

IW:LEARN Comms Lab VII

Working with the media: turning your project into news

Hilary Clarke, FAO Common Oceans Program

About me

- 25 years experience as a journalist starting on local papers
- 7 years in Brussels for Bloomberg and then The European. 3 years deputy business editor for Independent on Sunday
- 4 years as a correspondent in Rome mainly for Sunday Times/Times
- 8 years comms consultant for WFP, IFAD and mainly FAO – web, media relations, 6 months in Sri Lanka, Haiti and Kenya
- Then back to journalism – start-up Arise TV (Nigerian channel), 3 years digital producer/writer for CNN and 3 years UK correspondent for SCMP
- Now back at FAO as comms consultant for GEF-funded Common Oceans Program – work on ecosystem approach to fisheries management and cross-sectoral cooperation in ocean areas beyond jurisdiction

How can the media help?

- Media coverage raises visibility and credibility of project for donors
- Creates awareness of the issues involved
- Can be an agent of social change
- Helps get your project's viewpoint across to governments
- Message also to wider public
- Just nice to have work recognised
- Journalists are not your enemy especially those interested in IW work/issues



What is it like being a journalist?



- 12000 journalism jobs lost in UK and US between 2023 and 2025
- 6 PRs to one journalist – so at international channels like CNN journalists can receive 100s of pitches a day
- Wages down, workload up, many now freelance
- Have to produce constantly to tight deadlines
- They have to pitch the story to an editor

Do your research



- What media outlets? (local, trade, environment focused)
- Which journalists cover transboundary issues, environment, climate change
- Have they covered similar issues? When?
- Find ways to get to know journalists – is there a local press club? Go to an event where the press will be there. UN press briefings.
- Build a media list – (generic, X, linkedin)
- Radio chat shows that cover topics related to your work, podcasts
- Don't forget the producers especially planning for TV and radio

What type of story?

The screenshot shows a web browser displaying a news article. The browser's address bar shows a URL from 'com/news/overfished-tuna-stocks-shrink-rfmos-must-be-open-to-trade-offs-for-ecosystem-challenges/'. The page header includes a navigation menu with categories like 'ALL ATUNA NEWS', 'TUNA INFO', 'PRICES', 'PROCESSING', 'FISHING', 'TRADE', 'SUSTAINABILITY', 'FARMING', 'HEALTH', and 'EVENTS'. The article title is 'Overfished Tuna Stocks Shrink, RFMOs Must Be Open To Trade-Offs For Ecosystem Challenges', dated April 2025. A 'VIEWPOINT' section features a photo of a man in a cap and a text block discussing the UN General Assembly's recognition of responsible tuna fishing. A sidebar on the right promotes the 'EUROPEAN TUNA CONFERENCE 2025' with a 'Register HERE' button and a 'LATEST NEWS' section listing several articles.

Overfished Tuna Stocks Shrink, RFMOs Must Be Open To Trade-Offs For Ecosystem Challenges

April 2025

VIEWPOINT

We have come a long way since the UN General Assembly, recognising the importance of responsible tuna fishing for biodiversity, nutrition, and livelihoods, designated May 2 as World Tuna Day eight years ago.

Then, 75 percent of the commercial tuna catches were estimated to come from stocks that were not overfished and where overfishing was not occurring. Today, that figure is over 90 percent. This improvement can be attributed to the concerted and collective effort of scientists, experts, stakeholders, and government officials, working through the five tuna regional fisheries management organisations (RFMOs).

One key element to their success has been the gradual embrace of management procedures, otherwise known as harvest control rules. These are pre-agreed guidelines that determine how much fishing can take place, based on indicators of the status of the harvested population. These guidelines are negotiated with all stakeholders and supported by science-based simulation frameworks before a net or line is cast.

The first tuna RFMO to adopt a management procedure was the Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin

EUROPEAN TUNA CONFERENCE 2025

May 5th, 2025 | Barcelona, Spain

[Register HERE](#)

LATEST NEWS

- [Today Is World Tuna Day](#)
- [Dampened Skipjack Trading Mood In Bangkok Tuna Hub](#)
- [China Becomes Party To PSMA To Combat IUU Fishing](#)
- [WCPO Transshipments Made Strong Recovery In March](#)

- News stories (report findings, new projects)
- Feature stories
- Interviews
- Opinion editorials
- Not always necessary to be the story – enough just to be in it as a commentator

Human interest or straight?

Flood resilience in New Orleans

Human interest angle

After surviving three separate floods in her New Orleans neighborhood, a local homeowner didn't move out—she and her family stepped up.

Today, they're leading efforts to advocate for green infrastructure, ensuring their community has a voice in the city's climate resilience plans.

Their story is one of perseverance, place, and people-power in the face of rising waters and climate change.

Drier, more direct angle

Your client is advocating for municipal funding to support green infrastructure in flood-prone areas of New Orleans.

A city council vote is upcoming, and the campaign highlights the potential long-term benefits of permeable pavement, rain gardens, and upgraded drainage systems to mitigate stormwater overflow and property damage.

When to pitch



- Timeliness is everything
- Be aware of journalist deadlines (daily, weekly, monthly)
- Don't send when reporter is likely to be busy or send a press release on a Friday afternoon
- Don't send for events that have already happened
- If linked to event or UN Day – contact the media well in advance
- For example, today is World Fisheries Day – so a weekly local paper should have been first contacted a couple of weeks ago

What type of pitch?



- Standard press release
- Email pitch
- Web story
- If it's a pitch to one journalist – just do one at a time to build trust (exclusive)
- Don't waste their time by trying to “sell” a non-story
- Try and avoid copying in lots of colleagues when corresponding

Writing and sending the pitch



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- Headline/title/subject line is everything, no jargon, no acronyms
- Be clear in a few words what articles is about
- Add a couple of context paragraphs
- If you send an article idea, be ready for immediate interest..or wait a month
- Answer any follow up questions promptly
- Be ready with additional information – list of concisely written facts
- If you don't get an answer leave it a while then follow up with call or another email
- NEVER send an AI generated article/pitch

Be demonstrative



- Take the journalist somewhere and show them something
- This works for all types of media, print, radio and television
- Let them talk freely with people
- Is there any action/noise they can film record

Preparing for interview



- Who will be talking to the media from your organization
- Send correctly spelled names and titles in advance
- Context is everything – prepare background to area, project, problem
- Work out key messages you want to get in article or media interview before hand
- Try to speak in conversational tone as you would to a friend. Best quotes/soundbites that way
- Don't ask for questions in advance unless offered
- Remember, the more you help the reporter out and make their work easier the better it is

Media ecosystem



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- Local/regional/national/international
- International news agencies/local stringers
- If you get an article in local paper it may get picked up by national/international media
- The more you are on the web/now AI/and name and project comes up more chance other journalists will see it
- In print first you then have something to send to radio/podcaster



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Thank you for your attention

Hilary Clarke

FAO Common Oceans Program

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