

# Canadian Media and the Developing World

A Critical Mapping of Key Issues, Events, and Actors



What are the **stories** that Canadians are told about the developing world?

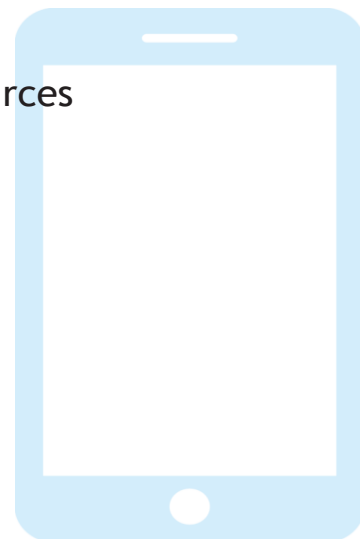
Which parts of the **developing world** do these stories feature?

Who are the **voices and sources** telling these stories?

What **perspectives and interests** are informing them?

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## The Project

Canadians' perceptions of international issues are shaped in significant ways by their media environment: the news we read in print and online, watch on television, and listen to on radio; the stories and posts we swipe and share on social media; and the many forms of popular culture we consume. Yet, the precise nature of this media discourse (i.e. the topics, voices, perspectives, and stories that comprise it) is elusive.

- What are the stories that Canadians are told about the developing world?
- Which parts of the developing world do these stories feature?
- Who are the voices and sources telling these stories?
- What perspectives and interests are informing them?

Aga Khan Foundation Canada (AKFC) commissioned a research team from Carleton University and Université Laval to examine these and related questions. Co-lead investigators Josh Greenberg (Carleton) and Colette Brin (Laval) were tasked to develop a research strategy that would provide a comprehensive analysis of Canadian English and French news coverage.

The focus of the research was less on international issues than those with an explicit development focus, and their objective was to map the coverage of core development issues in a representative sample of 'developing' countries. This sample was composed of:



PRINT



BROADCAST



DIGITAL MEDIA

The analysis involved both quantitative and qualitative methods. The research team worked collaboratively on the study methodology and design in consultation with AKFC. The research included:

- a comprehensive literature review
- a review of over 3,000 news stories across multiple news platforms
- quantitative analysis of the reporting on all coverage of a targeted group of developing countries
- a more focused analysis of the 'development' specific coverage of these countries.

## Key Findings

### The literature review indicates:

- Media coverage remains the major source of news and information about the developing world for Canadians and can exert a strong influence over policymaking.
- There is a dearth of Canadian scholarship examining media coverage of international development issues.
- There is significant research showing that Canadian media coverage of the developing world has a narrative orientation toward conflicts and disasters, both natural and human-caused.

### The media analysis shows:

- Newspapers generated more coverage of issues and events in the developing world than broadcast or digital media.
- In English media, the individual countries of Haiti, Kenya, and Nigeria had the most amount of coverage; in French media, Iraq and Haiti had the highest volume of coverage.
- Terrorism and war were the major drivers of the news coverage in both English and French.
- The largest proportion of development-themed stories were hard news reports, many of which were wire pieces, rather than stories by staff writers or opinion reports (op-eds, columns).
- Development themes varied by language. In English media, the most common development themes were about infrastructure, education, and gender, while in French, the most common themes were economic development, human rights, and governance.
- In English newspapers, almost half of the stories were prominently placed on the first four pages of the publication while in French the stories were more likely to be located deeper in the paper.
- Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) were the most frequently quoted sources in development stories, and many of these stories included discussion about possible solutions.

# Literature Review

## Introduction

Public understanding of international issues is shaped in important ways by the news networks that make up the modern mediascape. For Canadians, this no doubt includes the CBC and its television, radio, and online properties, national newspapers like *The Globe and Mail* and *National Post*, and our local and regional dailies (from those with large, national circulation like the *Toronto Star* to mid-market papers in Halifax, Ottawa, and Winnipeg). Increasingly, it also includes newer, digital-first platforms like VICE Media. These media outlets play a crucial role in shaping how citizens learn about and understand international events, the places where these events occur, and the people who are involved and affected.

At times, this coverage can be highly significant and can influence government policy. The murder of Pakistani child activist Iqbal Masih in 1995, and the attention this event garnered in Canada, provided a window into the international carpet industry and its horrible legacy of child labour (Kielburger, 2016), and arguably contributed to changes in Canada's trade and foreign policy.<sup>1</sup> Yet, a considerable body of research also shows that mainstream media coverage of the developing

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world, particularly in the Global North, is not just inadequate (Wu, 2000), but declining in both volume and scope. James Hoge, Jr., former editor of *Foreign Affairs*, presciently wrote in 1997, "Except for the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989-90, the coverage of such international news...has steadily declined since the late seventies, when the Cold War lost its sense of imminent danger" (p.48). Hoge was writing about the U.S. media, yet his observations continue to hold today, and not just

in that country; when media do report on international issues, the coverage is frequently driven by a particularly dramatic event—famine, war, civil conflict, etc.—which significantly skews public perception of the complexities, politics, and struggles in those regions, not to mention overshadowing the progress also occurring in those countries. As John Mitchell proclaimed: "A misguided rule of thumb for foreign correspondents covering the news of the world is: all anyone cares about is coups and earthquakes."<sup>2</sup>

Time and again, international correspondents and global media scholars lament the paucity of media coverage of international affairs, and especially the lack of coverage about the complex issues facing nations in the Global South. Yet, it doesn't go far enough to say that global media cover disasters and conflicts but not poverty and development. After all, some disasters and conflicts get plenty of coverage, and others do not. The ongoing humanitarian crisis in South Sudan, for example, rarely

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1. In May 1996, the New Democratic Party (NDP) introduced a private members' bill calling on the Liberal government of the day to ban importing of goods manufactured in countries that violated child labour laws prescribed under the International Labour Organization. In introducing the bill, NDP Member of Parliament Bill Blaikie explicitly cited the work of Canadian activists and the media coverage they generated to shine on a light on this issue.
  2. Quote retrieved from Centre for Media Literacy website <http://www.medialit.org/reading-room/reflection-media-third-world>

breaks into the legacy media's orbit of attention. The same is true for the violence in the Central African Republic, which Refugees International recently called "impossible to ignore" (Lamensch and Pogadl, 2015).

We all know that not all countries can be covered everyday, yet the picture of the world presented by establishment news organizations is inevitably distorted, and people, countries, and events are represented unevenly (Wu, 2000). Scholars of international communication are intrigued by the hidden structural underpinnings that shape this coverage. They ask, why are some countries more likely than others to get covered? What are the systemic forces that shape international news? Scholarly analysis and efforts to explain the discrepancy between the world of geopolitical events and the world of media representation typically fall under one of two umbrellas:

- 1) They examine the processes of newsgathering and distribution by a chain of gatekeepers (media elites) who apply a set of traditional news values that reflect a collective judgement of what is considered newsworthy (and, also, what is not);
- 2) They assess patterns in news flow and coverage through a hegemonic lens, explaining imbalance in news coverage according to a set of ideological practices that both reflect and help constitute the larger global system, which in turn are structured by the forces of international politics and economics.

More recent analyses have focused on the relationships between media institutions and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other actors working in aid delivery and development.

There is a significant body of scholarship examining U.S. news coverage of international issues, yet surprisingly little detailed research on the nature of such coverage in the Canadian context. This section of the report summarizes this body of work and identifies pathways to inform this study of Canadian media coverage of the developing world.

## Gatekeeping and Agenda Setting

Agenda setting theory accounts for the connection between the rate at which media cover an event and the extent to which the public and policymakers will consider that event to be important. According to Shaw and McCombs (1977), the most important effect of the mass media is its ability to mentally order and organize our world. Agenda setting occurs because news media make conscious and unconscious decisions about what is newsworthy, and by extension what is not (McQuail, 2000). Through this selection process, media professionals (reporters and their editors) are able to shape the public's knowledge of events by allowing some stories to pass through the system while keeping others out. This 'gatekeeping' process results in a global news system that over-represents particular issues and countries while under-representing others; and this selection process depends on a number of different determinants, such as how closely developing nations are 'indexed' to elite interests (Boydston, 2013), their proximity to centers of geopolitical power (Golan, 2006; Moumouni, 2003), and their degree of narrative fidelity (Lule, 2002) and cultural affinity (Hester, 1973).

Many studies that test the influence of national traits on news flow across national borders center on Galtung and Ruge's (1965) structural theory of foreign news. They argue that economic, social, geographic, and political differences determine the amount and the nature of coverage that any one country receives in another nation's media system. Writing about the U.S., Dupree (1971) established several key variables that could predict the level of international news coverage a given country receives, including foreign stock residing in the U.S., gross national product (GNP) per capita, population density, population, translatability, literacy rate, newspaper availability, import-export volume, and distance, though the results were inconclusive. In another study, Rosengren (1977) found that factors such as trade, population and geographic proximity influenced the volume of coverage a nation received in the media from other nations. While the indicators of gatekeeping established by these studies were compelling at the time, they were not easily replicated and the results weren't consistent in subsequent studies (Johnson, 1997). For example, Robinson and Sparkes (1976) published the results of a study comparing American and Canadian news that did not follow this pattern, finding that trade, GNP, and population failed to predict news coverage in U.S. media. In Canadian news outlets, on the other hand, they concluded that trade relationships with other countries were the best predictor of coverage. That is, if Canada possessed strong trade relationships with a particular nation, that nation was much more likely to get covered in the major Canadian news organizations they examined. In another Canadian study, Kareil and Rosenvall (1984) found that "eliteness" of nations was the most significant factor, followed by population, trade, and GNP. In researching why news of what was then called the "Third World" was far less likely to be reported in international media, Larson (1984) concluded, perhaps not surprisingly, that the strongest predictors of coverage were proximity of U.S. network bureaus and the presence or absence of international news agencies.

Communication scholars advanced this research in the 1990s and 2000s, arguing that transnational information flows both reflect and are constituted by the larger global system, which in turn is structured by world politics, economies, and cultures (Hopkins and Wallerstein, 1996). Looking at systemic factors that tend to influence the volume and content of news that flows from various parts of the world, they attempted to determine the menu of international news available to gatekeepers, arguing that the representation of the world in the news is a result of both news values and the global system of news-gathering and distribution (Hanusch, 2009). Building on debates about the nature of international news coverage and information flow, Chang, Lau, and Hao (2000) found that developed countries dictated the flow of international news and attracted more stories from developing countries than vice versa. In previous research, Peterson (1979) and Zaharopoulos (1990) reported that cultural differences affected foreign news selection, so the greater "cultural proximity" one nation had to another, the more extensive coverage it received. Shoemaker, Danielian, and Brendlinger (1991) indicated that unusual news events that took place in countries economically and politically significant to the United States were more likely to be covered.

Previous studies tend to focus on news coverage about a single country or region, and only look at one medium (typically television or print), making it difficult to generate a comprehensive theory about how media broadly report on the developing world. Nonetheless, such studies have provided powerful hypotheses



about discrepancies in international reportage. In their analysis of media coverage of the Millennium Development Goals, for example, Giffard and Van Leuvan (2008) offer several arguments:

- 1) Most news reports are filed from Western capitals in the global economic core;
- 2) Nations located in the global core (highly industrialized capitalist countries) are mentioned more than periphery nations in international media;
- 3) Sources quoted or mentioned in news stories relating to international issues are disproportionately nationals of elite nations;
- 4) High profile actors and government officials are quoted more frequently than civil society actors;
- 5) Organizations based in the developed world receive more coverage than local organizations;
- 6) The development issues that are covered are those that are most relevant to the West.

### Hegemonic Theories and Global Media Flow

Many scholars have emphasized the need to look beyond news values and gatekeeping processes to provide a more critically-engaged, theoretically-informed approach to the study of factors that determine the newsworthiness of global issues and events (Golan, 2006). Ideas about the influence of powerful regions and countries on processes of global media production were at the forefront of debates over the New World Information and Communication Order in the 1970s and early 1980s. These discussions, and the research that stemmed from them, highlight many of the political, legal, technological, and financial imbalances that circumscribe the flows and content of international communication (Himmelboim et al, 2010). As a result of this corpus of scholarly work, researchers have attempted to identify determinants of international news flow and coverage that go beyond a mere taxonomy of news values. Stemming from debates about cultural imperialism and the factors that ensure the dominance of the global political and economic order, scholars focusing on hegemonic global news practices can be grouped according to the following theoretical trajectories: preferential attachment, World Systems Theory, and Triadic World Theory (ibid).

**Preferential attachment theory** highlights the tendency of some nodes to initiate ties with other nodes that are already highly connected. In the context of this study, this theory suggests that news media in Canada would be more likely to report on events in countries that are already heavily covered by international news than to other countries that are not covered, thus strengthening the existing asymmetry in international media attention and their dominance as 'objects' of representation. For example, if a crisis happens in Syria, which is already garnering significant international news coverage from agenda-setting Western media such as *The New York Times* and BBC, it is more likely to be covered in Canada as well, than if a similar event were to happen in, say, Rwanda or Bangladesh. Beyond resulting in widely disparate coverage of global news, the theory posits that news coverage strengthens the dominance of select countries over others as objects of scrutiny and attention.

Wallerstein's (1974) **World Systems Theory** divides the world into a three-level hierarchy of core, periphery, and semi-periphery countries. Core countries are dominant capitalist nations that exploit peripheral countries for their labour and raw materials; semi-periphery countries are industrializing countries which have adopted capitalist modes of production and sit between core and periphery nations. Within this configuration, all international flows—of information, products, news, and power—follow a capitalist logic and perpetuate asymmetries in economies, cultures, and communication. Media analysis drawing on this theoretical framework argues that economic and political differences among countries are the basis for asymmetry in global media attention. Chang, Lau, and Xiaoming (2000) highlight that core nations dominate coverage of international events; are covered twice as much semi-periphery countries; and receive seven times as much coverage as those countries on the periphery of the world system. In terms of news flow, countries where information is produced and from which it is disseminated hold significant power over countries where information is imported or consumed. For instance, Golan (2006) argued that the lack of U.S. media coverage of African countries is related primarily to their positions in the periphery of the global political and economic system.

**Triadic World Theory** is similar to World Systems Theory, but adds a geographic component to explain the structure of relationships among countries. Each centre has its own corresponding periphery, or "hinterland," with which it has more interaction (Gunaratne, 2002). There are three economic

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centres where trade is predominantly concentrated: Western Europe, North America, and Asia. The theory suggests that international communication will flow first and foremost among the central economic clusters, then between centres and their corresponding hinterlands, and last between centres and other hinterlands (ibid).

Despite their differences, each of the frameworks demonstrate that global news media continue to reproduce patterns of reportage where news flows from the core to the periphery, and not the other way around, thereby sustaining a hierarchical news system that prioritizes news of Western, affluent countries over developing ones. As a result of a news system that flows from "the West to the rest" (McQuail, 1994), Western countries hold not only economic power but also symbolic power, in that they get to represent both themselves and the less powerful countries in the world.

## International Coverage of Crises and Disasters

When disaster strikes in distant places, mainstream media are the primary sources of information about these events and their effects (Franks, 2013). Even with the rise in social media, legacy media organizations continue to provide a "pivotal role of validating and providing a coherent, reliable gatekeeper to the information about such crises" (ibid, p. 6). However, most of the world's disasters never get any airtime at all, despite the reach of global media (Riffe, 2001). Media coverage of humanitarian crises tends to be determined and shaped by the interests and views of aid agencies, which are struggling to raise awareness and funds in support of their efforts, and those of the news media, which need to attract readers, and generate

ratings and revenue (Kalcsics, 2011). Both of these communication processes are affected by massive cuts in foreign news reporting in recent years, making it difficult for aid groups to communicate from disaster zones and for stories about international crises to make it into international news if there is little interest. As a result of these shifts, aid groups have developed their public relations capabilities to feed under-resourced media agencies with firsthand accounts from the field (Cooper, 2011). In her research, Kalcsics (2011) asks, “Are we getting ethical content from aid agencies and the media? Can the whole story be told? If not, why not? What are the concerns of reporters and aid workers?” (p.8).

The changing economic status of many news agencies also means that international stories, already more likely to focus on crisis events than development processes, are increasingly in competition with one another and with stories originating in Western countries. This imbalance has created a scenario where, as noted in the earlier discussion above, “Western self-interest is the pre-condition for significant coverage of a humanitarian crisis and national political and economic interests are a better guide to press interest than human suffering” (CARMA International, 2006). In addition to the questions it raises about journalistic ethics, the interdependence between humanitarian agencies and news media often results in misrepresentation and sensationalized coverage of disasters that induces compassion to raise funds for humanitarian organizations and secure ratings for news agencies (Greenberg and Scanlon, 2016).

### Media Coverage of Africa

Many scholars writing about the discrepancy in global news coverage of world events address the African continent in particular, where a majority of countries are among the most peripheral nations in the world. Rothmyer (2011) laments the lack of positive news stories about Africa’s rapid economic growth and development, claiming that despite declining poverty rates and improvements in economic development, child mortality, and education, “U.S.

journalism continues to portray a continent of unending horrors” (p.2). She cites a 2011 article in *TIME* magazine showcasing women in Sierra Leone dying in childbirth as illustrative of an international media that continues to portray the continent in terms of the negative stereotypes that have perpetuated for centuries. Similarly, Golan (2008) argues that the limited coverage of Africa and its nations best exemplifies the lack of balance in both the flow and coverage of world affairs by Western media. Most recently, media coverage of the Ebola outbreak in Western Africa showed how persistent the “heart of darkness” narrative remains, despite the rapid economic advances across much of the continent.

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Western journalists have closely tracked a narrow band of issues affecting developing nations. In the 1980s, an Ethiopian famine driven by a complex configuration of climatic and political factors, set into motion a recurring pattern of international news stories about “starving Africans” that continues to persist (Zelizer, 2010). Steven Ross (2004) showed that between 1998 and 2002 the number of stories about famine in Africa tripled. While there continues to be horrific conflict and suffering in many parts of the continent, the lack of context or breadth in international news coverage presents simplistic, one-sided stories that reproduce an

incomplete and inaccurate account of the continent—both the problems that continue to plague many countries and what the roots of those challenges are, not to mention the positive gains and development progress underway in many areas. Weaver et al.’s (1984) content analysis of more than a decade of foreign news coverage on CBS, ABC, and NBC showed that Africa (6.7 percent) and Latin America (6.2 percent) received the lowest amount of coverage, compared to the Middle East (32.4 percent) and Western Europe (21.1 percent). Beaudoin’s (2001) analysis of foreign news in American newspapers showed that while Western Europe was largely depicted as beautiful, Africa was depicted as a region consumed by conflict and power struggles. Golan’s (2003) content analysis of four U.S. television newscasts during the entire year of 1999 found that of the 3,183 international news broadcasts, just 0.01 percent (n=33) of those stories focused exclusively on African nations. Similarly, Golan’s (2008) study of American television coverage of Africa from 2002 to 2004 found that despite the numerous controversial elections, ethnic cleansing campaign in the Sudan, widescale famine in Mali and Senegal, and numerous civil wars, television newscasts did not view the African continent in large part to be newsworthy. The results indicate that a dozen or so African nations account for the majority of U.S. coverage, while the majority of African nations received little to no coverage at all.

The results of these studies highlight not only the lack of coverage of Africa in Western news media, but also the patterns and type of coverage received. All scholars conclude that the majority of stories about African nations focus on conflicts and disasters, both natural and human-caused.

The recent development and liberalization of African news media and implications for democratization is also an area of research interest (Frère, 2015, 2016), as well as possible African-Western collaboration in journalism education (Gilberds, 2013). For example, The Rwanda Initiative based at Carleton University (2006-2011), which provided both a teaching partnership and student internship exchange program for Canadian and Rwandan journalists and students, and a recent initiative to support the development of science journalism in Africa and the Middle East (Lublinski, 2012). These efforts can be situated in the larger challenge of decolonizing journalism and communication education, including, in Canada specifically, integrating the perspectives, needs, and voices of Indigenous peoples (Todorova, 2016).

## NGO-Media Relationships

It’s no secret that as newsgathering budgets continually shrink, it is becoming more difficult for media to fully cover international stories and events. The result is a homogenization of foreign news that often lacks important depth and context, and is increasingly limited to coverage of major wars — e.g., Iraq and Afghanistan — where there is a strong American (and Canadian) military presence and high levels of corporate investment (Abbott, 2009). As a result, media organizations have begun to rely increasingly on NGOs working in developing countries for “information subsidies” (Gandy, 1982) that help fill out this picture (Powers, 2014). “...[A]s newsgathering budgets continually shrink, it is becoming

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more difficult for media to fully cover international stories and events... media organizations have begun to rely increasingly on NGOs working in developing countries for 'information subsidies' that help fill out this picture." (Abbott, 2009, n.p.).

Given the proliferation of international NGOs over the past two decades in many regions in the developing world, humanitarian/aid groups and those working on issues relating to development and democratization are often in competition with one another for the attention of journalists, donors, and policymakers. As a practical matter, these organizations understandably tend to focus not on what has been accomplished and how new programs are improving the lives of citizens and communities, but on convincing people how much remains to be done. Pressures for funding thus inadvertently create 'narrative incentives' to tell gloomy stories that attract attention and generate persuasive appeals for donations. The relationship between journalists and humanitarian groups in this context is problematic, as media are increasingly mobilized to help paint the negative picture provided by NGOs. Mainstream media and NGOs have long had a symbiotic relationship, with the media using NGO experts for news tips, quotes, and access. Now, NGOs are doing even more: researching and pitching stories, sharing contacts, developing content, and providing logistics, guidance, and analysis. In her book *The Crisis Caravan*, Polman (2010) describes a willingness on the part of journalists to be given tours of NGO-run refugee camps without asking tough questions about organization corruption, attacks on civilians by peacekeeping forces, or the need for such facilities in the first place.

What does the increasingly interdependent relationship between media and NGOs mean for international coverage of the developing world? Aside from the potential compromise in standards of journalistic ethics and potential for bias, it tends to skew news coverage towards the negative, and focuses on the immediacy of events rather than the deeper political and geopolitical issues that sustain wars or cause famine. Almost entirely missing from this context is international attention to development and democratization—wars, pestilence, and famine attract more attention than new irrigation systems, hospitals, or schools. Yet, missing from this explanation of media bias is an account of why some areas of the developing world receive greater negative attention than others. Why, for instance, does civil war in Syria attract more attention than a similar conflict in what is now South Sudan?

### Coverage of Developing Countries in Canadian News Media

As noted above, there is a dearth of Canadian research on media coverage of developing nations. The studies that do exist were primarily conducted during the 1970s and 1980s, with few studies looking specifically at Canadian foreign news coverage since 2000. Most studies focus on Canadian proximity to the U.S. and American media influence on Canadian content (Kim et al., 2007; Szuchewycz and Sloniowski, 2002). This review found a paucity of empirical research on Canadian media coverage of developing regions, with most prior studies looking at foreign news coverage more broadly, and the influence both of geopolitics, and Canadian diplomatic relations and trade interests.

In a study of 30 Canadian newspapers in 1969, Scanlon found that 32.9 percent of all news was devoted to “foreign” news, defined as news about issues not occurring in Canada or the United States (Scanlon, 1973; Cuthbert, 1980). Similarly, a 1975 sample by Sparkes and Robinson of a composite week in 10 Canadian newspapers found that foreign news encompassed only 14 percent of coverage devoted to issues outside of continental North America. Hackett’s (1989) study of Canadian television networks examined newscasts from CBC and CTV and assessed whether criticisms of the coverage of developing nations in Western media also applies to Canadian news. He concluded that the geographical distribution of foreign news is highly concentrated in Canadian news media, and that foreign news coverage focuses primarily on Western countries’ news and events and non-Western regions where there is violence involving Western interests. Hackett further argued, “the Third World is persistently associated with violence and disasters” (p. 823), and there is an overwhelming emphasis in Canadian news on negative events and secondarily on conventional politics, “at the expense of the long-term, multi-faceted struggle for development” (ibid). He emphasizes two likely consequences of such coverage: first, public support (both political and financial) for Canadian foreign aid is likely to be less than it would be if examples of successful development received more attention; and second, such coverage reinforces negative stereotypes that Canadians already hold about immigrants and refugees from developing regions.

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While scholars and critics were decrying the lack of Canadian foreign news coverage in the 1970s and 1980s, the situation has rapidly declined since 2000 with a massive reduction in the number of Canadian foreign correspondents, an increase in concentration of media ownership, and greater profit orientation (Halton, 2001). The trend towards profit-oriented journalism has resulted in an increased focus on niche markets such as sports, consumer issues, crime, and health, at the expense of in-depth, investigative reporting. Tighter budgets have also arguably led to restrictions on travel for reporters and many Canadian news bureaus, resulting in a stronger emphasis on local rather than global news. Such constraints also mean that Canadian news agencies rely more

on wire services as a source for reporting global events, thus generating greater homogenization (i.e. singular focus on “newsworthy” events such as disasters or conflicts) and less reporting of underrepresented countries, or systemic issues that require in-depth research and investigation (ibid).

A 2007 study by Kim et al. on Canada’s coverage of the war in Darfur concludes that the influence of the U.S. press on Canadian foreign news coverage is more limited than previously thought. They argued that this is especially true when it involves countries that are linked to Canada’s foreign policy agenda, which emphasizes its role as an “internationalist” middle-power by promoting multilateral initiatives and delivering humanitarian aid. This comparison of American and Canadian coverage of the Darfur crisis highlights that coverage is more closely linked to Canada’s internationalist agenda than simply defined according to established news values. Finally, Payette (2005) found that Quebec media coverage of the Rwandan genocide

was oversimplified, incomplete, superficial, cliché-laden, and, in many cases, inaccurate. She notes that even the commemoration of the events a decade later included the voices of genocide-deniers (see also Thompson, 2007).

## The Impact of Digital Media and Online News

The emergence of online news and proliferation of social media have provided Canadians with access to more news and information than ever before. Online news sites - both the web portals of legacy media but also upstart and alternative news platforms - have expanded access to a wider range of news sources, and arguably provided the conditions which make possible a broader array of topics and issues. Zuckerman (2008) argues that we should now be living in “a golden age of international news” (p.2). The dramatic political events of the past decade demonstrate a need for news and information from all corners of the world. Moreover, the rise of the Internet, mobile phone, and citizen media suggest that reporting could come from a new, and much larger, set of voices: not just the few journalists dispatched abroad to report on foreign issues, but also the NGOs, advocacy groups, humanitarian/aid organizations, and independent citizens based in those regions.

A number of studies have attempted to determine whether this proliferation of new media platforms has impacted global news flows, altered agenda-setting dynamics, and increased the visibility of previously marginalized regions of the world. A 2010 study by Pew Research Center demonstrates that, despite the presence of evermore media and media-savvy sources, this proliferation of media outlets has done little to shift global news flows. The study found that social media and legacy media share the same agenda: “they tend focus on blockbuster events, and they cut across a wide variety of predictable topic areas – the economy, outbreaks of disease, and the deaths of well-known political figures” (Pew Research Center, 2010). In their analysis of online news coverage, Himelboim et al. (2010) came to similar conclusions, arguing that traditional network structures and global political-economic hierarchies are reproduced in online media. They argue, “given the dominant patterns of global capitalism, it is far more likely that the Internet and the new technologies will adapt themselves to the existing political culture rather than create a new one” (Himelboim et al, 2010, p.302). In a similar vein, research at The Berkman Center for Internet and Society at Harvard University shows that the explosion of online news, blogging, and citizen media has not dramatically shifted coverage of countries in the global periphery (Zuckerman, 2008). The Global Attention Profiles, a project that performs simple statistical analysis of online news sources, suggests persistent systematic over-coverage of a small set of nations at the expense of most of the world’s population. Perhaps predictably, very wealthy countries and nations where the United States is militarily engaged have a much higher chance of attracting the attention of international news media than poor nations (ibid).

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Despite the proliferation of online news and alternative news sources, there is little evidence to date about what different kinds of information media consumers actually want, and the receptivity of Internet audiences to different types of stories

about the developing world. There is also very little understanding of how stories move from online media into the mainstream, where we would expect them to reach much larger audiences, or how mainstream media may set the agenda for online news platforms.

## Avenues of Inquiry

Recognizing that some nations and regions are more ‘newsworthy’ than others, communication scholars have attempted to identify the factors that influence which nations and international issues and events garner coverage. This is of high importance considering the potential effect of news coverage on public perceptions of national and international affairs (Wanta and Hu, 1993). Media coverage remains the major, if not only, source of news and information about the developing world for ordinary Canadians and influences policy discourse and development as well. For example, decades of scholarship has demonstrated discrete but measurable impacts of international news coverage on public opinion (Salwen and Matera, 1992; Wanta and Hu, 1993; Bennett and Rademacher, 1997). The influence of international news is more far-reaching than people expect. For instance, policymaking is often driven by public opinion (Holsti, 1996), and can shift in response to patterns of media coverage and attention (Bahador, 2007). The extensive

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coverage of the Bosnia conflict is a case in point. As Bennett, Flickinger, and Rhine (1997) argue, events, media coverage, public attention, and knowledge of the geopolitical issues shaping the conflict in the Balkans is related, but not universally: “We conclude from the Bosnian case that the public has the potential to become aroused about foreign policy matters in the post-cold war era, but we do not know the limits or extent of that interest. (...) [W]e cannot project these findings to future foreign policy crisis.” (p.102).

Some might suggest that the source of this problem lies with readers, i.e., citizens are simply not interested in news from parts of the world whose challenges and events don’t directly impact their lives. Research suggests that this is an entirely false assumption. Stempel and Hargrove’s (2002) news audience survey found that most readers were just as interested in news from Africa as they are in news from Western Europe, and more interested in news stories from the African continent than they were in stories about Southeast Asia. A 2006 BBC poll concluded that two-thirds of Americans believe it is extremely or very important to have access to international news. Half of those polled rated U.S. coverage of international stories as poor or fair, lamenting that stories are too often “sensationalist,” “superficial,” and “narrow” (Abbott, 2009). Are news media not responding to demand for these types of stories? It is also worth considering that these survey results may reflect a ‘social desirability bias’ – that is, respondents recognize the value of in-depth, socially significant international news stories but might not actually consume it as readily as more entertaining content, or shorter, simpler stories that require less effort from the user.



# Methodology

## Sample Identification and Sampling Strategy

### SAMPLE

The sample of print media coverage in Canada included the country's key national agenda-setting English-language newspapers—*The Globe and Mail*, *National Post*, and *Toronto Star*—in addition to six influential regional dailies—the *Vancouver Sun*, *Calgary Herald*, *Winnipeg Free Press*, *Ottawa Citizen*, *Montreal Gazette*, and Halifax's *Chronicle Herald*. French-language print media included *La Presse*, *Le Devoir*, and *Le Journal de Montréal*. The sample was collected through the Factiva, Canadian NewsStream, and CEDROM-SNI databases using the country names as key search words. For each of these print publications, hard news and editorials (including columns and op-eds) were examined to map the dominant events, issues, and key actors/voices who are shaping the coverage about the developing world. One online news site for the sampling period was also examined, VICE Canada, as well as the following English broadcast news programs: CBC's *The National*; CTV *National News with Lisa LaFlamme*; and CBC's *World Report* and *The Current*. In French, the news reports of ICI Radio-Canada television and radio were sampled.<sup>3</sup> While our sample is not exhaustive of the entire Canadian media landscape, we do consider it to be both robust and representative.

### COUNTRY SELECTION

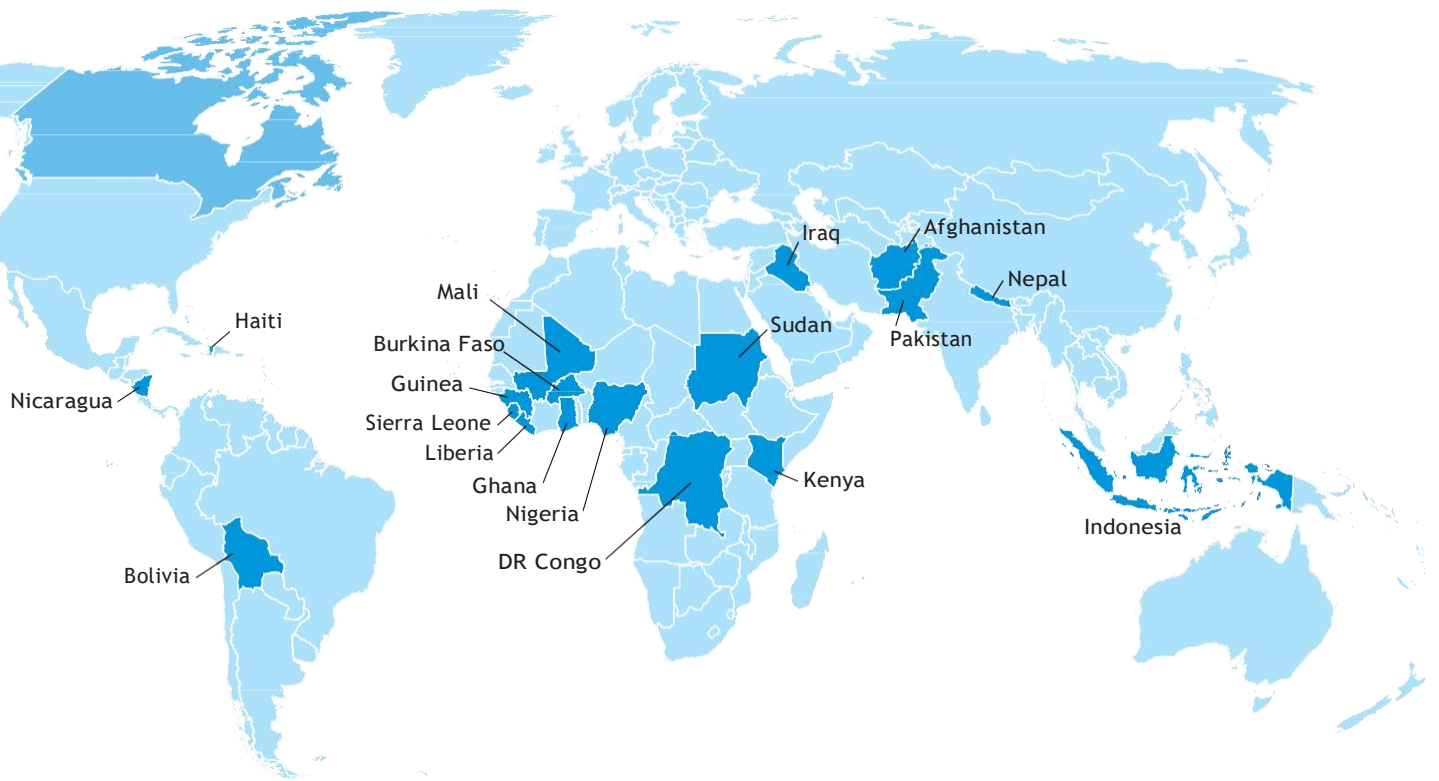
After consultation with AKFC, the researchers determined coverage of the Americas, Asia, Middle East and North Africa, and Sub-Saharan Africa was appropriate for the project. The Human Development Index (HDI) was used to select the specific countries within these regions for inclusion in the study. The HDI is a composite statistic of life expectancy, education, and income per capita. Based on the composite score, the countries are ranked from 1 to 188 (Canada, for example, is #10 on the index). In each of the six selected geographical areas, the countries with the lowest rankings were selected. The resulting countries selected were: Bolivia, Haiti, Nepal, Nicaragua, Iraq, Afghanistan, Indonesia, Pakistan, Burkina Faso, DR Congo, Ghana, Kenya, Mali, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea, Nigeria, and Sudan. The rankings of these selected countries ranged from a low of 185/188 for the DR Congo and a high of 108/188 for Indonesia.

### ARTICLE SELECTION

Country names were used for the keyword search strategy to ensure consistent and comprehensive coverage of the development issues in the region. Once obtained, the article, text, or script was then downloaded into a digital file. All stories were then reviewed manually to determine if they were relevant to the study. In total over 3,000 stories or transcripts were reviewed for inclusion in the study. Stories were excluded if the story was not specifically about the country or did not take place in the country, further focusing the database.

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3. Due to the absence of a searchable database of news stories, TVA was not included in the sample. It is worth noting that in May 2015, a report in *La Presse* exposed a series of fabrications committed by François Busingo, a former analyst of international affairs in Quebec media. Following the allegations, he resigned as contributor to 98,5 FM in Montreal and as host of an international news program on LCN, Groupe TVA's news channel.



## CODEBOOK DEVELOPMENT

A codebook was developed by the research team and reviewed by AKFC before coding began. The codebook focused on the structural elements of the coverage including: news outlet, publication date, author, story placement, length, quoted sources, and topics/issues, as well as the latent content of the coverage including themes. The full codebook is reproduced in Appendix I.

## CODING

Research assistants at both Carleton and Laval were hired to carry out the coding of the news coverage. Coders were trained and supervised by the research team leaders and the research manager of the Carleton University Survey Centre. Inter-coder reliability checks were undertaken at regular intervals in the coding process. A Holsti coefficient of over 80 percent was maintained throughout the process to ensure reliability and validity.

In the English and French print media coverage, all news items for all 18 countries from January 2015 to April 2015 were examined and coded. In total, 1,793 news stories in English and 1,023 in French were generated for all newspapers from January to April 2015 as having an international focus. However, only 67 of these stories in English (3.7 percent), and 59 in French (5.7 percent) dealt directly with topics or themes relating to development. Once the proportion of development to non-development coverage was established, the assumption was made that these proportions would not vary significantly in the remaining coverage across all news platforms. Therefore, due to the volume of coverage about non-development issues and events, and the primary objective to examine only development-themed coverage, the researchers, in consultation with AKFC, opted to focus on only development-themed news coverage. It is important to note, however, that all coverage was still read and reviewed carefully before being selected for inclusion.

Finally, the research was not without its challenges. First, it was difficult to access many stories and transcripts across the myriad platforms under analysis. The use of different databases to search for news stories generated different information and in different formats. Searching digital news platforms was difficult because of the way in which material is currently archived on these sites; some have searchable databases for limited times, while others do not have searchable databases at all. This will probably improve over time, but limits the availability of this information. Second, the sheer volume of news coverage about countries in the developing world also proved to be an issue in the coding stages of the research and could be likened to looking for a needle in a haystack. When considering over 3,000 English and French stories/scripts/transcripts were read to uncover 341 development-themed stories, the magnitude of the task becomes apparent.

## Findings

Overall, 1,914 English language news stories (print, broadcast, and digital) and 1,117 French stories were ultimately included in the study. From this total population of 3,031 news items, across all platforms, 188 English items and 153 French items (N=341) were deemed to have a ‘development’ theme and were thus coded in their entirety, Table 1.

**Table 1: News Story Count**

	Time Period (2015)	Non-Development-themed	Development-themed
<b>ENGLISH</b>			
<i>Newspapers</i>	<i>Jan - April</i>	<i>1,726</i>	<i>67</i>
<i>Newspapers</i>	<i>May - Dec</i>		<i>95</i>
<i>Newspapers</i>	<i>Jan - Dec</i>		<i>162</i>
CBC The National	Jan - Dec		7
CTV National News with Lisa LaFlamme	Jan - Dec		5
CBC Radio World Report	Jan - Dec		3
CBC Radio The Current	Jan - Dec		1
VICE	Jan - Dec		10
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>188</b>

	Time Period (2015)	Non-Development-themed	Development-themed
<b>FRENCH</b>			
<i>Newspapers</i>	<i>Jan - April</i>	964	59
<i>Newspapers</i>	<i>May - Dec</i>		77
Newspapers	Jan - Dec		136
ICI Radio-Canada télé			14
ICI Radio-Canada radio			3
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>153</b>

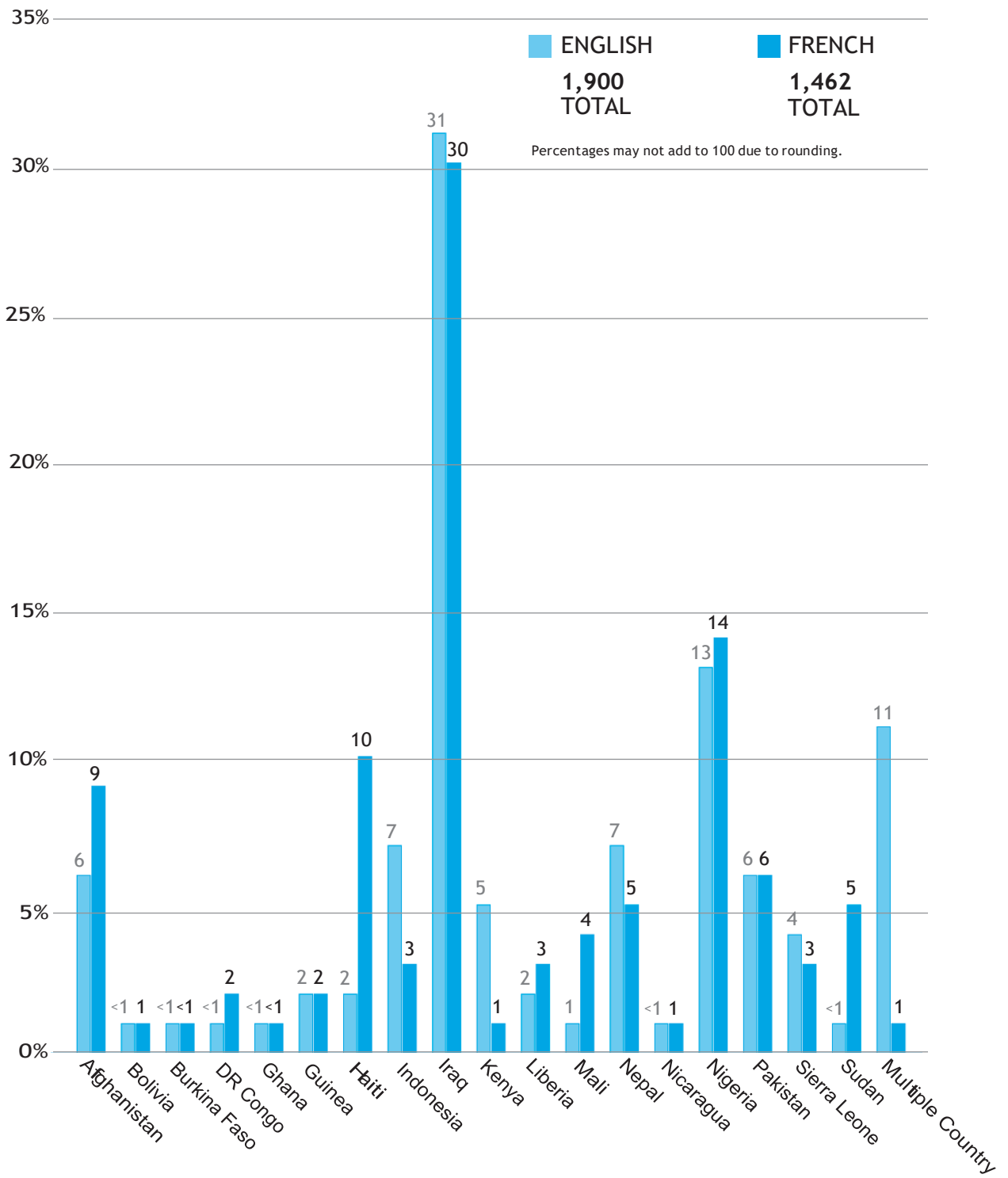
From **Table 1** we see that English print media had the highest volume of total coverage in comparison to the other platforms. Among broadcasters, CBC generated more coverage than CTV in their national television news reporting and World Report had more coverage than The Current. VICE had a higher volume of reports about the developing countries than the broadcasters did. In French, newspapers also had the highest volume of stories; *Le Devoir* and *La Presse* produced the most stories in comparison with those in English Canada. Generally, however, the proportion of news stories about the developing world that emphasized issues relating to development was very low across all platforms.

### Non-Development Coverage

While the primary focus of the report will be on ‘development’ themed coverage, it is important to understand the context of the 341 development stories in the bigger picture of the media’s reporting on these countries. In total, 2,690 news items were coded from January to April 2015 that did not have a development theme (1,726 English/964 French).

Each of the stories was coded for the country or countries that were mentioned. The coding for ‘country’ could include up to three individual country mentions. To clarify, a single news item could be about one, two, or three countries. If the focus of the story went beyond three countries then it was coded as a ‘multiple’ country story. The number of total country mentions were summed and are presented in **Figure 2**.

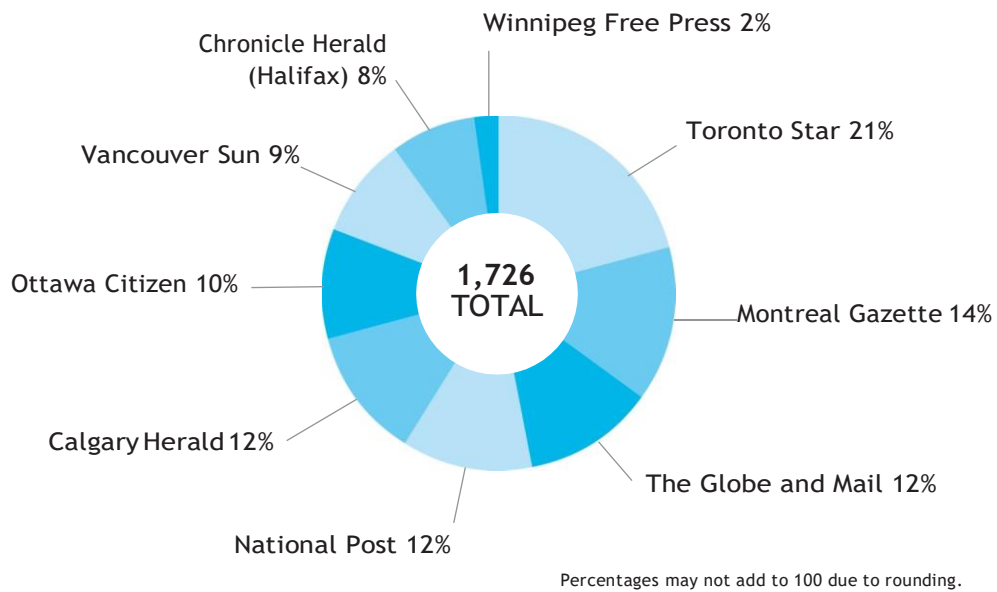
Figure 2: Non-Development Newspaper Stories by Country



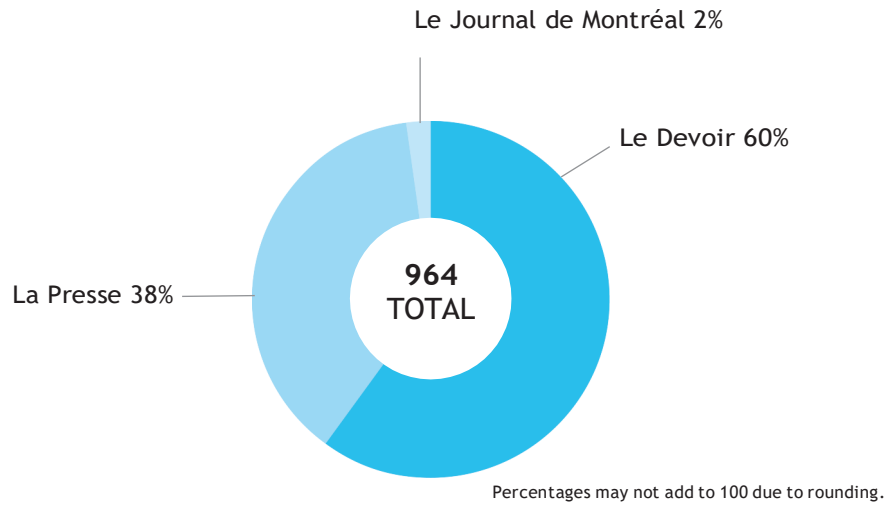
When looking at **Figure 2** we see that the bulk of media coverage of the developing countries included in this study was focused, in both the English and French samples, on Iraq (31 percent/30 percent), Nigeria (13 percent/14 percent), and Afghanistan (6 percent/9 percent). Countries with the least amount of coverage, each with one percent or less of the total sample, included Bolivia, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Nicaragua, and Sudan. English papers had a higher proportion of coverage of Indonesia, Nepal, Kenya, and Sierra Leone while French papers had a higher proportion of coverage of Mali and Haiti, both former French colonies.

How did these news stories distribute among the 12 newspapers?

**Figure 3a: News Source % (English)**

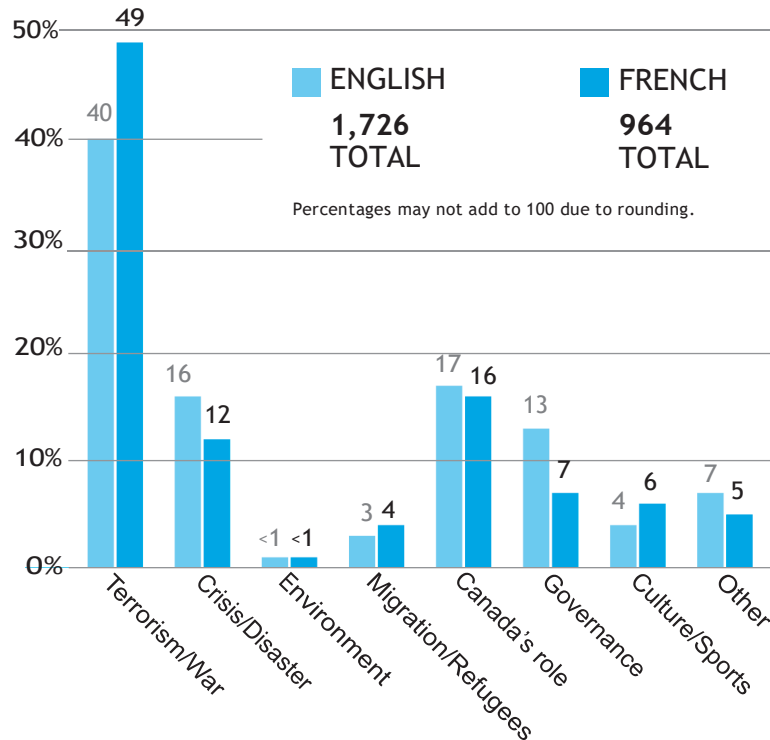


**Figure 3b: News Source % (French)**



As shown in **Figure 3a**, among English-language papers the *Toronto Star* had the highest volume of coverage about developing countries included in the study (21 percent), followed by the *Montreal Gazette* (14 percent), *Calgary Herald*, *The Globe and Mail*, and *National Post* (12 percent each). The *Halifax Chronicle Herald*, *Vancouver Sun*, and *Winnipeg Free Press* had the least amount of coverage. In the French-language papers (**Figure 3b**), *Le Devoir* had the most amount of coverage (60 percent) followed by *La Presse* at 38 percent and *Le Journal de Montréal* at two percent.

**Figure 4: News theme**



**Figure 4** reports the news themes that comprised the stories with an international focus: the largest proportion of stories was about ‘Terrorism and War,’ 40 percent in English and 49 percent in French. In English-language media, the remaining coverage was split between ‘Crisis or Disaster’ news themes (16 percent), ‘Canada’s Role’ (17 percent), and ‘Governance’ (13 percent), while there was very little coverage about the ‘Environment,’ ‘Migration or Refugees,’ or ‘Culture and Sports.’ In French, other than ‘Terrorism and War’ the largest proportion of stories were about ‘Canada’s Role’ (16 percent), ‘Crisis or Disaster’ (12 percent), and ‘Governance’ (7 percent).

Generally, the coverage of developing countries is focused on countries in conflict or which have recently experienced disaster (e.g. Nigeria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Nepal). The news stories are driven by these conflicts or disasters, particularly the role Canada is playing or could and should play in them. The *Toronto Star* is the newspaper with the highest volume of coverage of the countries selected.

### Development Coverage

The selection of ‘development’ themed stories required close scrutiny. To be considered a development story, the news item had to be about more than just humanitarian aid in the context of responding to a crisis or disaster. Rather, it had to also mention at least one or more aspects of human development (protection of human rights/fundamental freedoms, health, education, economic development, etc.). In short, stories dealing with how development impacts people by addressing their incomes, choices, capabilities, and well-being, including their freedoms, were included (Sen, 1999). Ideally, the story also included mentions of root causes, long-term problems, and solutions.

Of the more than 3,000 stories we read about the 18 countries across all news platforms, only 11 percent, 188 English and 153 French stories, were coded as dealing explicitly with ‘development’ issues and themes. (This, however, is not representative of the percentage of development stories within the broader coverage of the 18 countries under study, as international non-development stories were only coded for the period of January to April 2015. Within this period, 3.7 percent of English newspaper articles and 5.7 percent of French newspaper articles included in this study were deemed to have a development focus.)

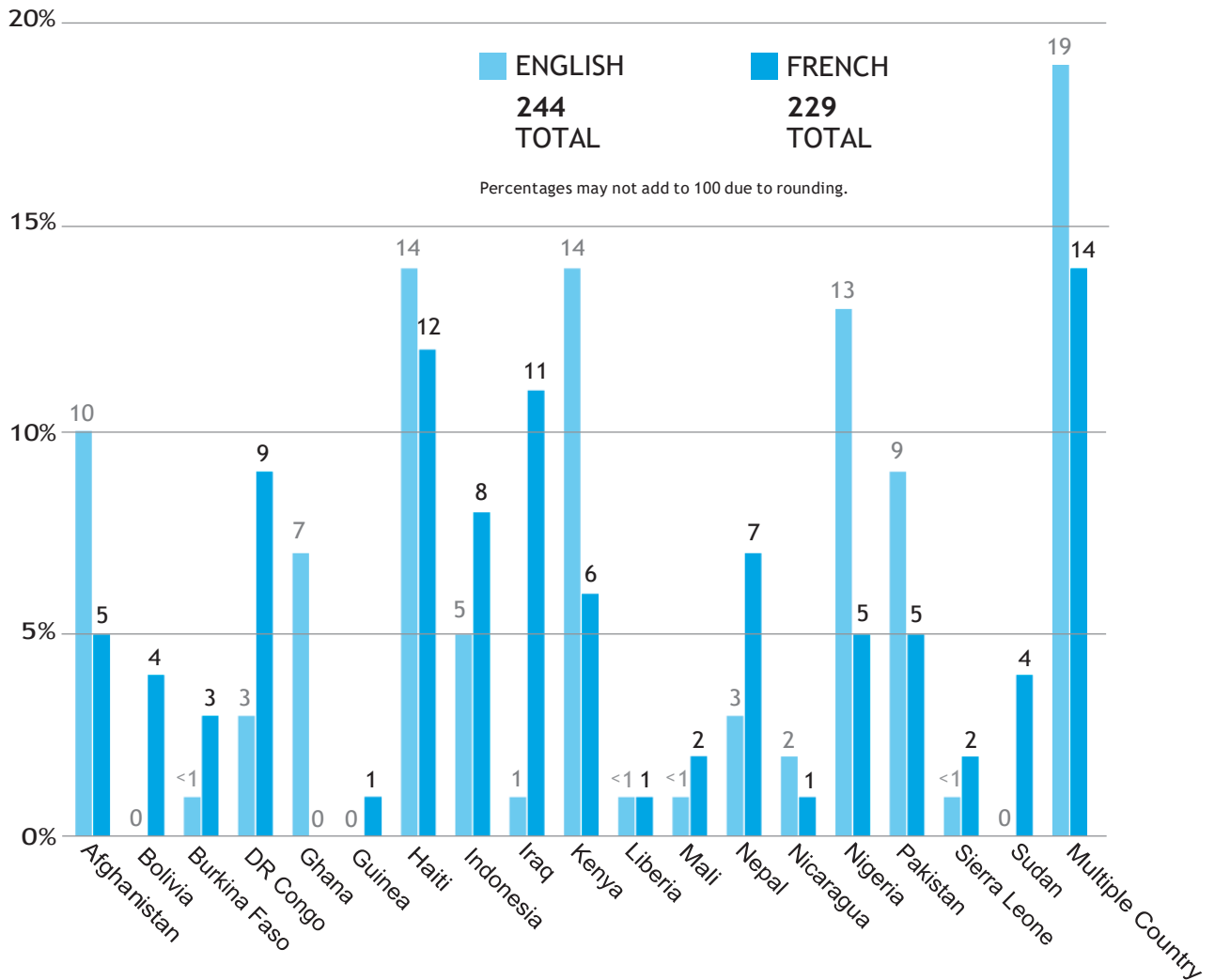
The data for these stories was broken down by the same categories as the non-development stories; country, news source, and news theme, as illustrated in Figures 5, 6, and 7. In addition, the stories were coded for development theme, identification of solutions, article type, author, placement, and quoted sources, Figures 8 to 14.<sup>4</sup>

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4. Three analytical variables proved to be unusable in the analysis: section heading; visuals; and video length. The sections headings were not comparable across newspapers and platforms. The databases used for the study did not offer exhaustive and reliable information on visuals and video.

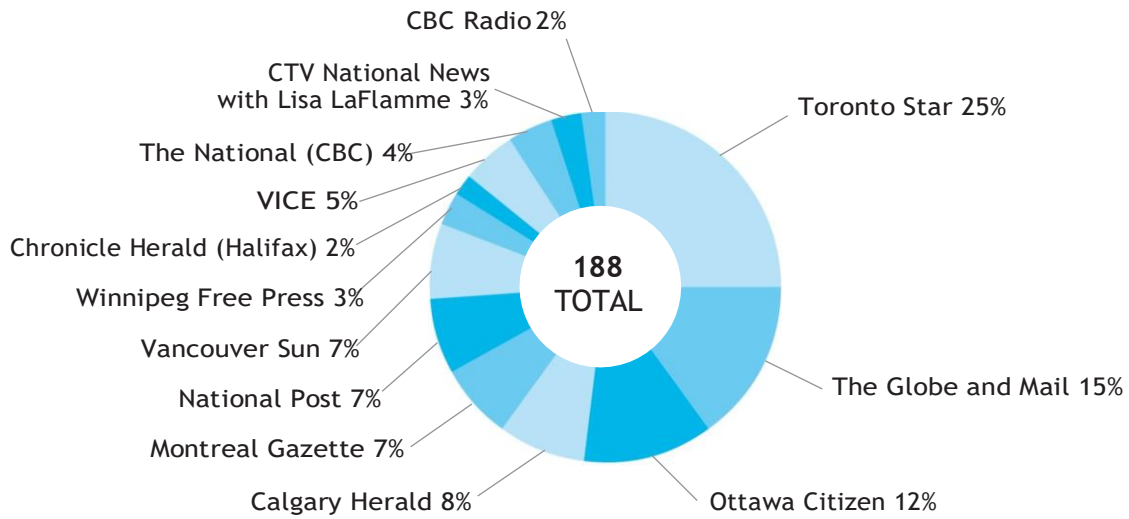


Figure 5: Country – 1st and 2nd mention



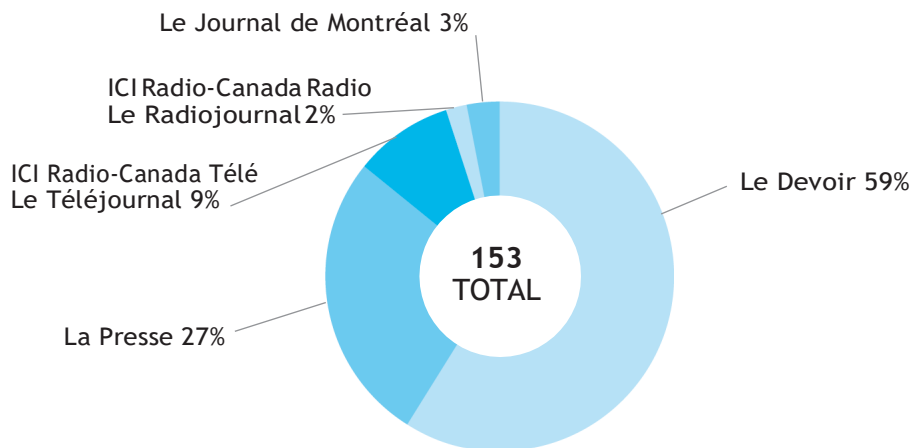
In English, the countries with the highest proportion of coverage with a development theme were Haiti (14 percent), Kenya (14 percent), and Nigeria (13 percent), followed by Afghanistan (10 percent), Pakistan (9 percent), and Ghana (7 percent). There was no coverage of Bolivia, Guinea, or Sudan. Almost 20 percent of the stories with a development theme, however, addressed issues or events affecting multiple countries. In the French-language media, the countries with the highest proportion of coverage with a development theme were Haiti (12 percent), Iraq (11 percent), and DR Congo (9 percent), followed by Indonesia (8 percent) and Nepal (7 percent), with Afghanistan, Nigeria, and Pakistan each garnering five percent of the coverage. Fourteen percent of the stories covered multiple countries.

**Figure 6a: News Source (English)**



Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

**Figure 6b: News Source (French)**

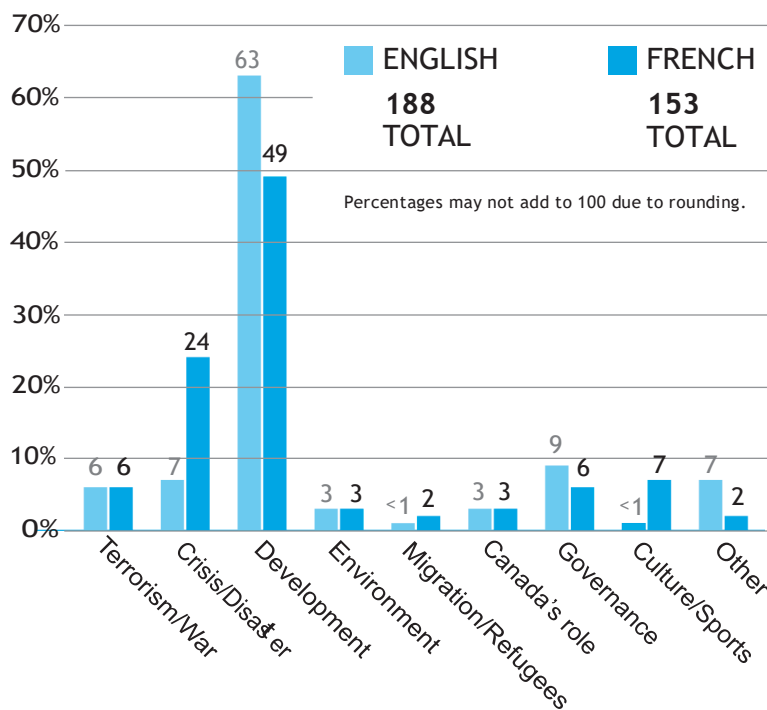


Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

When looking at the English newspaper coverage of the developing world, the *Toronto Star* published more development-themed coverage than any other paper (25 percent), followed by *The Globe and Mail* (15 percent) and *Ottawa Citizen* (12 percent). The *Calgary Herald*, *National Post*, *Montreal Gazette*, and *Vancouver Sun* each had between seven and eight percent of the development-themed coverage. Halifax's *Chronicle Herald* and the *Winnipeg Free Press* had the least amount of development-themed coverage, with two percent and three percent respectively. In French-language media, *Le Devoir* led the pack (59 percent) followed by *La Presse* (27 percent). Only three percent of the development coverage in the French media was provided by *Le Journal de Montréal*.

Less than 15 percent of the total news stories in English came from broadcast or digital sources of news. Among these sources, VICE had the highest number of stories with a development theme (n=10), followed by CBC's *The National* (n=7), CTV's *National News with Lisa LaFlamme* (n=5), and CBC radio (n=4). Eleven percent of the French coverage came from broadcast news sources.

**Figure 7: Dominant News Theme**



Each article was coded for its dominant news theme; the primary focus of the article. While the majority of the stories were primarily about development, 63 percent in English and 49 percent in French, in the remaining stories, the development theme was a secondary focus. In English, close to 10 percent of the stories had a dominant news theme of 'Governance,' followed by 'Crisis/Disaster' and 'Terrorism/War.' In French, 24 percent of the stories were about 'Crisis/Disaster,' followed by 'Terrorism/War,' 'Culture/Sports,' and 'Governance.'

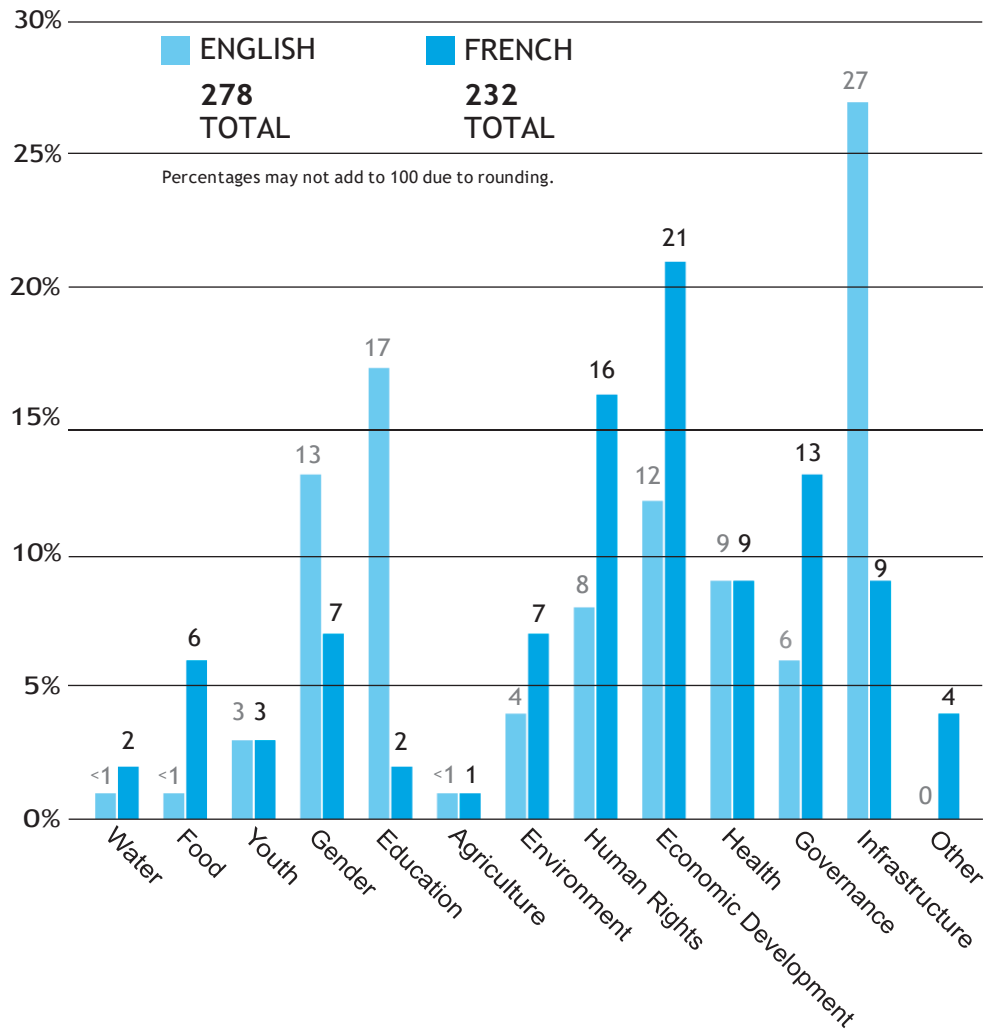
An example of a 'Terrorism/War' dominant news theme with 'Human Rights' development theme:

**CBC Radio, April 14th, 2015, "Nigeria: Chibok girls still gone one year after their abduction by Boko Haram"**

*It has been one year since more than 200 schoolgirls were abducted in Nigeria, kidnapped by Boko Haram, sparking the Bring our girls home campaign...Many of the marches taking place to mark the abduction of the Chibok girls have been silent ones...Oby Ezekwesili is a Nigerian activist, of the co-founders of the Bring Back Our Girls movement. She calls it an open sore on the conscience of Nigeria.*

Each coded article could include two different development themes. Figure 8 represents the two mentions combined.

**Figure 8: Development Theme**



In the English media, the most common development theme was ‘Infrastructure’ (27 percent), followed by ‘Education’ (17 percent), ‘Gender’ (13 percent), and ‘Economic Development’ (12 percent). Very few stories were about ‘Water,’ ‘Food,’ or ‘Agriculture,’ all with less than one percent. In French language media, the most common themes were ‘Economic Development’ (21 percent), ‘Human Rights’ (16 percent), and ‘Governance’ (13 percent). ‘Water,’ ‘Youth,’ and ‘Education’ were the least frequently addressed development themes.

Examples of infrastructure-themed development stories included:

***Halifax’s Chronicle Herald, September 12th, 2015, “Construction of delayed gas pipeline to start this year”***

*Pakistan’s prime minister said Friday that Turkmenistan will begin construction on a much-delayed gas pipeline stretching from Central Asia by the end of the year, a project that once is completed is expected to help his energy-starved Islamic nation overcome the shortage of natural gas in the years to come. (...)*

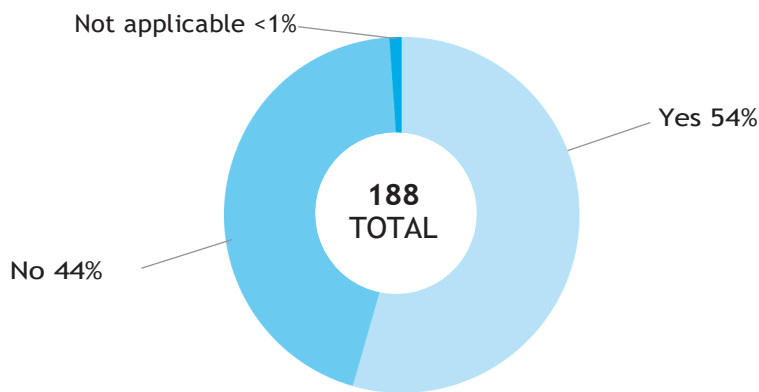
***VICE News, June 18th, 2015, “Millions of US dollars may have gone to Ghost Schools in Afghanistan”***

*The United States has often touted the education sector as one of the major success stories of post-war rebuilding in Afghanistan, but it now appears that the numbers used to bolster that claim may have been inflated – and that some US taxpayer dollars may have gone to fund ‘ghost schools’ that don’t actually exist. (...)*

***Toronto Star, January 13th, 2015, “Haiti marks five years since quake; Capital awash in construction as poverty, stability linger”***

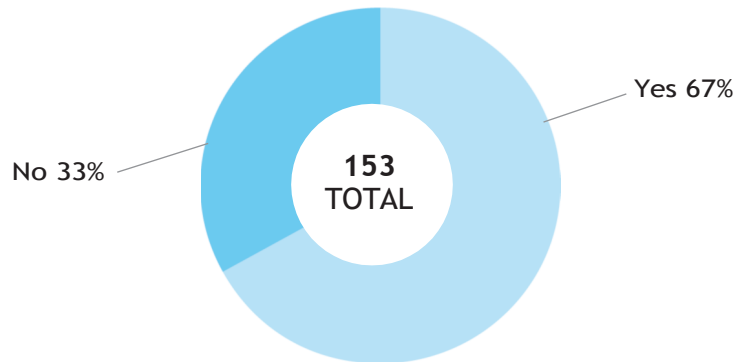
*Sombre Haitians gathered early Monday to remember the devastating January 2010 earthquake that left much of the capital and surrounding area in ruins in one of the worst natural disasters of modern times. (...)*

**Figure 9a: Solutions Identified (English)**



Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

**Figure 9b: Solutions Identified (French)**



Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Just over half of the stories with a development theme in English (54 percent) also offered some type of solution included in the article. This was more common in the French media, where 67 percent of stories included some mention of long term solutions for addressing the development issues in question. Examples where solutions were identified are included below. Given the predominance of development-themed coverage in the print media, these examples draw from this subset of the sample:

***Le Devoir, January 6, 2015, “Freeing mentally ill Africans from their chains”***<sup>5</sup>

*Grégoire Ahongbonon carries a metal chain with him in his suitcase. This chain was used to restrain a person suffering from mental illness in Ivory Coast, his adoptive country. He brings it with him when he travels, in case he might have the chance to place it on the desk of decision makers. In case the metal pieces may change their mentalities. (...)*

***La Presse, April 25, 2015, “A magazine sold by kids on the street”***<sup>6</sup>

*In Montreal, we have L’Itinéraire. In Sucre, constitutional capital of Bolivia, the magazine is called Inti. In the poorest country of South America, this publication’s mission is not social reinsertion of homeless people. It is a way for kids to earn some money, legally, on the street. (...)*

***Vancouver Sun, December 8th, 2015, “Recycling initiative earns international accolades”***

*The Plastic Bank, a Vancouver-based social enterprise that encourages people living in poverty to collect and exchange waste plastic for goods, services and cash, has won the Sustainia Community Award at the COP21 climate conference in Paris...The Plastic Bank began full operations in Haiti with 32 Social Plastic Recycling Markets. (...)*

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5. Translated by author.

6. Translated by author.

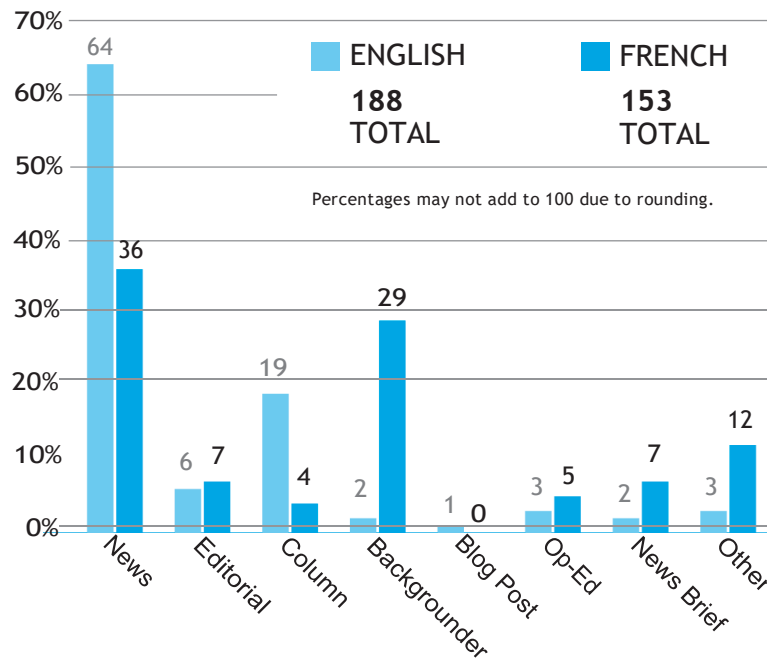
**Toronto Star, June 13th, 2015, “On how to help boys with AK-47s”**

*It was just one more day in the life of a campaigner who spent his four-decade career in the world’s most catastrophic countries, on a mission to rescue children and their families from disaster, danger and destitution. (...)*

**The Globe and Mail, September 5th, 2015, “How can the Internet help Africa? Start by asking Africans”**

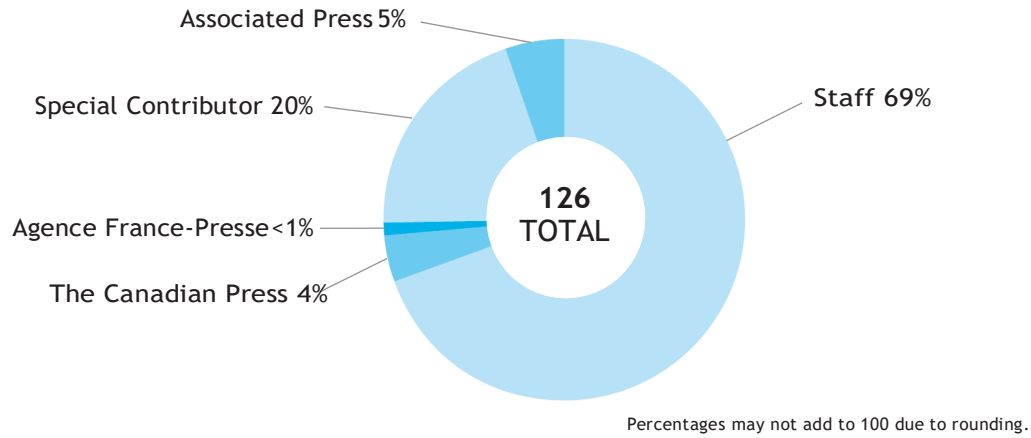
*Overlooking the expansion of Internet access is problematic as it is to set to become the most important infrastructure for development that the world has ever seen...in the context of development in Africa, if one wants to know how countries can succeed at leveraging the Internet for development, they need to look at what Africans are doing to help themselves. (...)*

**Figure 10: News Item Type**

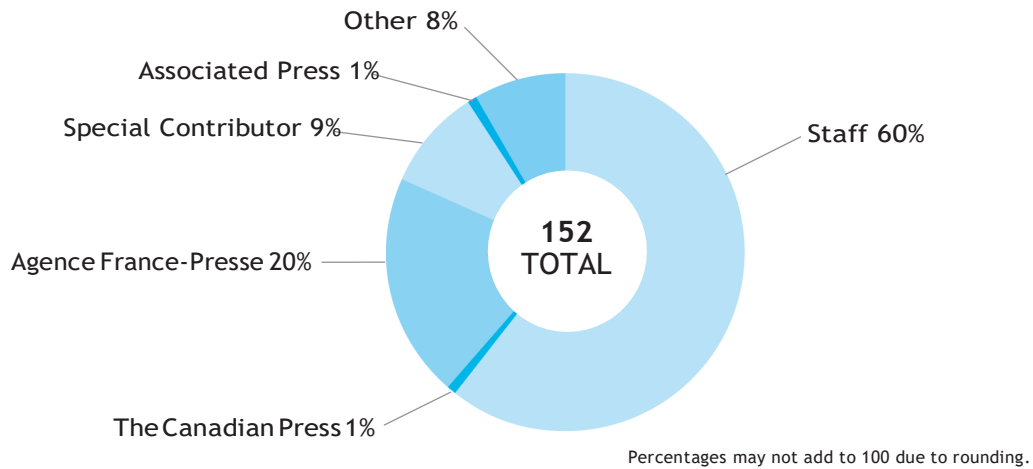


In English, the majority (66 percent) of stories were hard ‘news’ (news or news briefs), while slightly less than one-third of all stories (31 percent) were examples of ‘opinion discourse,’ i.e. stories with an explicit normative position and argument, often written by an editor, columnist, or guest op-ed writer. In French, the type of stories was more varied, with 43 percent of the stories coded as ‘news’ and 29 percent backgrounders. Only 16 percent of the French stories were opinion-based.

**Figure 11a: Author (English)**



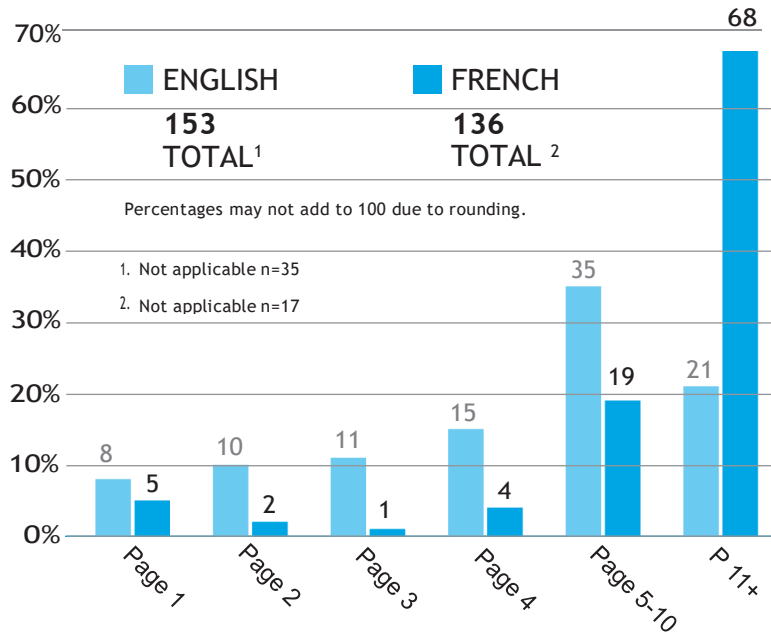
**Figure 11b: Author (French)**



For many of the English stories (32 percent), the author of the article was not identified. Of those stories where an author was identified, the majority were written by unidentified “staff members” of the news organizations, 69 percent in English and 60 percent in French. In English, less than 10 percent of the stories were from wire services, but in French, 22 percent were from wire services, predominantly Agence France-Presse (AFP). Twenty percent of the stories were by special contributors in English.

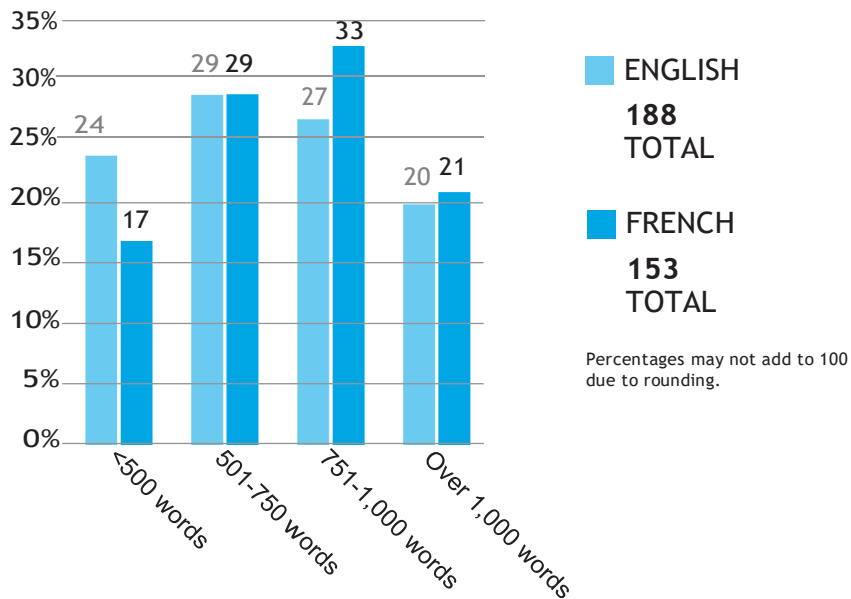


**Figure 12: Page Number**



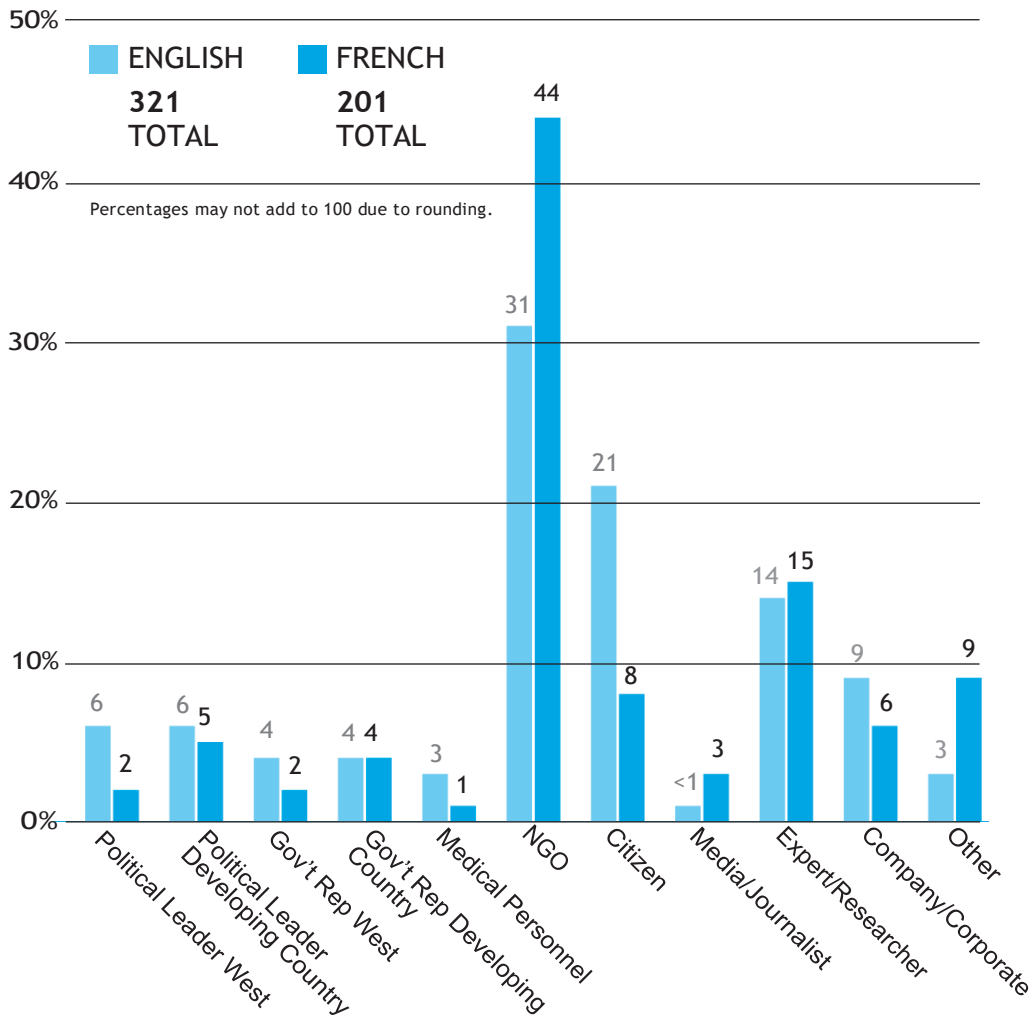
In English, just under half of the news stories examined were on the first four pages of the news platform (44 percent). Only 12 percent of French language stories were on the first four pages of the news platform. In English, 35 percent were located on pages five to 10, and 21 percent were on pages 11 or higher. In French, 68 percent of the stories were on pages 11 or higher.

**Figure 13: Story Length**



The length of stories varied. In English, almost one-quarter of the stories (24 percent) were less than 500 words, 29 percent were between 501 and 750 words, 27 percent were from 751 to 1,000 and 20 percent were over 1,000 words. In French, there was a slightly higher proportion of stories over 750 words than there were in English, 54 percent versus 47 percent.

**Figure 14: Quoted Source – 1st and 2nd mentions**



A maximum of two quoted sources were coded for each story. The most common quoted source in the development coverage in both English and French were NGOs, 31 percent and 44 percent respectively. Among the more than 40 different NGOs cited in the coverage, the most common were UNICEF, the Red Cross, and Oxfam (for a complete list of the quoted NGOs, see Appendix II).

In English, individual citizens were the next most quoted source while in French experts and researchers filled this role.

Political and government representatives, from the West and the developing country, were quoted sparingly, in both the English- and French-language media.

## Summary

This study has identified a number of features of Canadian news coverage of developing countries.

- First, as the literature review shows, international events may attract considerable attention from the Canadian news media, but the proportion of international stories that take up questions relating to development are very small. Moreover, the closure of foreign bureaus and thinning of editorial resources over the past decades has led to more heavy reliance on wire services and a decline in what *National Geographic's* Paul Salopek called “deep journalism.” For Salopek, deep journalism “is informed by deep immersion in the story at ground level... revealing the texture of lives of people... who live within front-page stories, but normally don’t make the news themselves” (Bishop, 2015).
- In the sample examined here, newspapers, when compared to digital and broadcast media, included more coverage of issues and events in the developing world (but also more news stories in general). In the English media, the *Toronto Star* had the highest volume of all international news coverage of the developing world, both in terms of development and non-development stories. In the French media, *Le Devoir* had the highest volume of all coverage. National newspapers generally had more development-themed coverage, although the *Calgary Herald* and *Montreal Gazette* had a higher volume of non-development coverage than *The Globe and Mail* and *National Post*.
- Terrorism and war were the major drivers of the news coverage of the developing world in both English and French. Not surprisingly, countries like Iraq and Nigeria, where conflict was very high in 2015, were the main focus of the non-development-themed coverage.
- When looking at the amount of development-themed coverage of the 18 selected countries across all news platforms, we see very little reporting in general and therefore it is important to be cautious in the conclusions that are made about it (other than the conclusion that development stories are largely invisible). Overall, multiple country stories in English and French were the most predominant, as opposed to stories dealing with development issues in single countries.
- In English language media, the individual countries of Haiti, Kenya, and Nigeria had the most amount of coverage and, again, traditional print coverage had more coverage than the digital or broadcast media; in French, Haiti, Iraq, and DR Congo had the highest volume.
- The English national papers generally had more development-themed coverage than the regional papers, although the *Ottawa Citizen* and *Calgary Herald* were third and fourth respectively in this type of coverage. As noted above, the *Toronto Star* had the highest proportion of stories about developing countries in general as well as the highest proportion of development-themed stories. *The Globe and Mail*, while having fewer stories about developing countries generally, had the second highest number of development-themed stories.

- In French, *Le Devoir* had the most development-themed coverage, followed by *La Presse*. Considering the number of media included in the study, the proportion of development-themed stories in French-language newspapers seems comparatively higher to the English-language sample. The number of stories is similar for Radio-Canada and CBC.
- The largest proportion of development-themed stories were hard news rather than opinion, although the French coverage did have a higher proportion of news coverage when compared to the English. In English, the most common development themes of these stories were about infrastructure, education, and gender, while in French, the most common themes were economic development, human rights, and governance.
- Most of the coverage that was identified with an author was written by staff at the news organizations, although French stories were more likely than English stories to have used wire services (nearly all from AFP).
- In English, almost half of the stories were prominently placed on the first four pages of the publication while in French the stories were more likely to be found after page four.
- The stories in English were generally shorter when compared to the French stories. Approximately 20 percent of all stories (English and French) were 1,000 words or more. Only 47 percent of English stories and 54 percent of French stories were more than 750 words.
- NGOs were the most quoted sources with over 40 different NGOs identified in the English and French.

## Discussion

The results of our content analysis confirm what the research discussed in the literature review tells us about Western media coverage of the developing world: it tends to be rare, episodic, fragmentary, and focused on conflict or catastrophe. Over the course of our sample period, Canadian media spent very little space and time on issues pertaining to development — only about one in 20 stories dealing with countries of the Global South, in a context of diminishing media resources, declining audience share, and constant struggle for the attention of the public and political class.

Most of these stories were published in newspapers, which is not surprising, considering a broadcast news program can only run a limited number of items. The *Toronto Star*, *La Presse*, and especially *Le Devoir* appear to make more room for development news compared to other media, which may be explained in part by the ethnocultural diversity in Toronto and Montreal. However, French-language newspapers relied more heavily on wire services for these stories and ran most of them deep into each publication where they are less likely to attract reader attention or drive policy conversation. While our sampling of digital news sources was challenging, we do expect that the development storytelling has a brighter future with media like VICE than with legacy news organizations, particularly those in the economically challenged industry of print news.

Interestingly, sub-themes related to development issues received varying levels of attention: infrastructure and education were very common topics in English-language media, much less in French. Economic development was a focus of interest in both languages. Many stories presented governance issues related to emerging countries or markets, as well as social and environmental challenges for businesses in the developing world.

While official political actors are typically the dominant news source in stories about politics and public policy, in this study NGOs were the most frequently quoted sources in development stories, which appears consistent with the observation that journalists and these organizations have developed increasingly interdependent relationships. For advocacy organizations in the international development sector, this presents some openings and opportunities for shaping media discourse and, presumably, the policy decisions that flow from coverage of international issues and events. Indeed, the presence of these organizations as ‘primary definers’ in the development coverage may help to explain why despite the ‘narrative incentives’ for negative reporting, a majority of development-related news stories examined here advanced a range of possible solutions. This suggests not only that media access is more open than past research suggests, but also that the established narrative about the developing world - as a locus of war, conflict, and gloom - can be punctuated by positive and progressive storylines, such as those which humanize populations in developing countries, showing them to be active agents rather than passive, dependent, and needy victims (Chouliaraki, 2006; Tester, 2001).

The number of stories, and their length, placement, themes, and sources provide an accurate picture of the coverage of the developing world by Canadian media in 2015. What is missing from this picture, however, is, first, the impact of each of these stories on the public and policymaking communities and processes. The literature review presented above indicates that media coverage shapes public understanding of the developing world, yet we have little empirical evidence of this impact either in terms of how it shapes public attitudes and beliefs or the decisions of policymakers as it relates to development initiatives and programs. The methodology developed for this study was unable to address this issue, but it remains an important one, worthy of further analysis.

Also missing, and second, is an understanding about the specific effects of visual media discourse on public understanding of international development. One of the defining images of the federal election campaign, in September 2015, was the photograph of Alan Kurdi, a three-year-old Syrian boy, found dead on a Turkish beach. While the Syrian refugee crisis had been simmering for many years, and although Kurdi was not the first child to perish in a desperate escape for freedom, the nature of the image of his tiny lifeless body washed ashore struck a chord, particularly in Canada where it arguably shifted the tenor and tone of the campaign and placed issues of international conflict and Canada’s role in the world at centre stage. Yet, the extent to which that iconic image influenced the substance and tone of the policy discussion about development solutions to the refugee crisis remains unclear, not only in Canada but elsewhere as well.

Third, while the media analysis illustrates a prominent definitional role for NGOs in development news stories, it cannot tell us much about the media strategies or communication activities of those organizations. The development sector is a crowded field composed of multiple organizations with competing priorities, objectives, and mandates. This study has shown that some of them are able to rise to the top in terms of the media prominence they achieve. But what factors account for this prominence? Is the development NGO field structured by differential relations of power? Is media dominance determined by access to political and economic capital? Are aid and relief organizations more or less likely than those engaged in policy advocacy to achieve definitional prominence in news coverage about development? These are important questions that future researchers would do well to explore.

A final area of study which appears both promising and useful to understand the dynamics of Canadian media and the developing world is the growing body of research on audience attitudes and behaviour, in the context of a shifting media landscape, new media formats and platforms, and online consumption/contribution practices. The implications of these changes for the media industry and for democracy are discussed in a recent report submitted to the Government of Canada (Public Policy Forum, 2017). Regarding the developing world more specifically, examining the complexity of audiences' responses to crises and international development news can help NGOs to engage the public more actively with stories of "distant suffering," beyond the occasional donation (Seu, 2017). The barriers to engagement may not be geographical, but rather cognitive and emotional – which seems especially relevant now, as the flow of migrants from countries in conflict brings their realities to our doorstep. Yet, to ensure Canadians acquire a fulsome understanding of the migrant crisis, as with so many other crises relating to underdevelopment and global social inequality, we desperately need a media sector that situates Canada's vulnerability to the fragilities and destabilizing forces of the world in its wider socioeconomic and geopolitical contexts. Canadians deserve media coverage that promotes a deeper understanding of how global poverty and underdevelopment not only have effects abroad, but at home as well.

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## Appendix I: Codebook

CATEGORY	CODE	INSTRUCTIONS
Date	Month/Day/Year	
Headline		Verbatim
Country (1,2,3)		
	1	Bolivia
	2	Burkina Faso
	3	DRC
	4	Ghana
	5	Guinea
	6	Haiti
	7	Indonesia
	8	Iraq
	9	Kenya
	10	Liberia
	11	Mali
	12	Nepal
	13	Nicaragua
	14	Nigeria
	15	Pakistan
	16	Sierra Leone
	17	Sudan
	18	Afghanistan
Source		
	1	Toronto Star
	2	Globe and Mail
	3	National Post
	4	Ottawa Citizen
	5	Vancouver Sun
	6	Calgary Herald
	7	Winnipeg Free Press
	8	Halifax Chronicle Herald
	9	Montreal Gazette
	10	VICE
	11	CBC
	12	CTV
	13	Le Journal de Montréal
	14	Le Devoir
	15	ICI Radio-Canada Télé - Le Téléjournal
	16	ICI Radio-Canada Télé - Le Radiojournal
	17	La Presse

CATEGORY	CODE	INSTRUCTIONS
Date	Month/Day/Year	
Headline		Verbatim
News Theme		
	1	Terrorism/War
	2	Crisis/Disaster (e.g. disease outbreak, famine, drought)
	3	Development
	4	Environment
	5	Migration/Refugees
	6	Canada's Role
	7	Governance
	8	Sports/Culture
	99	Other
Other specify		
Development Theme (Code 1, 2)		
	1	Water
	2	Food
	3	Youth
	4	Gender
	5	Education
	6	Agriculture
	7	Environment
	8	Human Rights
	9	Economic Development
	10	Health
	11	Governance
	12	Infrastructure
	99	Other
Other specify		
Identification of solution		
	1	yes
	2	no

CATEGORY	CODE	INSTRUCTIONS
Date	Month/Day/Year	
Headline		Verbatim
Type		
	1	News
	2	Editorial
	3	Column
	4	Backgrounder
	5	Blog post
	6	Op ed
	7	Letter to Editor
	8	Visual
	9	News Brief
	99	Other
Author		
	1	Staff
	2	CP
	3	Reuters
	4	AFP
	5	Special Contributor
	6	AP
	99	Unknown
Section		Alpha
Page Number		Numeric
Article Length		Word count
	99	Not available
Video Length		Time (minutes/seconds)
	99	Not available

CATEGORY	CODE	INSTRUCTIONS
Date	Month/Day/Year	
Headline		Verbatim
Quoted Sources (1,2,3)		Indirect or direct quote
	1	Political Leader West
	2	Political Leader developing country
	3	Government Rep West
	4	Government Rep developing country
	5	Military
	6	Medical personnel
	7	NGO                      Note name of NGO
	8	Citizen
	9	Expert/researcher
	10	Media (journalist)
	11	Company/corporation rep
	99	Other
Visuals		
	1	Photo
	2	Video
	3	Data/infographics
	99	Other
If visual		Open description



## Appendix II: NGO Quoted Sources

### ENGLISH

African Women's Development Fund	Lower Nine
Aga Khan Foundation	Me to We
American University, Nigeria	Musasa Project
Amnesty International	National Commission on the Status of Women
Act 4 Accountability	National Resources Defense Council
Artists for Peace and Justice	Neengar
Aurat Foundation	Nyantede Foundation
Borderless Higher Education for Refugees	Nova Foundation
Bring Back our Girls	Oxfam Canada
Care International	Partners in Health
Chatham House	Physicians for Human Rights
Canada Haiti Action Network	Plan Canada
Canadian Red Cross	Policy Plan International
Canadian Women for Women	Red Cross
Carnegie Endowment for International Peace	Robert F Kennedy Centre for Justice and Human Rights
Centre for Social Innovation	Rotary International
Coalition for Adolescent Girls	See Me Play
Earth Hour	Slaight Foundation
Engineers without Borders	Stimson Centre
Free the Children	The Plastics Bank
Gates Foundation	UNICEF
Global Forest Watch	UNICEF Baga Sola
Grand Challenges Canada	UNICEF Canada
Greenpeace Canada, The Forest Trust	United Nations Children's Fund
Greenpeace International	United Nations Foundation
Human Rights Watch	Washington Center for Economic and Policy Research
Indonesian Conference on Religion and Peace	Water Aid
International Campaign for Tibet	Women in Development and Environment
International Organization for Migration	World Bank
Let's Save the Girls	World Economic Forum
Lift the Children	World Food Programme
	World Vision
	Zana Africa

## FRENCH

Action Works

Alternatives

Amnistie internationale

Asia Foundation

Association québécoise des organismes  
de coopération internationale

Association Saint-Camille-de-Lellis

Banque mondiale

Centre du commerce international

Centre d'étude et de coopération  
internationale (CECI)

Climate Action Tracker

Committee to Protect Journalists

Conseil norvégien pour les réfugiés

Enough Project

Entraide universitaire mondiale  
du Canada (EUMC)

Fondation Architectes de l'urgence

Fondation Unatti

Fonds international pour la protection  
des animaux (IFAW)

Fonds monétaire international (FMI)

Freedom House

Greenpeace France

Haut-Commissariat des Nations Unies  
aux droits de l'homme (HCDH)

International Crisis Group

Justice Project Pakistan

Mali Folkecenter

Médecins sans frontières

Œuvre Léger

Organisation de coopération et de  
développement économiques (OCDE)

Organisation mondiale de la santé  
(OMS)

ONU

Organisation des Nations unies pour  
l'alimentation et l'agriculture

Oxfam-Québec

Programme alimentaire mondial des  
Nations unies

Reporters sans frontières

Solidarité Union Coopération

UNESCO

UNICEF

Women Environmental Programme  
(Burkina Faso)

World Wildlife Fund

## Principal Investigators

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**Aga Khan Foundation Canada (AKFC)** is a non-profit international development agency, working in Africa and Asia to find sustainable solutions to the complex problems causing global poverty. AKFC concentrates on development challenges in health, education, civil society, economic inclusion, food security, gender equality, and the environment. In Canada, AKFC raises funds, builds partnerships with Canadian institutions, and promotes discussion and learning on international development issues. Established in 1980, AKFC is a registered Canadian charity and an agency of the worldwide Aga Khan Development Network.



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