

CALL FOR APPLICATIONS

Data Story Grant

Background

The Role of Journalism in Natural Resource Governance

Journalism is one of the most essential mechanisms for bringing critical issues to public attention. Through rigorous reporting, journalists inform citizens, stimulate public discussion, and create pressure for policy reform. In the natural resources sector, where governance failures and corruption can remain hidden from public view, the role of the press is particularly vital. Investigative and analytical journalism serves as a watchdog function—scrutinizing the actions of governments and corporations, exposing illegal practices such as unauthorized logging, and ensuring that environmental policies are enforced rather than ignored.

When media coverage of natural resource issues increases, it creates accountability loops: public authorities become more responsive to community needs, and citizens are better equipped to monitor and report resource crimes. Evidence from programs across multiple countries has demonstrated that sustained media attention on forest governance can dramatically increase the resolution of reported cases of resource misuse and contribute to measurable improvements in transparency and law enforcement.

Why Data Matters in Environmental Reporting

Data-driven journalism adds a critical layer of evidence and credibility to environmental reporting. While traditional reporting relies on interviews and observations, integrating quantitative data—such as satellite imagery of forest cover change, statistical trends in deforestation rates, or spatial analysis of land concession boundaries—enables journalists to reveal patterns that would otherwise remain invisible. Data strengthens the evidentiary foundation of a story, making claims verifiable and harder to dismiss.

Environmental datasets are increasingly accessible through platforms such as Global Forest Watch, which provides near-real-time satellite monitoring of forest loss globally. Tools like these democratize access to evidence, allowing journalists to independently verify government claims and corporate commitments regarding forest conservation. When reporters combine this quantitative evidence with human stories from affected communities, the result is journalism that is both compelling and analytically robust—the kind of reporting that can catalyze governance reforms and hold powerful actors accountable.

Cambodia's Forestry Context

Cambodia's forests are among its most valuable natural assets, supporting the livelihoods of millions of rural Cambodians who depend on forest resources for income, food security, shelter, and fuel. Yet the country has experienced some of the world's most severe deforestation over the past two decades. Between 2001 and 2024, Cambodia lost approximately 2.9 million hectares of tree cover—roughly 33 percent of its tree cover as measured in the year 2000. Cambodia has recorded one of the fastest rates of forest loss globally, averaging 3.3 percent in net annual change over the past decade, a rate more than four times greater than Brazil.

The drivers of this loss are complex: commodity-driven conversion for rubber and cashew plantations, illegal logging operations, agricultural encroachment, and infrastructure development. Much of this deforestation has occurred inside officially protected areas. In 2024 alone, 56 percent of Cambodia's tree cover loss was recorded within its protected area network, despite regulations that prohibit forest clearance in these zones. These trends underscore a significant gap between policy ambition and enforcement on the ground—a gap that quality journalism can help illuminate.

Producing accurate and insightful reporting on these issues is a time-consuming and resource-intensive endeavor. Journalists need the skills to access, analyze, and interpret complex datasets; the capacity to verify claims through multiple sources; and the editorial support to produce stories that are both analytically rigorous and accessible to a general audience. It is precisely this combination of skills that the Data Literacy for Reporting on Natural Resources training was designed to build.

Objective

This Call for Applications invites journalists who participated in the Data Literacy for Reporting on Natural Resources training to apply for a Data Story Grant. The grant aims to:

- Encourage journalists to put into practice the data literacy skills acquired during the training by producing a publishable, data-driven explainer story focused on Cambodia's forestry sector.
- Support the production of analytical, evidence-based journalism that reveals meaningful patterns, challenges assumptions, or deepens public understanding of forestry-related issues in Cambodia.
- Strengthen the connection between open data, investigative research, and public-interest journalism as tools for promoting transparency and accountability in natural resource governance.

Eligibility

To be eligible for the Data Story Grant, applicants must meet the following criteria:

- Attended the Data Literacy for Reporting on Natural Resources training organized by ODC on 28-30 March 2026.
- Demonstrate a genuine interest in producing an explainer story on a topic related to forestry or natural resource governance in Cambodia.
- Commit to delivering the completed story within the agreed timeline.
- Be willing to apply the workflow, tools, and analytical skills gained from the training throughout the story production process, including data collection, analysis, and visualization.

Grant Amount

Grant per story	USD 500
Number of grants	2 grants

The grant is intended to cover costs associated with the story production process.

Benefits

Selected grantees will receive the following support:

- **Hands-on application of training skills:** An opportunity to apply the data literacy skills learned during the training to a real-world reporting project, reinforcing and deepening the competencies acquired.
- **One-on-one mentorship:** Dedicated editorial and technical mentorship from a trainer throughout the story development process, from story pitch refinement to final review.
- **Financial support:** A USD 500 grant to support the costs of producing the story.

Expected Output

Each selected grantee is expected to produce one explainer story that meets the following criteria:

- **Topical focus:** The story must address an issue related to forest loss, natural resource governance, or environmental change in Cambodia.
- **Analytical depth:** The story must go beyond surface-level reporting. It should reflect in-depth research into the issue or system being examined, revealing interesting patterns, questioning prevailing assumptions, or uncovering misconceptions.
- **Data integration:** The story must meaningfully integrate data —whether quantitative datasets, geospatial information, or statistical analysis—in a way that adds deeper insight and strengthens the evidence base of the narrative. Global Forest Watch data is encouraged to be used to add deeper insight into forest loss.
- **Explainer format:** The story should be written in an explainer style that makes complex information accessible and understandable to a general audience.
- **Skills application:** The story production process should demonstrate clear application of the data literacy workflow and skills gained during the training.

Timeline

Selected grantees will have a production period of **two (2) months** from the date of grant award to submit the final story. The timeline includes the following milestones:

Milestone	Timeframe	Deliverable
Story pitch submission	Week 1–2	Written pitch outlining the story angle, data sources, and methodology
Research and data analysis	Week 2–5	Data collection, cleaning, and preliminary analysis
Draft submission	Week 5–7	First draft of the explainer story for mentor review
Final story submission	Week 7–8	Revised final story incorporating mentor feedback

How to Apply

Interested applicants should apply via [this link](#) by **14th May 2026**.