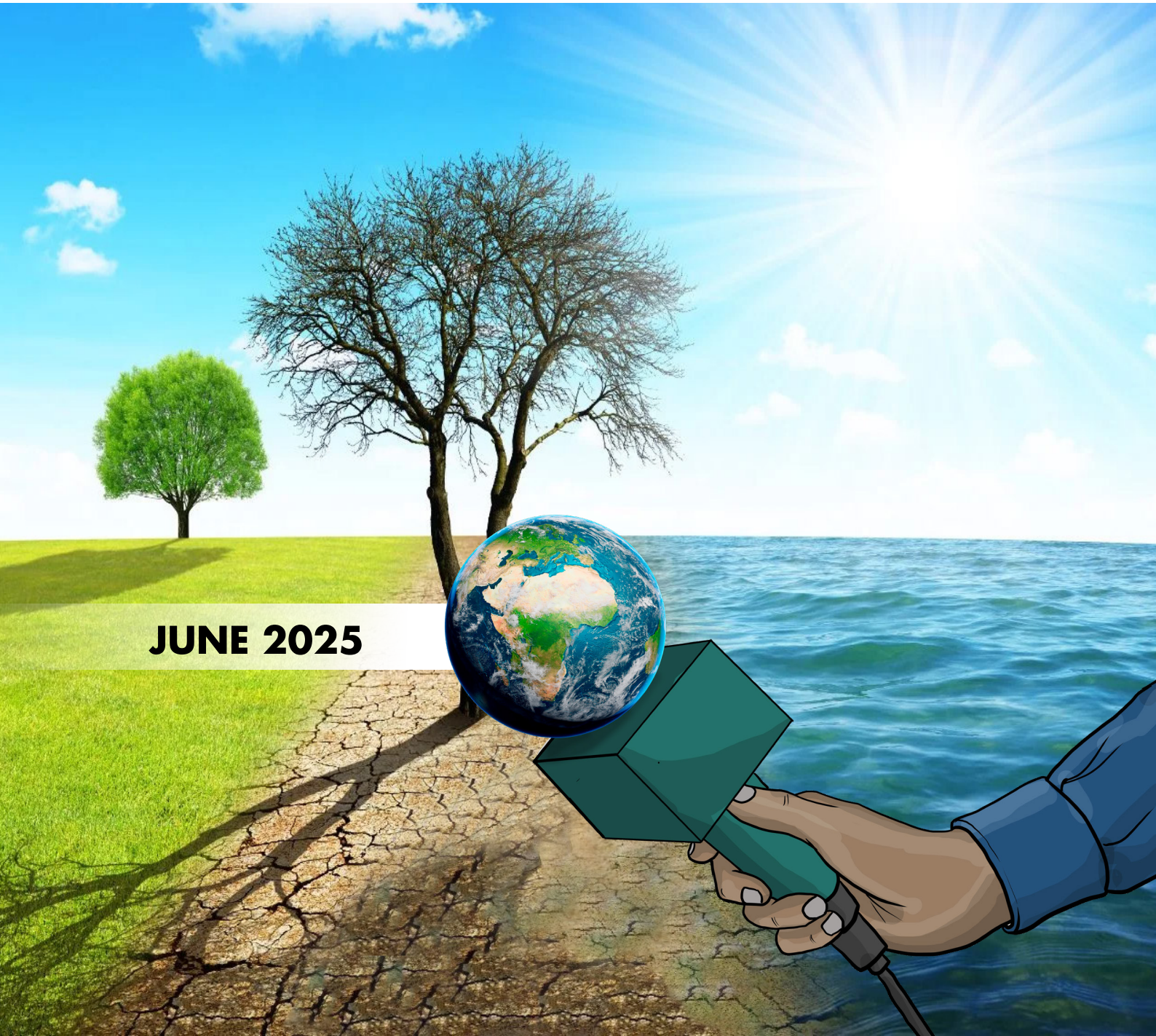
AFRICAN CENTRE FOR
ACME MEDIA EXCELLENCE

UGANDAN MEDIA COVERAGE OF CLIMATE CHANGE 2024-2025



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AUTHORSHIP AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The research team that conceived and conducted this study as well as authored and reviewed the report comprises Dr. George Lugalambi, Mr. Brian Ssenabulya, and Mr. Godwin Okiror of the African Centre for Media Excellence. Ms. Clare Muhindo provided editorial assistance.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Uganda faces the impacts of climate change, such as altered rainfall patterns, floods, recurring droughts, mudslides, and unprecedented warming, all of which threaten livelihoods. Global assessments rank the country among the most vulnerable to climate change and the least prepared to handle its risks. Consequently, news media do more than merely report events: they provide a public service by shaping what people understand, discuss, and decide regarding climate impacts and solutions.

This study analysed the scope and characteristics of climate change coverage in Ugandan media to provide evidence that can guide interventions aimed at improving media reportage on the topic. It is a quantitative content analysis of climate change coverage across four Ugandan news outlets: *New Vision, Daily Monitor, Bukedde,* and *Uganda Radio Network*. Findings include coverage volume, topics, formats, sourcing, prominence, and factors influencing coverage.

Key findings

- A total of 191 climate change stories were identified. *New Vision* accounted for 42.4 per cent of all stories, followed by *Daily Monitor* with 38.2 per cent, *URN* with 14.1 per cent, and *Bukedde* with 5.2 per cent. Coverage peaked in November 2024, driven by COP29, and declined in January and February 2025.
- Climate change stories were not so prominent in print, as 90.2 per cent were published beyond page five, and none appeared on the front page during the study period.
- Straight news dominated (62.3%), with far fewer features (14.7%) and opinion pieces (12.6%). Reporting leaned heavily on conventional "he-said-she-said" formats (79.6%); enterprise/interpretive pieces comprised 19.7%, and only one investigative story (0.7%) was identified.
- The most-reported topic was climate financing (25.7%), followed by ecosystems/biodiversity (16.2%), policy/regulation (12.6%), and climate-smart solutions (12.6%); scientific research and disaster management each received just 1.6%.
- At least eight in ten stories were triggered by event-based activities (notably CSO/NGO and government events at 23.1% each). Self-initiated reporting accounted for just 19%, underscoring a reactive news agenda.
- Ordinary individuals (22%), CSO/NGO reps (16.7%), and central/local government officials (31.3% combined) led sourcing; high-level political actors were rarely quoted. Women comprised only 29.1% of sources.
- Coverage tilted toward mitigation (49.2%) over adaptation (30.9%), with 19.9% addressing both.

This study makes recommendations to improve climate change reporting, such as strengthening local language reporting and community-based media, addressing the gender imbalance and capacity building of journalists.

INTRODUCTION

The study examined the extent and nature of climate change coverage in Ugandan media, focusing on three major daily newspapers and one online news agency. The newspapers studied were Bukedde (a Luganda-language daily), Daily Monitor, and New Vision (the only two English-language dailies). The online news agency analysed was the Uganda Radio Network (URN), a key digital platform known for its wide distribution of stories across local radio stations and other media outlets.

The study covered seven months from August 2024 to February 2025, during which all climate change-related articles published by the four media platforms were identified and analysed.

The study relied mainly on quantitative content analysis to explore the quantity of stories on climate change, the types of stories published, the reporting formats employed, the topics covered, and the voices represented in the coverage.

Primary objective

The main objective of the study was to assess how the media reported on climate change in order to provide evidence to inform interventions intended to improve Ugandan media coverage of the subject.

BACKGROUND

Climate change is recognised as a defining global challenge of the 21st century, with significant consequences for ecosystems, human health, and socio-economic development. The United Nations[1] defines climate change as long-term shifts in temperatures and weather patterns, which can occur naturally through events such as volcanic eruptions or changes in solar activity. However, since the 1800s, human activities, particularly the burning of fossil fuels, deforestation, and unsustainable consumption patterns, have become the primary drivers of climate change.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC, 2023)[2] reports that these activities have caused unprecedented warming, with global surface temperatures between 2011 and 2020 approximately 1.1°C higher than in the pre-industrial era (1850–1900). The World Meteorological Organisation[3] notes that land areas are warming faster than oceans, with temperatures rising more rapidly since 1970 than in any other 50-year period over the past 2,000 years. As such, the world is experiencing more frequent and severe weather extremes such as droughts, floods, heatwaves, and unpredictable rainfall patterns, which threaten livelihoods and human security. Developing countries are more vulnerable, given their limited adaptive capacity, reliance on climate-sensitive sectors such as agriculture and pre-existing socio-economic challenges (Serdeczny et al., 2017).

Uganda, like many other countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, contributes little to global greenhouse gas emissions[4] but is disproportionately affected. Its economy relies heavily on rain-fed agriculture[5], which employs 62.3% percent of households (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2024). According to the National State of the Environment Report 2024[6], climate change and variability are already impacting Uganda's environment and livelihoods. The country is experiencing shifting weather patterns, declining water resources, and growing uncertainty in agricultural production (National Environment Management Authority, 2024). These changes also put pressure on critical ecosystems such as forests, wetlands, and grasslands, leading to habitat loss, reduced biodiversity, and increased vulnerability of both people and wildlife.

Communication and public understanding of climate change

Given the scale and urgency of the crisis, communication becomes an important part of the national response. The media plays a critical role in how climate change is understood, prioritised, and acted upon. A global study by the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism found that news media continue to be the primary

[1] United Nations. "Climate Action Fast Facts." Accessed August 29, 2025. https://www.un.org/en/climatechange/what-is-climate-change

[2] Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. 2023. *Summary for Policymakers. In Climate Change 2023: Synthesis Report. Contribution of Working Groups I, II and III to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.* 1–34. Geneva, Switzerland: IPCC. https://doi.org/10.59327/IPCC/AR6-9789291691647.001

[3] World Meteorological Organization (WMO). "Greenhouse Gases." Accessed August 29, 2025. https://wmo.int/topics/greenhouse-gases

[4] https://www.emission-index.com/countries/uganda

[5] Uganda Bureau of Statistics. 2024. National Population and Housing Census 2024: Final Report, Volume 1 – Main. Kampala. https://www.ubos.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/National-Population-and-Housing-Census-2024-Final-Report-Volume-1-Main.pdf.

[6] National Environment Management Authority. 2024. National Status of the Environment Report (NSOER) 2024. Kampala. https://www.nema.go.ug/en/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/National-Status-of-the-Environment-Report-NSOER-2024.pdf.

source of climate change information for the public, led by television (31 per cent) and online news (24 per cent). McCombs and Shaw (1972) argue that the media do not simply transmit information but actively frame issues and influence how societies interpret and respond to them[7]. Therefore, coverage of climate change can raise public awareness, highlight local impacts, and mobilise communities, policymakers, and other stakeholders toward meaningful mitigation and adaptation measures. Guedegbe and Nforngwa (2023) further emphasise that the media can drive climate action by facilitating informed decision-making, keeping climate change high on the policy agenda, and holding political leaders accountable for their national and international commitments.

Media attention to climate change

Media attention to climate change is also crucial in countering misinformation and apathy[8]. However, climate science is often complex and highly technical[9]. Without effective media reporting and synthesis, these complexities can alienate audiences or promote misconceptions. In parts of Africa, research indicates that climate change knowledge levels are generally low, with significant gaps in public understanding (Afrobarometer, 2019). This can be attributed to the limited visibility and depth of climate change coverage in mainstream media, where environmental reporting often takes a back seat to political and economic news. A frame analysis of mainstream news articles from five African countries: Kenya, South Africa, Nigeria, Madagascar, and Ghana, found that climate change reporting tends to be episodic, with spikes in attention linked to catastrophic events such as floods and mudslides or major diplomatic meetings rather than sustained, in-depth coverage.

Through in-depth and investigative reporting, journalists can scrutinise government commitments under international agreements and monitor the implementation of adaptation and mitigation policies. This study seeks to understand how the media in Uganda is engaging with climate change as a public issue, to shed light on the current state of environmental journalism in the country and identify gaps and opportunities for enhancing the media's contribution to climate action.

[7] Maxwell E. McCombs and Donald L. Shaw (1972). "The Agenda-Setting Function of Mass Media," Public Opinion Quarterly36, no. 2: 176–87

[8] Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung. 2023. Media Perceptions of Climate Change in Sub-Saharan Africa. Nairobi: Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung. Accessed August 29, 2025. https://www.preventionweb.net/media/96226/download?startDownload=20250829.

[9] Harold, J., Lorenzoni, I., Shipley, T.F. et al. Communication of IPCC visuals: IPCC authors' views and assessments of visual complexity. Climatic Change 158, 255–270 (2020). https://doi.org/10.1007/s10584-019-02537-z

METHODOLOGY

Scope of the study

The study analysed news content across different platforms from August 2024 to February 2025. Content from the following media was assessed:

Newspapers: Bukedde, Daily Monitor and New Vision. These were selected because they are Uganda's only daily newspapers that have a significant influence on national discourse.

Online news: Uganda Radio Network (URN) is a subscription-based news agency with a wide reach through radio stations, online platforms, and print publications. URN also distributes its content through its free-to-access website, making it a good source for understanding online discussions.

A total of 191 stories from the four media platforms were analysed.

Methods of data collection

The study relied on quantitative content analysis of coverage of climate change issues by the three newspapers and one online news site.

Content analysis

We analysed manifest content. "Manifest content refers to what is explicitly stated and draws on the objective and replicable qualities of quantitative methods" (Hilton and Hunt, 2010).[10] However, where appropriate and necessary, we also undertook qualitative analysis of latent content.[11]

Content analysis was used to get an all-round sense of the nature of coverage in terms of both quantity and quality. Stories were coded and analysed based on a detailed coding sheet that contained a number of variables that were necessary to answer the set research questions. The variables included the following[12]:

1. Publication [name, type, etc]
2. Volume of climate change stories
3. Prominence/placement of climate change stories newspaper pages
4. Type of articles published on climate change
5. Climate change story prompts or origins
6. Reporting formats employed
7. Nature of coverage
8. Topics in climate change coverage
9. Use of context in climate change stories
10. Number of sources
11. Occupation of sources
12. Gender of sources

[10] Hilton, S. & Hunt, K. (2010). UK newspaper representations of the 2009-10 outbreak of swine flue: one health scare not over-hyped by the media?" Research Report, J Epidemiol, *Community Health*

[11] See, Krippendorf, K. (2004). *Content analysis: an introduction to its methodology.* Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

[12] A full list of the variables and their definitions is detailed in the coding sheet in Annex 1.

The content analysis was conducted by three research assistants who coded the data after attending a training workshop. Samples of the preliminary data entered were analysed to test intercoder reliability (or the level of agreement between the different assistants doing the coding). The reliability test showed a high degree of agreement on the way different variables were coded. The coding protocol and related tools are available on request.

FINDINGS

Volume of coverage

A total of 191 stories were published on climate change by the four media outlets studied between August 2024 and February 2025. New Vision at 42.4% published the highest volume of stories, followed by Daily Monitor at 38.2%. Bukedde, the local language daily, contributed the least share at 5.2%.

Media house	Frequency	Percent
New Vision	81	42.4
Daily Monitor	73	38.2
URN	27	14.1
Bukedde	10	5.2
Total	**191**	**100.0**

The findings suggest that coverage of climate change in Ugandan media is largely concentrated in mainstream, English-language outlets that largely serve elite and urban audiences. In contrast, Bukedde, the country's leading daily newspaper, with the highest circulation, published very little on the subject. Despite a steady decline in newspaper sales, Bukedde has maintained the highest circulation for the last seven years. In the 2023/24 financial year, it sold 18,474 copies, compared to New Vision's 15,906, according to the Vision Group 2024 Annual report[13]. This gap is significant because Bukedde primarily serves audiences who are less likely to read the English-language newspapers, yet are among the most vulnerable to the effects of climate change. It risks reinforcing the perception that climate change is a distant, elite issue rather than an urgent reality affecting food security, public health, and everyday survival.

Total coverage by month

The highest volume of stories on climate change was recorded in November, while January and February recorded the lowest numbers on the subject. In November, the two English-language dailies, New Vision and Daily Monitor, published more than double the average number of climate change stories compared to other months. New Vision ran 25 stories and Daily Monitor published 21, significantly exceeding their respective monthly averages over the seven months studied.

[13] https://www.visiongroup.co.ug/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/VG%20Annual%20Report%2024_Finall.pdf

The increased coverage in November was because of the extensive reporting on the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP29) held in Baku, Azerbaijan, from 11 to 22 November 2024[14]. Like in many countries, Ugandan media tends to scale up coverage around global climate summits, given their high visibility and the involvement of political leaders, international organisations, and civil society, and the new commitments that are considered newsworthy.

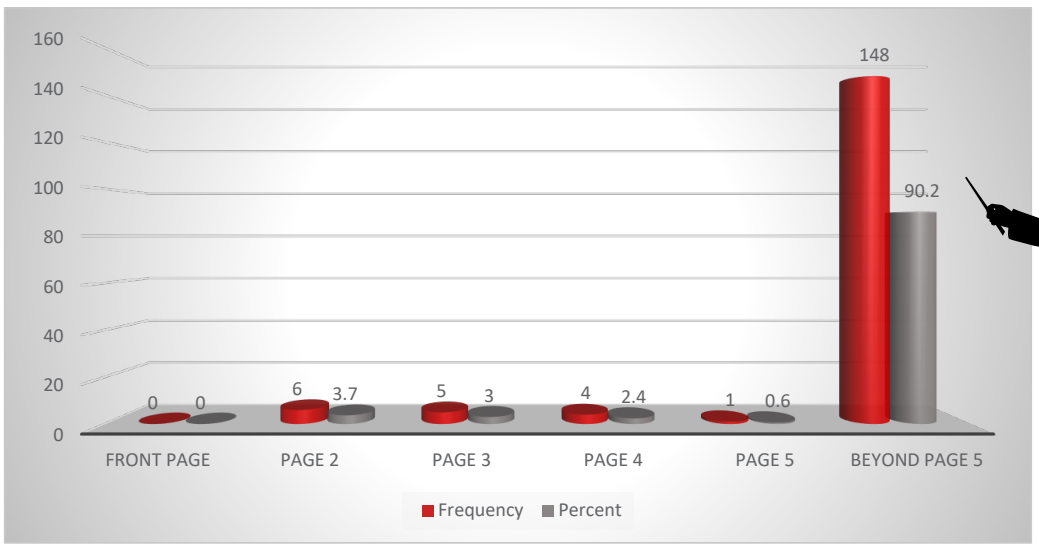
More so, media houses often send journalists to cover the conference, and in some cases, international organisations provide financial support to facilitate coverage. However, this temporary spike in reporting can mean that ongoing coverage of climate change issues is overlooked. A Daily Monitor journalist observed that climate stories generally receive less editorial attention compared to politics or crime, partly because most of the editors are former political reporters and are therefore more grounded in political beats. "During COP, stories are readily available, from press statements and news agencies such as AFP, so the editors publish those," the journalist noted.

Month	New Vision	Daily Monitor	URN	Bukedde
August	14	5	4	2
September	9	11	3	3
October	8	11	5	1
November	25	21	6	0
December	9	11	5	3
January	2	10	3	1
February	14	4	1	0
Total	**81**	**73**	**27**	**10**

[14] https://unfccc.int/cop29/about-cop29

Prominence of stories

Nine out of every 10 stories on climate change in newspapers were published beyond page five. Only 7% of articles on the subject were placed within the first three pages, and notably, no climate change story was featured on the front page during the seven months studied. From this finding, we note that climate change, despite its significance as a public affairs issue, was not prioritised by print media in terms of prominent placement.



All stories in Bukedde were placed beyond page five.

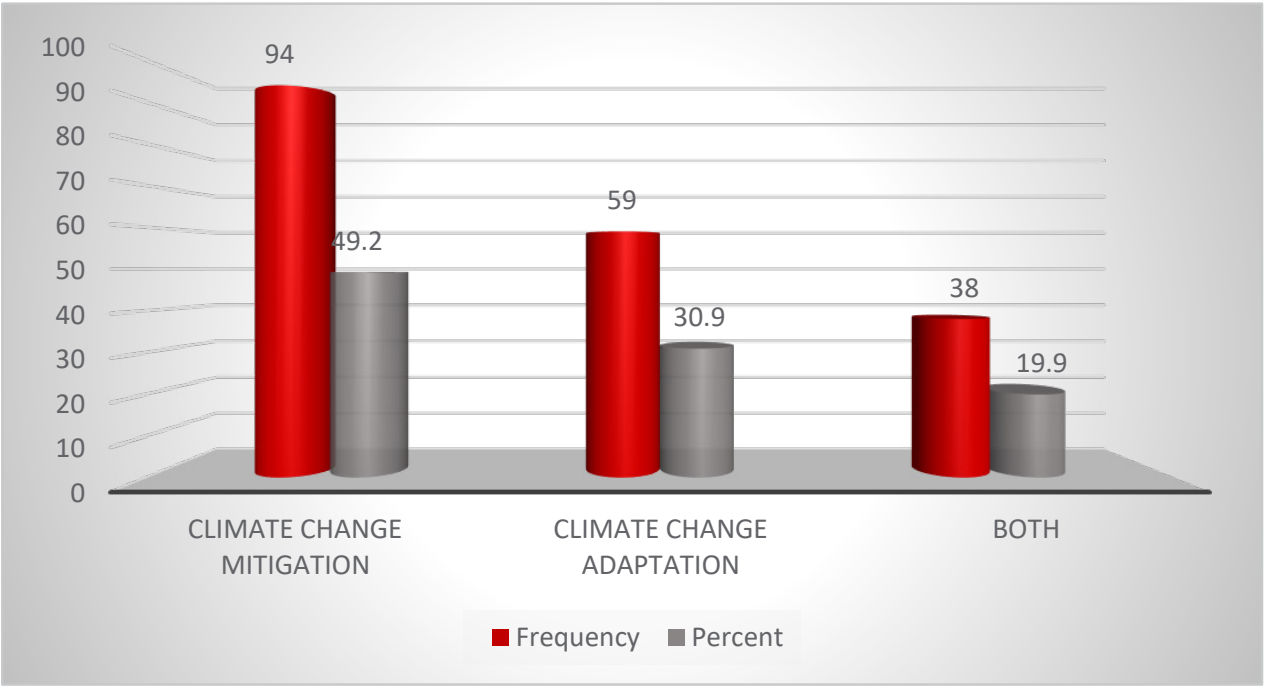
	New Vision		Daily Monitor		Bukedde	
Page location	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Front page	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0
Page 2	4	4.9	2	2.7	0	0
Page 3	2	2.5	3	4.1	0	0
Page 4	4	4.9	0	0.0	0	0
Page 5	0	0.0	1	1.4	0	0
Beyond Page 5	71	87.7	67	91.8	10	100
Total	**81**	**100.0**	**73**	**100.0**	**10**	**100**

Nature of coverage

Nearly half of the coverage focused on climate change mitigation. Three out of every 10 stories on climate change centred around adaptation efforts, while the remaining 19.9% addressed both aspects of the subject. This finding suggests a slightly higher emphasis by Ugandan media on efforts to reduce or prevent greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions over strategies aimed at coping with the current and anticipated impacts of climate change.

According to the European Environment Agency[15], adaptation means anticipating the adverse effects of climate change and taking appropriate action to prevent or minimise the damage they can cause, or taking advantage of opportunities that may arise. Mitigation, on the other hand, means preventing or reducing the emission of greenhouse gases (GHG) into the atmosphere to make the impacts of climate change less severe. Mitigation is achieved either by reducing the sources of these gases, such as increasing the share of renewable energies, or establishing cleaner transport systems, or by enhancing the natural carbon sinks, such as forests.

The slightly limited reporting on adaptation leaves the public under the impression that climate change is a technical or policy issue for governments and international actors, rather than a lived reality requiring urgent response at the local level to enhance resilience and preparedness.



New vision carried the highest number of stories on climate change mitigation, while URN at 48.1% had the highest proportion of stories on adaptation, followed by Daily Monitor at 43.8%.

[15] European Environment Agency (2024) https://www.eea.europa.eu/en/about/contact-us/faqs/what-is-the-difference-between-adaptation-and mitigation#:~:text=In%20essence%2C%20adaptation%20can%20be,of%20climate%20change%20less%20severe.

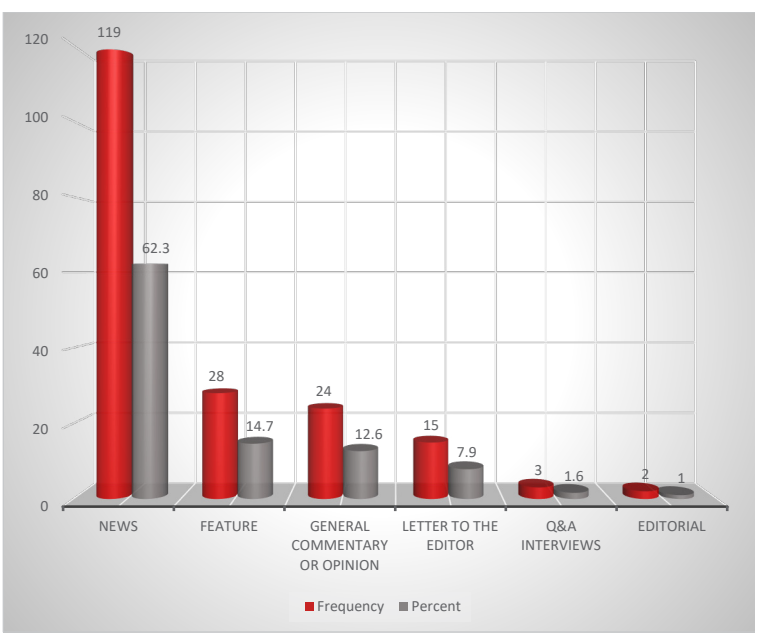
	New Vision		Daily Monitor		URN		Bukedde	
Nature of coverage	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Climate change mitigation	43	53.1	31	42.5	13	48.1	7	70
Climate change adaptation	12	14.8	32	43.8	13	48.1	2	20
Both	26	32.1	10	13.7	1	3.7	1	10
Total	**81**	**100.0**	**73**	**100.0**	**27**	**100.0**	**10**	**100**

Type of article

Consistent with trends observed in previous studies on public affairs reporting in Uganda[16], news stories dominated climate change coverage, accounting for six out of every 10 articles produced on the subject. Feature stories followed in a distant second at 14.7%, while general commentary or opinion pieces made up 12.6%. Letters to the editor represented 7.9% of the total, with Q&A interviews and editorials comprising the least frequent formats at 1.6% and 1%, respectively.

The dominance of news articles may be attributed to limitations within media houses. As noted by one online editor, "Media houses don't usually provide adequate guidance and resources to enable journalists to take time to prepare long features,"[17] explained the editor.

This finding raises concerns because article types like features, editorials, and opinion pieces play a critical role in enhancing public understanding. Unlike straight news reporting, these formats often provide background and expert perspectives, which help readers understand the broader implications of climate change.



[16] https://acme-ug.org/2022/02/28/research-report-on-ugandan-media-coverage-of-the-covid-19-pandemic-and-other-public-affairs-2020/

[17] Key Informant Interview, April 2022, Kampala

New Vision and Daily Monitor carried a wider variety of article types compared to URN and Bukedde.

New Vision had the highest number of opinions, while Daily Monitor had the biggest percentage of letters to the editor.

	New Vision		Daily Monitor		URN		Bukedde	
Type of article	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
News	54	66.7	31	42.5	27	100	7	70
Feature	8	9.9	17	23.3	0	0	3	30
General commentary or opinion	14	17.3	10	13.7	0	0	0	0
Letter to the Editor	2	2.5	13	17.8	0	0	0	0
Q&A interviews	1	1.2	2	2.7	0	0	0	0
Editorial	2	2.5	0	0.0	0	0	0	0
Total	**81**	**100.0**	**73**	**100.0**	**27**	**100**	**10**	**100**

Reporting format

Climate change reporting across the four media platforms studied was dominated by the conventional hard news format, commonly referred to as "he-said-she-said" journalism. Conventional reports accounted for nearly eight out of every 10 stories identified, indicating a strong reliance on routine event-based coverage. Enterprise and interpretive formats accounted for 19.7%, while only one investigative story (0.7%) was published over the seven months studied.

Reporters and editors have previously attributed the dearth of enterprise and investigative stories on public affairs reporting to limited resources, in terms of both personnel and financial resources, within many newsrooms. "The workforce in the newsroom is minimal. As a result, the amount of time you spend doing a story is dictated, yet such investigative and enterprise stories require more time to complete"[18], said a reporter from NMG. "Most media houses are not able to invest in investigative reporting because it's expensive and requires experienced and investigative journalists who are not common in our newsrooms"[19], added an editor from Chimp reports.

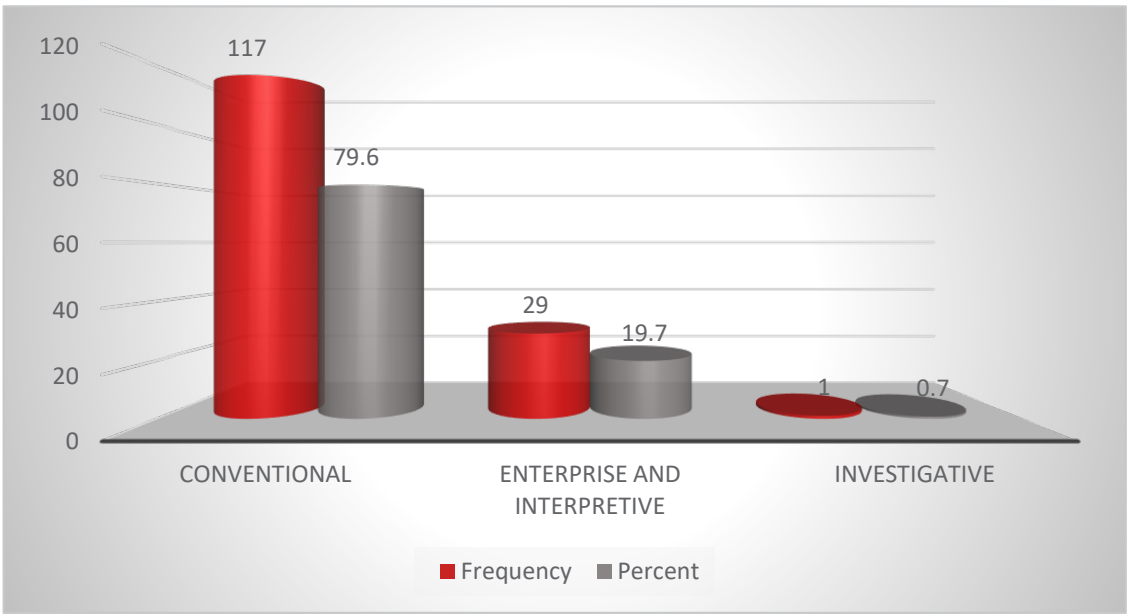
A Daily Monitor journalist further observed that climate change rarely receives sustained investment. For instance, NMG created a climate change desk with support from Palladium, but it largely produces desk-based stories or quick source-driven reports. "When you want to step out of the newsroom to investigate some of the issues, you are asked to work with a bureau chief who has to do the field work." He adds that external funding has had a limited impact, with climate change stories often left to interns and freelancers.

A media trainer reinforced this concern, attributing the gap in investigative journalism partly to the financial strains faced by many media houses, especially since the COVID-19 pandemic hit, leaving lasting impacts. "Sometimes journalists want to do such stories, but media houses don't want to invest resources and atten-

[18] Key Informant Interview, April 2022, Kampala

[19] Key Informant Interview, April 2022, Kampala

tion. Some just don't have the money to do investigative and enterprise reporting. However, where ACME has given grants, people have done very good stories."[20]



Under the conventional format, fact-finding is the dominant feature with common characteristics such as: spot or hard news that tends to focus on events; neutral and often uncritical transmission of facts; tendency to assign equal weight to all positions; faithful recording of the observed event or issue; suppression of the journalist's prior knowledge of the subject; depends largely or entirely on material provided by others; and tends to be event-centred.

Under the enterprise reporting format, the story is usually of the journalist's own initiative and effort. The coverage follows more leads than the usual straight news story and depends on material gathered or generated through the reporter's independent efforts. Enterprise stories tend to explore issues in greater depth, usually with the aid of narrative or literary techniques. These stories are traditionally presented as features. Instead of focusing on breaking news, enterprise stories focus on the forces that shape the events that may or may not be in the news. Exposition is the dominant posture under the investigative reporting format, with common characteristics such as the following: the story is the journalist's original initiative; reporting depends on material gathered or generated through the reporter's own effort; reporting uncovers information that an individual or entity may have tried to conceal from public scrutiny or information that an individual or entity may have had an interest in keeping out of the public domain; resources and evidence used by the journalist are clearly discernible; there is evidence of strong documentation (the paper trail) and sourcing.

This heavy reliance on conventional formats in climate change coverage demonstrates a need for investment in newsroom capacity to support more analytical and impactful reporting on climate issues.

URN only employed the conventional hard news or straight reporting format. Bukedde had the highest proportion of stories that used the enterprise format, while the Daily Monitor carried the only investigative story registered on the subject.

[20] Key Informant Interview, April 2022, Kampala

	New Vision		Daily Monitor		URN		Bukedde	
Format	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Conventional	50	80.6	33	68.8	27	100.0	7	70.0
Enterprise and interpretive	12	19.4	14	29.2	0	0.0	3	30.0
Investigative	0	0.0	1	2.1	0	0.0	0	0.0
Total	**62**	**100.0**	**48**	**100.0**	**27**	**100.0**	**10**	**100.0**

Topics in climate change stories

An analysis of the topics covered in climate change coverage showed that climate financing was the most frequently reported topic, accounting for over a quarter of all articles. In this study, climate financing referred to the mobilisation of public or private financial resources aimed at supporting mitigation and adaptation efforts related to climate change.

The second most covered topic was ecosystems and biodiversity (16.2%), encompassing stories that explored how climate change affects natural ecosystems and the diversity of life within them, as well as how these systems, in turn, influence climate processes. This was followed by policy and regulation (12.6%) and climate-smart solutions/innovations (12.6%), both of which reflect growing interest in policy responses and adaptive solutions that address climate change challenges.

Other reported topics included greenhouse gas emissions (12.0%), global warming (5.8%), and natural disasters (4.2%). The lowest frequency was observed in topics such as scientific research and disaster management, each accounting for only 1.6% of the coverage. This suggests a gap in the reporting of climate science and disaster preparedness, both of which are critical areas for building public understanding.

The distribution of topics highlights an uneven focus in media reporting, with financial and ecological aspects of climate change receiving more attention than scientific and disaster-related themes.

Topic	Frequency	Percent
Climate financing	49	25.7
Ecosystems and biodiversity	31	16.2
Policy and regulation	24	12.6
Climate-smart solutions/innovations	24	12.6
Greenhouse emissions	23	12.0
Global warming	11	5.8
Natural disasters	8	4.2
Scientific research	3	1.6
Disaster management	3	1.6
Other	15	7.9
Total	**191**	**100.0**

Original source of the story

At least eight out of every 10 stories on climate change originated from event-based activities, meaning they were triggered by scheduled activities initiated by external actors. The majority of these events that triggered the coverage were CSO/NGO and central government activities, both at 23.1% followed by international organisation events at 17%. The other event-based triggers of the coverage included company activities and natural disasters, among others.

Stories originating from independent reporting or investigation by the journalist or media house comprised 19% of the coverage. This limited proportion of self-initiated coverage reflects a broader pattern of reactive rather than proactive climate reporting within Ugandan media.

Origin	Frequency	Percent
CSO/NGO activity	34	23.1
Government activity (both central and local govt)	34	23.1
Independent reporting, research or investigation by the journalist/outlet	28	19.0
International organisation activity (e.g. COP29)	25	17.0
Company activity	17	11.6
Natural disaster e.g floods, mudslides, etc	3	2.0
Court or judicial activity	2	1.4
Document e.g. report, study/research	2	1.4
Religious activity	1	0.7
Parliamentary activity	1	0.7
Total	**147**	**100.0**

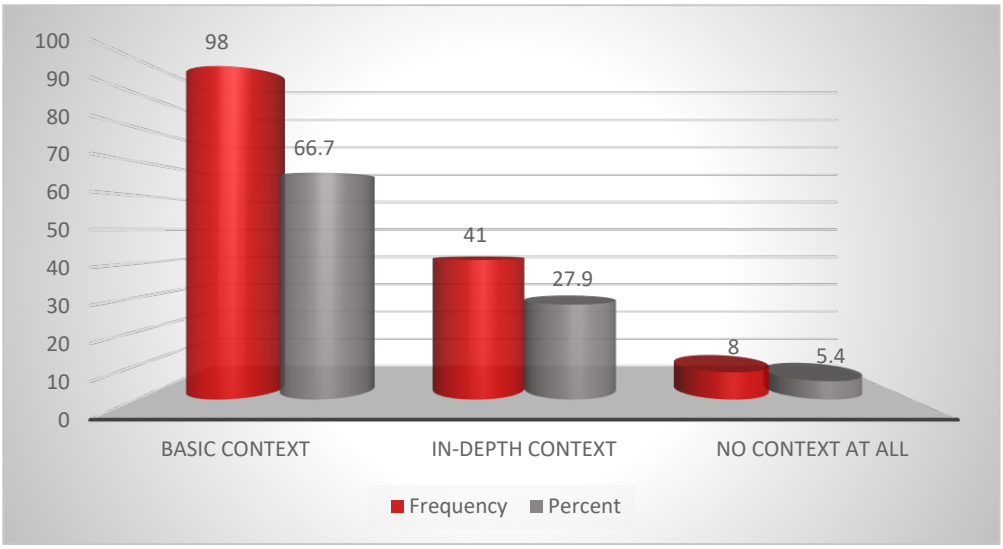
Use of context

At least nine out of every 10 stories registered on climate change were reported with some level of contextual background, enabling readers to better understand the issues being presented. 66.7% of the stories offered basic context, such as brief explanations of causes, impacts, or ongoing efforts related to climate change. Only 27.9% of the reports provided in-depth context, incorporating comprehensive background information. 5.4% of the stories lacked context (basic or in-depth).

The presence of contextual information in the majority of stories shows an encouraging effort by journalists to move beyond event-based reporting and provide readers with the necessary background to interpret climate change-related issues. However, the relatively low proportion of in-depth context points to the structural challenges journalists face when reporting on highly technical subjects such as climate science.

Generalist reporters, who dominate most Ugandan newsrooms, may find it difficult to unpack complex concepts around emissions, adaptation, or international negotiations without specialised training or support. A journalist at Daily Monitor noted that both a lack of interest and newsroom practices contribute to this gap, noting that even when climate stories are pitched, they are often reassigned to less experienced reporters, while senior journalists are directed to focus on political stories. "As an experienced reporter, I have tried to mentor younger journalists in climate reporting, but they still prefer event-based coverage, because at the end of the day they are appraised on story count, not on story quality or impact."

This aligns with broader challenges identified in climate change journalism across Africa. WAN-IFRA[21] reports that journalists face serious obstacles in accessing localised climate data and simplifying complex scientific concepts for general audiences, which is mirrored in Uganda's predominance of event-based or agency-driven coverage. A study by the Africa Policy Research Institute[22] adds that severe funding shortages compel journalists across Africa to default to crisis narratives and international framing, rather than investing in stories rooted in local resilience, solutions, and indigenous experiences (Mbungu, George and Roberts, 2024). Addressing these gaps will require sustainable investment in specialised training, data access, and narrative capacity to enable Ugandan journalists to tell locally relevant, empowering climate stories



URN had the highest proportion of stories with no context. Daily Monitor, on the other hand, recorded the highest volume of stories that used in-depth context.

	New Vision		Daily Monitor		URN		Bukedde	
Context	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Basic context	47	75.8	28	58.3	16	59.3	7	70.0
In-depth context	15	24.2	20	41.7	3	11.1	3	30.0
No context at all	0	0.0	0	0.0	8	29.6	0	0.0
Total	**62**	**100.0**	**48**	**100.0**	**27**	**100.0**	**10**	**100.0**

[21] Environmental Reporting Africa. (N.D). https://climatereporting.wan-ifra.org/context/challenges-faced-by-journalists-as-they-report-on-climate-change-and-environmental-issues-from-a-local-perspective/.

[22] Mbungu, G., George, S., & Roberts, I. (2024). Telling Climate Change Stories: Perspectives from African Journalists. Africa Policy Research Institute, Berlin, Germany. DOI: https://doi.org/10.59184/ccr024.02

Sources in climate change stories

Ordinary persons quoted in their individual capacity (22%) were the most frequently quoted voices on climate change, followed by CSO/NGO representatives (16.7%) and central government officials (16.3%), in second and third place, respectively. Local government officials also contributed significantly to the share of voices at 15%.

Other notable sources included business representatives (8.3%) and experts (6.5%). High-level political actors such as ministers (5%), diplomatic representatives (3.7%), and the president (0.4%) were minimally quoted.

There is a degree of diversity in sourcing, as coverage draws on voices ranging from ordinary citizens to diplomats and Members of Parliament. However, this breadth does not guarantee balanced or critical perspectives

Sources	Frequency	Percent
Ordinary person quoted in their individual capacity	101	22.0
CSO/NGO representative	77	16.7
Central government representative	75	16.3
Local government official	69	15.0
Business representative	38	8.3
Expert	30	6.5
Prime Minister and Ministers	23	5.0
Diplomatic representative	17	3.7
Foreign politician	7	1.5
Member of Parliament	6	1.3
Religious representative	5	1.1
Military/security representative	3	0.7
President	2	0.4
Cultural representative	2	0.4
Politician or political operative	1	0.2
Other	4	0.9
Total	**460**	**100.0**

Gender of sources

Whereas women and girls are known to be more adversely impacted by climate change[23], their voices were sidelined in the coverage, contributing only 29.1% of the total sources quoted. "Male sources are easily willing to speak compared to female sources, and that explains why the males dominate in the reporting of public affairs than their female counterparts," said an editor at The Independent[24]. "There are fewer

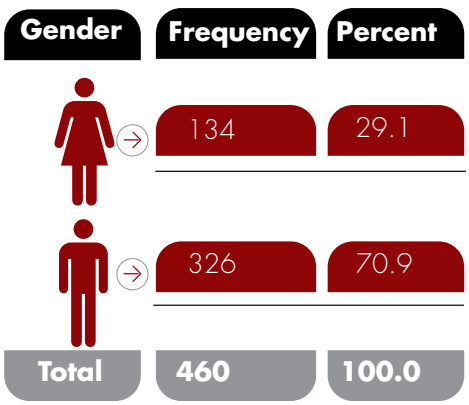
[23] https://www.unwomen.org/en/articles/explainer/how-gender-inequality-and-climate-change-are-interconnected

[24] Key informant interview, Kampala, May 2022

female sources available to speak to the media. Most of them are not open to giving responses", added a reporter at New Vision.[25] A freelance reporter blamed the under-representation of women's voices in media coverage on bias within newsrooms. "I should say, there is a general problem in our media. We have seen different initiatives by different organisations to make sure that women's voices feature in news stories, but I think it's the existing bias within the mostly male-dominated newsrooms."[26]

The underrepresentation of women's voices in coverage is further compounded by the low proportion of female journalists in Uganda. A 2021 study by the African Centre for Media Excellence (ACME)[27] found that only 20% of journalists in Uganda are female, a decline compared to earlier years. Existing scholarship suggests that female journalists are more likely to include female sources in their reporting, implying that the gender imbalance in the newsroom directly contributes to the exclusion of women's perspectives in climate reporting.

As such, addressing both the structural newsroom biases and the broader underrepresentation of women in journalism is critical to ensuring a more balanced and inclusive climate change coverage in Uganda.



New Vision recorded the highest proportion of female sources, followed by URN and Daily Monitor. Bukedde performed worst on this front.

	Daily Monitor		New Vision		URN		Bukedde	
Gender	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Female	48	27.3	55	32.5	25	30.9	6	17.6
Male	128	72.7	114	67.5	56	69.1	28	82.4
Total	**176**	**100.0**	**169**	**100.0**	**81**	**100.0**	**34**	**100.0**

Number of sources in a story

The number of sources quoted in climate change reporting serves as a key indicator of the depth and diversity of perspectives presented. The findings showed that over half (53.7%) of the stories used three or more

[25] Key informant interview, Kampala, May 2022

[26] Key informant interview, Kampala, May 2022

[27] ACME (2021). A portrait of Ugandan journalists in turbulent times. https://acme-ug.org/wp-content/uploads/National-Journalists-Survey-Report-for-Web-upload.pdf

sources, suggesting an effort by journalists to gather and reflect multiple viewpoints. This is a promising sign for comprehensive and balanced reporting on issues of climate change.

However, a significant portion of the coverage, nearly 43%, relied on only one or two sources, which can limit the scope of a story and potentially introduce one-sided narratives. Notably, 21.8% of the stories were single-sourced, and 3.4% had no identifiable source at all.

Number of sources	Frequency	Percent
No source	5	3.4
1 source	32	21.8
2 sources	31	21.1
3 sources	30	20.4
4 sources	18	12.2
5 or more sources	31	21.1
Total	**147**	**100.0**

New Vision had the highest proportion of stories (30.6%) with only one source, followed by Bukedde (30%). New Vision also had the highest number of stories without sources.

Daily Monitor registered the highest percentage of stories (66.7%) with at least three sources, followed by URN (63%).

	New Vision		Daily Monitor		URN		Bukedde	
Number of sources	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
No source	4	6.5	1	2.1	0	0.0	0	0
1 source	19	30.6	5	10.4	5	18.5	3	30
2 sources	14	22.6	10	20.8	5	18.5	2	20
3 sources	9	14.5	12	25.0	7	25.9	2	20
4 sources	4	6.5	8	16.7	5	18.5	1	10
5 or more sources	12	19.4	12	25.0	5	18.5	2	20
Total	**62**	**100.0**	**48**	**100.0**	**27**	**100.0**	**10**	**100**

Research has shown that using limited sources can undermine the accuracy, balance, and credibility of climate change reporting. Multiple sourcing is particularly important in environmental journalism because climate change is a complex, interdisciplinary issue that spans science, policy, economics, and real-life community experiences. Boykoff and Roberts[28] (2007) noted that the inclusion of a variety of voices, from scientists, policymakers, civil society, and affected communities, helps reduce bias and enriches public understanding of climate change. Similarly, Schäfer and Schlichting (2014) emphasise that multi-sourced stories are better equipped to convey the uncertainty and nuance inherent in climate science, while also making coverage more relevant to diverse audiences.

[28] Boykoff, Maxwell T., and J. Timmons Roberts. *Media Coverage of Climate Change: Current Trends, Strengths, Weaknesses.* Human Development Report 2007/2008. Background paper. United Nations Development Programme, 2007. https://hdr.undp.org/system/files/documents/boykoffmaxwellandrobertsjtimmons.pdf

CONCLUSION

The findings on climate change coverage by Ugandan media reveal both promising practices and persistent gaps in reporting. Prominence and depth of coverage on climate change were limited. Most stories were published beyond page five, and none made it to the front page, indicating a lack of prioritisation of climate change as a critical public affairs issue.

In terms of content, coverage leaned heavily towards climate mitigation with less emphasis on adaptation, which may limit public understanding of how communities can respond to the impacts of climate change. The dominance of conventional reporting formats over more enterprise or investigative pieces further constrains the media's ability to offer deeper insights into climate change issues. Additionally, the overwhelming reliance on event-based stories suggests a reactive rather than proactive approach to climate change coverage.

Encouragingly, most stories offered at least basic context, and a majority used three or more sources, which contributes to more balanced and informative coverage. However, there were still notable gaps in the diversity and gender balance of sources, with female voices being sidelined in the coverage of climate change.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Drawing from the findings, key informant interviews and literature, the study proposes the following recommendations to improve climate change reporting in Uganda.

Broaden coverage in vernacular media

The study found that coverage of climate change remains concentrated in English-language media that largely target urban audiences. Given that Bukedde, the country's highest-circulating newspaper with a predominantly rural readership, produced only 5.2% of climate stories. To address this gap, deliberate efforts are needed to strengthen reporting in local-language and community-based media. As Simiyu and Odera (2025) argue, accessibility to climate information cannot be achieved if language barriers persist. This involves reducing technical jargon, tailoring messages to different audience profiles, and employing culturally relevant storytelling approaches[29]. Media houses, government agencies, civil society, and development partners should collaborate to support the translation and dissemination of climate change information in local languages, to ensure that rural populations, who feed the nation through agriculture, can access, understand, and act on climate information.

Integrate climate change into broader news coverage

The study recommends that Ugandan media move beyond treating climate change as an isolated beat and instead integrate climate narratives across diverse areas of reporting. Climate change is inherently cross-cutting, influencing sectors such as agriculture, health, business, conflict, and even sports, while simultaneously being shaped by political and economic decisions. Evidence from the Climate Change and News Audiences Report 2024[30] shows that audiences are more interested in climate change stories when they are connected to other aspects of their daily lives (Ejaz, Mukherjee and Fletcher 2024). Therefore, Ugandan newsrooms should adopt strategies that mainstream climate change into existing beats, rather than confining it to occasional, event-driven coverage.

Diversify sources and address the gender imbalance

The study found a persistent underrepresentation of women's voices in climate change coverage, with only 29.1% of sources being female, consistent with other issues in public affairs. Media organisations, civil society groups, and journalism training institutions should collaborate to address this gap. This can be achieved through training programmes that equip journalists and editors with skills in gender-sensitive reporting and strategies for involving both female experts and ordinary women from affected communities. Civil society groups can support these efforts by helping media outlets build and sustain databases of credible climate experts, practitioners, and community representatives. Additionally, regular audits of media content

[29] Kennedy Njasi Simiyu and Isaac Otieno Odera, "Role of Community Radio in Demystifying Climate Change Concepts: The Challenges in Disseminating Information at Tulwoob Koony (TK) Radio in Mt Elgon, Kenya," International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science 9, no. 13 (2025): 296–306, https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2025.913COM0027

[30] https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2025-01/Ejaz_et_al_climate_change_and_news_audiences.pdf

should be carried out to evaluate gender balance in sourcing and reporting, with the results guiding targeted actions and ensuring that editorial policies on gender inclusivity are effectively implemented.

Establish and strengthen climate reporting desks

The establishment of dedicated climate desks or specialised correspondents within newsrooms has the potential to institutionalise sustained, expert coverage of climate change, moving beyond reliance on externally driven events such as COP summits, press statements and international news agencies. While some media houses, such as NMG, with support from Palladium, have introduced climate reporting desks, their operations remain largely limited to desk-based reporting or source calls. Investigative and analytical reporting, according to reporters interviewed, is often constrained. To fully realise the potential of climate desks, newsrooms must provide refresher training for editors and news managers, emphasising the editorial value of climate reporting and its relevance as a human-interest and public affairs issue. Additionally, newsroom practices should empower climate reporters to pursue investigative and field-based stories, ensuring that climate coverage is not overshadowed.

Encourage entreprise journalism

Since over 80% of stories were triggered by external events, climate reporting remains largely reactive. Media houses should encourage enterprise journalism, whereby reporters independently pitch and pursue climate-related story ideas. This would help situate climate change within everyday reporting rather than confining it to episodic events. This can be achieved through targeted training programmes for journalists and editors. Additionally, media houses have to proactively collaborate with experts and development organisations to provide journalists with the resources and insights needed to produce in-depth data-driven stories.

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