

STORYTELLING FOR *ENVIRONMENTAL* → *CHANGE*

Tackling Air Pollution in New Delhi

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Analysing News Media Narratives of Air Pollution:

Interim Summary of Findings (September 2023)

Seven Key Problems, as identified through news media analysis, interviews with stakeholders and literature review along with **Seven Key Recommendations**, based on these findings:

Problem 1

Air pollution crisis is **generated by interaction of multiple complex factors**, both natural and anthropogenic, which **makes it challenging to address**.

Solution 1

There is a **need for sustained year-round focus and interventions to tackle bad air crisis**. Rather than jumping into action during periods of intense catastrophic winter spikes, all stakeholders need to work on mitigation round the year.

Problem 2

Disproportionately large focus in media coverage **on natural factors** impacting pollution, such as weather systems, thereby **framing the crisis as lying outside people's control**. Presents the issue as a 'seasonal' crisis rather than a persistent year-round concern.

Solution 2

Media reportage is heavily skewed towards few contributing elements- natural factors, stubble burning and vehicle emissions. There is a **need to focus on multi-sectoral emissions for effective mitigation measures**. Pathways and human responsibility for mitigation need to be clearly foregrounded.

Problem 3

Disproportionately large coverage of winter stubble burning, overshadowing discussion of other, year-round, sources of air pollution, and **unproductive framing of pollution as a problem generated by 'other' states and rural communities**.

Solution 3

Need to remedy urban bias in media coverage of air pollution and operational scale of air pollution action plans. There is a need to extend design and implementation of action plans to rural areas. Media needs to **provide more geographically inclusive, multi-perspectival, coverage of air pollution**.

Problem 4

News cycle dominated by reports on policy initiatives to address air pollution, with similar stories appearing each year, **but little critical evaluation of these initiatives**.

Solution 4

Along with reporting on government interventions, media should also **critically evaluate the efficacy of policy measures**.



Seven Key Problems, as identified through news media analysis, interviews with stakeholders and literature review along with **Seven Key Recommendations**, based on these findings:

Problem 5

Large chunk of coverage is **AQI-gazing and containing significant levels of technical jargon**, which may be **inaccessible and alienating for general audiences**.

Solution 5

Supplement and contextualise pollution data with emotionally resonant narratives of lived experience of air pollution. Avoid reporting that is simply 'AQI-gazing'.

Problem 6

Although some key factors are consistently presented as to blame for air pollution, there is **little examination of complex structural or socio-economic reasons why people continue to engage in polluting practices**.

Solution 6

Investment is needed for **specialized training of journalists to understand and report on complex environmental issues**. Media institutions need to **prioritise environmental journalism and storytelling**, especially in the context of urgent challenges posed by climate change.

Problem 7

More media attention on inequalities that are intensified by air pollution. Incorporate marginalised voices of victims of air pollution, rather than relying solely on governmental and expert sources.

Solution 7

Reporting relies heavily upon government sources and expert voices, **little space is given to stories of those harmed by air pollution; very limited focus on inequalities in vulnerability and harm**.

For more detailed analysis, methodology and evidence, please visit: www.pollutionstories.org

