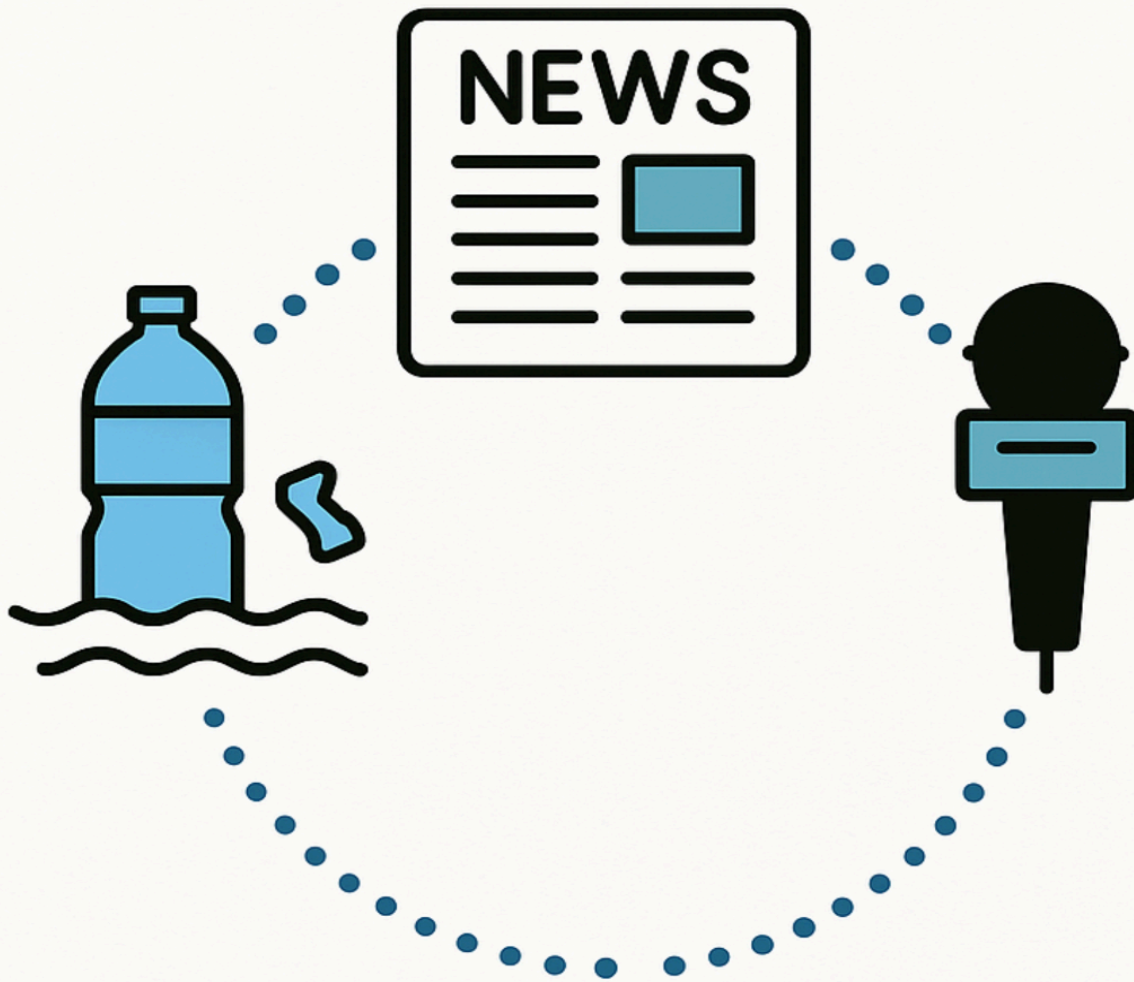




CAG

Citizen consumer and civic Action Group

Connecting the Dots: The Global Plastics Treaty and Media



A report on the proceedings of the
Media Workshop 2025
March 14, 2025

Report prepared by

Vamsi Sankar Kapilavai (Programme Lead, Environment & Climate Action, CAG)

Acknowledgements

The author acknowledges S. Saroja for her critical review of the report and the communications team for editing the report.

Special thanks to

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the incredible individuals whose support and outreach made this workshop a truly national engagement. Their efforts were instrumental in ensuring that aspiring journalists from leading institutions across India could participate in and benefit from this unique learning experience.

Mr. Afroz Khan (CAG, Chennai), Mr. Ramalingam Karunanidhi (CAG, Chennai), Ms. Kezia Shah (Delhi), Ms. Kathakali Naskar (Kolkata), and Mr. Aashish Razdan (Mumbai) deserve special mention for their unwavering commitment and proactive coordination in mobilising colleges from their respective cities. Their dedication to nurturing the next generation of environmentally conscious journalists is truly commendable. Thanks to their efforts, this workshop resonated across geographies, reaching young media minds far beyond its digital boundaries.

We also extend our sincere thanks to the colleges and journalism departments from Chennai, Delhi, Kolkata, and Mumbai, whose enthusiastic participation enriched the dialogue and brought diverse regional perspectives to the table. Their presence reaffirmed the power of academic spaces in shaping media that is responsible, reflective, and rooted in public interest.

Together, their contributions made this workshop not just an event, but a movement towards a more informed, environmentally literate, and action-oriented media landscape.

Programme

Session	Speaker	Time
Introduction and Context setting for the session	Vamsi Sankar Kapilavai	1400 - 1405
Session 1: Negotiations to News: How Journalists Can Cover the Global Plastics Treaty	Mr. Jacob Koshy	1405 - 1440
Q & A		
Session 2: Tools and Techniques for Effective Reporting (Video)	Ms. T K Smitha	1440 - 1515
Q & A		
Session 3: Tools and Techniques for Effective Reporting (Print)	Ms. Sonal Khetarpal	1515 - 1550
Q & A		
Vote of Thanks	Vamsi Sankar Kapilavai	1550 - 1600

The workshop opened with a welcoming introduction by Mr. Vamsi Sankar Kapilavai, who greeted the audience of aspiring journalists, early career media professionals, and curious learners. Representing the Citizen consumer and civic Action Group (CAG), a 39-year-old non-profit dedicated to upholding citizens' rights in consumer and environmental matters, he briefly outlined CAG's mission to promote transparency, accountability, and participatory governance. Setting the tone for the session, he emphasised the importance of effective storytelling in environmental journalism, especially when dealing with complex issues like the Global Plastics Treaty. He encouraged participants to engage actively, make use of the chat for questions and reflections, and assured them that recordings would be shared. Vamsi reminded everyone that while plastic pollution is a visible and urgent crisis, impacting everything from oceans to morning tea, it is the journalist's role to transform treaty negotiations and technical jargon into accessible, meaningful narratives. Acknowledging the challenges of covering such global negotiations, he stressed that the workshop would provide practical tools and expert insights to help participants cut through the noise. With this, he welcomed everyone to dive into a session that promised to build confidence and clarity in reporting on plastics and policy.

Session 1:



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**CONNECTING THE DOTS:
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Mr. Jacob Koshy
Journalist

The Hindu Group

**SESSION 1 - NEGOTIATIONS TO NEWS:
HOW JOURNALISTS CAN COVER THE GLOBAL PLASTICS TREATY**

About the speaker:

Mr. Jacob Koshy is a seasoned journalist with nearly two decades of experience, currently serving as Deputy Editor at The Hindu, he specialises in reporting on science, environment, and clean energy. With a background in electrical engineering from NIT Rourkela, he further honed his expertise with a Master's in India Studies from King's College, University of London.

Session Synopsis:

Mr. Jacob Koshy opened his session by framing the Global Plastics Treaty as a relatively new but critically important diplomatic process. Drawing from his extensive experience reporting on science, environment, and international negotiations, he provided a historical overview of how the treaty evolved, tracing it from UNEP's early consultations in 2017 to the latest negotiation round held in Busan, South Korea. Mr. Jacob Koshy carefully unpacked the core issues being debated: whether countries should cap primary plastic production, how to classify harmful polymers, and the debate over extended producer responsibility. He used clear graphics and real-world analogies to explain the complexity of positions taken by countries such as the U.S., India, China, and members of the EU.

Mr. Jacob Koshy highlighted India's nuanced stance, supportive of improved waste management, but resistant to production caps due to its economic dependencies on plastic-related industries. Mr. Jacob Koshy also described the structure of the negotiations, including the "contact groups" established to tackle distinct parts of the treaty, like waste management, chemicals of concern, financial mechanisms, and compliance monitoring.

From a journalist's perspective, he shared the logistical and ethical challenges of reporting on closed-door treaty talks. With limited access to diplomats and technical language dominating the sessions, Mr. Jacob Koshy emphasised the importance of building relationships with observer groups and other stakeholders for reliable insights. He urged aspiring journalists to prepare thoroughly, understand geopolitical dynamics, and master the art of simplifying jargon for lay readers. His advice: stay objective, be curious, and aim to leave your readers better informed. As he put it, "You must give the reader the sense that they became slightly smarter after reading your story."

Session 2:



The banner for Session 2 features a portrait of Ms. TK Smitha on the left. To her right, the CAG logo (Citizen consumer and civic Action Group) is displayed. The main title 'CONNECTING THE DOTS: THE GLOBAL PLASTICS TREATY AND MEDIA' is in orange text at the top right. Below the title, a dark blue box contains the text 'Ms. TK Smitha' and 'Independent Journalist' with a small icon between them. At the bottom, a dark blue box contains the text 'SESSION 2 - TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES FOR EFFECTIVE REPORTING (VIDEO)'.

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Ms. TK Smitha ↙ **Independent
Journalist**

SESSION 2 - TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES FOR EFFECTIVE REPORTING (VIDEO)

About the speaker:

Ms. T K Smitha is an independent journalist with nearly a decade of experience across print, television, digital, and audio, covering politics, climate, civic issues, law, and gender in South India. She has worked with Hindustan Times, NDTV 24x7, The Quint, and now collaborates on documentaries and long-form reports for Bloomberg, ABC News, Deutsche Welle, and Channel 4. She is also a recipient of fellowships from Deutsche Welle, the U.S. State Department (IVLP), and Chevening South Asia Journalism Fellowship 2025. She has also led workshops on refugee crises and migration. Her award-winning documentary 'Flooded but Parched in Chennai' led to a TEDx talk, and her investigative work on climate and social justice has secured grants from the Earth Journalism Network. She has covered major elections, interviewed key leaders, and reported on pressing issues like demonetisation, COVID-19, and caste segregation. Beyond journalism, she mentors young reporters and develops learning modules, including one on renewable energy. Her impactful storytelling has driven real-world change, from securing aid for flood victims to supporting girls' education.

Session Synopsis:

Ms. T K Smitha began her session by shifting the lens from policy to people. She argued that plastic pollution must be understood as not just an environmental crisis, but also a political,

social, and human one. Ms. T K Smitha critiqued the shallow treatment often seen in mainstream reporting, where stories are built around press releases and official statements. She urged journalists to go beyond the headlines, to the landfills, beaches, homes, and informal settlements where the real impacts are felt.

Using examples from her award-winning documentary work and reporting in Chennai, she demonstrated how to pair visuals with human stories to create a lasting impact. A standout example was her report from Pallikaranai marshland, where she contrasted the lush wetland ecosystem with an adjacent landfill choked with plastic waste. Ms. T K Smitha screened a short excerpt to show how visual storytelling can break through apathy and make abstract statistics feel urgent and real.

Ms. T K Smitha offered practical tips on using tools like Google Earth Studio, Flourish Studio, and infographics to enhance storytelling. Importantly, she highlighted the need to approach the issue intersectionally, acknowledging how plastic pollution intersects with caste, class, gender, and access to resources. Journalists, she argued, have a responsibility to platform marginalised voices like waste pickers, who are often excluded from policy conversations despite doing the bulk of waste management work. Her mantra: show the conflict, follow the consequences, and don't forget the solutions. For her, effective journalism isn't just about relaying information but about inspiring reflection and action: "Don't just tell. Show and tell."

Session 3:

A promotional graphic for Session 3. On the left is a portrait of Ms. Sonal Khetarpal, a woman with dark curly hair wearing an orange sari. To her right is a dark blue box with white text identifying her as 'Ms. Sonal Khetarpal' and 'India Today Journalist'. Above the portrait is the CAG logo (Citizen consumer and civic Action Group) and the session title 'CONNECTING THE DOTS: THE GLOBAL PLASTICS TREATY AND MEDIA'. At the bottom, a dark blue banner contains the text 'SESSION 3 - TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES FOR EFFECTIVE REPORTING (PRINT)'. The background features a light green and white dotted pattern.

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Ms. Sonal Khetarpal India Today
Journalist

SESSION 3 - TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES FOR EFFECTIVE REPORTING (PRINT)

About the speaker:

Ms. Sonal Khetarpal brings over 15 years of experience across India and Singapore, with a strong foundation in the media sector. She began her career in Singapore, working in publishing houses for four years before returning to her hometown, Delhi, in 2012 to pursue journalism. Over the years, she has worked with leading media organisations such as Business Today, Financial Express, Business World, and Nine Dot Nine, covering a diverse range of topics including management, human resources, consumer brands, education, social media, and start-ups. Currently, at India Today magazine, she specialises in long-form trend pieces on consumer businesses, HR, environment, gender, and climate, among others. She holds a Master's degree in English Literature (Literary Studies) from the National University of Singapore and a Bachelor's degree in English Literature from Daulat Ram College, University of Delhi.

Session Synopsis:

Ms. Sonal Khetarpal's session focused on the role of print journalism in shaping the public's understanding of environmental policy. She emphasised the need to "connect the dots" between global treaties and everyday realities, helping readers understand why something like the Global Plastics Treaty matters to them. For Ms. Sonal Khetarpal, effective reporting starts with clarity on the audience: Who are they? What do they know? What do they need to know?

Ms. Sonal Khetarpal shared her process of stakeholder mapping, identifying voices across sectors, from government and corporates to civil society and local communities, to build well-rounded narratives. She encouraged journalists to personalise data with relatable examples, such as linking plastic use to rising health concerns or economic costs. Importantly, she stressed the importance of platforming under-represented voices while also engaging decision-makers via social media and email outreach.

Ms. Sonal Khetarpal also addressed the importance of using visuals and multi-format content, especially in a print landscape. She noted that journalists are not just competing with other news stories but with viral videos, influencers, and entertainment content. Her advice: break down the story, use compelling hooks, and deliver value. She closed by reminding participants that stories on plastic are everywhere, from grocery bags to health clinics, and with creativity and clarity, journalists can make them resonate. For Ms. Sonal Khetarpal, the plastic story is everywhere and ever-relevant: "Plastic is everywhere, so are opportunities to tell better stories."

The Q&A session covered key questions around biodegradable alternatives, ground-level reporting, and securing funding for international reporting. Mr. Jacob Koshy clarified the technical gaps in certifying biodegradable plastics, while Smitha offered guidance on tailoring stories for various social platforms. Mr. Jacob Koshy also pointed participants toward European journalism grants for environmental reporting.

As the workshop drew to a close, Mr. Vamsi Sankar Kapilavai left participants with a useful call to action: What will YOU do with the knowledge you gained today? He urged attendees to reflect on how they might deepen their understanding of India's role in the Global Plastics Treaty negotiations, critically challenge misleading narratives around plastic production/solutions, and amplify the voices of communities most impacted by plastic pollution. To support this journey, he shared several next steps: join the India Youth Collective by writing to aswathy@breakfreefromplastic.org, subscribe to the Plastics Treaty newsletter via robi@no-burn.org, or become part of the GAIA Asia Pacific Journalists Network by contacting dan@no-burn.org. Participants were also encouraged to explore the Zero Waste Academy and sign up for the Global Plastics Treaty course (bernadette@no-burn.org) and to refer to the [Guide for Journalists: Reporting on Greenwashing & False Solutions](#) as a vital tool in their reporting journey. The event concluded with a Vote of Thanks by Mr. Vamsi Sankar Kapilavai.

In conclusion, the workshop blended policy knowledge, reporting strategy, and storytelling techniques to help journalists navigate and cover one of the most critical global environmental negotiations of our time. The sessions underscored the critical role media play in translating complex treaty language and policy into compelling, accessible narratives that drive public understanding and accountability.

The resounding message: Stay with the story, follow the plastic trail and use facts, empathy, and creativity to cut through the noise and make people care.

The recording for Media Workshop 2025 can be found [here](#).