Reporting Air Pollution: Some Takeaways from Past Media Engagements in Catalyst Pilots

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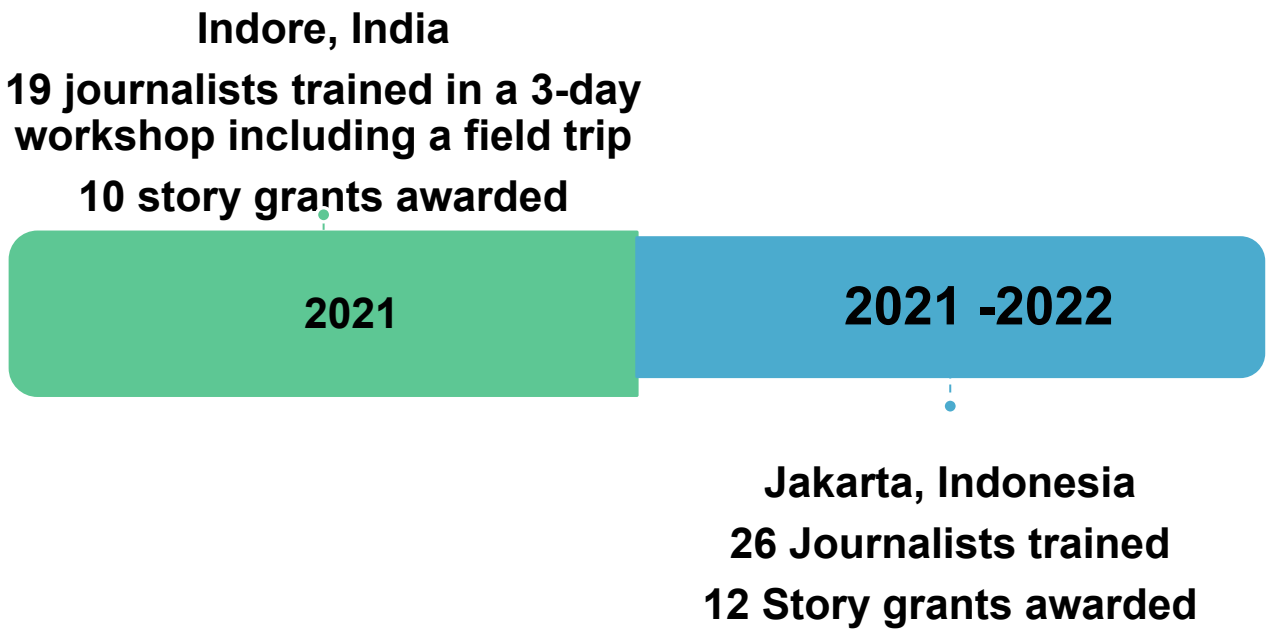
Clean Air Catalyst Pilots' Media Workshops and Grants

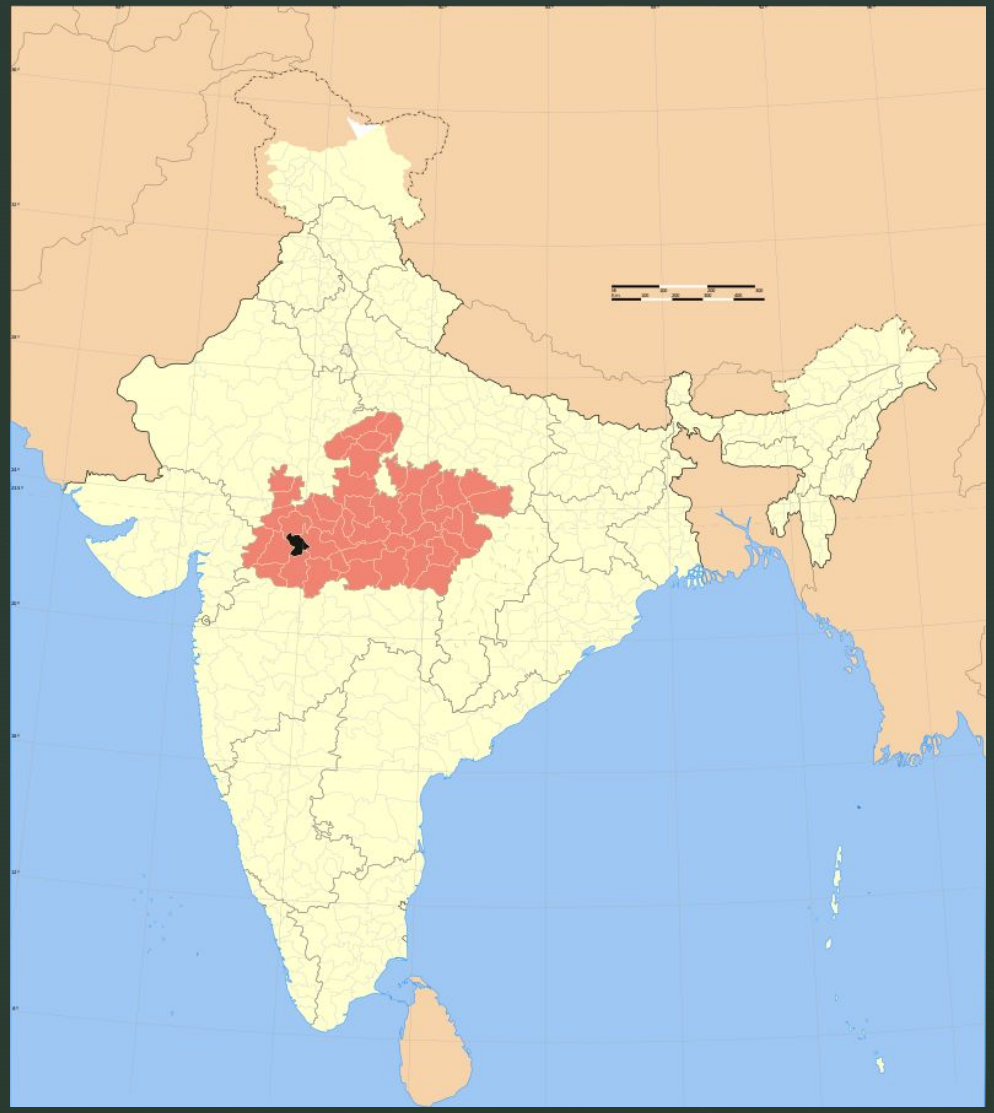


Indore, India at a glance

Recognized as the ‘cleanest’ city of India 7th time in a row

An education hub

Emerging hub of business-tourism



First Reaction was … Disbelief!

Our Biggest Observations

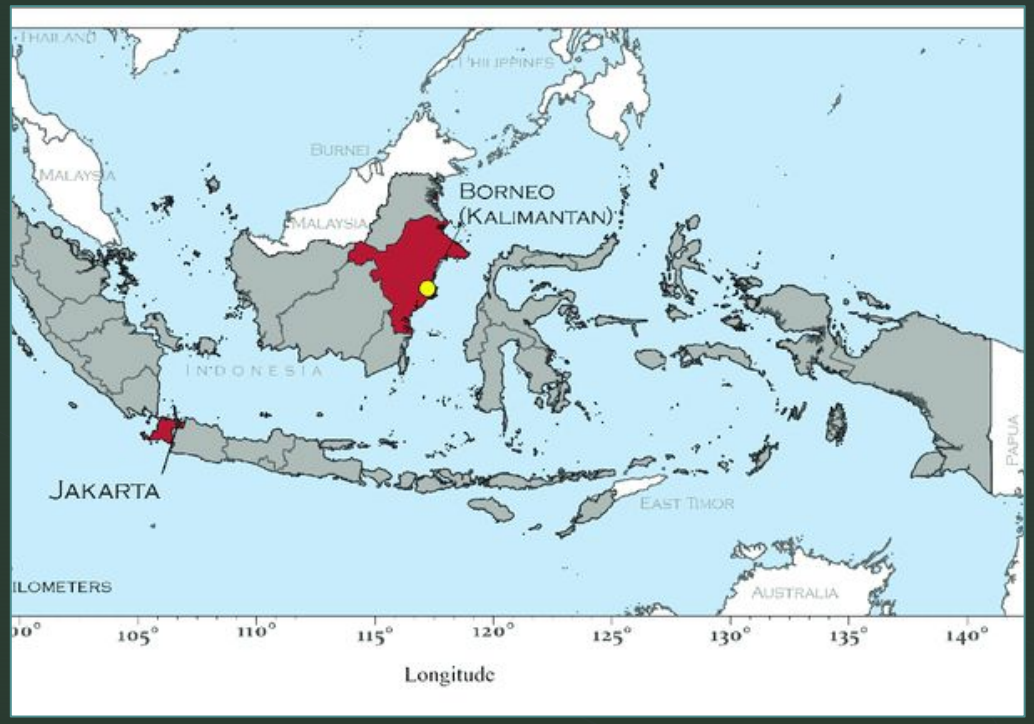
- Journalists were generally unaware of the city's air quality; struggled to understand how a clean city could have unclean air
- Journalists were unaware that increasing motor vehicles on the city road was an environmental problem
- They were also unaware of air pollution could also pose a personal health risk or could have gendered impacts .
- Finally, nobody perceived air pollution as a Technology story or a business/economic story

Post Workshop and Story Grant

- 63 stories were produced by the trainees and grantees in all
- These stories were focused on a wide range of subjects including effect of air pollution on human health (lungs, skin, eyes, reproductive) and environmental
- Journalists were especially able to identify sections of people or communities who were more vulnerable to air pollution
- They were especially aware of the fact that even if a city has no garbage on the street, it can still have polluted air and that tackling air pollution needed different sets of actions than a successful waste management initiative

Jakarta, Indonesia at a glance

- A densely-populated, highly climate- vulnerable city
- Gets frequent coal dust that's blown over from other provinces
- Air pollution is a politically-sensitive issue



Our Biggest Observations

- Journalists were generally aware of the city's air quality. However, while reporting, they focused on "who is to be blamed" than exploring the true causes and extents of air pollution.
- Journalists were unaware that increasing motor vehicles on the city road was an environmental problem; they perceived coal as the only source of air pollution
- Journalists had some awareness about air pollution's health impacts but not how many ways that could happen or how different sections of the populations could be affected.
- For local media, it was a political story, Some saw it as a climate story, but again, nobody was aware of other angles like economy, business, gender, or technology

Post Workshop and Story Grant

Journalists produced a total of 19 stories, including in-depth features.

These stories had a wide range of subjects including air pollution's effect on infants, elderly people, Transgender community and people with Autoimmune Deficiency,

This was the first time such a large group of journalists in the city reported on air pollution that are apolitical and focused on health impacts

Now, What Really Helped? Our grantees Highlighted a Few Points

- Learning directly from the experts
- Learning of the intricacies of air pollution impacts on health
- Interaction with affected communities
- Breaking complex theories and research findings into concrete stories
- Mentoring
- Story grants

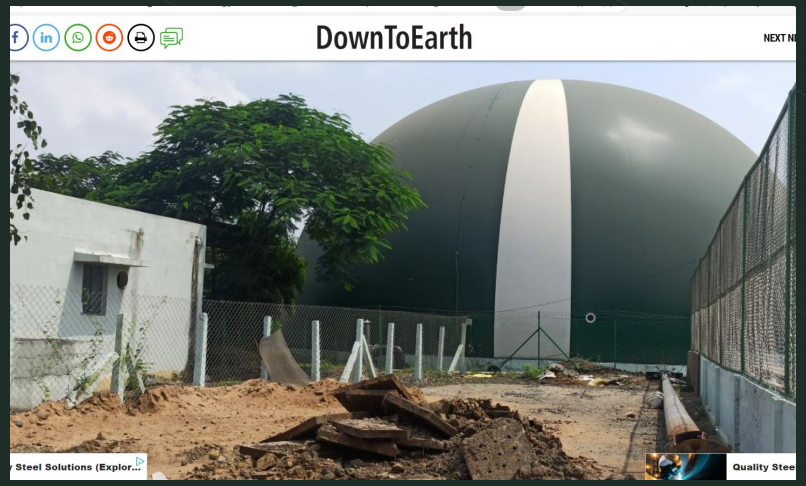
Some stories from Jakarta

Jakarta's shift to EV: When will residents make the change? (ekuatorial.com)

Maumere trans women enjoy clean energy, their peers in Jakarta struggle with air pollution (ekuatorial.com)

Stories from Indore

Can Bio-CNG click: Indore plant reducing air pollution, but odour remains a challenge (downtoearth.org.in)



Female sanitation workers in Indore work without protective gear despite worsening air pollution (enewsroom.in)

A Direct Impact

Indore journalist and our grantee reported on a pollution-causing cement warehouse

The report led to a public debate following which the government announced closure of the warehouse

Finally, we also tracked the influence of misinformation about air pollution both in Indore and Jakarta

Sharing some snippets of the misinformation gathered from the communities.

We Found these in India and Indonesia. What Would you Find in Nairobi?

- “Smoke – from all sources, flies upwards and therefore doesn’t affect us directly”
- “Air Pollution only occurs early in the mornings. If you don’t go out of your home at that time, you are safe”
- “If it doesn’t smell bad, its neither dangerous nor poisonous”

Thoughts? Questions?

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