

# SCREENING THE WORLD

HOW UK BROADCASTERS PORTRAYED  
THE WIDER WORLD IN 2007-8

MARTIN SCOTT



children's, factual and news

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## FOREWORD

DFID is committed to building the support for development needed to bring an end to global poverty. This work begins at home. The broadcast media has a vital role to play in bringing a fair and accurate account of complex issues such as poverty, trade, conflict and climate change to our television screens, in formats that appeal to and engage UK audiences of all ages.

The latest *Screening the World* research, funded by DFID, highlights important issues about international coverage on our television screens. I hope it will encourage broadcasters to look seriously at how they can do more to help the British public become better informed about the wider world.



**Gillian Merron**

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State  
for International Development

# INTRODUCTION

IBT has commissioned this new research because it addresses the international content of three key genres – children’s, factual and news – which are crucial to the future of public service broadcasting. Television is the main source of information about the wider world for most people in the UK. Yet, as this research shows, there are some worrying trends, with a narrowing of the range of countries, stories and voices featuring in international coverage.

Children’s programming is particularly at risk. As global citizens, children need access to information about the lives and cultures of people in other countries and television has a vital role to play in providing this. In chapter 1, for the first time, we measure the nature and volume of children’s programming with international content, in order to have a clearer understanding of what information about the wider world is available for children on television in the UK.

Despite the proliferation of TV channels aimed at children, programming about the United States dominates, and without the BBC there would be very little diversity in international coverage. The findings highlight the central role played by just two programmes, *Blue Peter* and *Newsround*. If current trends continue, children in the UK will find that television, which has the potential to open their eyes to the rest of the world, will instead limit their horizons and understanding. It’s a critical situation which requires urgent action.

The second chapter of this report is the latest instalment in a unique longitudinal

study, first commissioned by IBT in 1989, which has tracked the changing nature of international factual programming on UK television. The statistics for 2007 show that BBC2 and Channel 4 dominate, but there is a continuing migration of international factual programming to digital channels, where they are less likely to reach wide audiences.

The results also suggest that programming often falls into global stereotypes as international coverage of the United States and Europe was dominated by crime and travel respectively, and Africa by wildlife and the Middle East by conflict.

Chapter three explores some of the issues raised by the coverage of the post election violence in Kenya and highlights the difficulties which UK broadcasters face in reporting a fast moving and complex news story. The audience was unprepared and the early reporting provided little context and too much emphasis on tribal causes.

This ‘broad brush’ approach in the first few days framed the way in which UK viewers understood subsequent events, even though later coverage revealed a more complex picture. Reporters should think about how they can provide more context in the early coverage of a crisis and broadcasters need to acknowledge that audiences want more than simply bad news and to continue to look for creative ways of broadening the news agenda.

Mark Galloway  
Director, International Broadcasting Trust

# CHAPTER 1 INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S PROGRAMMING 2007







## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Children's television is seen as under threat and an influential coalition headed by Save Kids' TV is calling on the Government to take urgent action. One of their concerns is the dominance of North American programming and the fear that it will lead to cultural homogeny, limiting children's understanding of the wider world. As global citizens, children need access to information about the lives and cultures of people in other countries. Television has a vital role to play in providing this.

The purpose of this study – the first of its kind – is to measure the nature and volume of children's programming with international content, in order to have a clearer understanding of what information about the wider world is available for children on television in the UK.

The results for the terrestrial channels demonstrate the dominance of North America and the key role the BBC plays by maintaining a diversity of international coverage. Of the 19 digital channels studied only 7 had any developing world coverage over the two week period we sampled. The report also highlights the significant role played by *Blue Peter* and *Newsround*. *Blue Peter's* coverage of developing countries was greater and more diverse than the output of ITV1, Channel 4 or FIVE.

## INTRODUCTION

Children's television has been at the heart of the UK's public service broadcasting system for over fifty years but is now under scrutiny as a genre which is in decline, and some would say, 'in crisis'.

In 2007, the communications regulator, Ofcom published a report which has been instrumental in influencing IBT to commission this research. *The Future of Children's Television Programming* examined what is being broadcast on TV for children in the UK and what viewers think of it. The research presented in this chapter provides, for the first time, objective evidence on the volume and nature of children's programming with international content on UK television. We hope that this report will contribute to the debate about the future of children's television in the UK and focus attention on the crucial issue of the way in which the wider world is presented to the next generation.

A wealth of research indicates that high quality programming can have a positive effect on children's development and stimulate their interest in the world around them. This has always been a key element of the public value behind programmes like *Blue Peter*, *Magpie*, *Wise Up!*, *Rainbow*, *Art Attack* and *How!* The list of entertaining, educative shows which are in the archive is a long one. However, the list of such programmes currently being made is much shorter.

From the Ofcom report, it can be seen that despite the rise in the number of hours of programming for children, there are concerns that the quality, range and diversity of that programming is diminishing.

Programming on commercial children's channels was especially found to be lacking in diversity, weighted towards animation which makes up 67% of their output. Ofcom's audience research indicates that there is a significant gap between parents' expectations of children's programming and what is actually on air. It concludes that:

"While a clear majority of parents regard public service programming for children as very important, less than half think it is being delivered satisfactorily, especially in reflecting a range of cultures and opinions from around the UK." (*The Future of Children's Television Programming: Research Report, Ofcom, 2007, page 1*)

There are a number of factors which have contributed to this decline in high quality, diverse UK-produced programming.

Between 1998 and 2007 the number of dedicated children's channels in the UK increased from 6 to 25. By 2007, 90% of households with children had multi-channel television. Today nearly 6 times the amount of children's programming is transmitted as in 1998. As a result of growing competition for advertising revenue and an increasingly fragmented audience, share and budgets per hour have fallen and broadcasters are now less able to fund original programming for children. Since 2001 Ofcom found that investment in children's programming had fallen by 17%, while investment in television production as whole had risen by 4%.

Since the Communications Act in 2003 commercial public

service broadcasters have had no quota for children's output, with children's treated in the same way as many other public service broadcasting (PSB) genres such as religion, arts and drama. In 2007 ITV1 and FIVE significantly reduced their commitment to children's programming and the BBC is now the main commissioner of UK-made children's programming.

One of the concerns expressed by consumer groups is the effect of the dominance of North American programming. It is feared this will lead to cultural homogeneity, which could impair the development of children in the UK, both culturally and socially, and limit their understanding of the world around them. It is also feared that low cost imports from the US will increasingly undermine the desire by broadcasters to commission new children's programming made in the UK despite the fact it is more culturally relevant to the audience.

If UK citizens, both adults and children, are to have a well-rounded, informed understanding of the world they live in, they need access to information about the lives and cultures of people in other countries. UK television has a vital role to play in providing this information.

The purpose of the research presented in this chapter is to measure the nature and volume of international children's programming on UK television in order to have a clearer understanding of what information about the wider world is available to children on TV.

To capture as wide a range of information about programmes with international content that are made for children, this study has looked at three elements of television content during 2007: terrestrial channels' output, digital channels' output and *Blue Peter* and *Newsround*, both on the BBC.

## KEY FINDINGS

The results for terrestrial channels demonstrate the dominance of North America, (46% of all international children's programming) and the crucial role of the BBC in providing a diverse range of new international children's programming.

Of the 19 digital channels investigated during the 2 week sample period, only 7 channels had any developing country programming at all. This amounted to only 7% of all international programming which was overwhelmingly dominated by North America. North America was found to be the focus of 79% of all international children's programming over this period.

The results for *Blue Peter* and *Newsround* demonstrate the vital role that both programmes play, in providing diverse content about the wider world outside the US and UK. *Blue Peter's* coverage of developing countries was greater and more varied than ITV1, Channel 4 or FIVE during 2007. One note of caution, however, is that with audiences of around 400,000 (see section on Viewing Figures below) for both *Blue Peter* and *Newsround*, the impact they have is less than it once was.

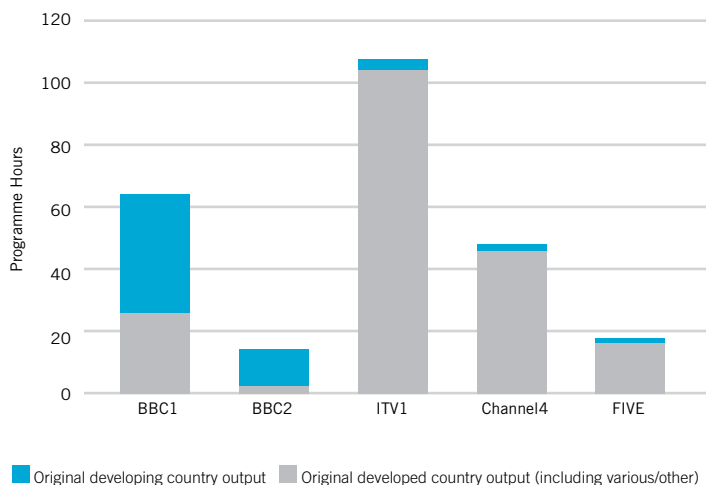


Figure 1: New international and developing country programming on the 5 terrestrial channels in 2007

### Sample 1: New International Children's Programming on Terrestrial Channels for all of 2007

Figure 1 appears to illustrate the dominance of ITV1 in providing new international children's programming on terrestrial channels with twice as much programming as BBC1. However, none of ITV1's first-run international children's programming was factual and it was dominated by acquisitions from North America, with animations such as *Bratz*, a series based on the doll franchise of the same name. Only 3%, or 3.3 hours of ITV1's international children's coverage was of the developing world due to 8 new episodes of the animated series *The Emperor's New School*, set in parts of the old Inca Empire.

Channel 4 and FIVE had even smaller amounts of developing country content than ITV1, with 1.8 hours and 1.4 hours respectively. However, the international children's output on these two channels was entirely free from animations with programmes such as *Take away my Takeaway* on Channel 4 which showed teenagers travelling to the country from which their favourite takeaway originates and the wildlife programme *Michaela's Wild Challenge* on FIVE.

The most striking feature of BBC1 and BBC2's coverage is that it was dominated by developing country programming. Examples include *Serious Andes* on BBC1 which is an observational documentary following a group of children as they attempted to climb the Andes and *Mama Mirabelle's Home Movies* on BBC2 which is an animated series about wildlife around the world. Between them BBC1 and BBC2 had 88% of all new developing country children's programming in 2007.

To give some context to the data in figure 1, it is interesting to

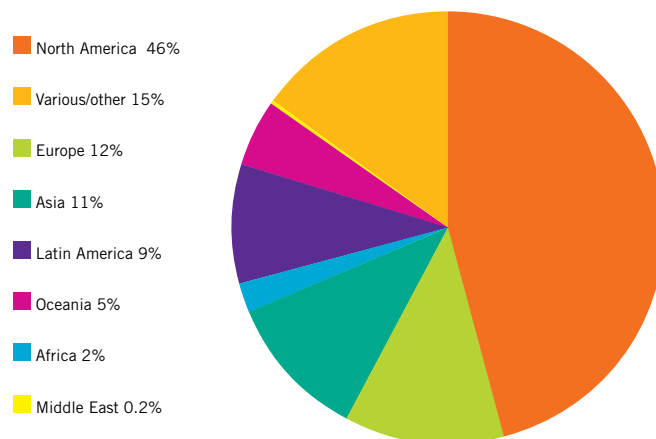


Figure 2: Percentage of new international children's programming on terrestrial channels in 2007 covering different regions of the world.

note that there was three times as much new international adult factual content, as discussed in chapter two of this report, as there was new international children's programming, in 2007.

Figure 2 highlights the dominance of North America with 46% of all new international children's programming as well as the lack of coverage of certain regions of the world such as Oceania (5%), Africa (2%) and the Middle East (0.2%). In the entire year, there was only one new children's programme about the Middle East which was a half hour episode of *Take Away my Takeaway* on Channel 4. By contrast, with programmes such as *Power Rangers* on ITV1, *The O.C.* on Channel 4 and *Hannah Montana* on FIVE, North America had by far the greatest amount of new international children's output on ITV1 (47%), Channel 4 (92%) and FIVE (72%). Interestingly, only 8% of the BBC's new international children's coverage was about North America.

BBC1's coverage was the most diverse. With programmes like *Mortified*, a comedy set in Australia, *Serious Andes* shot in Ecuador and *Roman Mysteries*, a fantasy drama set in ancient Rome, new international children's programming on BBC1 covered every continent. On BBC2 the two regions which received the most coverage were Latin America and Africa with output including the animated wildlife programme, *Mama Mirabelle's Home Movies* and the mystery/adventure series, *Escape from Scorpion Island* which is set on a tropical island and filmed in Brazil.

These results clearly demonstrate both the dominance of North America in new international children's programming on the terrestrial channels and the important role of the BBC in maintaining a diversity of international coverage.

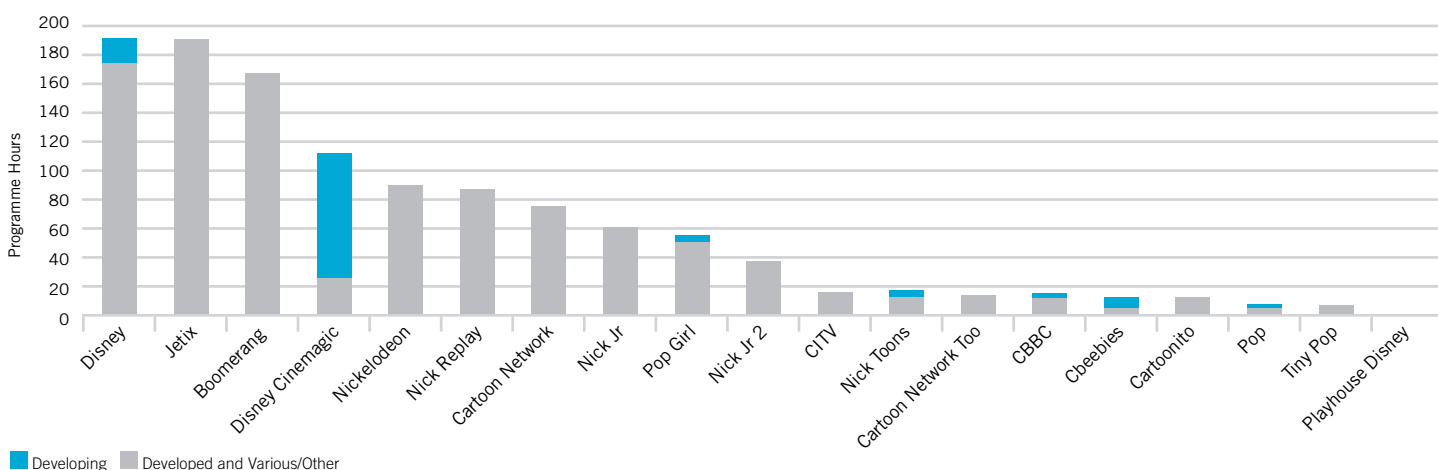


Figure 3: Number of programme hours of developed and developing country children's programming on 19 digital channels for 2 sample weeks in 2007

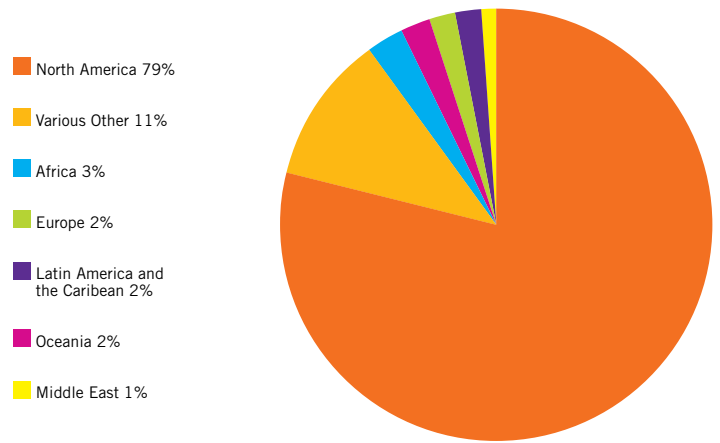


Figure 4: Percentage of international children's programming for different regions of the world on digital channels in 2007, over 2 sample weeks

### Sample 2: All International Children's Programming on 19 Digital Channels for 2 sample weeks in 2007

Figure 3 illustrates two important findings. Firstly, the distinct lack of developing country children's programming on digital channels. 12 of the 19 channels examined showed no developing country children's programming at all over the two week sample period. Of the 7 channels that did show programming set in the developing world only 2 of these, Disney and Disney Cinemagic, showed more than 5 hours, and it consisted entirely of animation, such as *Tarzan* and *Aladdin*, which are likely to give only a very superficial impression of the developing world. Overall, developing country programming made up just 7% of all international programming and approximately 1.3% of all children's programming over these 2 sample weeks. The only new developing country children's programming in the sample period was 5 episodes of *Mama Mirabelle's Home Movies* on CBeebies.

The second feature of children's coverage illustrated in Figure 3 is that the amount of international children's programming varied dramatically between channels. While Jetix and Disney had around 190 hours over the two week period there were 9 channels that had fewer than 20 hours.

With 79% of children's programming set in North America, figure 4 demonstrates the extent to which international children's programming on digital channels in 2007 was dominated by

this one region. Examples of North American programming include *Saved by the Bell* on Nickelodeon and *Spiderman* and *Power Rangers* on Jetix. North America also received the most coverage of any region on 14 of the 19 channels studied.

Programmes categorised as 'various/other' received the second most coverage with 11% of all international programme hours. Output in this category included programmes which were set in several locations or where the exact location of a particular episode could not be determined because of lack of available data, such as *Dora the Explorer* on Nick Jr. It is likely that this category contains a small proportion of programming set in parts of the developing world but disaggregating this category would not have had a significant impact on the results.

The remaining 10% of international coverage was set in Africa, Oceania, Europe, Latin America and the Middle East. There was no programming at all which covered Asia. Only 5 channels had any coverage of Africa with episodes of *Tarzan* and *Timon and Pumba* on Disney Cinemagic making up two thirds of this coverage. Australia was the only country in Oceania to receive any coverage and just featured on 4 channels with programmes such as *The All New Sleepover Club* on Nick Replay. Only 5 channels showed coverage of Europe including Jetix which had the new factual programme *The Making of Ratatouille* shot in Paris. Latin America only received coverage on two channels, Disney and Disney Cinemagic, consisting

*Serious Andes*, BBC1







Blue Peter, BBC1

of just two programmes, *The Emperor's New School* and *Brandy and Mr Whiskers*. The Caribbean received no coverage at all. Coverage of the Middle East was shared between just four channels and consisted mostly of episodes of *Aladdin* on Disney Cinemagic.

Although they contributed two of the smallest amounts of international and developing country children's programming, output on CBBC and CBeebies did cover the widest range of regions. *Mamma Mirabella's Home Movies* and *The Koala Brothers* on CBeebies referred to Africa and Australia, while on CBBC *Fergus McPhail*, *Friends* and *Heroes* and *Even Stevens* referred to Australia, the Middle East and North America. *Our Planet* on CBeebies which is a documentary series examining issues that affect the natural world was one of only two factual programmes set in a foreign location shown over the sample period.

### Sample 3: International Content of *Blue Peter* and *Newsround* in 2007 *Blue Peter*

The international content of *Blue Peter* was identified in three different ways. Firstly, by the number of complete programmes shot in a foreign location. During 2007, 9 complete programmes, each 24 minutes in duration, were shot in 6 different countries. Examples included *Blue Peter on Ice* in Sweden, *Jungle Survival* in Bolivia and *Sand, Scree and Scrums* in Namibia. Secondly, international content was identified by the number of short location reports which covered other countries. In total, 25 such films were shown totalling 2.5 hours, and shot in 9 different countries. These included *Camel Farmer* in Oman, *Geth in Venice* and *Ugandan Monkeys*. Finally, there were 8 studio features which directly related to foreign countries or international themes such as *Civilisations' Response to Global Warming*.

In total, there were 6.5 hours of international programming on *Blue Peter* in 2007 which amounted to approximately 10% of its

total content. Of this, 4 hours comprised developing country content. This represents more new children's coverage of the developing world than ITV1, Channel 4 or FIVE. By featuring content from North America, Latin America, Africa, Asia, Europe and Oceania, *Blue Peter* also covered more regions than any other terrestrial or digital channel during their respective sample periods, except BBC1.

Objectively defining what is international content for children is of course problematic because much of what they watch is set in imaginary worlds which may share similarities with real locations but not be factually accurate. Therefore, although it is not a feature of coverage that is quantifiable, the real nature of factual content produced by programmes like *Blue Peter* about the wider world is significant since children will gain a more accurate impression of what everyday life is like in Africa from the *Blue Peter* item *Anna and her Bike*, about the life of a young girl in Malawi, than from an animation set in a generic 'Africa' such as *Tarzan*.

These results demonstrate not only the important contribution that *Blue Peter* makes to providing developing country children's programming but also highlight the chronic lack of such programming on almost all other channels.

### *Newsround*

The results from two weeks of listings of output from *Newsround* show that the programme had at least one international report every other day.

Over the 14 days analysed, *Newsround* had 8 international reports in 7 programmes about 2 different countries (Iraq and Vietnam). The pegs for these were the anniversary of the war in Iraq and a typhoon in Vietnam.

The coverage of Iraq included background to the current situation, reports on the lives of children in Baghdad and a report on children in the UK who have parents serving in Iraq. The stories from Vietnam



covered the news as it played out that week and included a report on the impact the typhoon had.

In both cases, rather than being isolated reports about one-off events, the reports on both countries ran over several consecutive days showing the genesis of the impact of the typhoon in Vietnam and five different aspects of the conflict in Iraq. This type of coverage helps children to build up a more rounded impression of what everyday life is like in these countries compared to the traditional news approach.

## VIEWING FIGURES

The viewing figures in tables 1 and 2 are for the two sampled weeks and demonstrate two points. Firstly, the vital role that BBC1, and in particular, *Blue Peter* and *Newsround*, play in providing content for children. Secondly, the relatively low viewing figures that even the most popular children's programmes now receive on terrestrial television in an increasingly crowded multi-channel environment.

| Title                 | Day | Viewers (millions) | Channel |
|-----------------------|-----|--------------------|---------|
| Blue Peter            | Mon | 0.51               | BBC1    |
| Newsround             | Thu | 0.50               | BBC1    |
| The Scooby Doo Show   | Mon | 0.49               | BBC1    |
| My Parents are Aliens | Tue | 0.48               | ITV1    |
| Newsround             | Tue | 0.48               | BBC1    |
| Newsround             | Wed | 0.48               | BBC1    |
| Grange Hill           | Mon | 0.48               | BBC1    |
| Even Stevens          | Thu | 0.47               | BBC1    |
| The Scooby Doo Show   | Wed | 0.47               | BBC1    |
| Newsround             | Mon | 0.47               | BBC1    |

Table 1: Top ten children's programmes for week ending 20/03/07 (source - Broadcast Magazine)

| Title                     | Day | Viewers (millions) | Channel |
|---------------------------|-----|--------------------|---------|
| The Sarah Jane Adventures | Mon | 0.44               | BBC1    |
| Newsround                 | Mon | 0.38               | BBC1    |
| Newsround                 | Thu | 0.38               | BBC1    |
| Blue Peter                | Tue | 0.34               | BBC1    |
| Chute!                    | Thu | 0.33               | BBC1    |
| Best of Friends           | Thu | 0.33               | BBC1    |
| Newsround                 | Fri | 0.33               | BBC1    |
| Trapped                   | Fri | 0.33               | BBC1    |
| Thumb Wrestling           | Mon | 0.32               | BBC1    |
| Newsround                 | Tue | 0.32               | BBC1    |

Table 2: Top ten children's programmes for week ending 14/10/07 (source - Broadcast Magazine)

## CONCLUSION

This research into the international content of children's programmes in 2007 confirms that the BBC has become the overwhelmingly dominant provider of public service broadcasting for children in the UK. There is a real danger that this over-reliance on the BBC will lead to an even greater lack of variety in programming and a diminishing diversity of viewpoints.

Across all the channels, there's also a striking dominance of North American programming and a chronic lack of programmes about other parts of the world. As children in the UK grow up in an increasingly globalised and interconnected world, television has a vital role to play, in helping them to understand the wider world. The dominance of North America will only serve to limit their understanding and, if the trend continues, ultimately lead to a cultural homogeny.

## METHODOLOGY

Measuring the amount of international programming that is primarily directed at children is problematic. Characteristics of children's television such as the low level of factual programming, the setting of stories in imaginary worlds and the blurring of boundaries between genres, make it more difficult to differentiate 'international content' as opposed to UK content. Therefore, in a departure from previous IBT research which has focused on factual output, we have decided to analyse all children's content for international themes and subject matter. In order to gauge the international content of children's programming as fully as possible three complementary approaches have been used.

### **Sample 1: Whole programmes on BBC1, BBC2, ITV1, Channel 4 and FIVE for the entire year of 2007**

Despite the range of digital channels available, terrestrial channels still play an important part in the viewing habits of children in the UK. Consequently, all new international children's programming was recorded from the five main terrestrial channels using publicly available listings such as *Radio Times* and the same methodology as for the adult factual study (see chapter 2). These results were also cross-checked with the relevant broadcasters. Only new children's programming was recorded – ie programmes having their first run on UK television, regardless of origination.

### **Sample 2: Whole programmes from all children's digital channels during a two week sample period**

Last year's Ofcom report on the future of children's programming found that 90% of homes with children in have multi-channel television. However, the vast number of channels makes recording total output challenging, so a sample from two weeks was recorded. 19 children's channels available on a children's Sky package were included in the study. Two weeks from the months of March and October were selected to avoid school holidays – March 17-23 2007 and October 6-12 2007. The data was collected from Digiguide, analysed and was then subject to cross-checking with most of the relevant broadcasters. We were unable to verify results with Disney or Turner. Although the results from this sample period give us an indication of the amount of international children's content on digital channels, there are significant limitations to such a small sample size.

In the two week sample period there were virtually no new international children's programmes on the 19 digital channels. In order to provide meaningful data from which to draw conclusions about the nature of children's programming repeats were also included in the study of digital programming.

### **Sample 3: International content of *Newsround* and *Blue Peter* in 2007**

Although no previous IBT study has included the international content of magazine programmes it was felt that *Blue Peter* and *Newsround* both made such a significant contribution to international coverage for children that it was important that they were included. *Blue Peter* was able to provide listings of the entire content of every programme in 2007. From this, the amount of international content was then determined. *Newsround* was able to provide listings of international content for the 2 sample weeks which were covered in the analysis of digital channels.

## DEFINITIONS

**International children's programming:** Programming directed at children (aged 16 and under) and whose principal themes are explicitly and directly related to countries outside the United Kingdom (including animated programmes).

**Developing country children's programming:** Programming directed at children (aged 16 and under) and whose principal themes are explicitly and directly related to developing countries (including animated programmes).

These definitions have been devised in an effort to exclude 'family' programming which may be watched by children but which is not intended solely for them, such as *Dr Who*. In order to classify animated programmes as 'international', a distinction is made between those which are felt to offer significant opportunity for information takeaway about real, rather than fictional, places. Using this distinction, programmes such as *Bratz* and *Power Rangers* have been included while programmes such as *Spongebob Squarepants* have not. Deciding which programmes could be defined as 'international' was done in consultation with all of the relevant broadcasters.



CHAPTER 2  
INTERNATIONAL FACTUAL  
PROGRAMMING  
2007







## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The findings presented in this chapter are the result of a unique longitudinal study, first commissioned by IBT in 1989, which has tracked the changing nature of international factual programming on UK television. These statistics for 2007 show that BBC2 had the largest amount of international factual programming, followed closely by Channel 4. They also provide evidence of a continuing migration of international factual programming to digital channels, with More4 now making a significant contribution to the overall total with almost twice as much international factual output as ITV1. This is a significant trend as the digital channels have smaller audiences and their output is mainly watched by viewers who intentionally seek it out. Programmes on the terrestrial channels are more likely to reach a wider audience. Overall, international coverage was dominated by North America and Europe, with these regions characterised by high levels of programming about crime and travel respectively. By comparison, Africa received little coverage and that was dominated by wildlife programming.

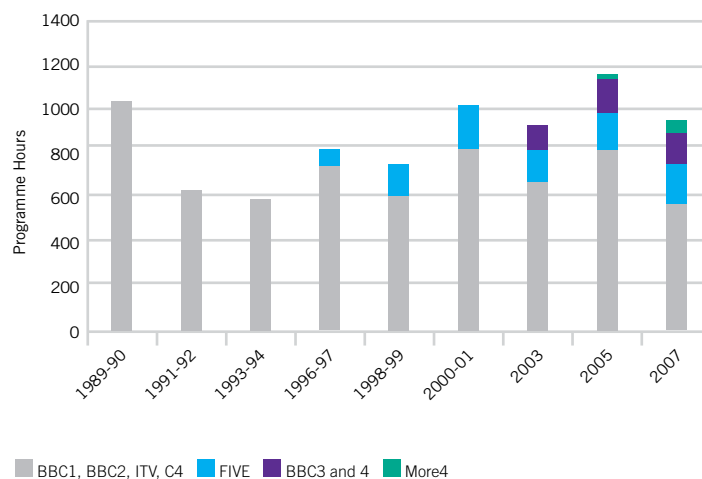


Figure 1: Total hours of international factual programming since 1989/90

## INTRODUCTION

As increasing globalisation and migration require us to interact with other cultures and our economic, political and social interdependence with other countries becomes ever more apparent, so there is a growing need for UK citizens to have a greater awareness and understanding of the wider world and their place in it. As UK citizens' primary source of information about the wider world, television is uniquely placed to inform and educate audiences about other places.

The findings presented in this chapter represent the latest contribution to a series of biennial reports into the nature and volume of international and developing country factual programming on UK television. This unique longitudinal study was first commissioned by 3WE, IBT's sister charity, in 1989/90 (the two organisations merged in 2007).

Collecting comparable data over a number of years allows the identification of general trends in output over time. The results of this study show that the international factual output of the four main terrestrial channels in 2007 was the lowest recorded since these reports began but that developing country factual content has increased to 39% of international factual output, the highest proportion since 1996/97.

The data highlights the increasing migration of international factual content to digital channels which now makes up 24% of the total, the highest figure to date. 'Soft' programming topics such as travel continue to dominate whilst 'harder' ones such as conflict and disaster and politics constitute only 12% of all international factual output.

The results of this study also help to identify changes in the nature and volume of international programming within and between broadcasters. In 2007, BBC2 had the largest amount of both international and developing country factual output, followed closely by Channel 4 which had only marginally less international factual output but a considerably smaller proportion of developing country output. ITV1 was found to have had almost no developing country factual output in 2007 and its lowest amount of international factual output since this study began.

Changes to the methodology in this report mean that we can now see how different regions of the world are covered. They show, for example, that Africa receives relatively little coverage and is dominated by wildlife programming whereas the Middle East is dominated by conflict and disaster programming. Europe and North America together make up 47% of all international factual output and are characterised by high levels of travel and crime programming respectively.

The results of this research also highlight examples of international programming that made a positive contribution to UK television's coverage of the wider world. Without *Millionaires' Mission* on Channel 4 and *Mission Africa* on BBC1, for example,

there would have been virtually no factual coverage of international development issues. These two programmes also help to reduce the dominance of wildlife programmes in coverage of Africa and as peak time programmes on terrestrial channels, they demonstrate an attempt by the broadcasters to engage different audiences with complex issues that are often considered to be less 'popular'. Programmes on the BBC such as *Tribe* and those in the *India and Pakistan '07* season such as *Lost World of the Raj*, *Saira Khan's Pakistan Adventure*, *Ganges* and *India with Sanjeev Bhaskar* helped to show different cultures and different ways of life in other countries. *Meet the Natives* on Channel 4 and *Return of the Tribe* on FIVE both attempted to make the important link between our lives and the lives of other people in different parts of the world.

## RESULTS

Figure 1 illustrates the total amount of international factual programming in each of the years that have been measured by the IBT studies and makes a distinction between terrestrial and other channels in later years. The data shows that the total amount of international factual output in 2007 (952.8 hours) was the fourth highest since the longitudinal research began and that since 2000/01 the total amount has remained significantly higher than in the 1990s. Despite this, figure 1 also reveals that in 2007, the international factual output of the four main terrestrial channels was the lowest ever recorded at just 582 hours.

The discrepancy between these results is explained by the continuing migration of international factual content to digital channels which was first identified in the 2003 IBT report, *The World on the Box*. In 2007, the majority of the BBC's *Storyville* programmes such as *An Islamic History of Europe*, *Godless in America*, *Why We Fight*, and *Journeys with George* were shown almost exclusively on BBC4 whereas in the past, such international documentaries could have been found on BBC2. Digital channel content now makes up the highest ever percentage of total output at 23%. This is significant as digital channels such as BBC4 have much lower viewing figures than terrestrial channels and output on niche channels is only likely to be watched by audiences who intentionally look out for programming that they already have an interest in.

The other main result illustrated in figure 1 is that for the first time, More4 made a significant contribution to the overall total with 66.3 hours of international factual output. This was largely due to the *True Stories* strand which included programmes such as *Czech Dream*, *ABC Colombia* and *Escape from Luanda*.

Figure 2 shows that despite the overall total of developing country factual programming being the second highest ever recorded, at 371.8 hours, the developing country factual output

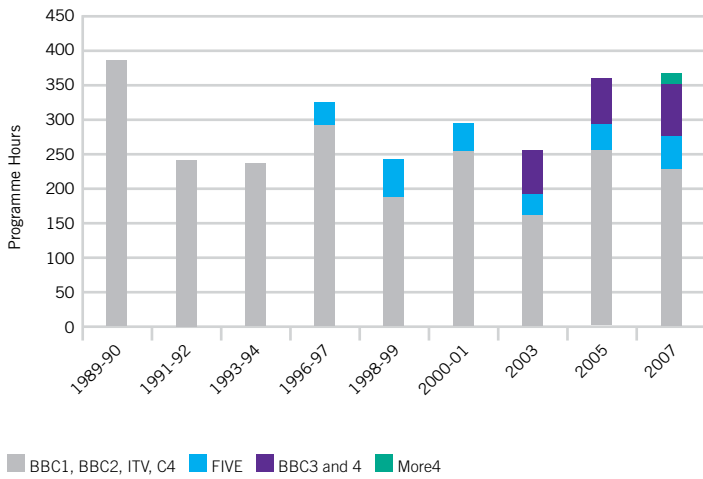


Figure 2: Total hours of developing country factual programming since 1989/90

of the four main terrestrial channels was the third lowest recorded at just 227.4 hours. Developing country factual content on digital channels now makes up the highest ever percentage of total output at 24%. As with figure 1, these results show further consolidation of the trend for international factual content to migrate from the main terrestrial channels to digital channels.

Although the contribution of FIVE, BBC3 and BBC4 to developing country factual programming has remained fairly consistent, in 2007 all three channels made their biggest contribution to developing country programming. Also, total developing country factual output has risen by 44% since 2003. It now accounts for 39% of international factual content, the highest proportion since 1996/97.

The break down of results by channel in figure 3 shows which channels had the greatest and least overall content in 2007 and the relative amount of developing country factual programming. BBC2 had the largest amount of both international and developing country factual output, followed closely by Channel 4 which had only 10.1 hours less international factual output but a considerably smaller proportion of developing

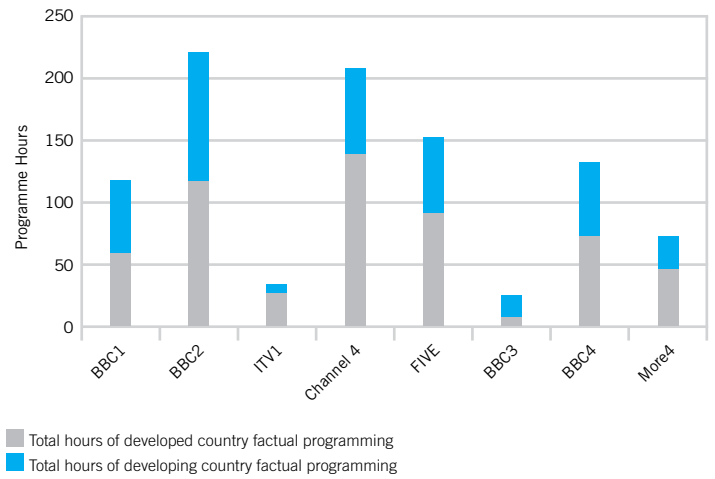


Figure 3: Total hours of developed and developing country factual programming for each channel in 2007

country output. ITV1 had almost no developing country factual output and only BBC3 had less international factual coverage.

BBC1, BBC4, Channel 4 and FIVE all had very similar amounts of developing country factual output, ranging from 52.3 hours on BBC4 to 66 hours on Channel 4. Apart from BBC3, all channels had more coverage of developed countries than developing countries.

Figure 3 also illustrates the significant amount of international and developing country factual programming that the digital channels provided. With a range of *Storyville* documentaries, the *Why Democracy* season and programmes such as *Indian School* and *Bombay Railway*, BBC4 had the fourth highest amount of international factual programming and more developing country factual programming than BBC1. Although BBC3 had little developed country factual programming, the two series *Last Man Standing* and *Fat Men Can't Hunt* helped it to almost 25 hours of developing country factual programming. With programming like *War Oratorio* and a week of documentaries in the *China Rising* series, More4 had almost twice as much international factual output as ITV1 and only 17 hours less developed country factual programming than BBC1.



Banged Up Abroad, FIVE



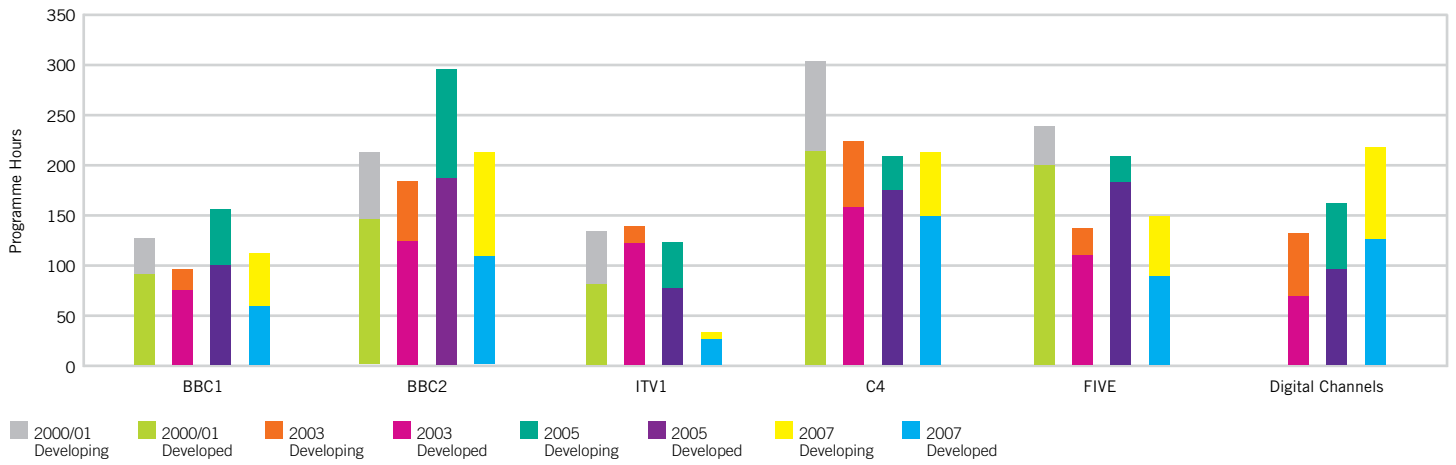


Figure 4: International and developing country factual programme hours by channel, 2000/01 – 2007

As figure 4 shows, the international factual output of BBC1 and BBC2 have mirrored each other since 2000/01 with peaks in both 2000/01 and 2005 (with the *Africa Lives* season) and troughs in 2003. The figures for both channels in 2007 represent a levelling out of output at around 120 and 220 hours respectively. Over the last seven years, BBC2 has had at least 79 hours more international factual output than BBC1.

The 2007 results for ITV1 show a considerable drop in international factual output from a previously very consistent amount of around 130 hours to a record low of just 35.3 hours. It is likely that the change in methodology for this study had a disproportionate impact on ITV1 and the figure for ITV1 was artificially high in previous years because the methodology allowed the inclusion of reality shows shot abroad such as *I'm a Celebrity...Get me out of Here!*. This year's research suggests ITV1 has almost entirely abandoned any commitment to providing significant coverage of the wider world and particularly developing countries. The only developing country factual programmes on ITV1 in 2007 were *Commando on the Front Line*, *Tonight with Trevor McDonald: Mind the Gap Year*, *21UP South Africa*, *Bethlehem: No Room for Peace* and *The South Bank Show: Isabel Allende in Chile*.

As figure 4 also shows, after a steep decline in coverage from 302.1 hours in 2000/01 to 222.3 hours in 2003, the international factual output of Channel 4 has remained remarkably stable with an increase of only 1.5 hours from 2005 to 2007. While it had the highest international factual output of any channel in both 2000/01 and 2003, BBC2 had more in 2005 and 2007.

Although FIVE had the third highest amount of international factual output in 2007 with 151.9 hours, this represents a drop of 37% since 2000/01. Its developing country output

included *Paul Merton in China*, *Search for the Lost Treasures of Afghanistan* and *Macintyre: Edge of Existence*.

Taken together, the three digital channels have shown the most striking change in output which has increased by 61% since 2003 when their contribution was first recorded. In 2007, their total international factual output was only one hour less than BBC2's.

Figure 5 shows that the 'softer' programme topics including miscellaneous, travel, religion culture and arts, history and wildlife were the five topics with the greatest output. 'Harder' topics such as conflict and disaster, development, environment and human rights and politics had the least amount of programme hours. The two most common topics, miscellaneous and travel, collectively took up 40% of all factual programming, which shows the extent to which factual UK television output relating to the rest of the world is still dominated by 'soft' programming such as *Holiday* on BBC1 and *A Place in the Sun* on Channel 4.

Politics and development, environment and human rights made up less than 7% of all international factual programming. They included various episodes of *Dispatches* on Channel 4 such as *The Indian Miracle?* and several programmes on BBC4 from the *Why Democracy* season such as *The Iron Ladies of Liberia* and *The Kawasaki Candidate*.

It's striking that the BBC and Channel 4 both had international factual output covering every one of the nine topics, whereas 60% of ITV1's coverage related to travel and miscellaneous and 74% of FIVE's to wildlife, crime and miscellaneous.

For the first time in this longitudinal study we have looked at which parts of the world are covered by broadcasters. As figure 6 shows, not surprisingly, North America had the most overall international factual output, largely due to content on Channel 4

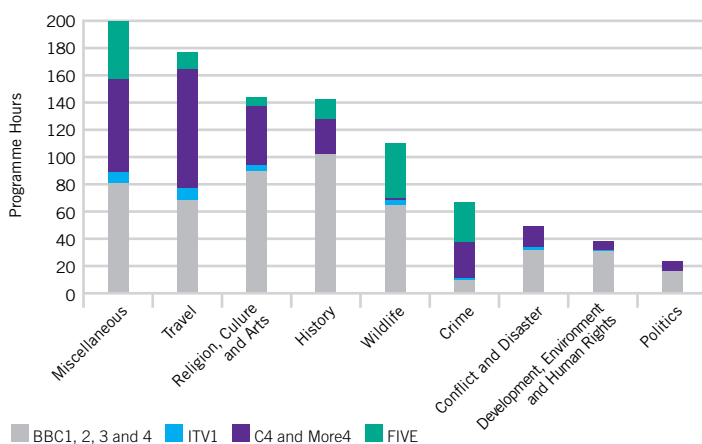


Figure 5: Programme hours for each topic covered in international factual programming for each broadcaster in 2007

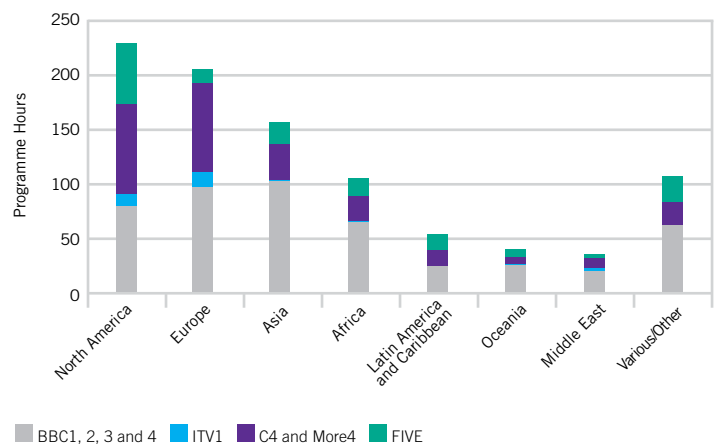


Figure 6: Total factual coverage of each region of the world and by each broadcaster in 2007





and FIVE. 34% of all international coverage on FIVE was of North America. Europe received the second most coverage, mostly because of Channel 4 and More4 output such as *A Place in the Sun*. Between them North America and Europe had 47% of all international factual coverage.

Asia received the third most coverage, largely due to the amount of coverage on the four BBC channels. This included *Indian School* and numerous factual programmes from the *India and Pakistan '07* season such as *Calcutta Uncovered* and *Lost World of the Raj*. The BBC had more coverage of Asia than any other region.

Interestingly, with programmes like *Mission Africa* and *Long Way Down*, Africa received nearly as much coverage as North America on the BBC channels. However, because there was relatively little coverage of Africa on ITV1, Channel 4 and FIVE the total amount of international factual programming about Africa was less than half that of North America and Europe.

Latin America and the Caribbean, Oceania and the Middle East received the least coverage overall and the least for virtually every broadcaster. Together these three regions had only 14% of all international factual output.

21Up, ITV1





As figure 7 illustrates, the most common topics for North America were miscellaneous (37%), religion, culture and arts (19%), crime (12%), history (11%) and travel (10%). Programmes included *Bill Oddie Back in the USA* on BBC2, *Property Ladder USA* on More4 and *Jessie James: The True Story* on FIVE. Interestingly, 43% of all international crime programming was about North America.

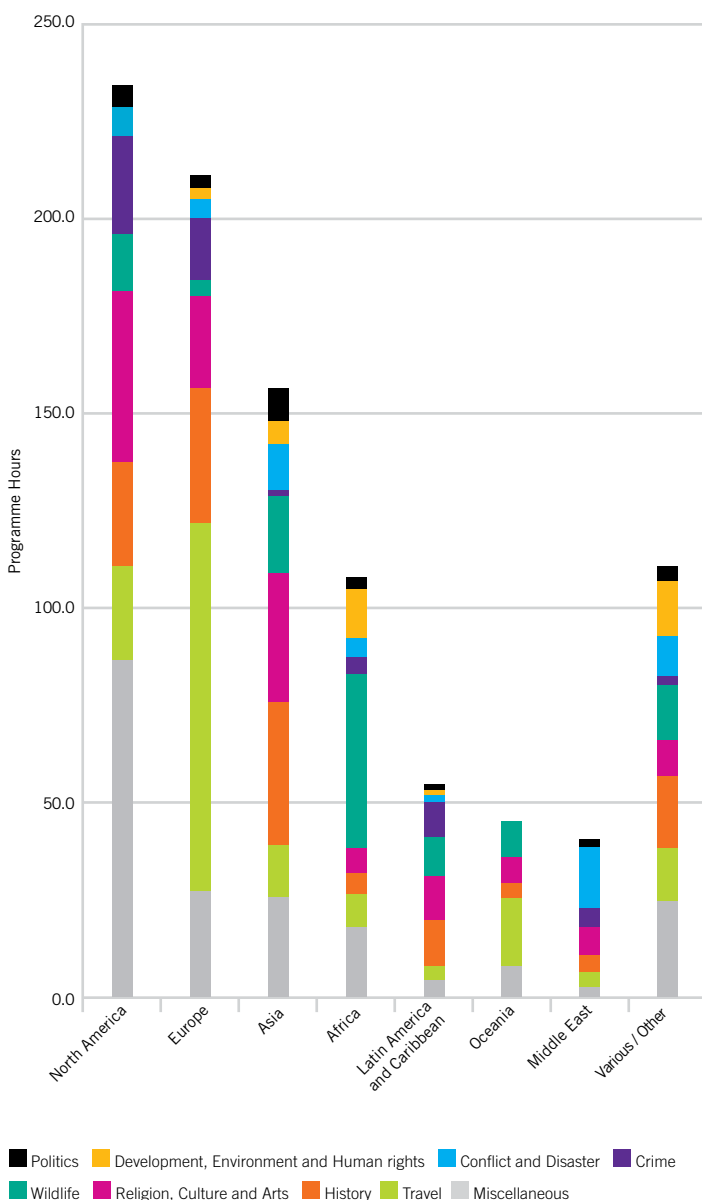


Figure 7: Programme topics used to cover each region in 2007

Coverage of Europe was dominated by travel shows almost entirely set in Southern Europe, such as *Living in the Sun* on BBC1 and *A Place in Spain* on Channel 4. Other significant topics about Europe included history (17%), miscellaneous (13%) and religion, culture and arts (11%). Programmes included *Peter and Dan Snow – 20th Century Battlefields* on BBC2, *Virgin School* on Channel 4 and *Masterpieces of Vienna* on BBC4. Coverage was not evenly spread throughout the continent as almost half the countries in Europe received no coverage.

As figure 7 shows, for Asia the most common topics were history (21%), religion, culture and arts (21%), and miscellaneous (14%). Programmes included *Jonathan Ross's Japanorama* on BBC3, and *Travels with My Camera* on More4. South East Asia was dominated by wildlife programmes such as *Orangutan Diary* and *Expedition Borneo*, both on BBC1.

40% of factual coverage of Africa was about wildlife and 40% of all wildlife programming was in Africa. Programmes included *Lemur Island* on FIVE and *Meerkat Manor* on BBC2. East and southern Africa received the majority of Africa's coverage with programmes such as *Safari School* on BBC2 and *Vet Safari* on BBC1. East Africa received far more coverage about development, environment and human rights than any other place in the world, largely due to *Millionaires' Mission* on Channel 4 and *Mission Africa* on BBC1. Interestingly, west, north and central Africa received less than 10% of African coverage between them and only 4.5% of coverage of Africa was about conflict and disaster.

South America took up 59% of all international factual coverage of Latin America and the Caribbean. With programmes such as *Banged up Abroad* on FIVE and *The Hairy Biker Ride Again* on BBC2, South American coverage was characterised by miscellaneous (21%) and religion, culture and arts (21%). The Caribbean was dominated by history (31%), wildlife (26%) and religion, culture and arts (28%), with programmes such as *Wild Caribbean* on BBC2 and *Cuba! Africa! Revolution!* on BBC4. Central America received only 13% of Latin American coverage.

Australia and New Zealand had 66% of coverage of Oceania. 60% of Australia and New Zealand's coverage related to travel. Coverage of Melanesia was dominated by religion, culture and arts, largely as a result of *Meet the Natives* on Channel 4 and *Return of the Tribe* on FIVE.

37% of output about the Middle East related to conflict and disaster with programmes such as *Bethlehem: No Room for Peace* on ITV1 and various episodes of *Unreported World* on Channel 4 and *Panorama* on BBC1.

Most of these results about the way different parts of the world are portrayed on UK factual programming may not be surprising – the fact that Latin America and the Caribbean receive little





*Mission Africa, BBC1*

coverage, Africa is shown largely as a place of wildlife and the Middle East as a region of conflict and disaster. But providing this data enables us to begin to explore the link between television content and audience understanding of other parts of the world. For example, the fact that the UK public generally knows very little about Latin America and the Caribbean may be related to the low level of television coverage.

### **Conclusion**

The longitudinal element of this research reveals some striking trends. International factual programming on the four main terrestrial channels has now reached its lowest overall level since 1989-90. The increasing levels of output on BBC3, BBC4 and More4 point to the migration of international factual content to digital channels. And

the collapse in recorded programme hours of international and developing country factual programming on ITV1 is striking.

It is encouraging that BBC2 and Channel 4 maintain relatively high levels of international and developing country factual output. However, the results show that output across the channels is dominated by the same programme topics and regions of the world are often covered in stereotypical ways. If television is to reflect the increasingly globalised lives that people in the UK live, then new and diverse ways of bringing the world to the UK must be found. Indeed, if the BBC is to fulfil its commitment to 'bring the world to the UK' and Channel 4 its new remit 'to challenge people to see the world differently' then programming about the Middle East should focus on more than just conflict and programming about Africa on more than just wildlife.



*Millionaires' Mission, Channel 4*

## METHODOLOGY

As there have been many changes in programme genres and styles since the IBT reports began in 1989, so the methodology being used had become increasingly out of date. It was decided, therefore, that some alterations should be made. Although this makes comparisons with the data from previous reports less reliable, because current affairs and relevant UK based programming has now been included and reality programming shot abroad but with little or no relevance to the country has now been excluded, the overall totals have remained very much as they would have been.

### Data

Included within the survey is all new factual programming:

- broadcast on BBC1, BBC2, ITV1, Channel 4 and FIVE, and on BBC3, BBC4 and More4
- between 1 January 2007 and 31 December 2007
- which meets the definition of factual international programming or developing country factual given below.

### Definitions

For the purposes of identifying and categorising relevant programming, the following definitions were used:

#### Factual international programming

All non-news factual programming in which the principal themes are explicitly and directly related to a country or countries outside the UK (whether it was shot in the UK or abroad).

#### Developing country factual programming

All non-news factual programming in which the principal themes are explicitly and directly related to a developing country or countries (whether it was shot in the UK or abroad).

These definitions have been changed from the ones used in previous reports so that programmes which are shot in foreign countries but which have no content relating to that country, such as *I'm a Celebrity... Get Me Out Of Here!* do not qualify for inclusion. However, programmes such as *Meet the Natives* which do provide content relating to foreign countries but which are filmed in the UK, can now be included. Current affairs programmes are not distinguished from factual programming because such a distinction is no longer considered valuable for this research.

#### Developing Countries

As with all previous IBT studies, this report relies on the classification of developing countries used by the United Nations Development Programme. The World Population Programme classifications of different regions of the world are also used where appropriate.

### Programme hours

Most sections of this report use 'programme hours' as the main indicators. Where a programme met the criteria described in this methodology, the entire time of the programme was counted. For programmes broadcast on commercial channels, 10% of programme time was deducted to allow for commercial breaks and trailers.

### Inclusions/exclusions

Open University, school programmes, the Learning Zone, repeats and 'omnibus' collations were not included in this research. For the first time programmes consisting solely or mainly of archive material are included. This is done in order to account for programming that relies heavily on archive material but which uses this material to convey new meanings. The genre of programmes collating clips of real life footage from other countries, such as CCTV footage, was included. Arts and culture programming was included, but programmes featuring celebrity subjects, where the culture of their home country was not examined, were excluded. Music shows recorded overseas but consisting of performance only were not included. Those which blended musical performance with other material on the culture or society of the country concerned were included. Studio programmes such as *Newsnight* were not included because the information required to identify every piece of international content was not available.

### Sources

The data was collected from publicly available listings sources such as the *Radio Times*, but was then subject to rigorous cross-checking with the broadcasters, who have co-operated closely in order to verify the information needed for correct classification of individual programmes. We would like to thank all the broadcasters for their help and co-operation.

### Issue categories

Programmes were categorised into the following broad issue bands:

- **Conflict and Disaster:** comprising international and civil war, global security, terrorism, crime and civil unrest within the past ten years, and both historical and contemporary natural and man-made catastrophes.
- **Crime:** all aspects of crime, criminal activity and investigation, including CCTV and police video compilations.
- **Development, Environment and Human Rights** issues.
- **History:** factual programmes telling stories which took place over ten years ago (in order to distinguish the 'History' category from 'Conflict and Disaster,' in the case of war documentaries). This category also comprised archaeology, and included standard documentaries made up of archival footage and 'talking head' interviews, if the historical subject matter was placed outside the UK.



- **Miscellaneous:** comprising lightweight human interest topics, observational documentaries or docu-soaps, science and medicine less easily classifiable programmes.
- **Politics:** comprising elections and political change, political economics, and political analysis within the past 10 years.
- **Religion, Culture and Arts** including anthropology.
- **Travel:** all variations on the travel/adventure/holiday programme.
- **Wildlife** and natural history: shows mainly about animals. Purely reconstituted footage of animals was distinguished from animal programmes examining their environmental and human contexts, which would fall into the 'Development, Environment and Human Rights' category.



## CBA-DFID BROADCAST MEDIA SCHEME

Since it was launched in October 2001 the CBA-DFID Broadcast Media Scheme has provided support for UK based programme makers who aim to 'reflect the real world' to the UK television audience.

The cost of researching and developing programme proposals to submit to broadcasters in the hope of a commission is substantial and it is inevitably cheaper and less risky to research a programme idea in Durham than in Delhi. But by reducing this financial risk for producers, the CBA-DFID Broadcast Media Scheme works to increase the volume of programme ideas set in and about the developing world that are submitted to UK commissioning editors.

The Scheme is funded by DFID but run by a small team from the Commonwealth Broadcasting Association (CBA), thereby enabling producers to maintain their editorial independence. Support is given either via the idea specific Programme Development Fund or the person specific Travel Bursary Fund. The Scheme also provides programme makers with practical support, such as flight, visa and health information and professional contacts, via the global network of CBA member broadcasters.

Since 2001, 159 programme ideas have been supported via the Scheme. 40 of the 95 projects awarded support from the Programme Development Fund have so far either been broadcast or commissioned, a commissioning success rate of 44% compared to an industry average of 7%. To put this in context, in 2007 ITV1 broadcast just 9 factual programmes about the developing world, FIVE broadcast 68 and Channel 4 broadcast 105.

Over the 6 years that the Travel Bursary Fund has been running, 64 awards have been granted giving 70 different programme makers an opportunity to research international programme ideas. 41 of these awards have already resulted in at least one broadcast programme with many awards resulting in multi media coverage across the UK.

In 2007, Channel 4 broadcast a series of short documentaries supported by the Scheme that celebrated Indian independence. *Made in India* was shown in peak time and attracted an audience of 1.2 million per episode. The Scheme also worked with the BBC to send 5 non-journalists from the UK to rediscover their family roots and ties in India and Pakistan. Output from the 5 bursars was used for TV, radio and online coverage of the anniversary of Indian independence.

Travel bursar, Alison Pinkney, from Lion Television, was one of the team of producers who developed and filmed *Indian School* shown on BBC4 and BBC2 during 2007. This series followed from the success of *African School*, also developed by a travel bursar from the Scheme.

Extensive media coverage resulted from multi media journalist Susan Schulman's bursary trip to Sierra Leone during 2007.

*War Oratorio* was a feature length musical film, broadcast on More4 in 2007. Filmed in Afghanistan, Uganda and Kashmir the film combined the language of musical performance and documentary to tell the real stories of people caught up in the maelstrom of war.

**Sally-Ann Wilson. Project Director**

**CHAPTER 3  
CONSTRUCTING KENYA:  
HOW THE UK BROADCAST MEDIA  
COVERED THE POST-ELECTION  
VIOLENCE IN KENYA**





## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report explores some of the issues raised by the coverage of the violence in Kenya and highlights the difficulties which UK broadcasters face in reporting a fast moving a complex news story. The audience was unprepared for the crisis and the early reporting provided little context and too much emphasis on tribal causes. This ‘broad brush’ approach in the first few days framed the way in which UK viewers understood subsequent events, even though later coverage revealed a more complex picture. Broadcasters acknowledge that mistakes were made – for example running out of date pictures on a loop which suggested the violence was ongoing when it was not. With the content from UK broadcasters now being watched around the world, reporters need to be sensitive to local issues and contexts. Graphic images including body parts and inflammatory language feel very different to a local audience in the midst of a crisis compared to an international audience watching from a distance.



## ‘Political tensions have exposed tribal divisions so they are settling old scores’

Karen Allen, BBC News, 30.12.07

### INTRODUCTION

Covering the violence which broke out in Kenya after the disputed elections posed a number of challenges for UK broadcasters. Since television news is the main source of information for most UK citizens about the wider world, the way in which such an important African news story is reported is likely to have a significant impact on how UK audiences perceive Africa. This report explores some of the issues raised by the coverage and highlights the difficulties broadcasters face in covering a complex and fast moving news story. It is based on a series of interviews conducted once the violence had subsided, with broadcasters, journalists and commentators in the UK and in Kenya.

### AN ILL PREPARED AUDIENCE

For many of the interviewees, their initial concern with the coverage was that the UK public was remarkably ill prepared for the events that took place after the election because of the way in which Kenya had been ‘constructed’ previously by the UK media. Michael Holman, former Africa editor of the *Financial Times* argues that ‘for many people [in the UK], Kenya is Africa and Africa is Kenya... Kenya is the iconic African state... You’ve got almost the happy image of Africa as a place of sun, sea and surf’. This is why, he believes, when the violence broke out, UK audiences were so unprepared for it and ‘to have this vision of Kenya destroyed has really been quite traumatic’. A senior BBC journalist agrees that ‘there was little preparation for the audience for what was going to happen’. The immediate question this raises, according to Holman, is ‘how did we ever come to think of Kenya as such a stable, prosperous, law abiding country? The press in general have got quite a lot to answer to because they create the illusion that ... they are now knocking down’.

In an article in the *Financial Times* in June 2007 Kenya was said to have a ‘sprightly’ economy that is ‘beginning to thrive’ with a political regime that has ‘inspired fresh optimism in the country’. The author, Barney Jopson, described a country where politics had been successfully de-linked from economics and announced that ‘while industry battens down the hatches in many African countries ahead of polls, business confidence in Kenya appears to be growing’. In the same week, the *Economist* presented an entirely different view, observing that ‘Kenya’s general state of disrepair is striking. Tens of billions of dollars of aid have been spent, yet in many respects the country’s infrastructure is worse than it was 40 years ago ... Kenya often feels like a country that cannot cope’. Holman cites this article in the *Economist* as one of the few examples of accurate reporting about Kenya in the UK press before the election.

### MORE BAD NEWS

The second theme that emerges from our interviews is the issue of which stories are covered and why. The build up to the Kenyan election was relatively peaceful and the election itself, with images of people queuing to vote, appeared to represent a story of democratic success in Africa. Yet this was barely mentioned by the UK media. Deborah Rayner from *Channel 4 News* acknowledges that ‘the actual election itself didn’t get sufficient coverage’ and a BBC journalist told us ‘we know that people... in African journalism were trying to get news organisations interested in the election. But there was – I am told – little interest’. Similarly, when the violence subsided and a peace deal was signed, the UK media coverage was minimal.

## ‘This week’s violence has shown how tragically and quickly ethnicity can be exploited when political tension is high’

Mike Wooldridge, BBC News, 2.1.08







## ‘This, the new face of one of Africa’s most stable democracies’

Karen Allen, BBC News, 2.1.08

Tim Singleton, Foreign Editor at ITV News, explains the lack of coverage before the violence began by arguing that ‘news is only news when something happens and I don’t think our viewers would have forgiven us if we had done lengthy pieces in December about the build up to the elections’.

The argument that the only news viewers are interested in is bad news was rejected by almost every other interviewee. Beatrice Karanja, a Kenyan journalist, argues that such a view ‘assumes the British public are thick’. She points to the relatively large diaspora populations in the UK and the fact that UK citizens travel widely, to make the point that audiences are worldly enough to want to know about more than just conflict and violence. Sally-Ann Wilson Project Director of the CBA – DFID Broadcast Media Scheme points to numerous pieces of research such as *Reflecting the Real World 1 and 2*, *Live Aid Legacy*, *Making Sense of the World* and *Viewing the World*, all of which document audience frustration with the broadcast news media’s focus on bad news and highlight the desire of audiences to be given a more complete picture of the world. Sinead Rocks, the editor of *Newsround* says that their audience research demonstrates that what both adults and children really want to see from news media is something unexpected.

Singleton defends ITV News arguing that ‘perhaps you are open to the accusation that you only report on the country when things go bad but that’s news.... Unfortunately we don’t live in a media world where everything gets equal attention all of the time. That is just not realistic’. Rocks disagrees, suggesting that ‘you can confound expectations because every news programme has room for features or investigations or stories that are of interest to the audience that may not necessarily be in the news that day’.

### INADEQUACIES IN EARLY COVERAGE

The issue of greatest concern to interviewees was the character of the early coverage of the violence and particularly the emphasis on tribalism. As Helen Palmer, Global media officer at Oxfam argues, coverage ‘fell very quickly into the ‘Africa is a tribal basket case scenario’ without explaining the wider context’. Paul Mason from *Newsnight* agrees that ‘they were too ready to categorise it as an ethnic conflict’. For Holman, the church massacre at Eldoret received disproportionate coverage because ‘once again it fulfilled the stereotypes of an Africa that is driven by bloodlust and tribalism’. Firoze Manji from Fahamu, the African human rights network, believes ‘it is institutional racism. When they see two Africans fighting, they look no further than tribalism’.

Tim Marshall from Sky News defends the initial focus on tribalism. ‘Yes it is tribalism and actually I would stand by that. I think then what actually happened has born that out. Sometimes there is a sort of media angst that doesn’t want to go down that line, but it clearly was related to tribalism... The essential truth is that [there were] very stark images of people being killed with machete blows simply because they were from the wrong tribal or ethnic background. That is undeniable. It is recorded on camera. That is the brutal truth of what happened’.

As BBC journalist Adam Mynott says, ‘it would be ludicrous to suggest [tribalism] wasn’t a factor and a big factor in all aspects of Kenyan lives’. All interviewees agree with this but many also stress the importance of highlighting other explanations and complexities such as the role of land rights, poverty, corruption, hopes for democracy and resource allocation. Without this wider context, Palmer argues, we can not get ‘beyond this stereotypical picture of Africans running around with machetes killing each other’.

‘The killing started early today, it is shockingly brutal, human skulls hacked open by men with pangas (machetes)’

Jonathan Miller, Channel 4 News, 3.1.08





**‘Kenya’s crisis has thrown up stereotypical images of an African conflict. But the country’s present agony is the product of a fast developing economy and massive aspirations to democracy which have been dashed’**

**Paul Mason, BBC News, 3.1.08**

Mynott believes ‘it is all down to the balance and nuance and getting the emphasis right. It’s a complex picture and should not be looked at in one dimension’. Fellow BBC journalist Mason agrees: ‘I think a lot of people in journalism also feel like me that you have to understand the complexity, understand the deep social roots of the resource allocation problem. To many Kenyans it looks like the Kikuyu elite allocated all the resources to itself. You have to understand that in order to explain the ethnic violence, not to condone it but to explain it’.

Marshall says the coverage did evolve: ‘In the first couple of days you are immediately assessing something and you are also operating out of a lot of the news agency wire stuff’. He says this is typical of how broadcasters cover this kind of story. ‘In the first couple of days you are going to get the broad brush, basic lines and then the complexities... I don’t think we should beat ourselves up too much about the coverage’.

The fact that coverage improved over time is accepted by almost all of our interviewees but they offer different explanations. Many blame the ‘fire fighting’ approach of some broadcasters. ‘They don’t do their research properly, they don’t speak to the right people and they fly from the UK with no political or historical [background]’ (Karanja). ‘I think it’s the classic scenario of people jetting in from outside vs. the experts on the ground. Certainly people like Adam Mynott at the BBC know the situation very well and explain the context very well... When they flew an anchor out from London and got him to tell us what he saw on the way from the airport – I don’t think that was particularly illuminating’ (Palmer). According to a senior BBC journalist ‘there is a tendency for editors to slot African stories into something simplistic. And you can understand it. If you are given a choice of reporting the latest negotiations between politicians nobody in the UK has heard

of, or a human interest story that symbolises the conflict, you are going to choose the latter’. One British reporter who was in Kenya during the violence told us ‘a huge amount of international press arrived who had basically come there with the question, knowing nothing about it, which tribe is fighting who? Which tribe doesn’t like the others? Tell me which tribe is it? You can’t [just] blame editors if the culture of journalists is ‘all African conflicts are about tribes’.

Although Palmer is encouraged by the improved Kenyan coverage, she believes the early reporting had serious consequences. ‘While it is great to have the more nuanced analysis coming through, the initial framework of the story is set by the opening few days’.

When asked about the practicalities of reporting the Kenyan crisis, Marshall points to the difficulty facing broadcasters in explaining complex stories in a short amount of time. ‘In terms of TV news for a mass audience, you can’t go into every nuance of tribal background that broadsheet newspapers can do in their 2000 words’. But for Firoze Manji from Fahamu, the lack of context in the early coverage was a serious failure. ‘When a crisis occurs, the principal role of the media should be to provide the necessary empirical background immediately so that it provides the context for interpreting events that are taking place’. *Newsround* editor Sinead Rocks agrees. ‘Our obligation is to give as many facts as possible but also to contextualise things. We treated it the way we treated any story, just to bring it down to a very factual level and to explain things as clearly as we can. A lot of news services just report a story and assume a great deal of prior knowledge – now we obviously can’t do that’. By adopting this approach, *Newsround* managed to provide coverage that did not rely on the single explanation of tribalism even with severe time and resource constraints.

**‘These horrific images come from the Dandora district of Nairobi, showing a man being slowly hacked to death today by a gang wielding machetes. He is left for dead in the street’**

**Jonathan Miller, Channel 4 News, 3.1.08**





## ‘Human beings were butchered like animals’

Orla Guerin, BBC News, 9.1.08

Deborah Rayner from *Channel 4 News* believes the choice of the team is critical. She says she was only able to send a team of five people, but these were ‘five people who really know what they are talking about... Sometimes on these big stories people get flung out and it could be their very first assignment’. Channel 4 also had the benefit of Lindsey Hilsum who knows Kenya well. Before flying to Kenya herself she sent briefings to the team on issues such as Kenya’s history and the correct pronunciation of the names of the different tribes. ‘Then we hired locally, very carefully. That is something *Channel 4 News* always does, you hire the very best people you can and you listen to them... we were very careful to hire a mix of tribes’.

### INCITING OR INSENSITIVE?

The most serious claim made by interviewees is that certain characteristics of the international media’s content could be responsible for inciting or exacerbating some of the violence in Kenya. A few days after the violence had started, Wachira Waruru from the Media Council of Kenya issued a statement urging the international media to show restraint in the naming of communities involved because, he argued, ‘this only goes to fuel and inflame already heightened emotions’.

Helen Palmer believes that because the international media ‘ran out of date pictures on a loop, they suggest the violence was ongoing when it was not’. Sylvia Mwachuli, from the UNDP in Kenya argues that this can make people believe that the violence being committed against their tribe is worse than in reality, which can help perpetuate the violence. ‘Because Kenyans were so stressed out, every time you see... the media you are not sure if they are [pictures] for today or

for yesterday but you see as if it is today’. Adam Mynott is ‘ashamed to say’ that the BBC also used out of date footage on a loop but added ‘I can sort of understand it from an editorial point of view... the most exciting pictures are the ones you stick on’. Mason adds that ‘the continuous loop of something being shown is a problem and something I think editors need to think about [particularly because] Kenyans are not that used to 24 hour rolling news’.

Several respondents claim that the nature of the coverage suggested that violence was occurring in more places than it actually was. ‘Some of the international media gave the impression that the whole of Kenya has been on fire for the last five or six weeks and that is very misleading. Eighty percent of the country has been largely unaffected’ (Mynott).

Tim Marshall, from Sky, concedes that ‘where I do think [they have] got a point is about the stuff on a loop, especially if your not paying close attention to the words... and I also think that it is incumbent upon us to point out that this is happening in a relatively small geographical area of a large country. I hope we did point that out but I am conscious of the power of the image and people are watching and you hear ‘Kenya’, you see violence and that’s your image of it. I see that point... We have a responsibility to put the pictures into context, we try and do it, we don’t always succeed... everyone’s fallible’.

Making a reliable assessment of whether or not the international media inflamed the situation is beyond the capacity of this research. As Tim Singleton from ITV News argues, ‘you’ve got pictures of people hacking each other to death, political leaders accusing each other of genocide, I don’t think you need us to stir it up’. Beatrice Karanja believes that those people involved in the violence are unlikely to have had access to television, that local radio stations

‘In this idyllic African landscape, another victim lies in the grass. His body has been here 10 days now and it’s been decapitated’

Orla Guerin, BBC News, 9.1.08







**‘It was a frenzy of savage brutality, people in Naivasha were attacked and slashed by mobs wielding machetes in sickening acts of depravity’**

**Adam Mynott, BBC News, 27.1.08**

played a more important role in inciting violence and that much of the violence was pre-planned. ‘It is blaming the media for human instinct or for something that is already going to happen’.

But what this debate does highlight is the fact that as the UK media reaches more audiences around the globe, journalists and editors will need increasingly to engage with context specific issues.

### **GRAPHIC IMAGES**

Wachira Waruru, who chairs the Media Council of Kenya, warned the international media about the use of graphic images which ‘only serve to take away the dignity of Kenyans who are at the moment going through very hard and traumatic times’. In his interview with us, he added that ‘when watching the news... about violent acts in Europe or America... you don’t see dead bodies, you don’t see body parts... you don’t see nearly dying people... The international media should apply the same principles when covering conflict here in our country’.

Marshall defends Sky’s use of images: ‘We specialise in eye witness reporting. To be frank, that is as worthy if not more worthy to show the world what is really happening than it is to spend your time stroking your chin, having these intellectual debates about what’s going on. The history of our profession shows that the more you are able to expose the truth – earlier on – the quicker international action is taken’.

Singleton believes ITV News did show restraint: ‘There were some agency pictures of people literally being hacked to death. We never showed the point of death. In the Kenyan instance we showed the start of the attacks on them and then news froze the picture and moved on and said the pictures are too graphic to see’.

### **INFLAMMATORY LANGUAGE**

Some interviewees expressed concern that the language used by reporters was often sensationalist and inappropriate. Palmer believes that ‘the language that some of the UK journalists used was very apocalyptic, it was very much ‘Kenya is finished, it’s going down the tubes right now’. Sky News came in for criticism. For example, Emma Hurd told viewers that ‘the appetite for bloodshed here doesn’t seem to be waning’ (29.1.08). The BBC’s Adam Mynott spoke of ‘a frenzy of savage brutality’ (26.1.08) while ITV News reported that ‘the police are caught between two tribes whose thirst for blood has not been sated’ (28.01.08).

Tim Singleton denies that the phrase ‘thirst for blood’ was inappropriate. ‘I think it is hard to exaggerate the brutality of some of the deaths of the people in these riots’. Singleton’s view is that ‘we always strive to use the best language – but sometimes in difficult circumstances it is easy to drift into cliché and exaggeration, but to accuse the media of stoking up the issue through insensitive language – I don’t think that really holds water’.

There is clearly a danger that the initial coverage, characterised by graphic images of dead and mutilated bodies with accompanying language reporting that ‘human beings were butchered like animals’ (Ola Guerin, BBC News), then becomes the frame of reference which the audience uses to understand all the subsequent coverage.

**‘Kenya is bracing itself for further violence. Tribe is now the language of hate. It’s no longer just about the election’**

**Karen Allen, BBC News, 28.1.08**







## 'The appetite for bloodshed here doesn't seem to be waning'

Emma Hurd, Sky News, 29.1.08

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Although this chapter focuses just on Kenya, it raises broader concerns about the nature of international news coverage in general. Reporting a fast moving and complex news story is challenging but audiences need to be provided with as much context as possible in order to understand the significance of events, as they unfold.

The audience was unprepared for the crisis and the early reporting provided little context and too much emphasis on tribal causes. Broadcasters need to be aware that a 'broad brush' approach in the first few days of coverage of an international crisis frames the way audiences understand subsequent events, even if later coverage provides more detail and a wider range of voices. Reporters should give thought to how they can provide more context in the early coverage of a crisis.

There is also a continuing contradiction between research that points to a wide ranging audience appetite for engaging news stories about a variety of international issues and the assumption by some broadcasters that audiences are only interested in 'bad news'. Covering off the agenda stories are a vital way of providing the context, alternative perspectives and variety that audiences say they want.

With the content from UK broadcasters reaching ever increasing parts of the world, broadcasters should be sensitive to local issues and contexts. Graphic images and inflammatory language feel very different to a local audience in the midst of a crisis, compared to an international audience watching from a distance.

### INTERVIEWEES

**Michael Holman** – Former Africa Editor, Financial Times

**Beatrice Karanja** – Kenyan journalist

**Firoze Manji** – Director, Fahamu

**Tim Marshall** – Foreign Affairs Editor, Sky News

**Paul Mason** – BBC Newsnight Correspondent

**David Mugonyi** – Reporter, The Nation, Kenya

**Sylvia Mwachuli** – Africa Communications Co-ordinator for the UN Millennium Campaign

**Adam Mynott** – BBC East Africa Correspondent

**Helen Palmer** – Global media officer, Oxfam

**Deborah Rayner** – Senior Foreign Editor, Channel 4 News

**Sinead Rocks** – Editor, Newsround

**Tim Singleton** – Foreign Editor, ITV News

**Wachira Waruru** – Chair, Media Council of Kenya

**Sally-Ann Wilson** – Project Director, CBA-DFID Broadcast Media Scheme

## 'We even found a Luo and a Kikuyu, the two main warring factions, sharing the same bed'

Emma Hurd, Sky News, 30.1.08



## REFLECTING THE REAL WORLD?

The first report in this series was published in June 2006. It included interviews with broadcasters and research exploring how audiences responded to different genres of programming about the developing world.

Copies can be downloaded at [www.ibt.org.uk](http://www.ibt.org.uk) or [www.cba.org.uk](http://www.cba.org.uk)



## REFLECTING THE REAL WORLD 2

The second in a series of research reports published by IBT, this looked at how UK television and new media portrayed developing countries. Based on a series of interviews with broadcasters, new media specialists and commentators, the report also included audience research examining the viewing habits of young people. Published in September 2007.

Copies can be downloaded at [www.ibt.org.uk](http://www.ibt.org.uk) or [www.cba.org.uk](http://www.cba.org.uk)



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report was written by Martin Scott and edited by Mark Galloway and Sophie Chalk. Our thanks to all the broadcasters who worked with us to verify the statistics quoted in the report, to all the interviewees who spoke to us about Kenya, and to DFID for funding this research project. Design by birdy.

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